



**The Zodiac Series**

**Capricorn**

Cyndi Redding and Larissa Lyons

**The Zodiac Series**

**Capricorn**

Cyndi Redding and Larissa Lyons

Published 2005

ISBN 1-59578-191-9

Published by Liquid Silver Books, imprint of Atlantic Bridge Publishing, 10509 Sedgegrass Dr, Indianapolis, Indiana 46235. Copyright © 2005, Cyndi Redding and Larissa Lyons. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Manufactured in the United States of America

Liquid Silver Books

<http://lsbooks.com>

Email:

[raven@lsbooks.com](mailto:raven@lsbooks.com)

Editor

Terri Schaefer

Cover Artist

April Martinez

This is a work of fiction. The characters, incidents and dialogues in this book are of the author's imagination and are not to be construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events or persons, living or dead, is completely coincidental.

**Guardian of the Angels**

Cyndi Redding

## Chapter One

Kurt Conrad politely greeted the other passengers on the elevator and rode in silence to the TV news office carrying his briefcase and a steaming paper cup of aromatic coffee. He strolled by the expansive windows taking in one of his favorite views--the city of Philadelphia covered by fresh snow on an early winter morning. Its derogatory nickname, Filthadelphia, no longer fit the city when transformed into a sparkling white panorama.

The newsroom was bustling with activity. It looked as if some disaster story requiring reporters and anchors to scramble for updates was going to add to the usual noise level. Whatever it was, he didn't want to hear about it.

Kurt considered himself lucky to have his glass office that looked down over the newsroom and he shut the door as he stepped inside. How could anyone work day after day waiting to be interrupted by the anticipation of bad news? He shook his head and reminded himself that he was lucky. At least he had a good job, even if it was a little boring, and he enjoyed occasional banter with his friend and co-worker, Frank. Good thing, since they shared the office.

Kurt carefully hung his gray wool coat over the hook on the back of the door. Sitting at his desk in peace, he sipped his low-fat latte and pulled a contract out of his inbox. His office mate arrived just as Kurt was incorporating the notes he had made from his meeting with the sponsor. Frank settled himself at his desk, which faced in the opposite direction, and then he cleared his throat several times.

"Bad cold you've got there, Buddy," Kurt said.

"I'll live. I was merely trying to get your attention without interrupting you."

Kurt kept pecking away at his keyboard, trying to finish the paragraph correctly so the sponsors wouldn't want it reworded. As soon as he typed the period, he whirled around in his swivel chair. "Now that you've interrupted me, what did you want to say?"

"Have you been to the break room this morning?"

"Nope. I bring my Starbucks with me."

"Well don't be surprised if one of the women asks you what your sign is."

"My Zodiac sign?"

Frank nodded. "Yup. All the women were gathered around a copy of *Cosmo's* bedside astrologer this morning. Don't ask me why buddy, but they're trying to figure out what your sign is and which single chicks are compatible with you."

"Me? Why me? Why not the tall, dark and handsome anchor?"

"They seem to think you're the pretty boy. I guess 'almost gay' is in this year."

Kurt narrowed his gaze. "You'd better mean 'metrosexual.'"

"Whatever. What the hell does that mean, anyway? Metrosexual?"

"It means I wear ironed, coordinated clothes and I like to try a little gourmet cooking once in a while, but I have mad skills with the ladies."

Frank chuckled. "For some reason, they think you've got it goin' on. Besides, anchor Andy's an asshole. They're under the mistaken impression that you're not."

Kurt smirked and turned back to his computer. "Thanks, pal."

A moment later one of the producers opened their door and popped her head in. "Hey, Kurt. How was your Christmas?"

Picking up his paper cup, he turned toward her with a smile. "Hi, Susan. It was nice. The whole family got together for once. Yours?"

"Great. I found out I'm sexually compatible with my husband."

Kurt almost dropped his coffee.

She giggled. "Oh it's no big surprise to me, but it's nice to know that we have *Cosmo's* blessing." She waved the magazine she had in her hand. "The January bedside astrologer edition was in my stocking. So what's your Zodiac sign?"

"Do not disturb."

Frank laughed. "I told you, buddy."

"Oh, c'mon... Everyone wants to know."

Kurt shook his head. "Forget it. Tell them I'm Barney the dinosaur."

Susan folded her arms and didn't budge. "They're going to hound you all day if I don't find out."

Kurt groaned but smiled inwardly at the compliment. "I would, Sue, but I have a birthday coming up, and if I tell you what I am, they'll want to know what day my birthday is. Then they'll bake a cake and I'll be expected to sit through an embarrassing rendition of 'Happy Birthday to You' in the break room."

"You're kidding. What day?"

"See?"

Susan giggled. "Okay, Mr. Capricorn. I won't bug you anymore."

"Damn. How'd you know?"

"Because we're in Capricorn for the next three and a half weeks." She rifled through the magazine until she came to the right page. "Okay, you're supposed to date Taurus or Virgo. Pisces and Cancer are okay too. Stay away from Gemini and Sagittarius, though. You may be attracted to them since they're witty and fun, but they're too flighty for you. You need honesty and trust."

Kurt snickered and shook his head. "Thanks, Sue. I'll remember that."

\* \* \* \*

Five months later, having ignored the warnings, he had dated and been dumped by a beautiful Gemini. Now with his weekends free, he was driving to Pittsburgh to visit his family. He should have made it home weeks ago to congratulate his little sister on her engagement. It wasn't that family didn't matter to him. He missed his folks and his younger sisters, but other things kept getting in the way.

Kurt's late model BMW convertible sputtered, limped off to the side of the road and died. The sun was directly overhead and he squinted, despite wearing sunglasses, as he looked around for some sign of civilization. He didn't see anything at first so he stepped out of the car, opened the hood, and attempted to diagnose the problem as if he knew his engine from his elbow. Driving cars was his passion, not fixing them. The midnight black BMW was usually so dependable. It was a hot day though, and he figured its radiator had overheated.

He tried his cell phone but that was dead too.

"Shit." Kurt glanced at his light gray slacks and crisp white shirt and stood next to his car scowling. He scanned the countryside again, and this time he spotted a farmhouse off in the distance. *That's weird. I don't remember seeing that before.* Even though the road seemed deserted, he checked the Bavarian sports car's interior for anything he shouldn't leave out in the open and grabbed a paper bag from the passenger's seat. Resigned, he strolled in the direction of the old farmhouse. It appeared solid enough to be inhabited, but desperately needed a good coat of white paint.

When he wandered up the grassy rise, he noticed a clothesline attached to the back of the house with a pair of lovely legs visible behind the clean white linens flapping in the fresh air. As he drew nearer, he saw flashes of a pretty young woman between the hanging clothes and sheets.

Hoping he wouldn't startle her, Kurt called out 'hello' from a few feet away.

She startled anyway. "Oh!" The young woman's wide blue eyes peeked around the laundry on the line.

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you."

"No. That's all right. I just didn't expect..." She stepped toward him and offered a shy smile.

Kurt noticed her big, bright eyes first. They were more turquoise than straight blue and held him with a deep, mysterious pool effect. Then he took in the rest of her. Beautiful medium brown hair with copper lights fell over her shoulders. It remained shiny and soft looking even though it had been tossed by the wind like the clothing on the line. Her body ... dear God, it had to be a perfect 38-24-36 dressed in casual blue jeans and a light cotton top. Kurt had seen plenty of exquisite women in and around Philadelphia, but this one captivated him.

He flashed his most charming white smile and took in a deep breath before he came to his senses and thought he'd better explain his presence. "My car broke down. It's a little ways down the road, and I could see your house in the distance. I'd like to use your phone to call Triple A if you don't mind?"

She blinked. "We don't have a telephone and what's Triple A--a farm?" Her sweet, innocent, azure eyes seemed to grow and sparkle as she stared at him.

The city dweller in him couldn't imagine living out here in the back-of-beyond without a telephone. He could barely imagine living without a computer, PDA, and cell phone, but he recovered quickly and hoped she didn't notice his moment of shock. His eyes wandered over the country girl for another long moment. He was unable to help himself. Her full bosom and deep cleavage winked at him through the ivory blouse tied with a pink ribbon at a peek-a-boo neckline. Outfitted in tight blue jeans, he wished she'd turn around. Her bottom was probably as shapely as the rest of her.

*I thought this was Amish country. If so, the black uniform reaching from chin to boots has certainly changed.* He continued to appraise her and noticed dark copper, luscious lips, perfect for kissing.

When he managed to bring himself back from his befuddled state for a second time, he didn't know precisely where his brain had been or how long it had lingered there. It was probably in his cock, expanding as the blood rushed to it. "Well, that's all right. If I could just get some water for the radiator, I think I could convince the engine to run again."

"Yes I can get you some water. Wait over there." She pointed to a white, wooden table and chairs by the side of the house.

He sat, as instructed. She smiled as she strolled past him to the side door, swinging her hips seductively. Oh, yes. Her ass was as gorgeous as he thought it would be.

\*

In the kitchen, Becky heard her brother-in-law, Jake, talking in a low voice to her mother.

"Sorry, Emma. I had to tell him. I'm afraid I made a mess of it."

"Well, Oliver's only thirteen. You were upset when you found out about the girls' powers at twenty. I'll talk with the boy."

As she walked in, Jake kissed his mother-in-law on the cheek and left through the swinging kitchen door that led into the dining room.

The outside door shut with a bang behind her, and Becky's mother whirled around.

"Becky, what's the matter with you? You're twenty-five years old, not ten. What's got you so fired up that you have to let the door slam?"

"There's a man outside, Ma." She reached into one of the cabinets painted a fresh shade of green and pulled out a glass. "He wants water."

"Where did this man come from?"

"Just down the road. His car broke down."

"Really? And all he wants is a glass of water?"

"Well no. He wanted a telephone at first." She filled the glass from the dull, metal tap. "I told him we didn't have one, then he said that was all right, and he could get his car going again with water."

Her mother laughed. "You can give him a glass of water to drink, but he might need a whole pail of water for the radiator in his car."

Becky felt the blush of embarrassment rise to her cheeks. She dragged the metal bucket from under the sink and filled it with their well water. "I feel so stupid when it comes to the ways of the world. I wish I knew more about how life is for folks in other parts."

"Well, just keep in mind that there are many things wrong with the world. I wouldn't covet first-hand knowledge, if I were you."

Becky rolled her eyes. She opened the side door with her pinky since she held both the bucket and the glass of water, and her mother issued a final word caution.

"I know he's handsome. I can see it in your eyes, but be careful. Don't give your heart away too soon."

“He only wants some water.” Becky let the screen door slam on purpose.

“I doubt that,” her mother muttered.

Kurt stood when he saw her approach and moved quickly to take the bucket from her. She placed the glass of water on the table sitting in the chair opposite his and said, “We don’t get many visitors here.”

He returned to his seat and smiled. “Have you lived here long?”

“All my life. And my mother before me and her mother before her and another generation before that. Our family has been living in this house for at least a hundred years.”

“That must be nice. I can’t imagine what’s that’s like. I’ve moved so many times.”

“Really? What places have you lived in?” Becky leaned forward, exposing her full cleavage. She enjoyed the heat in his eyes as he glanced into her low-cut neckline.

“Oh, that is, if you don’t mind telling me or if it’s not a secret.”

Kurt laughed and then stopped and cleared his throat. It looked like he thought she was making a joke.

“No. It’s not a secret. I was born in Germany. My parents moved to Alaska when I was a baby, then we lived in California when I was in high school. I went to college in Boston, and now I live in Philadelphia. My family moved to Pittsburgh, so that’s where I’m headed now.”

“My Lord! All those places?” She counted them on her fingers. “Germany, Alaska, California, Boston and Philadelphia! You must have lived a very exciting life!”

\*

Kurt took a deep breath. He was about to explain that his father was in the Army, but he didn’t have a chance. Those eyes! They were big and bright, and there was something special about them. He just stared into her deep mesmerizing eyes and didn’t say a word. He thought about what it would be like to make love to this refreshing, innocent, young woman, the likes of which he had never known. He finally managed to look down at the grass, breaking his riveted gaze. “We don’t even know one another’s names.”

“Oh! I should have introduced myself right off, and here I’ve already told you my whole life story. I’m Becky Morgan.”

Kurt put out his right hand to shake hers. “Kurt Conrad,” he said.

She took his hand and he noticed immediately how soft and smooth hers felt. How wonderful it would be to have those soft hands caressing his erection, which felt as big as a salami at the moment. Thank God, there was a table between them.

Kurt picked up the paper bag and handed it to her. “This is for your kindness.”

She reached into the bag and pulled out a bottle of champagne.

“This is wonderful! We don’t make wine, so we almost never have any. Sometimes we get a bottle from town at Yule. I’ll have to save it for then.”

Kurt finished his cool water and placed the glass on the table. “No need to do that. I’ll bring you another



bottle before Christmas.”

Becky sat back looking surprised but her smile grew wide. Her nipples were now visible peaks under her thin blouse.

Kurt was surprised to hear his voice inviting himself back, but he never wanted anything more in his life. He had to see her again. He forced himself to think of baseball until he could stand. Picking up the bucket, he realized there was an important question he should have asked first.

“Are you seeing anyone? I didn’t see a ring on your finger.”

“There’s no one around here to see.” She smiled as she looked down and stared at the grass around her bare feet.

Kurt sighed with relief. “Okay. Well, I’ll be back with the bucket in a few minutes.”

“Oh I don’t think you’ll need that anymore.” She must have seen the doubt in his eyes. “Really. I think maybe your car just needed to rest a bit. Try starting it now. It should most likely work again.”

He gazed at her innocent face like she was the rarest child that God had ever created and said, “You’re not like any girl I’ve ever known.”

He strolled toward the road carrying the bucket, and Becky returned to her family’s laundry.

He turned around briefly and called out to her. “And to think I never would have met you if it weren’t for that detour a couple miles back!”

Becky grinned and winked.

When he reached his car, just for the heck of it, he jumped in and turned the key. It started up and purred as contented as a cat.

## Chapter Two

“How was your trip home?” Frank asked.

“It was eventful.” Kurt stopped typing, but continued to face the opposite wall, smiling as he thought about the farm-girl he had happened upon.

“Really? Is your family okay?”

For all his usual wise-ass remarks, Frank’s friendship and loyalty were never ambiguous. Kurt turned around deciding to confide in his buddy. “Oh, sure. They’re fine. You asked about my trip home. That was what was eventful. I met someone on the way.”

“Oh, yeah? How’d you meet her?”

“My completely dependable car broke down.”

“Really? The Volkswagen broke down?”

“It’s a BMW, please. As it turned out, it was just vapor-lock or something, but I met the most amazing woman when I was stranded.”

“I want details.”

“Sorry,” Kurt said, “I couldn’t put her into words if I tried all day and all night. I’ve been trying to decide what it is about her...”

“The man who puts details into words for a living? She’s got you tongue tied?” Frank laughed.

“Yeah.” Kurt leaned back in his chair, folded his arms, and thought. “Well, I can describe her physically. She has this beautiful, shiny, brown-copper hair and the bluest-green eyes I’ve ever seen.”

“I suppose she’s got the tall, skinny bod, like most of the anorexic model types you date.”

Kurt knew the women he was dating weren’t his type, but it hadn’t deterred him from taking them to his apartment. It eased his urban loneliness. Right now the only woman he wanted to sleep with was country-girl Becky Morgan.

“No. She’s quite healthy-looking.”

“Are you saying she’s chubby?”

“No, not at all. She has this taut, athletic build, with a nice waist, perfect ass, and--brrrreasts.” Kurt’s breathing deepened as he thought of her peek-a-boo blouse, and he drifted off into a netherworld.

Frank grinned, “Sounds promising. Go on.”

“I can’t. I don’t know what... There’s something special, something uniquely different.”

“Mmm. Impressive. Sounds like you’re stupid in love. Are you going to see her again?”

Kurt chuckled. “I promised to come back before Christmas bearing another bottle of champagne.”

“Another tip from the master. Not too anxious, but classy. I might borrow that approach someday. So where did you find this indescribably delicious woman?”

“Lancaster County, I think. I had to detour off the highway.”

“Lancaster County? That’s Amish country--and you brought her champagne? I’d call those folks teetotalers, but I don’t think they drink tea, either.”

“Yeah, well she seemed happy to accept my gift.”

“Leave it to you to find an Amish wino.” Frank laughed out loud.

Kurt grinned. “Stop it, Frank. You barely know the girl.”

“Hey, I don’t know her at all, but I know you. If you wanted to badly enough, you could charm an Amish girl into using electricity.”

“I wouldn’t dream of changing her. I like her just the way she is. She’s so refreshing.”

“Believe me, I’d love to be wrong. Maybe you finally found the perfect girl. It would mean there’s hope for me too.”

