



Brenna
Lyons

Graham: Training the
Earth-Born Lord

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**A short story from the Kegin Universe
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Published by eXtasy Books, a division of Zumaya Publications,
2004

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www.zumayapublications.com
www.Extasybooks.com

Dedicated to...

Lisa, for suggesting I investigate my characters more closely.

Debbie and the folks at the Mystic Moon, for giving Graham his first test run.

My husband, for putting up with long nights and short tempers.

Note: *There is a glossary of Keen terms at the end of the story.*

Graham:



May 31st, 2007

Pittsburgh, PA
Planet Earth

A *m I sure about this?* “Yes,” Graham Miller breathed, pulling on the black band the soldier had handed off to him.

“Your pardon, Lord Graham?” the uniformed man asked in deeply accented English. He was unbelievably tall, a full head taller than Graham’s six feet one; and he blended into the shadows, his black uniform a perfect match for his dark hair and eyes, knee-high boots and deeply tanned skin.

“Nothing. I’m ready.”

He motioned to the shimmering doorway. “We have little time. My men have taken the few things you requested. Do you require anything more?” He didn’t add that there would be no coming back for anything he missed now. That went without saying.

Graham looked around his apartment with a sigh. “No. There’s nothing here for me.” There hadn’t been anything there for Graham since Loraine left. In two years, that hadn’t changed. That was why he was

willing to take this foolish chance at a new life and a new identity.

He took a calming breath and stepped through the doorway without hesitation. *There is nothing for me on Earth*, he reminded himself as the swirling mass of the doorway seemed to swallow him whole. Maybe Kegin would be different.

Graham expected disorientation, flashing lights, discomfort — some jarring effect to crossing galaxies of space in an instant of time. There was none. One moment, he stood in a dark, dingy apartment over a bar on Pittsburgh's South Side. The next, he was standing in a brightly-lit room, being gently drawn away from the doorway by men in red tunics. The black box was removed from his arm, and everything seemed to happen at once. While he looked at the strange heavy wood and stone furnishings, garbled speech flew around him, the doorway seemed to disappear, and soldiers sped away with nods and bows to him.

A lord. They said he was a lord, a cross-bred son of their race and humans who was seeded on Earth and left there to adulthood. He was brought home for one reason, to have children with a Keen woman that would strengthen the failing genetic base of the Keen and save the world. He had stepped through the doorway in the hopes that a psychotic fantasy might be better than the sane reality of his life on Earth.

He looked at the strange room again. *If this is a psychotic break, rent me a rubber room anytime.*

An older man dressed in an ornate sky blue and

Graham:



silver jacket bowed to him. "Welcome to Kegin, Lord Graham," the man said with less of an accent than the soldier had.

Graham nodded slowly. "The soldier said I was... This isn't a joke, right?" He felt his cheeks heat. After the doorway proved real, asking about the rest seemed ridiculous.

He laughed heartily. "It is very real, my lord. I am Brid of the Church Council. Welcome to my home."

"Your..." Graham faltered. This place had to be the size of a small palace, judging by the size of this room. It wasn't clear what the purpose of it was, but if it were a ballroom, it would easily fit a hundred people.

"Yes. It will be your home until you have learned a bit of our culture and language." Brid looked around with a grimace. "Unless my home is not to your liking," he amended.

"No," Graham replied hurriedly. "It is amazing."

It was amazing. Graham would have taken it for a museum of some sort. There was decorative tilework in the floor in shimmering colors of red, green, blue and white. The wood chairs and stone table were etched with scrolling swirls and curves that drew the eye and appeased some unnamed, unsettled feeling in him. Portraits of a woman with flowing white-blonde hair and green eyes and a red-haired man wielding a broadsword decorated the walls. The portraits showed the same couple in a variety of sexual and non-sexual poses together. A glance at Brid convinced Graham that the man in the portraits could not have

been the priest, even several decades earlier in his life.

Brid smiled. "I am heartened that you think so. We will start your lessons as soon as you wish."