“There’s no hope for you, Frank, trust me.”

“I trust nothing except your ability to get into her pants by next weekend.”

“Oh no you don’t. No challenges.” Kurt suspected that his Becky must be a virgin, and he had never deflowered one. This had to be done right. He turned back to his desk and remembered his own first experience. She had been a young divorcee and he was so anxious he had nearly attacked her. It was over in minutes. He knew that something more tender and gentle was called for when it came to Becky.

\* \* \* \*

The oversized rustic wooden table accommodated the entire Morgan family. Their dining room was decorated simply with stenciled walls, a long oak sideboard, and a massive braided rug. A simple, green linen tablecloth, a basket of fruit, and white stoneware dishes with blue stripes adorned the table. There were huge bowls filled with steaming homegrown vegetables and a large pork roast that covered a platter.

Becky watched as Emma Morgan took her place at the head of the table in the only armchair. Her children and grandchildren sat on plain ladder-back chairs lining both sides. One chair stood empty at the opposite end.

Becky’s oldest sister, Martha, sat on the matron’s left with her husband Micah and their four-year-old daughter Ruthie. Jake and his wife, Flo, the next to the oldest Morgan sister, sat on the matron’s right with Sally in her booster seat and Oliver fidgeting next to her. Becky was seated, with hands folded neatly in her lap, across from Oliver. Bowls were passed, and everyone with the exception of the small children were allowed to help themselves.

“Where’s Aunt Sophie?” Oliver asked.

Becky answered him quietly. “In the bathroom. She’ll be here in a minute.”

Meanwhile, the family seemed to take no notice until Sophie, Becky’s identical twin, finally slid into her chair at the opposite end of the table from her mother. Sophie had tried to distinguish herself as an individual by squirting lemon juice on her hair when she was out in the sun, trying to make herself a

blond. Her hair was brown with a few golden highlights, but not blond.

“Feeling all right?” Becky asked.

“Yeah, it’s just nausea.” Sophie burped.

“Again?”

Sophie gave Becky a meaningful look, and as if the two could read each other’s minds, Becky knew it meant, “Change the subject.”

Becky was about to comment on Sophie’s hair when Oliver, without realizing it, took care of the diversion. “Aunt Sophie, guess what?”

Sophie smiled at him. “What, Sweetheart?”

“I know all about you and Aunt Becky and Aunt Martha and Mom and Grammy and the babies having powers!”

Everyone stopped eating, frozen with forks in mid-air.

“Whatever do you mean, Honey?” his Aunt Martha asked.

“Your powers! You know, like my baby sister, Sally, floating!” Oliver beamed with pride.

Jake quickly interjected, “Take the little ones into the kitchen.”

Flo and Martha jumped up, carried their little girls and their plates of food into the kitchen to finish dinner there. Sally fussed for a moment at the abrupt change, but Flo said, “Shhh, baby,” and she quieted.

Oliver looked as if he didn’t know what he had done, but he knew it was wrong and that he had done it. His grandmother gently corrected him.

“The little ones are still too young to understand that they’re different from other people, Oliver honey.”

“You mean my sister can float above her bed when she’s happy to see me, but she doesn’t know she’s different?”

“Not at the age of two,” Jake said.

Sophie reached over and patted the boy’s shoulder. “So you know all about it, Oliver?”

“Well, I don’t know if I know all about it. Grammy was telling me some.”

“Welcome to our inner circle, Kiddo,” Becky said, and she kicked him under the table.

Oliver grinned.

“I even have something to help us celebrate the occasion.” Becky rose from her seat and took the bottle of champagne out of the cabinet under the sideboard.

Micah’s eyebrows shot up. “Where’d you get that?”

“A handsome stranger gave it to me.”

“Handsome stranger, huh?” Jake scratched his chin.

Becky was annoyed when it seemed as if no one was going to express any happiness for her.

“It’s about time you met someone,” Sophie said.

“Thank you.” Becky handed the bottle and the corkscrew to her mother and found five wine glasses in the cabinet. She placed one in front of each adult and a juice glass in front of Oliver.

Mrs. Morgan uncorked the bottle, poured a glass, looked at the bubbles and took a sip.

“You gave him water and he gave you wine. Hmmm. Champagne no less.”

Becky returned to her seat and said, “I guess I must have made an impression.”

“Quite an impression, it seems,” Micah said.

Becky noticed her mother’s suspicious glance, and then she passed the bottle to Jake. Jake poured his glass and passed the bottle back to Becky. She poured her own glass and passed the bottle to Sophie. Sophie passed and poured Oliver’s, giving him half the amount that the adults received.

“Hey, that’s only a sip!” Oliver protested.

“That’s enough for now,” his grandmother said. Her eyes were glued to her twin daughters.

“Mother, why are you looking at us like that?” Becky demanded.

“How much of an accident was this accidental meeting?” she asked, point blank.

“What?”

“You know what I mean.”

“And you know that when an unmarried woman in this family reaches the age of twenty-five, she’s allowed to use a little ‘influence’ if she hasn’t found someone.”

Her mother threw her hands up in the air.

“I knew it! Becky, sometimes it backfires. That isn’t the best way.”

“Well, the natural way wasn’t apt to happen at all! Sophie got the last half-way decent, marriageable man in the county.”

“Half-way decent?” Sophie narrowed her gaze at Becky.

“Pipe down, girls. We’re meant to celebrate Oliver’s new knowledge, not to get upset over trifles.”

“My life isn’t a ‘trifle,’ Mother,” Becky muttered.

The sky darkened and a rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance. The sky had been clear and sunny up to that moment. Oliver looked out the window and over at his Aunt Becky with fear in his eyes.

“Becky, Relax. Perhaps it was the only thing you could do. We’ll talk more later.” The matron had spoken. No one would pursue the topic further. As the sky cleared, Becky’s smile returned and she

thought of her handsome prospect.

Emma lifted her glass in Oliver's direction. Everyone took the cue and raised their glasses.

"Dearest, Oliver, there is one thing I want you to remember."

"What's that Grammy?"

"That with your new privilege comes an even greater responsibility. You must guard this knowledge to protect your family. You know you're not always careful with secrets, but this is the greatest secret you will ever know, and these women are the most powerful people you will ever know. Never, ever, betray this secret to anyone. You must protect us."

Oliver's expression became quite solemn. "Okay, but Grammy, if you're all so powerful, why do you need me to protect you?"

She chuckled. "We all need each other, dear. Life would be harder without us, and it would be much emptier and less rewarding without you. Lord knows what people would do to us if they found out."

"Okay. I promise," he said, and they all clinked glasses as if sealing the deal.

Oliver sat up straight and proud. "I don't care what happens or who asks me ... I swear to protect you and the secret."

Becky knew he would need to be reminded of that promise a few times in order to reinforce it. They could take no chances with a child's loose tongue.

Sophie patted his hand, and voiced what Becky had been thinking. "You need to remember this at school, Oliver. Never, ever, ever brag about living with a houseful of women who can make good things happen--or you'll see the bad they can make happen too."

\* \* \* \*

A week later, Becky and Sophie were making beds as they had done hundreds of times before. They talked casually while working.

"So, when are you going to tell everyone?" Becky asked.

"I'm not sure I have to. Mom, Martha and Flo probably know. Any woman who's had a baby must have figured it out, by now. They're probably able to sense it."

Becky shook her head. "You and I can sense what's going on with each others' bodies because we're twins, but our sisters and mother might not, and the men definitely can't."

"Let me tell Timothy first," said Sophie. "He might need a head start once Jake and Micah find out."

Both girls chuckled.

"What about Oliver?" Becky asked.

"What about Oliver?"

"We have to keep Oliver from spreading the news around! God forbid any of the Morgan women should have sex before marriage!" Becky said.

“Even though Timothy sleeps over every weekend...”

They both burst out laughing. Just then, their mother walked in.

“I’m glad you girls are in good moods. Becky, your young man is outside.”

Becky’s jaw fell open with delighted surprise.

Their mother turned to Sophie with a stern look on her face, and stated, “You, Miss, shouldn’t be joking about something so shameful.”

“Shameful? Mother, what are you talking about?” Sophie asked in her innocent voice.

“We know, Sophie. You’re sisters and I all know what’s growing inside you. Tell your young man as soon as possible.”

Sophie crossed her arms. “I will, but if it’s so shameful, then tell me exactly why our father married you only a few months before Martha was born?”

Mrs. Morgan acted like she was about to say something but thought better of it and left the room. Becky hugged her sister and patted her on the back before running downstairs.

\* \* \* \*

Kurt, pacing back and forth, clutched another paper bag and a bouquet of spring flowers. Becky emerged from the side door with a sweet smile and graceful gait. Her rosy cheeks lit her face with a beautiful, healthy glow.

Kurt was temporarily unable to speak. *She’s so...* He swallowed hard. “Becky, Hi! I didn’t expect to be here again so soon. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Of course not! Are you on your way home again?”

“No,” Kurt said. “I came to see you this time. I just wanted to talk with you some more and get to know you. I would have called, but you don’t have a telephone.”

“I guess it *would* be handy to have one. Was it a long trip?”

“Long? No! It really isn’t that long. Only about two hours, but I had to be sure that I could find you again.”

Becky grinned and looked down at her shoes.

“Oh, and I brought this for you.” He smiled, as he handed her a paper bag containing another bottle of champagne, and then the flowers.

“How thoughtful of you,” she said. “I’ll just put them inside. I’ll be back in a moment.”

She was good to her word. Becky was back in seconds. He noticed she was wearing another pretty peek-a-boo blouse, but this time in pink. He couldn’t get over how luminous or radiant, or ... whatever she was. *What the heck is it about her?*

Kurt didn’t know if he’d ever figure it out. He was just glad to see her again. “Would you like to take a walk?” he suggested.

Becky nodded, flashing a big smile. When he held his hand out to her, she grasped it firmly and walked with him away from the farmhouse.

She didn't seem to want to go to the road but led him past the barn, toward one of the newly planted fields. He hoped she wanted to go somewhere private. He wanted to taste her mouth and touch her hair. He had been thinking about it all week.

"Where do you like to go for walks?"

"There's a bridge over a river on the other side of those trees," Becky said. "I'd like some distance away from the house and family. It's a pretty place."

As little as they had in common, socially, being together felt completely comfortable. Their hands felt good pressing together and she chatted easily, smiling over at him periodically. She led him from the tilled field, through the tall, sturdy oaks, maples and pines.

The bridge was made up of only a few wide planks held together by a couple of narrow boards attached to the underside. The river was rushing over rocks, forming small rapids. It had been a rainy late spring. Kurt imagined it might be a lazy stream later in the summer. Becky crossed it adeptly and sat on the opposite side. He followed and sat next to her on the grass, not caring if his slacks became grass-stained.

"This is where I go when I want to daydream," Becky said.

"I wish I knew what you were daydreaming about."

She laughed. "You, silly."

He chuckled. No city woman would admit to that on a first date.

She leaned over and whispered conspiratorially, "I'm not supposed to be here."

"Why not?"

"Because the river is the border of our land."

Kurt realized how very little he knew about this strange girl, and he wanted to know everything. But bombarding her with personal questions might be a bit overwhelming. He'd start with an easy one.

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-five years and eleven and a half months. Almost twenty six!"

Kurt shook his head. "By the time most girls reach the age of twenty-five they're out on their own with no one telling them where they can or can't go."

"We're not supposed to leave home," Becky said.

Alarmed, Kurt opened his mouth to say something, but whatever it was had vanished from his mind. She simply gazed into his eyes, and he relaxed.

"That's nice," he heard himself saying. "It's good to stay at home when you love your family as much as you do."



“Yes. It is nice.”

He held her mesmerizing gaze for who knew how long. Contented, he sighed, “I hope to meet them soon.”

“You will. First though, I think it would be smart for us to get to know each other.” She looked down shyly. “I’d rather no one knew when or where we were meeting right now.”

He gazed at her beautiful body and imagined kissing and fondling her full breasts in this picturesque place. He was hard in seconds. “How will I know when you want to see me?”

“You’ll know,” she said. “Trust your heart and what it’s telling you.”

“Mmm. I might be here quite often.”

\*

She leaned into him and Kurt slipped an arm around her waist. She met his kiss with her own anxious, waiting lips. She loved his warm, supple mouth, and when his tongue began exploring her lower lip, she opened and let him in. An odd contraction gripped her in the core of her abdomen. Although nearly hyperventilating, she didn’t want to pull away.

Kurt deepened the kiss and his breathing took on the same rapid quality. She didn’t want him to stop kissing her ... ever.

He didn’t seem to want to stop, either. He leaned back and looked at her briefly, but leaned in again right away. He nibbled her upper and lower lip, alternately. As her temperature rose she not only let him take command of her mouth, but she frequently sought his tongue with hers. Their hands traveled over one another’s sides and backs. Sometimes daring to caress a hip, fingers brushing the other’s buttock. They kissed for what seemed like an hour.

Becky, anxious to go further, wondered if she should reuse her power on Kurt. It seemed to have worn off. She took in a deep breath and basked in the joy of his sensual kisses. *No. I want to know that he wants me.*

Eventually she realized that it didn’t mean she couldn’t make a subtle suggestion.

She took his hands and placed them on her breasts. Kurt leaned back and scrutinized her. She avoided his gaze by glancing down. He seemed to understand what she wanted and didn’t disappoint her. He rubbed her firm, supple breasts through the thin gauze blouse, causing her to moan with the sensation coursing through her nipples to her clenching vagina.

Her cheeks warmed as she purred his name in approval. Soon she wanted his hand on her tingling skin. If feeling her through her clothing elicited this kind of electricity and excitement, how pleasant would skin-to-skin contact be? She removed his hands, gently, and then guided them up under her blouse.

He leaned back and raised his eyebrows. She just nodded, and he smiled. As soon as his fingers reached her sensitive nipples she reared back and let out a groan of overt pleasure. *Oh, dear Lord! I can’t wait for the rest of it. I have to know what I’ve been missing.*

“Kurt?” she panted.

“Yes, angel?”

“I want you to make me a woman.”

Kurt placed slow sucking kisses along her neck, down to her shoulder, and worked his way back to her ear. He licked and blew his breath inside. Becky shuddered deep in her viscera and despite his cool breath, heat rippled through her. She glanced down and saw his cock was hard and straining against his zippered fly.

He paused a moment and smiled. “What are you telling me, Becky?”

“That I want you to make love to me.”

Kurt looked a little surprised. “Are you really ready to give yourself to me?”

She nodded eagerly.

“Well, let’s see what happens. Are you all right with a little slow exploration?”

“I’m fine with it, but how slow are you talkin’?”

Grinning, Kurt shook his head at his lap, but he began unbuttoning his shirt. When she removed her blouse, he glanced up as if he were only going to take a peek, but instead he did a double take and stared.

She paused and basked in the warmth of the compliment. She loved how he admired her fully exposed large mounds. She knew he liked what he saw. She glanced down at her smooth skin, tanned from sunbathing nude. It was softly shining in the sunlight. He moved toward her slowly, kissing her clavicle and her shoulders as he squeezed her breasts and ran his thumbs over her taut nipples.

Incredible. This must be the most wonderful feeling in the world! Becky sighed and unsnapped her shorts.

He pulled her body against him while kissing her mouth and slipping his hand over her shorts and between her thighs. She responded with tingles and tightening deep in her womb. She wanted him to touch and kiss every inch of her. He started with her collarbone and then he worked his mouth down, planting sweet, sucking kisses all the way to her cleavage. When Kurt slid his tongue over to play with her nipple, she planted her hands on the cool grass behind her and reared back. Her arching moans invited him to suckle her.

He took the hard nipple into his mouth and sucked with gentle pressure. It was glorious. Her mind emptied itself of any other thoughts or distractions and concentrated completely on reveling in the new stimulation. All she knew was that she wanted to feel every bit of this experience. Lying back in the grass she pulled his head down against her breast, allowing him to continue his exquisite foreplay.

She thrust toward him, encouraging him to take in more of her. He suckled her deeply and she nearly cried out in joy. He used his other hand to rub and squeeze the nipple of her other breast. She hoped for more of the same attention over there.

Soon her other nipple ached for his mouth, and as if reading her mind, he moved to the other breast and began his unhurried and thorough suckling all over again. Moaning her appreciation, she tried to imagine the feel of his cock inside her. She was thrilled knowing she would find that out very soon.

Kurt moved one of his hands into her shorts until his fingers parted the dark curls and found her clit.

She arched and gasped as she felt the deepest sensation yet. It radiated out, around, and through her genitals. Kurt massaged her sensitive clit and she began gasping and arching from the delicious torrent building and radiating throughout her body. She braced her arms against the earth and concentrated on the fingers rubbing her sensitive nub, taking her higher and higher. All-encompassing desire filled her and spread fast until it reached a shattering peak. She let go completely, crying out in ecstasy as she bucked and jerked against him. "Oh, Goddess!" She howled. As soon as she could breathe again, she relaxed her limp body and sighed. "Kurt Conrad, I can't wait to feel your body in mine. I want you!"

\* \* \* \*

"How much do you know about that?"

"I know your penis goes in my vagina and we fuck."

Kurt swallowed a chuckle, but he had to admit he was thrilled with the uninhibited vixen he had discovered inside this shy country girl, and taking her virginity would not be difficult at all. Being gentle enough, considering his lust for her, might be the challenging part.

"Now it's your turn," she said, reaching up and pushing his shirt off his shoulders. His tanned chest with "gym-workout" muscle definition was nothing he was ashamed of, and he intended to let her explore his body as thoroughly as she liked. He removed the shirt and tossed it aside. She ran her hands over his fine, brown, chest hair and pushed him onto his back. Kurt grinned as she lowered her head to kiss his neck and collarbone. She trailed her tongue along his skin and worked her way down to his nipples, kissing and sucking them tenderly. Tingling sensations ran through him, and he let out a soft moan. She was as thorough as he was. She was stroking the bulge through his jeans and giving him immense pleasure. Without warning, she stopped, stood and dropped her shorts.

"Now you," she said.

Kurt's mouth went dry, and he stared at her for a full minute. She stood there in the light of day displaying the most glorious nude body he had ever seen. Apparently she didn't believe in underwear. There was nothing around her ankles but her cut-offs. She stepped out of her shorts and Kurt's words lodged in his throat.

He had intended to be the perfect gentleman. This was his moment of truth. Did he mean it? Could he wait for the right planned moment? He didn't want to simply screw her their first time alone together, probably her first time, ever. That would be exactly what he'd do if he took her now. Still, her body was unbelievably distracting. It was difficult to think at all.

"Becky, are you a virgin?"

"Uh huh," she replied.

"Well, I--I want you, yes. If you only knew how much. But I want our first time to be special."

"Is it your first time too?" she asked wide-eyed.

He turned to hide his smile and looked at the trees. "No."

"Oh, thank goodness. I wanted one of us to know what we were doing!"

"I want you to know that I'm delighted by the invitation. You're ... you're... As tempting and as beautiful as you are, my angel, I would rather wait for the right time ... the perfect moment."

He couldn't stop staring, and she must know she was driving him to distraction. She twisted to the left, then right, showing off her striking body.

"Are you sure you want to wait?" she asked.

He hesitated, stared, and swallowed. At last, he blurted out the truth. "Hell no."

She dropped to her knees and nodded at his straining crotch. "I want to see your body too."

Taking a deep breath, he said, "That's only fair." He unfastened his belt and zipper. Her eyes seemed to bore through the fabric as she stared. He started by pulling off his boots. He stood and pushed the jeans around his ankles and stepped out of them, kicking them aside with one foot. Now he was down to socks and underwear. Standing on one foot and then the other, he pulled his socks off and tossed them on top of his jeans.

"Are you sure you're ready for more, Becky?"

"I'm sure." To prove her point, she scooted forward on her knees and fastened her wide, azure eyes on his briefs.

Kurt whipped them off, freeing his enormous erection. Her mouth formed a perfect "o". She reached out tentatively and touched his cock.

"Go ahead. Take it in your hand."

She glanced up at him, and he smiled, hoping to encourage her. She didn't need any more encouragement than that, apparently. She enclosed his aching shaft in her right hand, curled her fingers around it and stroked. Kurt let a soft moan escape.

"Am I hurting you?"

"Oh, no, angel. It feels very good."

"Okay." She smiled and slid her hand up and down the shaft.

His sexual desire intensified, and he craved completion, but he didn't have a condom, damn it. He doubted she had any diseases, but he didn't want to get her pregnant. He highly doubted she was on the pill.

*Oh, yes. That feels very, very good.* He'd have to stop her, soon. He didn't want to push his luck.

"Hang on a minute, angel." She stopped stroking, but literally, hung onto his shaft.

"We need to stop, now."

"Stop? Are you crazy?"

"I don't have a condom, sweetheart."

She cocked her head to the side. "What's a condom?"

*Oh boy.* "It's a covering that goes over my cock and keeps you from getting pregnant. Some people call it a rubber, or protection. We shouldn't make love without a condom."

"Oh." She dropped her head and looked crushed. "So we're not going to make love?" A cloud passed

overhead and a low rumble of thunder could be heard in the distance.

“Not today. Next time. I want to make it very special for you, Becky. I’m honored to be your first, and I want to do it right.”

He waited for her to acquiesce. She was usually so agreeable, but not this time. She seemed to be pouting. “I don’t like this condom idea. It sounds unnatural. You’d never... Don’t you want kids?” The thunder rumbled as if it were coming closer.

Kurt jumped up and reached for his underwear. “Someday, but not right now. It sounds like a storm is coming. We’d better get dressed in case we have to run for cover.”

Becky slumped and eventually nodded. She retrieved her clothes and dressed as the sky slowly cleared. “Can you stay a while and meet my family?”

“Sure, if you think they’re ready to meet me.”

“I think so. I just hope you’re ready for them!”

### Chapter Three

Becky burst through the back door and held it open for Kurt to enter behind her. She looked up to see her twin sister, Sophie, and Timothy sitting at the kitchen table with two plates of strawberry shortcake in front of them.

Timothy seemed to be staring at a blank spot on the table. He stood up slowly; then had to sit back down as if shock had liquefied his knees.

“No. That can’t be.”

“Well, it is. I don’t know why you’re so surprised. We’ve been having sex pretty regularly for about a year now.”

“But we were careful.”

Becky could feel her sister’s anger and realized she had picked the worst possible moment to introduce her handsome stranger.

“Um, Kurt, this is my twin sister Sophie and her boyfriend, Timothy.”

“Happy to meet you,” Kurt said.

Becky couldn’t imagine how uncomfortable he must be. The tension in the room was palpable.

“Ah, we were kind of in the middle of something,” Sophie said.

Sophie nodded toward Timothy, who sat white-faced, pushing strawberries around on his plate. Becky pulled Kurt through the swinging door into the dining room.

“Sorry to interrupt!” she called over her shoulder.

Kurt glanced at her curiously as she took his hand and led him through the living room to the main outside door.

“I wonder where my mother is?” She shrugged and led him straight to the garden where both Emma and her grandson were picking beans. Oliver looked up but the matron didn’t.

“Mother, this is Kurt. He’s the young man who brought us the wine before, and he brought us some more today.”

“He must like his wine, then.” She responded coldly, as if icicles hung from her words.

Surprised, Becky snapped, “Mother! Is everyone in this family going to be rude to my guest?”

“I’m not!” Oliver said. “Nice to meet you Mister...”

“Mr. Conrad.” Kurt extended his hand.

“Mr. Conrad, then. I’m Oliver.” Oliver smiled as he shook it.

“Nice to meet you too, Oliver.” He extended his hand toward Becky’s mother. “Mrs. Morgan?”

The matron finally straightened up slowly from her bent position. She looked him up and down without smiling.

“I can see that Mr. Conrad is a city man. Probably works in an office and drives a fancy car.”

“Yes, that’s true,” Kurt said. “You must have extra-sensory perception.”

That finally got her to smile and laugh.

“You could call it that. The women in this family are very perceptive. Becky, have you asked him to dinner yet?”

“No, but I will, if it’s all right.”

“It’s fine,” her mother sighed. She shook her head and chuckled under her breath.

Suddenly Sophie could be heard yelling, and the screen door slammed a couple of times. Becky, her mother, Oliver and Kurt ran through the house until they reached the kitchen. Lightning bolts crackled through the air. Both Jake and Micah rushed in the side door as if terrified for their lives. Whipped cream stuck to the screen and the men skidded and fell in cake, strawberries, and whipped cream, making a slippery mess.

“Calm down, Sophie. You really have to calm down,” her mother demanded, firmly.

“I didn’t want to use my power over him. I really wanted him to decide to do the right thing on his own.” She began to cry and rain pattered on the roof.

Becky gasped. “For God’s sake, Sophie, we have company!”

Everyone took a deep breath and looked at Kurt. He didn’t seem to be reacting in any way. Sophie either forgot he was around, or she just didn’t care. Becky stood by him calmly and held Kurt’s gaze.

“Oh, what does it matter anyway,” Sophie sighed. “She’s just going to make him forget, or maybe he’s been under your spell all along.”

Becky shot back at Sophie, “He has not, and what business is that of yours anyway?”

“Well, look at him!” Sophie insisted.

Kurt was gazing adoringly at Becky. Emma gave both her daughters a stern look.

“We’ll talk about this later. Right now it may have come in handy, but you cannot...”

“Oh, and to let him go unshielded in front of this whole deranged family would have been so much better!” Becky shouted. The rain fell harder and thunder rumbled.

Sophie bolted for the door. Micah, who had found his feet, grabbed her around the waist.

“Ho there! Where do you think you’re going?”

“I’m going after him!”

“Sophie this isn’t the way--not in that mood,” her mother commanded.

Sophie pushed past Micah and stormed out the side door.

“Do you want me to go after her?” Micah asked.

“No. You wouldn’t be able to stop her,” his mother-in-law sighed. “She’s too angry. She could hurt you accidentally if you tried.”

“I just hope she doesn’t hurt that poor confused boy!” Jake said.

“I can stop her,” Becky said. “I’m the only one who can.”

Everyone in the room looked at her with some trepidation, but eventually, all of them nodded. Becky ran outside and stood on the steps, looking toward her sister who was about to disappear in the rain. As she stood there, she raised her hands, palms up. Then she curled her fingers as if dragging her sister back.

Oliver asked, “Why is Aunt Becky the only one who can stop Aunt Sophie?”

“Because she’s five minutes younger, dear one.” His grandmother answered. “The power grows stronger with each successive female.”

\* \* \* \*

Jake and Micah guided Becky’s new boyfriend to one of the damp chairs by the side of the house and asked him to wait there, saying they’d send her along shortly. Kurt felt more comfortable outside by himself, anyway. Her overprotective family was very unusual, and there was something he couldn’t pinpoint that niggled at the back of his mind.

It was several minutes before Becky came out of the house. She said her sister was upstairs and she was having a really bad time of it.

“She and her boyfriend just had a lovers’ spat,” Becky explained.

“Oh, That’s too bad. I thought it was something like that.”

“Yeah. I’m sure they’ll work it out. They’ve been going together for a couple of years. I’m afraid this isn’t the best day to stay for dinner, though. My mother would like to have you, but Sophie’s in a tizzy and making everybody nervous.”

Kurt was actually relieved. He would like to have a little more time to prepare for dinner conversation with the family. What do you say to a bunch of farmers? “How’s the corn growing?”

“When should I call on you again?”

“Whenever you feel the desire to, I guess. If you still want to see me after you get home and think about this crazy family of mine, you’ll be more than welcome.” She gazed into his eyes and something stirred deep within him.

“Oh, I’m sure I’ll be back. I feel like we have a lot more to learn about each other. We have a nice relationship forming. I’d like to continue it.”

“Good,” Becky said. “I was hoping you wouldn’t give up on me just because my sister was putting on a side-show. I want to kiss you some more.” She lowered her voice and sidled up next to him. “And I want you to finish what you started”

“I want that too,” Kurt said, grinning. “We’ll make it memorable.”

Then she stunned him by taking his hand from her arm and stuffing it into her shorts right there in the yard where anyone could walk out and see them.



“You make me feel so good. I can’t wait.”

\* \* \* \*

Kurt had returned to his apartment in Philly, still bewildered. He looked out of the windows that ran almost from ceiling to floor. He loved this view at night with the twinkling lights of the city below. He tried to picture his beautiful Becky in his home, and it wasn’t easy. She didn’t belong here.

How would they ever be able to have a sex life? Would he have to take her to the other side of the river every time? What if they were still together when the weather turned cold? Would they be able to find a friendly place to fuck that wasn’t under the family’s roof?

Then he thought of how she offered him her luscious breasts, her velvet-soft body and how badly he wanted, no, needed to feel his cock deep inside her heated core. The whole situation preoccupied him and demanded an answer. He had already tried reading, listening to music, and watching TV. It was no good. He couldn’t stop thinking about her.

There might be a motel nearby. Ugh. That had the stench of sleaziness attached to it and he’d do anything to avoid that. *Where can we go? My car? God no. That’s even worse.*

He had to get her back here, somehow. Still, that seemed unlikely, especially after what she had said about not being allowed to leave the farm. He might think it was ridiculous, but he remembered the sweet girl he was falling in love with and how he admired her loyalty to her family. It might be good for her to spend some time away from them, though. What had happened with the sister and her boyfriend anyway? Was screaming and throwing things something the whole family did? It might take a while, but there had to be a way to get Becky away from them. He’d like to show her some of the people and places in his life. And he absolutely had to make love to her in a comfortable bed.

He scrubbed a hand over his face and sat on his couch to rack his brain for a while. All he came up with was a headache. As hard as it would be, he had to find a reason for her to get away, but he didn’t want to scare her or alienate the Morgans. He would have to come up with something creative--and special. He’d try to think of something. She wasn’t like other women, and that’s what attracted him to her in the first place. *C’mon, Conrad. Think!*

Finally, in utter frustration, Kurt poured himself a scotch and decided to ask Frank for advice the next morning. Of course, he’d have to phrase it in a roundabout way. If he told him the truth, Frank would probably laugh. If he helped solve the dilemma Kurt would risk all the taunting his friend could dish out.

Kurt stretched and yawned. Maybe by making some kind of a decision, however lame, he’d be able to relax his busy brain and get some sleep. God forbid, if he wasn’t able to solve this problem and had to give her up, he’d probably never sleep again.

\* \* \* \*

Kurt arrived in his office, pulled some papers out of his briefcase and pushed them aside.

Frank walked in shortly after that with two muffins, plunking one down in front of Kurt.

“Low fat blueberry, warm with butter--just the way you like it, buddy.”

“Wow! What did I do to deserve this?”

“Nothing special. Just wanted to spend a few minutes finding out how your weekend was. Thought I could entice you into a brief conversation with food.”

Kurt chuckled and turned his chair to face Frank’s, wondering how to explain his weekend.

“Not that I need to tell you anything, of course...”

“Of course. Now spill it.” Frank’s sly smile told Kurt he was sincerely interested and wasn’t taking “No” for an answer.

“Well, I drove out to see her again.”

“Daisy Mae?”

Kurt frowned. “Becky.”

“Sorry. I mean, Becky. ‘Miss Special.’”

“Yeah. Well something odd happened, but I’m not quite sure what it was. I’ve been thinking about it, and all I can come up with is that I must have missed a step somewhere.”

“You? Miss anything? I find that hard to believe!”

“Well, I must have, and it’s bugging me. All I know for sure is that I was meeting her mother and her nephew in the vegetable garden behind their house one minute, and we heard one of the girls yelling bloody murder the next. We all ran to find her sister in the kitchen, with whipped cream, cake and strawberries stuck to the screen door and all over the kitchen floor, and then it was like I blacked out or something.” Kurt scratched his head, still confused.

“Blacked out? Why? Did you fall and hit your head, or were you drinking their moonshine?”

“Cut it out. They don’t make moonshine, but the next thing I knew I was outside with her brothers-in-law.”

“And you lost whatever happened between the strawberry shortcake and the walk with the boys?”

Kurt nodded.

“That’s bizarre. Has anything like that ever happened to you before?”

“Never.”

“So who threw the cake?”

“Becky’s twin.” He shook his head.

“Better watch it,” Frank warned. “Tempers sometimes run in families, and the gene pool doesn’t get any closer than twins. Wait a minute. Did you say twins?”

“Forget it, Frank. She’s practically engaged, although they had some kind of lover’s spat. I haven’t seen any sign of a temper in Becky yet, but I’ll keep my eyes open.”

“Maybe I should go out there with you sometime and see if I have the same strange blackouts if I hang around her sister?”

“That’s okay, Buddy. Thanks for your concern, but I think I’ll go it alone for a while. I’m just getting to know them, and I doubt if they’re ready for the likes of you. Maybe I’ll ask her more about what happened next weekend.”

“Again? Wouldn’t you like to spend a weekend with your good friend once in a while?”

“Yeah, maybe I should. I’m trying to take it slow, and all I want to do is rip off her blouse and jump in her pants.”

Frank laughed. “Well, I’m here for you, pal! Hey, maybe you can get a little action on the side to take care of that nasty craving. We could double with those flight attendants again.”

“Thanks, but no. I’d rather stay low key, if you don’t mind.”

“What if I do? Would it help?”