"Immediately," he gushed, blushing again. "I mean, as soon as..." Graham sighed. Kegin was new. Kegin held hope. It was difficult not to jump right in.

His host laughed again. "Tomorrow morning," he promised. "For now, you should rest. The exhaustion of passing through the gateway will tire you. A meal has been prepared in your rooms. You will probably sleep away the evening after that. Would you like servants to tend to your needs?"

"Servants?"

Brid nodded. "Queen Susan assures us that most American humans will turn down that offer initially, but it is good form to offer."

"The Earth-Born queen?" he guessed. The soldier told Graham that he would meet the queen when he was settled in.

The priest nodded again.

"Uh. No. I think I'll do this on my own."

"As you wish, Lord Graham."

* * *

Carila watched Lord Graham enter the sanctuary. He was a beautiful male with deep choc hair streaked with gold and eyes the color of a stormy sky. When her father had asked Carila to tutor the Earth-Born lord, she'd been hesitant. Seeing him stride toward her, Carila was glad she'd reconsidered.

Graham:

He dipped his chin to her in what she recognized as an Earth form of greeting, smoothing his tunic over his abdomen self-consciously. "Sorry I'm late," he offered in his language.

She was suddenly overjoyed that she'd learned to speak it to honor Queen Susan when she visited the palace. Though the queen spoke almost perfect Keen after five years on the planet, she was touched when a native went out of his or her way to make her feel more at home with her own language.

"It is quite all right. You have a lifetime to learn the culture, and we knew the gateway would tire you." Carila touched the front of his tunic, feeling his muscles tighten through the silin. "The clothing is to your liking?" she asked.

"Yes, they are. I... Is this the style?"

Carila smiled, glad for an excuse to touch him again. "May I?"

The lord nodded. "Please."

He sucked in his breath, as Carila bloused the tunic. She loosened the ties at the neck and bared a bit of his throat. Graham shifted, his lengthening cock brushing her hip. His scent intensified, and Carila resisted the urge to taste the skin at his throat.

"Miss?" he asked, his voice rough.

"Yes, my lord?" she answered, though she didn't understand what he was asking of her.

"Graham. Please, call me Graham. I'm afraid — I don't know how to be a lord," he admitted reluctantly.

Carila glanced at his erect length, stifling a chuckle.

"You are more a Keen lord than you know." She moved away to the table, trying to calm her jangled nerves. Seeing his state of readiness and smelling his interest in her was making her forget her duty to train him.

Graham sank into the soft chair provided for him, looking like a child caught in some misdeed. "I apologize," he managed.

She raised an eyebrow in surprise. "For what are you apologizing?"

He motioned vaguely to his state of arousal. "I don't know what's wrong with me."

Carila planted her fists on her hips. "Wrong with you?" she demanded, reminding herself that it was probably a misunderstanding based on his human roots. "Am I so displeasing to you?"

His eyes widened. "No. Of course not. I just... Oh hell!"

"Pardon?" she asked, confused by what could only be an exclamation of anger or disgust.

"You are Carila. Right?"

She furrowed her brow, his logic escaping her. "I am."

Graham grimaced. "Brid is your father?"

"He is."

He buried his face in his hands, grumbling words foreign to her.

"Have I offended you somehow?" she asked curiously. "My studies have obviously not prepared me to deal with your cultural eccentricities."

Graham seemed at a loss for words. "You aren't

Graham:



offended by —” He glanced to his lap again.

Carila laughed heartily. “Why should I be offended? It is a compliment that you find me to your liking. I know my father would be pleased if you took me to your bed — and the breeding office.”

He scowled, looking about as if he were uncertain.

“That confuses you.”

“I’m accustomed to fathers who are a bit more protective. Brid doesn’t even know me.”

“He knows quite a bit about you.” Carila crossed the room to him and traced the line of his jaw. “Keen women choose their own sexual partners. Is it not so on Earth?”

“It is, but that doesn’t mean fathers don’t offer their advice.” He grimaced again. “Or their protests.”

Carila shrugged and sauntered back to the table. “You will learn our traditions soon enough. What would you like to learn first?”