“No. Maybe we can go out somewhere, but I don’t want another woman. Got it?”

## Chapter Four

Two weeks dragged by. Kurt couldn't wait to see Becky again. He drove a little faster on his way to the farm. He must have been daydreaming because he missed the little turnoff that led to her farm. He turned around at a gas station, filled up, and went back a couple of miles.

*How could I have missed it?* The road was right there, plain as the beautiful day. It was extraordinarily hot in the city, but there was a cool breeze here, and he estimated that the temperature was a balmy seventy-five. Perfect for getting laid in the woods. He was glad he had tucked a few condoms in his pants pocket and brought her a gift.

Soon he was driving up her dirt driveway, leaving a cloud of dust in his wake. Before he could reach the side door, Becky bounded outside and rushed to meet him. He caught her in a firm hug. She smelled like vanilla and something else. Was it pecan pie? Her soft, warm body melted all thoughts of caution from his mind.

"I've missed you. Is there someplace we can go?" Kurt whispered.

She draped her arms around his neck and trailed her finger seductively along his jaw. "I missed you too, and there's always someplace we can go. Want to go a little ways past the river to the orchard?"

"I'd like that." Kurt smiled and picked her up in another hug, as if he couldn't get close enough to her and wondered what had possessed him to stay away for an entire thirteen days.

The two of them walked with arms around each other's waists, across the large field toward the trees. Kurt caressed her from her hips to her torso where, with a casual stroke, he could graze the side of her generous breast. He almost lost his mind trying to discipline his erection. *Take it easy, damn it.* He had to come up with something else to focus on.

"Is any of this field planted?" he asked.

"Sure. Most of it is planted with corn. Some wheat back there." She pointed toward the dark, plowed earth behind the house.

"Should we be walking on it, then?" Kurt asked.

"Oh sure. Nothing ever happens to our crops. They come up healthy and hearty every year."

"That's lucky. Don't you ever have drought or heavy rains that affect the outcome of the harvest?"

"Nope. The weather's almost always perfect where we are--long, sunny summer days and cool starry nights. At night we have just enough rain, but not too much."

"That's amazing. I've never heard of weather so consistent in this part of the country. Most farmers would love to be able to depend on a good harvest year after year."

"Yeah. We're really lucky."

They walked toward a stand of trees and soon disappeared from view. The trees cooled the air and Kurt let go of her warmth reluctantly to follow her over the wooden bridge and arrive on the opposite side of the rushing stream.

As soon as his feet hit the soft grass, he turned her toward him and pulled her close. He gazed into her eyes, and she looked down shyly. Kurt picked up her chin and saw that her eyes were already closed. He

kissed her fervently, and she returned his kiss just as passionately. She was fully pressed up against him, and he couldn't wait to feel her naked softness. They each took in a large breath when their lips separated.

"The orchard's just a little further." She took his hand, and they walked in silence glancing over at each other with knowing smiles. The orchard was large enough to get lost in.

Dying to explore her body, he lowered her to the ground. "Becky, I don't know why I didn't come back sooner. I really did miss you."

"I missed you too. Tell me how you spend your time when you're not here with me."

He positioned himself behind her so she could lean back on him as if he were a tree. He kissed her neck and shoulders when she had settled between his legs, and decided that easing into whatever else would happen with some conversation might not be a bad idea. There were things he wanted to know too.

"Well, my work week was fairly typical. I signed a new sponsor, suggested a couple of ideas for ads, wrote up the contract, and... Are you really interested in this?"

"Not really, no." She chuckled. "I don't understand what you're talking about, but maybe if I did, it wouldn't seem like you're speaking in a foreign language."

Kurt had to laugh. "I love your honesty. Don't ever change that."

"Why would I?"

"Mmm. Let's not think about that. I'd rather listen to you for a while."

"What do you want me to tell you?"

"I'd like to know everything about you. Like, where did you go to school? Did you like it? What's the rest of your family like?"

"Okay. I'll tell you what I can."

Becky chuckled and guided his hands from around her waist up to her breasts.

Kurt figured it wouldn't hurt to give her a little frontal massage while she talked. He cupped and stroked as she let out a long satisfying breath.

"Ahhh. That feels so good."

"Tell me about yourself, Becky."

"Okay, but there's not much to tell. I went to school right here on the farm. Yes, I enjoyed it very much."

"What subjects did you enjoy?"

"Oh, I don't know. I liked 'em all. My mother and sisters tell me I'm pretty smart." Becky took Kurt's hands and moved them to lift her blouse, exposing her bare breasts, and then she placed his hands over them. His breath hitched. When he began to rub, she leaned into him and sighed.

He cleared his throat. "And the rest of your family?"

“As for the rest of my family, there’re only my older sisters and their two little ones to meet. I think you’ve met everyone else.”

“What about your father?”

“He died when Sophie and I were four. That’s how old Ruthie is now. It’s hard to remember him, but I still miss him. I really don’t want to talk right now. Can we just take our clothes off?”

He smiled. Kurt placed little sucking kisses along the back of her neck, to her ear. She giggled when he licked inside. Becky pulled open the ribbon of her blouse. She wore shorts that exposed her long, sexy legs and that, plus the feel of her breasts, tightened his gut and sent heat searing through him. His cock was rock hard and straining against his zippered fly.

“How far should we go this time, angel? It’s okay if you want to wait.”

“No. I want to do it all. Make love to me this time.”

Kurt smiled and removed her blouse. He looked over her shoulder and admired her fully exposed chest from above. She had beautiful, smooth, perfect, tanned breasts reflecting the sunlight. He moved slowly, kissing her shoulders as he alternately squeezed her firm breasts and ran his fingers over them, catching her taut nipples.

“Are you sure you're ready?”

Becky sighed and unsnapped her shorts. “So ready. More than ready.”

\* \* \* \*

She moved her body around to face him, kissing his mouth and slipping her tongue inside. He responded with enthusiasm and she felt him lowering her to the cool grass. She wanted him to fuck her right away. She pulled her shorts down and began working frantically on his belt buckle and zipper.

“Wait, Angel. I want to taste you and plant sweet kisses all over your body.” When Kurt let his tongue slide over to play with her nipple, she arched her breast into his mouth.

“Oh, I love it when you do that. It feels so good.”

He took the hard nipple into his mouth and sucked with firm pressure. She became wet between her thighs and knew enough of lovemaking to imagine the glorious feeling of his penis penetrating her there once he had breached her maidenhead. She knew there would be a sharp pain at first, but all she wanted was to feel. She would bear it quietly, and then concentrate completely on the new sensations to come as soon as that was over.

Lying in the grass, she pulled his head down, allowing him to suck her in deeper. “Ohhh ... I love you suckling me, Kurt. It feels good in other parts of my body that you’re not even touching.”

When he had paid thorough attention to both of her mounds, he moved off of her breast to continue his exquisite and torturously slow foreplay. She pulled at her shorts, encouraging him to take them off. He had suckled her deeply and used his hand to rub and squeeze the sensitive nipples. As far as she was concerned, she couldn’t wait any longer.

He licked and kissed down her torso and began an unhurried removal of her denim shorts. Moaning her appreciation, she lifted her hips and happily felt his hand slide over her buttocks and then her mons. She

was thrilled with the knowledge that he would create that wonderful sensation that had her tingling and quivering inside and maybe more. She wouldn't be a virgin much longer. They'd be having sex soon and as hard as it was to imagine, perhaps that would feel even better.

She hurried to kick off her shorts and Kurt let his fingers part the curls until they found her clit. She moaned and arched into his hand. Moaning louder as he stroked her sensitive nub, the fabulous build-up coursed through her again. She was going to crash over the edge like she had before. This time though, he slipped two fingers into her vagina and maintained the pressure on her clit with his thumb. This must be what having his cock in there would be like. It felt so good and she was so grateful to him for taking her there in steps, letting her imagine and crave the next level of intimacy.

She arched and gasped as she felt the deep vibrating sensation concentrate first in her clit and then radiate out, encompassing not only her genitals, but more and more of her whole body. She began spasming and trembling from the beginning of her delicious release.

She braced her arms against the earth and arched, digging her fingers into the ground shaking and crying out her joy as her orgasm rushed throughout her body. All-encompassing pleasure filled her as she bucked and jerked.

When she could finally speak, she said, "Oh, Kurt, what more can there be than this?"

He lifted his head and grinned. "You'll see, angel, but first, I have to get naked."

Becky was thrilled to be thought of as his "angel." She helped him undress, folded his clothes and tossed them out of the way.

With his clothes off, the two of them kissed and fondled each other for a little while. Taking his erection in her hand felt wonderful too. He felt like velvet over something solid.

Finally, Kurt managed to pry their bodies apart.

\* \* \* \*

"Becky, do you know what an aroused man likes?"

"I'm not sure. Tell me." She pulled herself up to a sitting position and bit her lip.

"Honey, are you afraid of something?"

"I'm only afraid that I won't please you like you pleased me. I don't know what could make you that happy. And I want to know that."

He put his arm around her. "Don't worry, angel. It's easy to please a man. I'll tell you what I like first, and if you don't think you can do it, I want you to be honest with me. Okay?"

"I will."

She trusted him. She'd be honest with him. Now could he be honest with her? After only a moment, he knew he'd damn well better be.

He tried to look into her eyes, and she looked down. "Now, you see? That's what makes me nervous about telling you this. You seem to be ashamed."

She turned her wide eyes to him and they seemed even more frightened. "No! That's not it all! I want

you to tell me what to do!”

He studied her face. She seemed more anxious to please than afraid. Perhaps her only fear was exactly what she had said--that she wouldn't make him feel good. By God, he'd tell her how and let the chips fall where they may. It was time for both of them to be brave.

“Becky, I want you to go down on me. Do you know what that means?”

The confused look on her face matched her one word answer, “No.”

She stared at his erection and touched it carefully. “Do you want me to touch you like I did before?”

Kurt smiled and said, “Yes. It's okay to start by touching my cock. I like that.”

Becky glanced up at him and smiled. Then she gazed at his long, thick erection again and stroked it with her curled hand.

“That's it...” he said. “Now close your hand around it a little more and feel it up and down. Can you do that?”

“Yes.” She did exactly as he said and didn't seem to react with distaste. In fact, she seemed fascinated. “Does this feel good?”

He let out a sigh. “Oh, yes, angel. That feels very good.”

He decided to up the ante and give her the encouragement she might need. “Becky, honey?”

“Yes?” she whispered.

“Do you think you could put your lips around the tip and suck it like I sucked your breasts?”

She looked up at him in surprise, but then a smile passed across her face. “I guess that must feel as good to you as sucking on my nipples feels to me.”

“Oh yes, angel. At least that good.”

Becky wrapped her lips around his swollen cock and pulled back over the sensitive head. Kurt leaned back, closed his eyes and moaned.

To his delight, he didn't have to ask her to do it again. She suckled the tip of his penis and advanced it into her mouth. Then she applied suction and withdrew. “Oh, yes. That's it.” He moaned again. She was very good at that. He would have liked to ask her to take him in deep, but not yet. Maybe later in the relationship.

He reveled in the lovely sensations she was creating, yet he wanted more. He wanted to give her more too.

“Becky, what I want to do with you has to be special. As special as you are.”

“What could be more special than making love? I want you so badly I could scream.”

“Well I want to make you scream, but only with delight. There are different ways to make love, darling. If I do it gently, it may hurt at first, but before you know it, you'll be wanting to make love a lot.”

“I want to make love a lot right now. What if something happened to you? Dying a virgin is something I



have no intention of doing, and I've wanted this so much that my yearning is becoming more powerful with every passing moment."

Kurt sighed. Even though he thought he should proceed slowly, how could he deny her? He didn't want to deny himself, and here she was sounding as desperate as he felt. Kurt usually went with conventional wisdom every time, but not this time. She wasn't conventional and neither were his feelings toward her. Never having felt this way, though, he couldn't identify his emotions. He was crazy about her, but didn't know if it was love--yet.

"Becky. I'll give you what you want, but please know that it might hurt you at first. I'll be as gentle as I can, but it's going to hurt the first time."

"I know that. I'm not worried. I trust you, Kurt."

*Dear God. I trust you, Kurt.* Responsibility was nothing new to him, but this kind of responsibility was. Emotional responsibility. How could he take that step if he didn't know how he felt yet, or how he'd handle it if he did?

"Becky, I want you. I need you. I'm even close to loving you." There he had said it. Too late to go back now. He had been honest, and any minute, she was going to fly into a fury over the words, 'close to.'

She looked up at him and smiled. "I'm close to loving you too. And I want and need you just as bad. Let's not wait any longer."

She lowered herself onto her back and spread her legs. "I want you to take my maidenhead, Kurt. Not some farm boy who wants to rut like a pig."

Picturing his Becky having to go through that sickened him. That was it. He would make her first sexual experience one they would both remember fondly.

He crawled between her legs and looked down at her face. She looked so beautiful and so filled with expectation. He hated to pause for the condom, but he wasn't about to throw caution to the wind. He reached his pants and fished into his pocket. She watched as he tore open the package and rolled the latex over his shaft one-handed.

Kurt kissed her gently on the mouth and tested her wetness with his fingers. She was soaked. He brought his throbbing penis to her opening and said, "This will only hurt this once, I promise, and I wish it didn't have to hurt at all."

She nodded. He hoped doing it fast would be like ripping off a Band-Aid and rammed himself inside her hot, wet opening, hard and deep. She gasped and sunk her nails into his shoulders. Holding her tight with one arm, he kept her close and waited until her breathing returned to normal.

"Are you all right, my darling?" He pulled back and looked at her face.

"Yes," she said. "Can you fuck me now?"

Kurt kissed her and smiled. He slowly slid his cock back and entered her again, but slowly. He was so hard and she was so tight. It was all he could do to discipline his driving desire. "Are you still all right, angel?"

"I'm fine, and I heal really fast. Go ahead, fuck me. Please?"

He smiled. It made him even hotter when she asked for it that way, and he cautiously began a moderate

rhythm. She lifted her bottom and met his thrusts, cooing. Her lubricated vaginal muscles tightened around him and he hoped he could hold off until he felt her coming. He couldn't help moaning in pleasure and wondered if that would be an option.

Her moans increased as he thrust into her faster and deeper. He checked her face and she didn't seem to be feeling any pain, so he relaxed and found a pleasurable rhythm, thrusting in and out of her in earnest.

She opened her eyes and looked down. "I love this feeling so much. I want to see you fucking me, Kurt." She tipped her pelvis up, and he slowed, sinking his large, engorged cock into her again so she could appreciate the view. She laid back on the grass grinning.

When she reclined and closed her eyes, he concentrated on grinding into her pelvis, increasing the friction and building the exciting sensations between them. Moments later he could feel himself ready go over the edge and Becky was beginning to vibrate at the same time. Kurt's orgasm hit him hard and he came longer than ever before. He could have sworn he felt the earth shake. Becky's vagina spasmed, clenching him. She cried out and shuddered.

He propped himself up with one arm and reached for her clit with his thumb. When he found it Becky shouted out his name and he knew she was about to come again. He kept up the rhythm on her clit, leaving his penis in her body. She spasmed and jerked while letting out a long, loud stuttering groan. At last, she was satiated. Both of them were complete and content.

## Chapter Five

When Kurt determined that she had recovered, he rolled off to one side and lay beside her. Kissing her fingers, he asked, “Angel, when’s your birthday?”

Becky lay spread eagle on the grass and gazed at him, dreamily. “What?”

“Your birthday. I know, it seems like a stupid question, but I want to know what your Zodiac sign is. You said you were about to turn twenty-six.” Kurt held his breath and hoped he hadn’t made a complete fool of himself.

“My birthday is tomorrow. May fifteenth. I’m a Taurus. My sister wanted to be born next week and be Gemini the twins, but no, we’re Taurus the bull.”

He smiled to himself, inwardly remembering what Sue had said. Taurus was one of his compatible signs. When it came to sexual compatibility, Cosmo sure knew what they were talking about. His lusty country girl made him feel things he’d never experienced before.

Kurt smiled and pulled his underwear and jeans back on. He kneeled between her thighs and kissed her tenderly.

“Happy birthday.”

She sat up when he handed her an envelope. “A card,” she said, delighted. Tearing it open she cried, “Oh, and there’s more.” She read the card and unfolded the small bit of tissue paper that was enclosed.

“It’s a...” She looked perplexed as she stared at the gold anklet.

Could she have no idea what jewelry was? Come to think of it, he’d never seen her wearing any. “Here. Let me put it on for you,” he said.

He wrapped the shiny chain around her ankle and fastened it. She touched the tiny sparkling gold heart as if it were made of fragile spun glass.

“It’s so pretty. I love it!” She threw her arms around his neck and hugged him close. “I loved what we just did too. I want you to do that to me again and again. I want you to live here with me and make love to me every night.”

*Oh God.* His mouth went dry and he couldn’t speak. It must just be the girl thing. She’s just dreaming out loud.

“My brothers-in-law added on another room for me when Sophie and Timothy began sleeping together. We can make love in my room any time we want.”

She meant it! “You’re kidding. With the family in the house?”

“Of course. They know things. They probably already know we’re close and need to make love and sleep together.”

“I can’t do that.”

She stared at him wide-eyed. “What do you mean, you can’t?”

“It’s crazy. Under your mother’s roof, knowing she’s not fond of me, and she’s very protective of you?”

Besides, I work in Philadelphia. I can't live way out here."

She glared at him. The sky darkened, the earth trembled.

Kurt looked skyward, but there didn't seem to be thunderclouds overhead. "I still don't understand why you can't come to visit me in the city once in a while. We can date for a couple of years and then..."

A lightning bolt shot out of the sky, splitting a nearby apple tree right down the middle. The trembling earth shook and tore open in fissures. Becky yelled, "Run!" She left her clothes and charged naked back toward the house.

"Becky, wait!"

Kurt ran after her, scooping up his shirt and shoes on the way. She bounded over the bridge and was way ahead of him, but he found a new burst of speed once he had struggled into his shirt, and the sky shot more lightning into the trees right behind him. He made it to the clearing and hoped the tall trees would continue to attract the storm, keeping them out of harm's way as they dashed across the field.

He had almost caught up to her as they passed the barn, but a startling sight stopped both of them cold. All of the Morgan women stood naked in a circle surrounding the four-year-old, Ruthie. She lowered her arms and smiled when she saw Becky.

As soon as Mrs. Morgan spotted Kurt and her daughter, she yelled, "Becky, where have you been? No one could sense you anywhere. Little Ruthie had to be initiated long before she was ready and taught how to find and retrieve you!"

Kurt backed toward his car. "Shit. What the hell is this?"

"Wait, Kurt. I can explain..."

Kurt wasn't about to wait for an explanation. He turned and ran.

Several of the women cried, "Becky! Stop him!"

He heard her firm voice answer them. "No!"

As he jumped into his BMW and revved the engine he saw her, arms extended and rays of white light radiating out from her fingers. She seemed to be blocking the path between him and her whole family.

"I won't force him to stay against his will," she cried. "I love him, but he has to love and want me too."

Terrified, Kurt threw the stick shift in reverse and backed down the driveway, throwing gravel in every direction, then he roared down the dirt road, and it started to rain.

\* \* \* \*

Back in his office, Kurt tossed his favorite leather jacket at the coat hook. When it missed and landed on the floor in a rumpled heap, he left it where it fell and plopped into his chair. Frank turned around as Kurt scratched the stubble on his chin.

"You're late again, Conrad."

"So?"

"Buddy, I know you can get down, but I've never seen you go all 'El Depresso' like this. You've looked

like hell ever since you broke up with Becky.”

Kurt turned to his overflowing in-box and ignored his friend.

“I mean it, man. I thought you’d get over it in a week or two, but if anything you look worse. You’ve got to forget about her. Look, it’s Friday. Go clubbing with me tonight. We’ll find you a gorgeous piece of ass to take your mind off...”

“No.”

Frank was silent for a moment, then said, “You can’t keep doing this.”

“Doing what?”

“You’re burying yourself in work and wearing a rut between your office and your apartment.”

“What if I am?”

Frank walked over and sat on the corner of Kurt’s desk. “I’m serious. I’m starting to worry about you.”

Kurt crossed his arms and leaned back in his chair, but he refused to make eye contact. “Look Frank, I know you’re trying to help, but please stop. I’m not going to forget Becky. You could introduce me to the whole Eagles cheerleading squad, and I wouldn’t forget her.”

“Well, if you’re so ruined for other women, what are you going to do? Work at this boring job and go home to your empty apartment indefinitely?”

Kurt took in a deep breath and let it out in a whoosh. He didn’t have an answer.

“Look, maybe you could figure out a way to make it work. You say she won’t leave the farm, but maybe you could get a job closer to her. Ever thought about starting a business? Being your own boss? I think you’d be good at it.”

“Yeah. I’ve thought about it.” Kurt snorted. “Maybe I could start the ‘Lancaster Farming Channel.’”

“Maybe you could do something on-line. Sell their jams and jellies ... or something, anything!”

Kurt waved Frank off and tried to get back to work.

His friend hung up Kurt’s coat and left the office shaking his head.

Reading the same paragraph three times, Kurt wondered how the hell he’d sell anything on-line without a phone, never mind a modem.

Maybe they could conjure up a link with whatever kind of sorcery or witchcraft they were into. Even if he could figure out what to do for work out there, could he accept whatever the Morgan family was? ... and what the hell were they? ... and if he lived on the farm, would they let *him* leave? *Jesus, how can I stop ruminating like this?*

There was only one way to answer all of his questions. He’d have to talk to Becky Morgan and her family. And in order to talk to them, he’d have to go back there.

\* \* \* \*

The following morning, with a small suitcase on his passenger’s seat, he drove through the Pennsylvania

countryside wondering if he was losing his frigging mind by doing this. Didn't matter. He was losing his frigging mind, anyway.

He roared down the dirt road and hoped he'd make it to the farmhouse before he regained his sanity. He hoped by the time he left her, he'd know enough to make an informed decision and maybe find some peace of mind. He glanced at the suitcase and didn't know if he'd need it or not. They might toss him off the property for what he did to Becky.

As the house came into view, he prayed that things would go well. That whatever happened, it would be for the best. He saw no one outside and was somewhat relieved. He drove up the gravel drive, turned off the engine and sat there. *What the hell am I going to do if they won't let me see her again?*

He was shaken out of his musing when a small figure approached from the side of the house. It was Oliver.

"Hey, Mr. Conrad. I didn't think I'd see you again. Grammy said you probably wouldn't be back, and if you did come, you'd probably bring the men in white coats with ya."

Kurt chuckled and felt oddly comforted. "Oliver, I'm here to ask a few questions, but maybe I could start by asking you one."

"Sure," Oliver said. "Can I sit in your car?"

"Of course." Kurt moved the suitcase to the tiny space behind the back seat.

"Are you planning on stayin' this time?"

"I don't know. That all depends on the answers to those questions, I guess."

Oliver opened the door and jumped in. "Wow, this is nice. Sure is a lot nicer than the school bus or daddy's truck." He stroked the leather upholstery.

Kurt adjusted in his seat to face him. "So, that question..."

"Oh, yeah. What did you want to know?"

The women in this family are, um, a little different from most people I know. Do you know what I mean when I say that?

Oliver's eyes opened wide and he stared at Kurt.

"What's the matter, Oliver? You look scared."

"Um... I, Um... Well, I'm not supposed to talk about that." Oliver opened the door and stepped out. He backed a few feet away from the car, then turned and ran around the side of the house yelling, "Daddy! Grammy! Come quick!"

*Oh no.* Kurt had just turned the key and was prepared to back down the driveway when Jake rounded the corner.

"Hang on there, Kurt," he called.

Kurt debated with himself for a couple of seconds. Just long enough for Jake to put his hands on the car and lean on it.

“Why don’t you come into the house? I think I know what you’re here about, and it’s kind of a long story. One we were preparing to tell ya, though.”

“I don’t want a story. I want the truth.”

“And that’s all you’ll ever get from us.”

Jake’s eyes were sincere.

Mrs. Morgan rounded the corner and said, “Jake, invite our guest to come in.”

“I did, Emma. I think he’s considerin’ it.”

“There’s nothing to fear, Mr. Conrad. We won’t hurt you, and we all have our clothes on.” Then she let out her tinkling laugh.

At that, he had to chuckle, and he shut off the engine.

“Bring your suitcase with you, too.” She turned and went back to the house. When he stepped out of the car and reached over the seat for his suitcase, he realized she couldn’t have seen it. *Oh, shit. It’s started already. What have I gotten myself into?*

As if reading his mind, Jake clapped him on the shoulder and said, “You have to get used to it, but they’ve all got good in their hearts. Especially Becky. We’re a mite protective of her, but that’s because she’s the sweetest one. Sophie’s a scrapper, and she can take care of herself, but Becky, well, she needs a little lookin’ after. Someone could take advantage of her loving, good nature.”

The look crossing his face left no doubt in Kurt’s mind. They didn’t want him to be that someone.

He didn’t want to be that guy, either. He was here with the best of intentions. Taking a deep breath and standing up straight, he said, “Lead the way.”

Kurt was ushered into the living room. The matron, already sitting in a chair, was sewing a button on what looked like one of Oliver’s shirts. Micah sat on the couch and stood to shake Kurt’s hand.

Kurt sat in an armchair and Jake took the other side of the couch.

“Do you know why I only have the men here to speak to you?” she asked.

“No, but I hope you’re going to tell me everything.” Kurt couldn’t help feeling uncomfortable and folded his hands.

“We will, in due time.” She turned to her son-in law, Micah. “Tell Mr. Conrad what it’s been like with your Martha.”

Micah sat forward and so did Kurt. It looked like the meeting of the minds. “I was the first man in this family since their poppa went to his maker over twenty years ago. He was run over by a truck in town. I guess Emma and her sister both had the gift and their mother before them. It’s hard to say about the women before that, it’s probably been passed down through this family ever since they came here from the Black Forest a couple hundred years ago, but it’s just the women and it grows with each generation. They have to be kept here to protect them from outsiders as well as teaching them to use and discipline their gifts in secret. It’s important that they don’t get upset.” He looked Kurt and paused for effect.

“The thing is, you won’t never find a better situation than this. These women can make all kinds of good

happen, and they love their men completely--body, mind and soul. Especially body, if you know what I mean?" Micah smirked.

Jake chuckled. "Yup, the chores practically take care of themselves. They never get headaches and we're never too tired. There's a lot of love in these women, but only for their one chosen man, and you should be honored that you've been picked by one of 'em."

*Been picked?* "But what do you do way out here?" Kurt asked.

"Just about anything we want to." Micah smiled and nodded to Jake. "Now you can talk about Polly and Flo, Jake."

Jake looked at the floor and said, "I thought Polly was going to be my wife. But I chose her. She didn't choose me. She ran off with a city fella who didn't marry her and didn't treat her right. She fell into some trouble by doing things he didn't bother to understand, and the city policemen didn't either. She was probably just trying to help him. Anyway, she landed in jail and couldn't handle the betrayal. She chose not to live anymore."

"You mean--she killed herself?" Kurt asked softly trying to be sensitive to Emma.

"That's what we figure. Anyway, twins run in this family, and Flo was Polly's twin. She helped me get through all that, and then Flo and I fell in love. She chose me. Now I'm the happiest man alive. I couldn't ask for a better wife."

Kurt sat back and digested this so far. He turned to the Matron and asked his most burning question. "Is that why you won't let them leave the farm?"

"They don't leave until they have a husband to protect 'em."

Kurt looked at her quizzically, but she never took her eyes off her mending. "Are you telling me that if I married Becky, she and I could leave the farm?"

"For periods of time. You wouldn't want her going anywhere without you, and we'd really prefer she stay on the farm until Ruthie grows up and learns to handle her gift. That powerful lightning storm you saw was a four-year-old's attempt to use her power without enough training."

"But Becky and I were just in the orchard."

"We didn't know that. For all we knew you kidnapped her. I think that's why Ruthie was scared enough to send lightning bolts toward you."

Kurt cleared his throat and sat up. "Well, she succeeded in scaring the pants off of me." Kurt turned his attention back to the men. "How do you feel about a wife who can control you like that?"

Micah and Jake laughed. "Once we marry 'em, they can't do a thing to us. It's in the vows."

Kurt stood and paced. "So, that's why I don't remember anything between running in the side door to see strawberry shortcake all over the place and you two taking me outside. Who did that to me?"

The matron spoke, and he stood still in front of her. "Becky did. She didn't want to, but figured you'd never understand when Sophie talked about not wanting to use her powers on Timothy. Becky isn't as volatile as Sophie. In fact, no one else in the family is. She'll be all right though, soon as she and Timothy get married. Once the females are married and get sex as often as they do, they're too content to



get upset about the little things.”

“Why was Sophie upset?”

The matron took in a deep breath and let it out in a huff. “It wasn’t a little trifle. Timothy got her pregnant and didn’t offer to do the right thing. He asked her to marry him on her birthday, though. Thank goodness.”

It took all his courage to ask the next question. “What are you? Witches? Magicians? Goddesses? I want the truth--whatever it is.”

Emma shrugged. “So do we. We don’t know what we are. That’s part of why we stay together. We know we’re different, but here on the farm we don’t feel like we have two heads.”

Kurt nodded. “You’re telling me the absolute truth?”

“We’re not good liars, Mr. Conrad. Our lives and emotions are tied to nature and we’d give ourselves away. If we’re sad, it rains. Angry? It thunders. Lightning comes from extreme emotions, and the earth trembles when we’re afraid. Lying usually comes out of fear, and the earth shakes so bad it splits in places.”

“Who lied when we were in the orchard?”

“We all did. We were saying you were an evil man who had taken Becky. That’s how we knew you weren’t. The ground shook and spit, so that was a lie. We’re bound to tell the truth. We don’t like earthquakes any more than the next person.”

“How do I know I’m not under a spell?”

“You’re not missing any time are you?”

He checked his watch. No. He estimated that he had been there for about twenty minutes. It was 10:30 when he arrived. It was now 10:50.

The matron laid her sewing aside. “Frankly, if I had my way, I’d have stopped you and erased your memory of the lightning and the naked circle too. But Becky wouldn’t have it.”

“Why not?”

“She wanted you to know what we were. Well, as much as we know, anyway. If you could accept her with all her unusual traits and talents, she wanted you worse than you knew. But, she won’t force you to take the happiness she wants to give you.”

Kurt sat on his chair with a thud. Could he accept her? He had just been given a large dose of truth and he needed a moment to swallow it.

The matron stood. “You’ve heard a lot. I’ll get you some lemonade. The men will leave you alone for a while if you’d like to think.”

Kurt nodded. Just before Micah walked out of the room, Kurt stopped him. “Wait. What do you do with yourself all day? I’d have to work. I couldn’t just sit around and drink lemonade. I’d go out of my mind with boredom.”

He nodded in understanding. “I know what you’re trying to say. Jake and I are farmers. We enjoy

working the land, especially when the sun is shining, the temperature is pleasant, and the crops grow well without bugs or rodents to worry about.”

“But what would *I* do? I’m no farmer.”

“Well, what have you always wanted to do?”

Kurt thought. “I’ve thought about starting a magazine. A news magazine, but focused on some good news for a change. Medical research. Charitable organizations. People turning lives around.”

Micah laughed. “Well then my advice is to have a long honeymoon and start a magazine. As long as you protect our families and don’t draw attention to us, I imagine you could set up an office anywhere you like. Harrisburg is nearby.”

Kurt stood when Emma entered the room with Becky behind her. Even his near-photographic memory didn’t do her justice. She was such a beautiful woman, both inside and out, and the only woman he wanted for the rest of his life. “Harrisburg it is, then.”

Becky flew into his arms, and he hugged her tight.

“Does that mean you know about us and you want to marry me?”

Kurt leaned close to her and whispered, “We don’t have to get into one of those naked circles, do we?”

Becky laughed. “The men don’t go to those. We women only do that when there’s some great evil happening to someone innocent and we have to pool our power to get rid of it. We’re stronger together.”

“Does it work?”

Emma proudly said, “It sure does. Every time.”

“How do you get the news way out here?”

Emma nodded to her sons-in-law. “The men go into town and sometimes they hear about some terrible thing that’s happening to some innocent child, or group of people, or animals.”

Energized by the possibilities, Kurt asked. “Can you do this all over the world?”

Emma laughed. “Heavens no. But, as each generation grows, we get stronger and can reach out a little farther. We hope each generation will teach the next. Eventually even more skills may emerge. Perhaps, some day…”

Kurt looked at Becky and put an arm around her shoulder. “So our grandchildren and great grandchildren?”

Becky grinned and said, “May save the world.”

Kurt scratched his head. A mixture of hope and disbelief flowed through his mind. At last, he nodded and smiled. “I know what you are, now.”

Mrs. Morgan raised her eyebrows in surprise. “You do?”

“Yes.” Kurt focused on Becky. “You’re angels. And if I’m lucky enough to be chosen by one, then I’ll love and protect her and our family secret for the rest of my life. It would be such a privilege to see some good happenings in our lifetime.”

Becky tipped her face up to his and he kissed her tenderly.

“Oh, Becky! I just remembered something. Can I ask you a favor?”

“Of course.”

“Before we get married, can you please erase my memory of your naked mother and all your naked sisters?”