* * *

Graham looked up at her, thankful for the reprieve from the memories of the beating Lorain’s father had dealt him the week she left. She’d played her father against Graham most effectively.

He swallowed hard at the look of invitation in Carila’s eyes. When Graham had learned that the Church Councilman’s daughter would be his instructor, he hadn’t expected Carila to be sex personified. From the dark waves of hair that cascaded around her thighs to the breasts, as good as

uncovered in the skin-tight blue dress, to the length of her tan legs; she was beautiful. And, every move she made had him lusting for her all the more.

Carila raised an eyebrow, reminding him that she had asked a question.

Graham scanned his eyes over the room, the same room the doorway had brought him to. Again, the portraits caught his eye – and wrecked havoc on his libido. “Who are these people? They are obviously very important.”

“Ah... A good place to start. The male is Mag, the king of the gods. He personifies laws, justice, vengeance, vows and duty. The female is Fion. She is the goddess of love, mercy, healing, and family. She is Mag’s mate.”

“Your...” Graham took a deep breath. “You display portraits of your gods...” He motioned to a portrait of Mag licking at Fion’s clit. The enjoyment on both of their faces was captured with remarkable clarity.

Carila chuckled. “You will find that much of Keen culture stems from our intensely sexual natures. Why should we not embrace what our gods made us? Surely, you have a healthy sexual appetite.”

He flushed, clearing his throat. “A little too much of an appetite according to my wife,” he grumbled. *My ex-wife*, he reminded himself sternly.

Graham rubbed the tension from his neck that thinking of Loraine always caused. She’d told her parents that she was leaving Graham because of his strange sexual habits. Funny how those same habits had always excited her – until he failed to give her

Graham:



the child she'd always wanted, the child David gave her before she ran to her parents to protect her from her "sex maniac" husband.

"You are contracted?" Carila asked in dismay.

"Contracted?"

"You have a bride?" she qualified for him.

"No. I *had* a wife," he spat, annoyed with himself for letting Loraine in again.

"She dissolved your contract, then?"

Graham sighed. "Dissolved is too pretty a name for what Loraine did."

Carila grimaced. "She was human. She could not properly appreciate the importance of your drives."

"Oh, Loraine appreciated it just fine, until it was a convenient excuse to leave me for a man who could —"

"Give her children," she finished for him, her eyes wide and sad.

Graham looked away from her pity. "Yes. Exactly."

"The females on Kegin," she began.

"Can they really have my children?"

"Yes. They can." Carila hesitated. "Many women will pursue you, Graham — for the purpose of a child and nothing more. You must be cautious."

Graham scrubbed a hand over his face. "Like Loraine," he decided. The baby she wanted had obviously been more important to her than Graham had been.

"I am afraid so, but you are an Earth-Born lord. In contract, the advantage is yours."

"Advantage?"

"In bargain. You can ask for things not typically granted a male. A woman who truly wishes to be your bride will grant you the assurances you require."

"For instance?"

"Any children would be yours in a split. The penalties for dissolution would favor you."

Graham snorted. "Well, that would be new and interesting."

Carila's face clouded in confusion. "Pardon?"

He waved the question off with a sigh. It wasn't Carila's fault that Loraine set out to publicly humiliate him or that the courts had taken him for what little he'd amassed in his life at her word.

"As you wish. Very well. Perhaps we should begin with the societal norms for sex and taking a mate."

Graham groaned. "Do we have to?"

"To safeguard yourself, you may want to," she cautioned.

He motioned for her to continue.

Carila eased herself up on the table and folded her legs under her. "Women will want the prestige of a child by you. They will wager on your ignorance of the law to help them get what they seek."

"In what way?"

"If a woman comes to your bed willingly and mates to completion, you have only the following day to demand the *regit lus*."

"Uh. What precisely is a *regit loose*?"