Everyone in the room laughed.

She put her arms around his waist and gave him a quick, affectionate hug. “I’d be glad to.” Pulling away a few inches, she stared into his eyes with hers. Blue as a lake, deep as the ocean. Then looked at the floor and asked, “What do you remember?”

Kurt smiled and said, “Everything. What a funny question. Now let’s get down to business. We need to make some plans. We’re getting married, and then we’re going to take a long honeymoon and make those children whose grandchildren may help save the world.”

### **The End**

#### **About the Author:**

Cyndi Redding is a New England native. She began her new career after 20 years as an RN. To keep her creative side active, she learned to write screenplays. Hollywood didn’t want her romantic comedies, so she tried authoring a book. Her first manuscript landed on a shelf in the back of her closet, but she maintains it was worth doing as a learning experience.

She monitored her reading choices for a while and found she liked the ‘hot stuff.’ As soon as she made that admission, and stopped blushing, she thought she might try writing it. She read Harlequin Blazes and Temptations until she had an idea. She’d turn one of her screenplays into a steam bath of a novel!

She is thrilled that her work has found a home and will reach readers who enjoy what she writes. Cyndi insists she doesn’t write smut. She writes original, sexy stories using her previous knowledge of plotting, pivotal turning points, realistic characters, and happy, but not sappy, endings. She is also known for her quirky plot twists, sense of humor, and fascination with paranormal phenomenon, all of which show up in her contemporary novels.

## **Written In The Stars**

Larissa Lyons

### **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to:

Jackie and Joan, special people whose mentoring and friendships have allowed my dream of being published to become a reality.

Sharon and DJ, two uniquely wonderful women who introduced me to the magical world of fairies and enriching friendships beyond typical boundaries.

My stellar husband, for allowing me to write ... and reading every word!

## Chapter One

### ASSIGNMENT

*GOAL: tie up the goat*

*REWARD FOR SUCCESS: choice of next assignment*

*PENALTY FOR FAILURE: you don't want to know*

Aurora barely had time to read the missive before Tragar snapped his stubby green fingers. In a whirlwind of color, she found herself hurtling through space, past nebula ... star clusters ... even that shiny thing labeled *Cassini* that still orbited Saturn. Ah, she must be headed to Earth again.

Maybe this time, she could stay longer. A few hours wasn't enough to--

*Umpf.* Her feet slammed into the ground. She tottered a moment, seeking balance. Moonbeams and morning glories, what a journey!

Before her eyes adjusted to the bright outdoor sun, warmth filled her arm. She looked at her hand, blinking rapidly. Her hair had tangled and twisted during her interstellar voyage. Through the unruly strands, she saw her fingers wrapped tightly around cloth-covered steel. Warm steel. Heat spread through her entire body.

"Whoa, there. You all right?"

The man's deep voice washed over her, and she glanced at him under the cover of her hair. Sunspots and solar flares! Not at all like the slender, almost effeminate males back home. For one thing, this man wore clothing. Dark heavy garments layered his body, the fabrics full of texture and substance. She longed to trace the material with her fingers almost as much as she longed to take them off. Her body blazed hotter at the unbidden thought.

Self-consciously, she released his arm. Her fingers burned from the contact. The gossamer fabric of her loose dress suddenly felt like a lover's caress touching her skin. Her breasts tingled, became fuller. Her tongue slipped from her mouth and licked her bottom lip, much as she longed for the man to do.

Toadstools and tulips, this wasn't like her. Were all humans this hot? The males back home never caused these feelings. This *heat*. Hiding her unexpected reaction, she nodded in response to his question and bent to unwrap the skirt which had tangled around her legs.

"Is this your first cruise?" he asked.

Cruise? Tragar could have told her that, tricky troll. Still messing with her skirt, she made a sound of agreement. "Mmmmm."

"First trip to Hawaii?"

She was more comfortable observing humans from afar. The man's focused attention unnerved her, even as part of her yearned for it. *Reveled in it*. Instincts long ignored and muscles long unused began clamoring for attention. She glanced at his face.

He was staring at her legs. Oooo, there went her temperature again. What had he asked her? Oh, Hawaii. She straightened and looked at him through her bangs. "Yes."

"Mine too. First vacation in years. Well, if you call a job interview vacation," he explained with a smile.

She wanted to touch his hair. Short and light, the color of sunshine, it spiked from his scalp, just begging her fingers to run through it. Was it as warm as it looked? What about his face? His body? Were they hot, too?

"I have an appointment at the Observatory on Mauna Kea to see about a job. Charles Manning, from New Mexico." He held out his hand.

It was big, too, just like the man. She could feel the heat emanating from his fingers.

A loud noise sounded from a speaker, and she jumped. The man cocked his head toward a narrow entrance that led to a gangplank. "Oh, that's me. I guess I can board now. Well, ahem." He slowly retracted his hand, and curved it into a fist before picking up his luggage. "Perhaps I'll see you around."

The moment he walked off, she leaned forward into the space he had vacated and inhaled.

Spicy, strong, sexy.

Arousing.

*Find the goat. Tie him up. The goat.*

The cryptic instructions intruded in her mind, even as her eyes followed the man's progress.

She *really* wanted to touch his hair.

\* \* \* \*

Maybe the fish was bad. The queasy feeling in his gut had started sometime during the day and had gotten steadily worse through dinner. He gave the uneaten fish on his plate a dirty look.

Just what he needed to start off the first real semi-vacation he'd taken in six years. Food poisoning. Shit.

"Have you sailed on *The Splendor* before, Mr. Manning?"

At the sound of his name, he looked up from his plate, determined to ignore the hollow sensations churning in his stomach. One of the elderly women seated across the large circular table smiled at him expectantly. He thought her name was Hazel. Or maybe Mabel. Before he could answer, one of the women flanking her said, "Harriet, it's *Professor* Manning. Did you forget, dear?"

Harriet. Now he remembered. When he'd been seated at his assigned table and seen the three matching octogenarians, he'd done a double take, then a triple take. Harriet was the most outspoken of the three, her bright orange hair matched by the God-awful orange lipstick that she'd all but chewed off the past half hour.

"Charles is fine," he told them. Actually, it was *Doctor* Manning, but he didn't want to correct them and come across sounding pretentious. This trip was supposed to be relaxing, casual ... a far cry from his usual twelve-plus hour workdays. "And no, ma'am. It's my first time out to sea in something other than a fishing boat."

"It's our fourteenth cruise." Blue-haired Hazel/Mabel told him with pride, waving her napkin in front of her like a flag.

"No, I think you're mistaken, sister. I do believe this is number fifteen," Harriet corrected. She reached into her purse and pulled out a tube of lipstick, heaven help the old dear.

"I think you're confused, Harry. Don't you remember, the Mediterranean was twelfth, and then we sailed..."

The three women continued to debate among themselves, leaving him free to contemplate his fish. Or not.

He'd rather think about the woman on the dock this morning. Damn. There went his stomach again. One moment, he'd been standing in line, reading over the ship's itinerary. The next, a strong breeze blew past him and he felt a small hand clamped around his arm. From his first glance at the woman's lithe body and long thick hair, he wanted a lot more than her arm clamped around him.

The hum of the engines changed as they picked up speed. He watched the liquid in his wine glass shimmy with the ship's motion. Now that they were away from port and in open waters, he'd expected the movement of the large ship to increase, but it was negligible, just a low-grade vibration. Like those cheap motel beds he'd loved as a kid. The ones that shook and vibrated for a quarter.

He'd tried to engage the woman in conversation, but her monosyllabic replies hadn't been encouraging. Too bad, she was one woman he'd sure like to get on a vibrating bed.

As if conjured by his thoughts, she entered the dining room, stopping when she saw the crowded tables. Charles wanted to jump up and shout, "Here! There's an empty chair right here!"

\* \* \* \*

After waiting her turn in line, Aurora boarded the large vessel and found her designated cabin. The little room was light and airy, and even smelled of magnolia blossoms, her favorite scent. The things Tragar arranged from half across the galaxy. Amazing. She removed the carry-on bag that had been strapped over her shoulder when she'd landed. Dropping it on the bed, she almost lit up like a glowworm. Her first overnight assignment on Earth! She couldn't wait to begin.

Static sounded from overhead, then a voice came from her ceiling. "As your captain, I would like to welcome everyone aboard. Tonight, dinner is in the main hall at 7:00 and 9:00. Starting tomorrow morning, room service will be available. Before we leave San Diego and the States, everyone must present themselves on deck for our required safety lesson. I expect smooth sailing, but better safe than sorry, eh?"

Aurora suffered through the crowded safety lesson the best she could. Her acute senses were overloaded from being in such close proximity with so many humans. Soon, the vessel was sailing on the high seas. Instead of floating through the air--which had become commonplace after she earned her wings--she was floating on the ocean. Flowers and fireflies, this was exciting.

Thrilled to her toes, Aurora tackled her latest assignment and looked for the goat.

And looked for the goat.

And looked ... for ... the ... goat.

It was useless. She searched every inch of the ship, and came up empty-handed. When she tried to check the cargo hold, a crewman barred the entrance. She refused to leave until he promised there wasn't a goat hiding behind the door. Glaring at her like he thought *she* needed to be tied up, he assured her the ship

was goat-free, that nary a goat ever traveled on *The Seaward Splendor*.

Frustrated, she considered the bright side. She'd been able to explore the ship and in the process, had found a secluded area that looked out over the ocean. The late afternoon sun glinting off the ship's wake had reminded her of the man's hair, all gold and enticing. Suddenly, she was parched. Making sure no one was nearby, she waved one hand and held out the other. Nothing happened.

Oh, asteroids and azaleas, she still didn't have any magic. The solar flares must be really strong today if her magic hadn't caught up with her yet.

She returned to her cabin, and flopped on the bed. How could she tie up the dadgum goat if she couldn't find it? Used to quick success, the unfamiliar cloud of pending failure weighed on her mind. Even the inviting cabin didn't lift her spirits.

Her stomach growled, reminding her of the distance she had traveled without nourishment. If she couldn't summon something on her own, she'd have to eat with the humans. Afterwards, she'd enjoy a warm bath, then rest. She'd look for the darn goat again tomorrow.

While she retrieved an outfit from the meager selection in her bag, she wondered when Tragar would call her back. *If* he called her back. She hadn't failed an assignment before, and didn't know how long she'd be here. Pity, she wouldn't mind having some time to look for the man with the dark clothes and sunshine hair. *Mr. Charles Manning*, of the steel-strong arms and sexy scent. *Charlie*.

Distracted by her thoughts, the elegant chignon she attempted to pull her hair into was nothing more than a mess, which she promptly blamed on Tragar. His instructions for this latest assignment didn't make any sense. Stupid troll. She'd like to give him a wart on the end of his nose, one to match the mole already there. But that wouldn't exactly endear Aurora to her current instructor.

Thanks to Tragar's terrible tutelage, her perfect assignment record seemed doomed, and she was dragging when she left her cabin. If she hadn't been so hungry, she would have skipped supper. Being around this many humans for so long was more of a strain than she expected, and a headache pounded between her eyes. Even after searching the ship earlier, she made several wrong turns on the way to dinner. Finally, she gave up and followed her nose, easily sniffing out the scents of food and humans once she lowered her guard.

By the time she reached the dining room, everyone was seated. Conversation and laughter clashed with the sounds of people eating. Her sensitive ears heard it all, increasing the pressure in her head. Standing inside the door, drained and despondent from the long day, she couldn't locate her assigned table or an empty chair. The longer she stood there, the more she noticed people staring at her. Oh, seeds and weeds, how she hated being the center of attention. Maybe she should skip supper after all? A protest rumbled up from her stomach.

Wearily and out of sorts, she scarcely noticed when a waiter walked over and escorted her through the dining room, *tsking* about how late she was, and how hungry she must be. The moment they neared her table, everything faded into oblivion. Her exhaustion ... the goat ... even her hunger.

He was here! Sitting at this very table! The man with the sunny hair. *Charlie*.

Energy thrummed through her. When she approached the empty seat, he stood and pulled out her chair. Oh, stars and satellites, he was big.

Tingles danced over her skin as she sat down and mumbled something in response to a question from the waiter. Charlie was so close. They almost touched. His breath was warm on the back of her neck when



he pushed in her chair, and her body almost went through the roof in response. Several other people at the table said hello, and Aurora smiled and nodded, pretending to understand while inside, she was awlirl with thoughts and possibilities. When the waiter brought her food a moment later, she mindlessly ate, considering her options.

Maybe the goat *hadn't* made it on board the ship. She *had* looked on all seven decks. Twice. If Tragar couldn't see fit to give her better instructions, then she couldn't be blamed for not completing this assignment. At least, that sounded like something her sister Trixie would say.

A waiter came by and offered to fill her wine glass. Aurora nodded absently and ate faster, concentrating on her thoughts. Her mind swirled with ideas. Goats ... assignments ... alcohol ... Charlie ... big, sexy Charlie...

\* \* \* \*

"...right, Professor Manning?"

"Huh?" he mumbled, his eyes glued to the woman standing by the dining room's entrance. When a waiter started escorting her toward the table where Charles sat, his cock jumped in his pants and did a happy dance. The woman practically glided as she made her way past the other diners. She wore another long dress, this one so sheer and filmy he swore he could practically see her nipples. Maybe he could sneak a glance down her front. The thought was so unlike him, he was almost ashamed. *Almost*.

"Professor, did I hear you say that you studied the stars?"

The question from across the table barely reached his ears. He responded abstractedly. "Uh, yes. I ... I'm ... an astron ... o..."

His words trailed off when the waiter led the woman directly to the chair next to him. Charles stood and pulled it out for her. She gracefully sank into it, giving him a shy nod of thanks. The waiter said he'd bring her food right out and Charles watched as she folded her napkin in her lap, took a sip of water, and looked anywhere but at him.

He itched to touch the delicate fabric of her dress. The kaleidoscope of colors swirling around her sent his senses spinning. The muscles in his throat tightened. He loosened his tie, and sat down.

Why wouldn't she look at him?

He couldn't remember when he'd been this attracted to a woman. Work and research occupied most of his time. He usually had little interest in dating. He glanced longingly at the woman next to him. Too easily, he saw her sitting front and center in his life. Better yet, front and centered *on his lap*.

Charles shifted, trying to relieve the pressure against his cock.

Well, shit. He hadn't dated in so long, he'd lost his self-control, as well as his finesse. Tomorrow at dinner, he'd try to talk to her again. By the end of this long cruise, maybe they'd actually engage in a real conversation. Oh, joy. Too bad he wanted a lot more than conversation...

He moved the fish around on his plate and tried to focus on the chatter buzzing around him.

"See, Harriet, I told you the professor here was an astrologer."

Sitting beside him in her flowing dress, the woman was so graceful and fresh, like a field of wildflowers. The image, in stark contrast to the sterile science lab where he spent most of his days analyzing data

from telescope observations, imprinted itself on his brain.

"Oh, I'm so excited. Maybe he'll do a reading for us. My last astrologer had to retire. Shut down by the IRS for nonpayment of taxes, and all. It's been ages since I've gotten a good reading."

"I've wanted to do that for years. I read my horoscope every morning, but I never..."

"Leave the man alone, Mabel, Harry. He's on vacation." A loud thump of a cane accompanied this announcement.

He really wanted to talk to her, but she hadn't returned his conversational gambits this morning and she was doing her best to ignore him now. His teeth ground in frustration.

"I bet he wouldn't mind. Would you Professor Manning?"

"Hmmm?" He was so damn distracted, his brain wasn't paying attention. If he only knew why she seemed uncomfortable around him. Maybe she was just shy, but he was a little afraid to try again. What if she wasn't interested?

*Try! Try again!* his cock urged, uncaring of the possible blow to his ego.

"Would you mind reading the stars for us, Professor? Tonight?"

"Harry, give the man a break." *Thump, thump* went the cane.

"Shhh. Let him answer, Hazel. Professor Manning?"

"Umm." His mind clouded with want, he tried to make sense of the words. Stars. Tonight. Oh, they must want him to give a constellation tour, something he did on a monthly basis back home as part of his ongoing educational outreach for the community. "Yeah." His tongue was thick in his mouth. He loosened his tie even more, and tried again. "Sure. I'll be happy to."

He'd be happier if the woman next to him wasn't behaving as if looking at him would turn her to stone. The waiter brought her food and she started devouring it so quickly he wondered if he'd be called upon to perform the Heimlich. Hey, at least that way, he'd get to touch her, right?

Why was she acting so skittish around him? Refusing to shake his hand this morning, barely acknowledging him tonight. He didn't understand. Just then, their skinny-ass Italian waiter came over to refill everyone's drinks, and she smiled and spoke to the scrawny man. Come to think of it, when the other guy had escorted her to the table--a puny, pipsqueak fellow who looked like he wouldn't know what to do with a woman if she stepped naked into his shower--she'd been smiling and glowing then, too.

Damn! Charles had his answer.

It was his size again. At six-foot-four and 210 pounds, he was built more like a linebacker than a scientist and part-time college professor. It wasn't that he clomped around, or was clumsy, just that he was, well ... big. Solid. Over the years, his size seemed to intimidate a lot of women, especially small, delicate ones that didn't know him well. Like the beauty sitting next to him.

He usually wasn't intrigued enough to care.

And he shouldn't care now. So why did he?

After all, he was here for a job interview. He hadn't come on this cruise to get laid. More's the pity.

\* \* \* \*

Halfway through dinner, Aurora made a decision and reached for her untouched wine glass. In two gulps, she drank half the contents.

Alcohol made her horny. Really, really horny. (At least it should, according to her sister, who was an authority on the subjects of alcohol and men.) Liquor also clipped her wings, which wasn't a position any self-respecting fairy wanted to be in. Not that Aurora was a full-fledged fairy. Not yet, anyway.

She was a third-cycle apprentice. And at the top of her class, until today. A lonely position, something she usually didn't notice because studying and assignments took up all of her time. Her feminine needs had been sorely neglected.

Needs that Trixie said a human man could take care of. *In a big way*. Her younger sister had loads of experience with males, and she was forever telling Aurora to pay more attention to her body's desires and less to her studies. Ignoring Trixie's outlandish advice had been easy in the past. Before today, Aurora hadn't been around many real men. At the moment, though, she'd sure like to be clasped around the one sitting next to her.

As she unthinkingly ate the food on her plate, she watched him surreptitiously. She'd been to Earth before, but never had she found a human male so fascinating. The sincere tone of his deep voice made her melt. Each time he spoke to the other humans, flutters coursed up and down her spine. She eyed the way his big hands gently handled the tableware, the way he carefully held his wine glass. How would he touch her skin? Her breasts ... her bottom?

At the thought, her under-used libido jumpstarted, revved up, and, after half a glass of wine, was raring to go. She'd had sex with male fairies before. It was no big deal. Nothing ever made her wings flap or her body glow like thoughts of Charlie did.

She tried to think of every way she knew to seduce a man. The list was short. Short as in non-existent. Trixie would know what to do. Aurora could just hear her sister saying, "Human males are easy. They always want sex. Just ask."

Okay, so maybe this wasn't the simplest task she'd undertaken, but it certainly promised to be one of the most satisfying. Thinking of satisfaction, the muscles between her legs clenched, reminding her of their empty state.

Quickly reaching for her water glass--she needed to cool down fast--she accidentally bumped his arm. Ummm. She knew something else she'd like to bump into.

The ship would be at sea for only five nights before arriving in port, and she didn't know when Tragar might call her back. Even five nights wasn't nearly enough for the erotic adventures she wanted to indulge in if she had the guts to go for it. She did. She wanted it all. *With Charlie*. Matching actions to intent, Aurora returned her water glass without taking a sip. She picked up her wine and drained it in one motion. When she placed the glass on the table, she deliberately knocked against the man once more.

\* \* \* \*

The woman next to him nudged his arm. Awareness zinged through his body and landed in his stomach like a supernova.

Steak. He should have skipped the cod and gone for the steak.

"Oops. I'm sorry," she said in a soft, husky whisper.

"No harm done," he told her, thinking third time's a charm. It was the third time their elbows had connected during dinner. And the first time she'd spoken directly to him.

Shy or not, she was one smart lady. She'd ordered the steak. Steak he'd watched her devour as if she hadn't eaten in a week. Seeing her luscious lips wrapped around her fork and sliding off pieces of meat had spurred all sorts of thoughts in his brain. He'd like to have her lips wrapped around him, sliding back and forth. His stomach twinged, pulling his mind out of his pants for the moment. The warmth from her touch was still zipping down his arm. He swallowed and loosened his tie a bit more. "Would you like to switch places?"

She glanced at their elbows, barely an inch apart, then nodded. He nearly saw past the long bangs covering her forehead to catch a glimpse of her eyes, but she kept her head ducked, even when she spoke again. "Left-handed curse." She laughed, causing the supernova in his stomach to head south. "I'm forever bumping into right-handed people."

It was the most she'd ever said to him. Progress, at last. He wished she wouldn't hide behind her bangs. If only he could see her eyes. He yearned to grasp her chin and hold her still, to discover their color, to study her features.

Standing, he pulled back her chair, taking care not to step on her long dress. His fingers itched to dive into the thick dark hair tied in a jumbled knot at her nape. Her head was at the level of his already close-to-throbbing dick, and he imagined sinking his hand into her hair and guiding her mouth to him. His grip on the chair tightened and he stood closer to it, disguising his condition from the remaining guests.

Before she could rise and take his seat, one of the triplets hollered out. "Are you two heading off already? But the dessert waiter is just now making his rounds. You can't skip dessert. It's one of the best things about vacation. And what about the stars? I thought you..."

"Harry, dear, leave the young people alone. They probably want to retire early. *Together*."

*Not a bad idea, old girl.* Lest the lovely lady think him a lecher, he roused his rusty chivalrous instincts in order to correct Mabel/Hazel's words, as much as he might wish otherwise. "Oh, no. We aren't leaving together..."

His sentence stumbled to a halt when he felt the woman shift in her seat and caress the back of his hand. The light, deliberate touch went straight to his groin. She stood, trailing her fingers across his arm--raising gooseflesh in her wake, and his cock in his pants. She looked directly into his eyes.

Purple.

Well, what do you know? Her eyes were purple. Amazing. Freaking amazing. Studying the amethyst-colored orbs, his stomach dipped again. Maybe he wasn't cut out for life on the high seas?

"Do you want to?" she whispered. "Leave together?"

Holy shit. Not so shy and innocent, after all.

Did he want them to leave together? Were there stars in the sky? Did the sun burn at 5000 degrees

Celsius? Was his cock so hard he thought he'd die if he didn't have her?

Hell, yes, he wanted to leave with her.

But what was going on with his stomach?

Could it be the woman affecting him this way? Ridiculous. He was a grown man. It had to be the fish.

Didn't it?

Either way, he was screwed. He hoped.

\* \* \* \*

"Not good. Not." The words escaped past pointy teeth and evaporated into the ether.

Watching the foolish twit making calf eyes at the human, Tragar scratched his long nose, disgusted. How was he supposed to teach Aurora anything if she wouldn't stay focused on her assignment? And she'd started out the cycle so promising, too. "Such a waste. Such."

Third-year apprentices tended to be full of themselves. After mastering the art of flying and pixie dust usage, getting them to pay attention in the classroom practically took a command from Queen Arlene. Aurora had been the brightest ray of sunshine in this year's crop of hopefuls. The young sprite, ignoring the examples of her many siblings, actually came to class, kept her feet on the ground--most of the time--and, until today, had completed each of her assignments so smoothly that Tragar had considered promoting her to Final Cycle early.

That idea was now shot to Hades. And, be damned if Cherlon wouldn't get top honors as instructor this year, something he'd been trying to steal from Tragar for eons. That slimy weasel. Tragar wouldn't put it past him to have placed this man in Aurora's path, just to thwart Tragar's exemplary record.

Queen of the fairies! The human had her so discombobulated she was eating animal flesh. Animal flesh! And his number one pupil didn't even seem to know it.

"What to do? What?" He couldn't call her home. Not now. Once she reached for the human libation, Tragar knew his perfect record was spoilt. Until the alcohol's arousing affects wound their way through her system, there was no reaching her.

Tragar's ears drooped. His arms dropped to the ground in disappointment, kicking up a cloud of dust. Knuckles dragging, he paced, contemplating the probable ruin of his star student. The light had gone out of his day.

"Clouds. All clouds."

\* \* \* \*

Aurora stood her ground, waiting for the gorgeous man in front of her to make up his mind. It wasn't supposed to be this difficult to seduce a man, was it?

Staring at the delectable morsel who towered over her a good foot, she was actually glad her assignment was a bust. So what if the penalty was banishment to the Underworld for an eon or two? A few nights in Charlie's arms might just be worth it.

Oh, who was she kidding? Of course it would be worth it. Just the thought of his name had her fingers

curling into her palms and her shoulder blades twitching. She couldn't believe the way she'd just touched him ... trailing her nails across his arm. Why, he probably thought she was a floozy. Or worse, a tramp.

Well, so what? She wanted him, and ... damn the damn goat! Aurora was going after her man.

Charlie just stood there, staring at her, moving her almost as much as the alcohol. Maybe more. Looking into his eyes, so deep, so dark, she was lost, utterly lost.

She tried to ignore the tension gathering throughout her body and figure out why he hadn't answered her. Maybe she hadn't asked him right. Trixie always said that men were stupid. Maybe Charlie didn't understand what she wanted.

She rose onto her toes, and placed her hands on his shoulders. Pulling him down, she spoke in his ear. "Charlie, would you like to have sex? With me?"

## Chapter Two

His head turned so fast his nose bumped against her cheek. He gripped her tightly around the waist and lifted her off the floor until their eyes were level. "Are you sure?"

Warmth from his hands seeped into her body. Oh, she liked being near humans. This one in particular. "I would like it ever so much."

The startled look left his face, and his lips widened in an alluring grin as he set her on her feet, and reached for her hand. "Lovely lady, your wish is my..."

"Professor! Professor Manning!"

The strident tone blasted through her ears, dazing her for a moment, and she stumbled. She gripped Charlie's hand tightly in order to remain upright. He immediately put his arm around her and pulled her close. Heat cascaded over her, blocking everything else.

When she could focus again, Charlie was talking with three ancient females who had the same wrinkly face set amidst various colors of hair, and another man with lots of clothes on. Bright white clothes with shiny gold ribbons and pins.

"...telling Captain Williams how you promised to give us a private little star party tonight. He'd like to join us, if you don't mind."

"Oh. Well, um, maybe tomorrow..." Charlie's voice trailed off, and he looked between her and the expectant people around them.

Star party? She almost levitated with excitement. The thought of having sex with Charlie in the stars made flunking her assignment seem doubly worthwhile. She hadn't been to a party in the stars for ages. The last time her lineage had gathered off Rigel, her older sister Muriel pulled the wings off a spacefly. Mother had been so mortified, she sent them all home early. Since growing up, her studies kept her too busy to party, but she just loved visiting the stars. She pulled on his arm with glee. "Oh yes, let's do the star party."

He looked surprised, then disappointed. "Really? *Now?*"

"I absolutely adore the stars. We can still have sex..."

\* \* \* \*

Charles coughed loudly, then squeezed her against him. "Well, ladies, Captain, it looks like I'll be your tour guide for the stars tonight. One semi-professional constellation tour coming up. If you'll lead the way, Captain, to the best viewing area on deck?"

"Constellation tour? What?" Grumped the old woman with hair the color of blueberries. "That's not right. You're supposed to..."

"Thank you, Charles," the frailest one said, interrupting her sister's confusing complaint. She stood and leaned on her cane, her poor pate almost bald. "It's nice of you to take time out from your vacation. Isn't that right, sisters?"

"Well, I wasn't so sure you still wanted to, *Professor Manning*. The way you skipped dessert and all, standing there, staring at..." Orange-haired Harriet looked pointedly at the woman tucked into his side.

"That little hussy."

Huh. The blue-haired one was a bitch, calling his woman names, Charles thought, holding her even closer. He wanted to tell blue-hair she could shove her disparaging remarks right up her tight, wrinkly--

"Can it, Mabel." The almost-no-haired one gave him a wink and poked her sister in the side with her cane.

His stance relaxed. This one was all right in his book.

"Yes, Hazel." Chastised, blue-haired Mabel waved the damn napkin in front of her face again, brushing away her embarrassment at being called to task in front of others. Served her right, damn biddy.

Harriet continued, glossing over the interruption. "The way you, uh, were acting so distracted and all, I wasn't sure you'd still be up for this."

*Oh, I'm up for it, all right.* Charles looked at the woman by his side. Her wide, excited smile was small compensation to his disappointed dick.

He couldn't believe she wanted him to give a damn constellation tour to a gaggle of shipboard geezers, not when the two of them could be sprawled on his bed, butt naked, moaning all over each other in the throes of ecstasy. God, how he wanted her lips around him. How he wanted to lick every part of her. He could imagine her taste, so light and delicate ... wispy, like her barely-there dress. A shudder ripped through him. Good thing he'd skipped dessert after all. His stomach couldn't take much more.

Not only did she have him by the balls, but this small woman tied his gut in knots unlike anything he could remember.

The captain led the vocal triplets and several other passengers that had gathered toward the exit. The woman curled her arm around his and threaded their fingers together as they followed the small entourage out of the dining room and onto an open-air deck. Wind whipped the sides of his jacket in every direction and he struggled to button it closed with his free hand, while holding on to her with the other. No way was he letting go of his dinner companion cum soon-to-be bed-partner.

Walking at a leisurely pace to allow the others to get ahead of them, Charles said, "I didn't catch your name at dinner."

"That's because I didn't throw it." She laughed, hugging his arm closer, and looking at him through the veil of her lashes. "I'm Aurora."

Ah, as in the colorful lights of the Aurora borealis. It fit. "Well, my darling Aurora, you have certainly surprised me tonight."

"In a good way, I hope?"

He heard the earnest inquiry in her tone. His feet slowed, then stilled. He swung her around to face him. "In a very good way."

Tugging her to him, Charles leaned down to press his lips against hers. Damn, if she didn't float up to meet him.

The first touch of her lips was magic. In an instant, the vague, annoying feelings that had plagued his stomach vanished, coalescing into raging hot desire. Pure need erupted and he backed her against the



ship's railing, devouring her mouth with his.

The humid, windy air surrounded them, bringing a light chill to the back of his neck. He gripped her against him, wanting to shield her from the evening's dew. Her lips were soft, ripe, and his erection grew hard and thick as he plundered the inner recesses of her mouth.

Where had this sex-starved scientist sprung from? He didn't recognize himself. Instead of displaying the serious mien and calm façade Dr. Manning presented to the world, he was acting like an out-of-control adolescent. His dick felt like a red giant about to explode. And he loved it. Allowing his desire free rein for the first time in years, he--

She squirmed in his arms, momentarily subduing his intensity. He dragged his lips from hers, breathing heavily, and placed one arm behind her on the ship's railing. "What ... too fast? I'm sorry ... I can't seem..." In his excitement, he was almost panting, unable to catch his breath. He squeezed the metal rail, trying to regain control. "I'll slow down. I promise. I didn't mean..."

Her fingers traced his lips, still wet from her tongue, halting his words. "Oh, no. I love what you're doing. Don't slow down. It's just that I wanted to touch you, and my arm was trapped between us."

At her explanation, he relaxed his death grip on the rail, and his tongue slipped out to meet her still-questing fingers. Instead of tasting a hint of salt air as he expected, her skin was sweet. Sweet and smooth. His lips wrapped around one of her fingers and he pulled it into his mouth, running his tongue over the slender digit and sucking gently. "You taste of..."

He struggled to describe it. Sugar? Honey? No, neither was right. Letting her finger slide from his mouth, Charles placed a hand against her cheek and tilted her head to the side. He gazed at her moonlit eyes for one brief moment, then bent to lick the smooth skin of her jaw. Ambrosia. Magnolias. He ran his tongue down the side of her neck, addicted, but past caring. Euphoria. Rainbows.

Huh? Rainbows? Was he out of his ever-lovin' mind? How could anyone taste of rainbows? Or euphoria?

Unwilling to follow that line of thought, he pushed everything away in his single-minded determination to taste all of her. Trailing his tongue past her collarbone, he moved toward her breast.

The filmy dress provided no barrier at all. His tongue easily found her nipple through the gossamer cloth and he savored her. He didn't care if he was insane. This experience, this woman ... it all felt wonderful, intense. Better than anything he could remember. Ahhh, he finally recognized her flavor. "Nectar," he spoke around her nipple, trying to fill his mouth and express the chaotic thoughts churning through him all at once. "Aurora, you taste of the nectar of the gods."

Showing her appreciation of his comment--or possibly of his talented tongue--she thrust her breast further against his mouth, and sank her nails into his scalp. God, the minute pain from those tiny arcs pressing into his skin combined with what his mouth was doing tilted his world off its axis. He--

"Professor Mannniinnnggg! Where are yooouuuu?"

The untimely reminder that they were in a very public place shocked him. He was expected to conduct himself in a professional and coherent manner in a few moments. Where was his self-control? He forced his lips to release her breast, covering the moist mound with his hand and bringing his mouth back to hers. He was breathing as if he'd run a marathon. The sharp point of her nipple pressed into his palm and his fingers instinctively contracted, holding the slight weight of her breast more firmly. The hollow

feeling was back in his gut. Shit, he'd barely known her for half a day, and he was a goner.