"A time of — test. *Ferdil Fion*," she breathed then motioned for his patience. "*Regit lus* lasts one of our

Graham:

months. You need not mate with the woman again, though you may if you are willing. If she conceives during that month, the child is yours in a split. If you dissolve the union, you leave with your child but forfeit a substantial penalty. If she dissolves the contract, she receives a small stipend for gifting you an heir. The problem with demanding *regit lus* is... If at any time during the month she demands a contract, you are bound to contract with her."

"And?" he prodded.

Carila grimaced. "If she makes your life miserable enough and withholds intimacy—"

Graham groaned in understanding. "It would be worth the penalty to escape her."

"And she would have her penalty without producing a child for you. Of course, if she mates and slips away, eluding you until the time has passed for you to demand the *regit lus*, she has the best of both worlds. You have no rights to your child, and she receives government aid for the babe. As the offspring of one of the Earth-Born, her stipend would be astronomical."

"Why bother?" he grouched.

"Pardon?" she asked again.

"With a world full of women like that, why would I bother mating?"

Her eyes widened. "Stopping may be harder than you realize."

"I've never had a problem controlling myself." *Despite what Lorraine said about me.*

"With human women, you mean," she guessed

sagely.

"Well, that goes without saying, doesn't it?" he commented sarcastically.

Carila chuckled, swinging her legs off the edge of the table. "Sex with a Keen woman is not the same," she assured him.

Graham swallowed past the lump in his throat, his erection fierce and insistent. His eyes locked on her slightly parted knees. He shook his head slowly, suddenly certain that he could smell her arousal from three yards away.

"Is that an offer?" he managed in a hoarse voice.

Carila cocked her head to one side, her hair fanning out over the stone tabletop. "Yes. It is." Her scent intensified.

* * *

Carila smiled at Graham's shiver of anticipation. He shook his head again, apparently unprepared for the force of his arousal, much as Queen Susan had been unprepared for her reactions in King Jole's arms.

"Would you care to experience the true Keen drive?" she offered.

Graham's cock was hard and his scent heavy. Whether he was ready to admit it or not, he wanted what she offered. His eyes panned over the portraits of Mag and Fion again, and his breathing quickened.

"Why?" he whispered. His eyes settled on the portrait to her left, and he swallowed again.

Carila smiled, knowing the portrait intimately. "I

Graham:

want you."

"You want me or you want a child?" he accused.

His mistrust does run deep. "Bargain with me. On Kegin, we are bound by our word. Mag demands that we keep to our vows."

"Bargain for what?" he snapped.

"I wave all rights. I have no claim on your estate."

"I have nothing to claim," he growled.

"Of course you do. You have two homes, dozens of troops and servants, a fortune and a title."

Graham seemed stunned by the revelation. Had no one told him what he inherited as an Earth-Born lord?

"I relinquish all claim." She raised a hand to still him before Graham could question her further. "I relinquish all claim on any child I might conceive by you."

"What do you get in return?" he asked suspiciously.

"Knowing that I am your first. The chance to educate you." She let her eyes wander over his body. "The chance to touch you as I have wanted to since you walked into this room."

"That's all?"

"Should there be something more?"

Graham closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. His fingertips skated over the length straining against his trousers.

Carila smiled at the move. "It is enticing," she teased.

"What is?" he asked in a dreamy voice, stroking himself again.

"The musk. It makes you crazy. The mating frenzy can be very intense."

His eyes opened slowly. Graham rose and came to her, a fine sweat on his brow. He planted his hands on either side of her hips and buried his face in her throat, drawing her scent deep into his lungs. He trembled in response.

"Oh God," he groaned. "It's true. I can smell you."

"Shall I be your teacher?"

Graham kissed her throat. "Where?"

"Here." A tingle of excitement coursed over her nerves. Yes, the sanctuary was the perfect place to teach one of the saviors of Kegin.

Carila expected Graham to balk at her suggestion, to demand a proper bed. He didn't. Graham captured her mouth, his movements frantic, lost in the frenzy.

"Is it always like this?" he breathed.

"Not always this strong," she admitted. *Fion, but he is a potent male!* "The musk is a powerful aphrodisiac."

Graham peeled the silin bodice from her shoulders and down her arms, uncovering her breasts. He sucked in the tip of one breast, his mouth hot, his movements insistent, a male lost in his drive, and it was wonderful.

"You taste of it," he groaned. "Your whole body tastes of it."

"The musk is much more powerful when taken orally," she instructed.

He nodded. "Yes. It is." Graham paid homage to her other breast, groaning at the feelings coursing

Graham:



through him.

"Did you enjoy tasting your human bride?" she asked.

* * *

The force of that question shook him. He nodded numbly and glanced to the short skirt of her dress. Of everything about Loraine, Graham missed eating her to a screaming orgasm most. He pushed the skirt back, his eyes locked on the thighs appearing beneath his palms.

Carila slid toward the edge of the table, spreading her knees wide in invitation. Her tan skin darkened in a blush that seemed to release more of her scent.

Graham stared at the dark curls that covered her mound in confusion for a moment then met her eyes, seeking an explanation.

"Ah. Yes. Queen Susan requested Earth-style undergarments when she arrived on Kegin. You would expect to see them."

"No one here..." he managed.

"Were there useless undergarments in your rooms?" she countered.

He sank to his knees, shaking his head in confirmation, thankful that the Keen traditions seemed designed to facilitate unencumbered sex. Graham licked a long, slow path over her seam, circling her clit. The flavors went to his head, a dizzying mix of musk and spice that sent a course of pleasure over his nerves. He stroked his tongue over

her again, addicted to the response of his body, a hundred times more powerful than his arousal with Loraine.

Carila wound her fingers in his hair, muttering something in her own language. "Anything," she pleaded. "Give me this, and I will give you anything you wish."

Graham looked to the portrait over her shoulder, knowing precisely what he wanted — after Carila came for him. He gave her his full attention, drinking in the dizzying flow of her musk as he stroked deep inside her.

She jerked, gasping in surprise as Graham discovered a slight ridge inside her. He investigated it further, groaning into her as Carila tightened her grip in his hair.

"Yes," she urged him. "It is the inner pleasure spot. Please, Graham."

He stroked his tongue over the ridge again and again, bracing her legs wide with his shoulders when she tried to clamp them shut, holding her hip in place when she tried to shift back onto the table. Graham stroked the pad of his thumb over her clit, smiling as she stiffened.

Carila cried out softly, a wash of her personal lubricant flooding his mouth, the rich, heady flavor making his head swim. Her inner muscles gripped him rhythmically, making the hunger for her surge.

Graham pushed to his feet, pulling at the buttons on his trousers. Carila dragged his mouth down to hers and kissed him passionately, her hands brushing

Graham:



his away and freeing him expertly.

She nipped at his lips, her breathing as harsh as his own. "I love tasting myself on you," she murmured.

"You do?" Loraine hadn't liked to taste herself. She wanted Graham to wash and brush his teeth before kissing her.

Carila nodded. She rubbed her thumb through the precome on the head of his cock and brought it to her mouth, licking it away with a look of ecstasy. She drew his face down again. "Taste yourself," she urged him. "Taste our mixed fluids."

Graham hesitated. One of Loraine's claims had been that his fervor for eating her after sex, his arousal that doing it caused — typically leading to a second round of sex, was unnatural. "I..."

"You like the taste," she stated with confidence.

He blushed, nodding his agreement.

Carila sealed her mouth to his, swirling a hint of his taste into him and firing his senses again. "You should," she whispered. "If I took you to climax in my mouth as humans often do, the taste and the smell of my resulting arousal would make you ready for me again."

Graham nodded, taking in this new information. *Normal. Everything I do is normal.* Well, it might not be commonplace for humans, but Graham wasn't human, and he'd never been more glad of that fact.

"Would you like," she started to offer.

He looked at the portrait again. "No. I don't."

Carila scooted forward, playing the head in her welcoming body. "You want me." It wasn't a

question. She didn't need to ask. Carila knew better than any woman ever did exactly what he liked.

Graham pulled back, shaking his head. "Not this way."

She nodded. "I promised anything."

He hesitated, looking toward the door. "Maybe we should —"

"Here. Trust me. It is appropriate that it be here."

"Why?" he asked, suddenly suspicious. "What is so special about this room?"

Carila smiled. "It is the sanctuary of our home."

"Sanctuary?" Graham groaned. She wanted him to have sex in a church?

"It is appropriate," she soothed him.

"Appropriate? Having sex in a church in a priest's home is appropriate?"

A frown of confusion turned her lips down. "I do not understand your words."

"Priest is — Oh hell."

Carila blanched.

"Your father is a holy man."

"Holy?" she inquired.

"A — man of your gods. Their go-between," he explained in exasperation.

She nodded. "Yes. Of course."

"And this is a holy place. A —"

"Yes." Her eyes widened. "This violates some human custom. You do not understand why this is appropriate."

"You're damn right I don't," he growled, cursing his aching body. Carila was right. Turning away from

Graham:



sex with a Keen woman was nearly impossible, even when it seemed so wrong to proceed.

Carila smoothed a hand down his chest. "In the days before unification, Fion's priestesses would shed their maiden's blood on the sanctuary stone. In the early days of the Ri era, kings often consummated contracts with their brides in the sanctuary out of respect for that heritage."

Graham ran his eyes over the portraits again. These were people who were biologically designed to be nymphomaniacs, who displayed portraits of their gods having sex in a sanctuary. Was anything taboo?

"What better place for the first mating of an Earth-Born lord?" she reasoned. "How appropriate to do it in the traditional way."

He nodded, turning her on the altar so that she supported her upper body on her forearms. Carila looked to the portrait she faced and spread her legs, pushing back toward his length for what she knew he needed.

Graham didn't stop to think about what he was doing. If he did that, he might argue it, and his sanity was strained nearly to brittle fracture as it was. Anything that made him question what his body howled for was dangerous to him.

He filled her in a single thrust, shuddering at the feeling of being buried inside her heat. It had been too long. Graham hadn't picked up a woman since sometime during his divorce proceedings. "Two and a half years," he groaned.

Carila eased forward then back again, impaling

herself on him. Graham found her rhythm, thrusting into her with increasing speed while she moved against him, matching his motions as if they were one being. That thought was too much for him. He thrust deep inside her, lodging to her cervix as his climax took over. His release seemed to go on forever, and then the swelling started.

Graham gasped as he locked in her, a tight band inside her squeezing hard around the head of his cock. He cried out harshly at the sensation, at the added stimulation that had been missing with Loraine. Carila screamed, her body milking his, intensifying the feeling of his climax.

He startled at the intensity of her reaction, afraid that he had done something incorrectly and hurt her. He ran his fingers along the column of her neck. "Are you—"

"Do not move," she gasped. "*Ferdil Fion*. The ova releases when you stimulate the band," she explained. "There is a one in fifty chance of conception."

Graham ran his lips over her shoulder, his body reacting to all of the knowledge she was imparting to him. "Every time?" he whispered. No waiting for the right time of month? A chance of a baby every time with a woman who could actually carry a baby for him? It sounded like heaven.

Carila nodded. "Multiple times in the same day increase the odds."

"How much?" And, would she let him try again?

"One in twenty-five for twice. One in fifteen for three times."

Graham:

"Will you do this again?" he asked, steadying his voice so he wasn't pleading. He wanted her again. Graham didn't care if every woman on Kegin felt this good. Carila was the one he wanted.

"Yes," she assured him. "I would like that. I forfeit all claim."

The doors opened wide, and Brid strode in. His look of concern melted into pure red-faced fury. Graham groaned. He'd been set up again.

* * *

Carila sighed. Her father wasn't angry with Graham, but the young lord wouldn't know that. This would have to be handled carefully.

"You had no right to do this," Brid stormed in their native tongue. *"It was not your place to test his readiness for mating."*

"English, Father. Graham does not understand your anger."

Brid's color faded to a faint pale. "My apologies for that lapse, Lord Graham." He scowled at Carila. "And for my daughter's actions."

A slight tremor passed through Graham's body. He sighed in relief, pressing his cheek to her back and wrapping his arms around her waist.

Carila reached behind her to stroke his hair. The first mating would be shattering enough without his fear of her father. "It is fine," she soothed him. "I told you all would be well."

Brid shot her a stern look. "You took advantage,"

he accused. "Lord Graham has no concept of how to protect himself from the legal complications inherent in such a mating."

"He does," she assured her father.

"If he demands a Trial Moon, what will you do?"

Carila's pulse quickened at that. She hadn't set out to become Graham's mate, but the idea heated her blood.

"A what?" Graham mumbled into her shoulder, his arms tightening around her in an unconscious move as his cock lessened within her and released the band. It was a common thing for males new to mating, the urge to hold to that feeling, to stay buried in the women who brought them pleasure.

She shook her head and motioned her father for silence, halting his protest before he assaulted Graham's battered nerves further. "*A regit lus,*" she crooned to him, running her fingers through his hair again in a calming gesture. "Graham does not wish a Trial Moon, Father. I have forfeited all my rights to his title and estate and agreed to bear him a child, if that is Fion's wish, with no legal hold on him or that child. He is legally protected with me."

Brid took a step back in surprise. "Why would you make that agreement?" he gasped.

Carila sighed. "*It was what he wanted, Father. He was frightened by the idea of the games Keen women would play with his love, the games that Earth women play.*"

Her father nodded.

"What did you say?" Graham asked.

Carila met her father's eyes. "I told him the truth.

Graham:



We were attracted to each other and wanted to experience each other. There was no need to add legal complications to that."

Brid sighed. "Very well. Lord Graham will have his heir. If he has waved his right to Trial Moon—"

"I haven't," Graham informed Brid. "I want one."

"One what?" Carila asked, dizzy in disbelief.

"The contract. The *regit lus*."

Brid grimaced. "If he hasn't forfeit his right of demand, you must comply to the rules of *regit lus*. Have the forms been observed?"

Carila dropped her forehead to her hands, closing her eyes as Graham's cock pulsed inside her, abruptly ready to resume their lovemaking. "Yes," she admitted. "They have."

Graham shifted, teasing the head of his erection over her inner pleasure spot. "Then I want it."

"But even the penalty if I dissolve is formidable," she cautioned him. "There is no need for you to pay it. The forms allow for me to give you this, and there will be no stigma to your child."

"Do you plan to dissolve the contract?" he asked pointedly.

"No," she admitted. "I have no plans of it, but I do not want you to feel obligated—"

His hips rocked slightly back and forth, stimulating the ridge. "Are you going to refuse me and make me miserable?"

"I..."

"You have to keep your vows. Promise me you won't."

"I promised to share your bed."

"That wasn't what I asked," he replied patiently.

"I will not refuse you." *Oh, Fion. How could I refuse this? No man has ever made my body sing this way.* "You have my vow."

"Then don't fight this," he pleaded.

"She cannot fight it," Brid replied crisply. "If you call her to a Trial Moon, if you demand your rights, Carila must comply, but you are also bound. That is the law. Are you certain you want this?"

"Go away and let me discuss this with Carila," Graham decided in a voice rough in renewed need.

Brid's face went a deep crimson. "As you wish. You have until the sun sets to revoke the call. If you do not, you are bound by Trial Moon."

"Understood."

Brid left, closing the doors behind him.

Graham left her body, turning Carila to her back and laying her out across the altar. He entered her again, rocking deep inside her, as she bowed up to his thrusts.

"I will not force you to *regit lus* if you don't want me. Do you want me for more than this?" he asked, his eyes hopeful.

"Yes. I do want you."

"If you don't want a child..." He let the offer hang between them.

Carila shook her head in shock. He would give up the child he wanted for her?

Graham nodded, misjudging her silence. "I believed I was sterile anyway. What have I lost? How

Graham:

do you prevent – ”

“No,” she gasped. “I want a child. I want several children.”

“But you – ”

“You would really give up children for me?” she asked at the same time.

“If I wouldn’t, I’d be no better than Loraine was. We have to want each other more than that. Otherwise, there is nothing to build on. You were willing to give up everything for a few days with me. I would give up everything for a lifetime with you – if you ask it.” He swallowed some strong emotion. “The question is... Do you want it? Will you give me that?”

Carila nodded. “But not in *regit lus*,” she decided.

“I don’t want a mistress,” he insisted. “I want a bride.”

“You will have one. Contract with me. Make it clear that we are both willing, that I chose willingly to contract with you and that you were not demanding your rights simply to secure your heir from me.”

Graham smiled widely. “I have your vow that you will sign the contract?”

“Of course.”

“On one condition.”

“Which is?” she asked suspiciously.

“We’re trying out every pose in these portraits.” He motioned to the wall to his right. “Including that one.”

Carila glanced at it, laughing hysterically at the gods having sex while mounted on a war-buck. “Do

you ride?" she asked.

"I'll learn."

"Then we will start with a mare," she assured him.

He smiled. "Agreed." Graham's gentle rocking became more insistent, his expression fierce in his barely controlled need.

Carila smiled. "There are more portraits," she informed him, nipping at the erogenous zone at the base of his throat.

"Are there?" he gasped.

"Yes. I felt it only fair to tell you that. Will we try those as well?"

"Absolutely."

He drove her over the edge of the abyss toward the soul's reward. If Fion were kind, she would conceive the first daughter of an Earth-Born lord on Kegin in the time-honored tradition of the Goddess herself.



KEEN CALENDAR

A year on Kegin is roughly equivalent to an Earth year. Days are twenty Earth hours long, but the year is separated into twelve months consisting of thirty-seven days each. A week on Kegin consists of eight of their days. I formatted the calendar as if the Keen year started in January like an Earth year. In reality, the Keen year begins in Endl. The end of winter and beginning of spring is a time of rebirth, and so it is the start of the Keen New Year.

Pri— — —	January
Ite— — —	February
Endl— —	March
Wos— —	April
Zor— — —	May
Fim— — —	June
Jad— — —	July
Caj— — —	August
Wend— —	September
Abrin — —	October
Veril— — —	November
Iric— — — —	December

GLOSSARY OF KEEN TERMS USED IN THE BOOK

NOTE: Keen is a lyrical language, and minor changes in pitch and inflection denote a slightly different word in the language.

Ferdil	Merciful
Fion	Keen queen of the gods; Goddess of love, balance, and mercy

Fion's Children/Daughters

	The matriarchal priestess race wiped out by the Lengar in Ti 10- 452
Hottel	a horse-like creature (mare pony- size and war-buck Clydesdale size)
Mag	Keen king of the gods; God of justice, law, and vows unbroken
Regit Lus	Trial Moon
Ri	King, the era of Keen history after the Era of Unification
Silin	a silk-like fabric that most women's clothing and royal bedding are made from
Trial Moon	an ancient custom by which a Keen man may demand a contract by a woman he has had sex with if certain conditions are met

About The Author

Brenna Lyons lives in Haverhill, MA with her husband, three children, and a zoo of pets. She was born and raised in the Hazelwood/Glenwood area of Pittsburgh, PA and toured the east coast as a Navy wife for thirteen years.

She enjoys the Society for Creative Anachronism and is a member of such groups as Broad Universe, EPIC, WRW and ERA.

Brenna holds a BS in Accounting and a Certificate of Computer Programming. Why? An auditing teacher commented that she would either "make the perfect auditor or the perfect thief," and she had been writing for eleven years with little professional training - in effect, a thief of attention by misdirection.

Never one to pass up a challenge, Brenna has worked as an auditor, tracking down fraud suspects, finding the backdoors into exchange computer systems, creating accounting programs for government and small businesses, and as a writer. Overall, it's the best of both worlds.

Brenna enjoys talking to readers and can be reached via her site at <http://www.brennalyons.com>