"Dammit," he mumbled against her lips. "I don't want to stop."

"Then don't." She licked his lips, then dove her tongue straight into his mouth.

The groan he made could probably be heard in the Andromeda Galaxy, 2.9 million light years away.

\* \* \* \*

Aurora laughed at the sound, and continued to kiss him.

"Ohhh, Prooooofesssorrrr! Are you cominnnggg?"

He pulled back from her with a grimace. "I guess *that* will have to wait for later," he muttered.

"Come on! Our star party awaits!" She grabbed his hand and took off toward the others, practically flying over the deck.

When they arrived at the bow of the ship, a small crowd milled about, waiting for the impromptu star party. Were they as excited as she was? The choppy waves sounded louder here as the giant vessel sliced its way through the water. Charlie kept a firm grasp on her hand, and walked to the captain, who was easy to spot, his white uniform reflecting the soft moonlight.

"Ah, there you are, Professor Manning." The captain held out his hand in greeting. When Charlie transferred his hold on Aurora to his left palm so he could respond to the captain without letting go of her, she felt herself glow with pleasure. "I took the liberty of asking the waitstaff to bring some refreshments. Now that dinner is over, I'm officially off-duty for the night. What better way to relax than with a sky full of stars and a rye and ginger, eh?"

Charlie shot her a look and rolled his eyes before he responded to the captain. She bit back a laugh.

"Right you are, sir. We've got such a flat horizon here at sea and a cloudless sky tonight. It should make for excellent viewing. I only hope I can do your beautiful night sky justice."

Two waiters meandered through the small crowd, dispensing the glasses of wine and champagne they carried on their trays, as well as taking orders for other drinks. Aurora snagged a glass when the waiter passed by. Sipping the alcohol, she gave herself up to the pleasure of the night. Time enough tomorrow to decide what she was going to do about Tragar and the blasted goat assignment, *after* Charlie's star party. For tonight, the decision had been taken out of her hands the moment she saw him again at dinner.

"Let's get started then, eh?" the captain said. "Everyone, if you'll gather around, we're fortunate to have a professional astronomer in our midst tonight who is going to grace us with a little tour of the stars."

She heard Charlie cough self-consciously as he relinquished her hand and dug into his pocket for what turned out to be a small laser pointer. Aurora leaned against his back, reaching her arms around his middle to give him a quick hug for confidence. He was so unlike the cocky, know-it-all male fairies back home. His nervousness made her want him even more.

"All right, folks." He cleared his throat then pointed the laser beam into the heavens. "We'll start with a couple of the brighter objects that are out tonight. If everyone will look just above the moon, you'll see a slightly reddish looking object. That's Mars."

\* \* \* \*

Several *oooooos* and *ahhhhhhs* followed his statement. "The god of war, right?" someone asked.

"Ha! War? I always say make love." *Thump!* "Not war."

"Hazel! We're in public."

"Don't be such a prude, Mabel. I've made plenty of love, in my day, I tell you." *Thump! Thump!* "Plenty."

Charles felt Aurora shaking with silent laughter, and he struggled not to join her. These three broads were worse than the college kids that frequented his constellation tours back home.

"Ahem. Let's see ... if you'll all turn around, there's Saturn, in the constellation of Cancer, above the horizon a bit."

Aurora snuggled closer, creating rings around his thoughts. She had her thumbs tucked into his waistband and her hands rested against his hip bones. Just a few inches closer, and she'd be able to feel the hard ridge of his erection.

"Saturn? It looks like a bright star to me." The comment came from the far side of the deck.

"You can see the planet, and even its ring structure, in a good set of binoculars or a small telescope. For now, I'll just point out basic star formations, all right?" The neon green laser beam shot into the sky again. He could feel Aurora nestled along his back, her diminutive form belying the amount of heat their proximity generated. He tried--hard--to sound coherent to their fellow observers. "Do you see the backward question mark just beneath Cancer on the horizon? That's the head of Leo, the lion. We'll be able to see most of it in a while. On the other side of Cancer the crab is Gemini, the twins. And right above it is Taurus, the bull, and then..."

"But what about Capricorn, Professor? Where is that?"

"It's not out this time of year. Each of..."

"But Capricorn is our sign and our birthday is next week. Why can't we see it?"

By now, he recognized the enthusiastic tone of her voice, and took an educated guess on the speaker. "Well, Miss Harriet, the zodiac constellations are called your *sun* signs," Charles began, letting his arm take a break from holding the laser pointer. He took a moment to reach around and run his hand down Aurora's side, lightly squeezing the outside of her thigh.

"I know that. I've been going to astrologers for years, you know," she chastised him.

"The term sun sign means our Sun is actually in that specific constellation, which is why you can't see it right now. It would be visible during the day, only our Sun's light blocks it out."

"But I wanted to..."

"Quit pestering Professor Charles, Harry. He's doing his job. A true Capricorn trait, so you've told me more than once, if you'll recall."

"All I see is how stubborn you're being. Another trait, I'll have you know. No wonder your knees are bad, Hazel. You're inflexible. Just like the old goa..."

Hoping to stave off the forthcoming argument, Charles interrupted. "Ah. If you'll look to the side of Gemini and Taurus, we have a widely recognized constellation. Anyone know what that is?"

"Orion!" Several voices responded.

"That's right. Orion, the hunter. These four stars make up his body." Charles reluctantly relinquished his grasp on Aurora and pointed to the stars. Her softly mewed protest went straight to his groin. "This bright star located at his knee is Rigel. It's the seventh brightest star in our nighttime sky. Below, the Orion Nebula is part of his belt and sword. It's..."

"Is it true that it wasn't his sword at first? But his penis?"

"Hazel! How could you?" Mabel complained.

"I'm so embarrassed!" wailed Harriet.

"Grow up, girls. Penis, vagina, breasts, buttocks ... everybody here knows who's got what and where it goes."

"Oh, Lordy..."

"Professor Charles? His sword?" Hazel asked again.

Charles felt Aurora's hands leave the side of his hips, and under the cover of his suit jacket, she slipped her fingers into the edge of his front pockets. Sweat beaded his upper lip. He wanted to remove his jacket but didn't dare. Dark or not, the bulge in his pants was sure to draw attention, and all this talk of penises certainly wasn't helping. "Well, ah, yes. When the constellations were first identified, it was before man had fashioned steel swords. I have heard that Orion's sword was originally considered..." *His heavy, throbbing dick.* "...his, uh, phallus. Moving on..."

"Are there any other planets out tonight?" Saved by the man in the white suit. The captain had procured a pair of binoculars and was staring intently at the sky.

"None that we can see. Uranus just set, right before we came out, but it can't be seen by the naked..." He felt her fingers pull away from his pockets and wondered what was coming next. Slowly, her hands slid across his waist and down, tracing the outline of his buttocks. Then her fingers came up the seam of his pants in between his ass cheeks, setting off all kinds of nuclear reactions in his own sword.

The laser pointer jerked in his hand, abruptly shifting to another part of the sky. "Eye! Ah, just south of Orion's, ahem, *sword*, is Lepus the Rabbit."

Quick as a bunny, her hands left the crevice of his ass and snaked around into his pockets again, then south, heading straight for his already engorged cock. The thin material lining the inside of his pockets did nothing to dull the touch of her fingers which glided against his length, pressing around him firmly. Thank God he'd left his jacket on. A family of four could probably camp under the tent she'd created in his pants. When her fingers lightly traced the swollen head of his penis, he couldn't hold back a groan.

Unexpectedly, her teasing hands ceased their tantalizing torture. The breath whooshed from his lungs. Good God, he'd had enough. Wrenching her fingers out of his pockets, he grabbed her hand and pulled her in front of him. Guiding her into his chest, he leaned down and whispered. "Turnabout is fair play. Now stand here and behave."

"Whatever you say." The delightful sprite nestled against him, pushing her bottom into his groin. He bit

back a growl.

"Sexy, man! That's cool!" A teenager had edged his way closer. He spoke with crisp fast diction, identifying himself as English rather than American. "I've seen the rabbit shape on the moon before, but I didn't know there was a rabbit constellation. Wizard!"

"Yeah, uh..." He tamped down the sexual vibrations that raged in his body and strove to make sense. "Uh ... some cultures say Orion is hunting the hare, others say he's aiming his bow at Taurus the bull."

Fortunately, that comment started a spate of conversation about ancient cultures and mythology, allowing Charles a moment to get his bearings. He unbuttoned his jacket and turned Aurora to face him, inhaling her heady, floral fragrance and wondering if he would ever be the same.

Under the cover of darkness, he slid his hand along the length of her spine and cupped the cheek of her ass. Smooth. Firm. A handful. He was in pure heaven. Of their own accord, his fingers twitched inward, almost coming to rest at the crease of her buttocks. He tried to remember the next constellation he meant to point out, but one thought knocked everything else out of his mind.

"You're not wearing any underwear," he whispered as his fingers slid further inside the crease of her legs, drawing the fabric of her dress with them.

She arched her back, slightly pushing her core towards his questing fingers. Her hands went around his waist. "I never do."

"Oh, God." His voice sounded much louder than he'd expected, and several heads turned their way. "Ah, God ... God, uh, surely did design a wondrous blanket of stars for us to gaze upon each night. Didn't he?"

Murmurs of agreement followed his statement, and no one seemed to suspect anything out of the ordinary, thank God. His fingers inched forward, sensing her heat and wanting nothing more than to dive inside.

### Chapter Three

It didn't take Aurora long to figure out her idea of a star party differed significantly from the humans'. But instead of being disappointed, she was almost relieved. At a crowded fey party, everyone would have been vying for Charlie's attention, and she didn't want to share him. Even with other humans nearby, the cover of night allowed her free rein to touch and explore him.

And explore him she did. Especially since she'd grown bold a few minutes ago and cupped him in her hand. Remembering the way his maleness filled her palm caused the ache centered between her legs to intensify, and she pressed against him, wishing he would fill her.

"Well, I for one don't see a rabbit. I thought you were going to *read* the stars for us."

"Yes, Professor Manning. Harriet's right. I didn't count on getting a crick in my neck, looking up. I was expecting to hear my horoscope. Humpf."

Luxuriating in his heat, in the poker-hot feel of his fingers probing her bottom, she never wanted to return home. Her cheek pressed against his chest, and she heard the loud thundering of his heart. He squeezed the lobe of her bottom, then released her and cleared his throat.

"Ladies, are you familiar with the Seven Sisters?"

Aurora held her breath.

"It's also known as the Pleiades. This open star cluster is almost straight overhead."

His arm moved across her shoulders to point with the laser. With his other arm anchored across her lower back, he pulled her to him. The hard ridge of his erection pressed insistently against her stomach. Her core felt so empty. Oh, how she wished she were taller. She wiggled closer and almost howled in frustration. In response, his hand splayed across her shoulder blades and mashed her breasts against his chest. Comets and kismet, how wonderful it felt.

"Oooo, you mean the little dipper?" One of the ancient women asked.

"A lot of people mistakenly think that, Miss Mabel, but no, that's the Seven Sisters."

She loved hearing Charlie talk about her homeland.

"But I've always been told it's the little dipper, too. Ever since I was a little girl and all." The other woman was adamant, and her raised voice caused Aurora to flinch.

"Yeah, and we all know how long *that's* been. Ha!" *Thump!*

"The Seven Sisters?" Another observer commented. "You know, I've heard some people on Earth claim to be from there. Is there any truth to that?"

Charlie tensed then shook his head, causing his chest to rub against her nipples. Aurora felt her body's corresponding response all the way to her toes. She shifted to his side and gazed at the stars in question. They seemed to be winking at her.

"Of course not," he told his audience. "That's just a ridiculous old wives' tale."

"I still say it's the little dipper. Harumph."

Toads and trolls, but that woman's voice was piercing!

"Little dipper, schmitter. The man is a professional, Harry. Give it a rest."

"But it is a *dipper*. And it's *little*. I just don't see how it can't be..."

"You two are as stubborn as all get out. Another one of those Capricorn traits you're so fond of, I wager. Ha!" *Thump!*

"Yes, well so is being socially responsible, Hazel. And your snide little comments are certainly not..."

"Land sakes, Harry, you know I think that astrology claptrap is pure hogwash. I only know so much from listening to you two yak about it every year."

"Well, Harriet and I think it's remarkably accurate." Demonstrating her newfound knowledge, the woman pointed to the heavens with the pale napkin she'd swiped from the dinner table. "After Professor Manning showed us Saturn, I remembered that the sign of Capricorn is ruled by Saturn."

"Huh?"

Poor Charlie seemed perplexed at his loss of control. Aurora hugged him tighter.

"And, it's an *earth* sign, so you can just put that in your girdle, Hazel, and smoke it."

"I've had enough, both of you. If mother were here she'd be appalled by your behavior." The old woman thumped her cane on the deck, punctuating her frustration. "Captain, Professor Charles, thank you for an enjoyable evening. I'm hitting the hay before I do something totally out of character and wring their necks. Or, better yet, throw 'em both overboard. Ha!" She inclined her head towards her sisters, who had gathered a small crowd around them and were discussing astrology. "This may well be the last cruise I take with them. Next year, I think I'll celebrate my birthday alone. Thank you again, Professor. It's certainly been educational. Maybe the captain can arrange a nice little massage for me at the spa tomorrow, to work the crick out of *my* neck? From my pain in the ass sisters, you know. Ha! They were booked when I tried to arrange something earlier, but I bet you can pull rank, right?"

Aurora watched the captain tip his head in acknowledgment, then down the rest of his drink. "I think this will be it for me as well, eh? Morning comes early on the high seas. Thank you, Professor ... Mrs. Manning? Allow me, Miss Hazel, to escort you to your cabin. And tomorrow, I'll be happy to arrange..."

His words faded as, with a slight weave to his walk, the captain and his elderly companion led a small exodus away from the observation deck. Only a few stragglers remained, wanting to hear anything else that Charlie might share.

"Well, folks, I guess it's about time we conclude our lesson for the night. If you'll notice, Leo the lion has..."

"Look!" The teenager called out. "A falling star! Wizard!"

"Actually, that's not..."

Aurora raised her hand to Charlie's lips and halted his technical explanation of falling space rock. "Let them believe. Humans need that."

He looked startled by her words. After a moment of searching her eyes, he nodded then kissed her

fingertips. "Yes, on any given night, you might see one or two dozen *falling stars*."

After sharing this bit of information, he looked at her, as if checking for her approval. She nodded in pleasure. Her initial suspicions were right. Her Charlie was a good man. She was glad she'd kept quiet about the other cause for apparent falling stars--fairies entering Earth's atmosphere. She didn't want to scare him off before she got to know him better. A lot better.

The teenager and his parents walked over. "You give a wonderful program, sir," the father spoke up. "Cheers to you and your wife for sharing it with us tonight."

\* \* \* \*

Picking at his pointy teeth with the still-green twig, Tragar rolled his large, bulbous eyes, staring at the scene being acted out on the big boat. It hurt to watch. "Star student no more. No more."

The gravelly-sounding words escaped past a throat thick with disappointment.

*What* did Aurora see in that human? The man was big and hairy (never mind the fact that Tragar had hair curling out of his own ears and nose) and he was stupid. Couldn't the man tell that Aurora didn't belong?

It was her job to complete her assignment, then return home. She wasn't supposed to lose sight of her training and her upbringing and hang all over the large man like a nymphet. *Where* was her pride?

A big sneeze caught him off guard. Tragar could practically smell her arousal from here ... 400 light years away. "Disgusting. So disgusting."

What was he to do? As long as she was affected by the alcohol, there would be no reaching her. And what would he do if her attraction to the human didn't wane? "Insane. All insane."

He could lose his job over this. Should he contact her mother? His ears shuddered at the thought. That had to be a last resort. Perhaps he could speak with one of her sisters? Maybe they--

"No. Heavens, no." They were as likely to turn him into a toadstool as help him.

He spit the chewed twig from his mouth and scratched the side of his nose. Aurora's scent was getting stronger. He sneezed again. Why did he have to be so attuned to his students? He had to find something to get rid of the stench. Where was a good dung beetle when you needed it?

Perhaps he would simply wait until she no longer wanted the human, and then call her back. Alcohol or not, she couldn't stay this aroused forever. Another sneeze built...

*Aaa-CHOOOO!*

By the Queen's wings! "Why me? Why?"

\* \* \* \*

"Let's get out of here, *wife*." Charlie placed strong emphasis on the last word--echoing the captain's erroneous label--and causing Aurora to laugh. "After the last hour of torture, I need to have you all to myself."

"I think I know a place where we can be alone." Maybe her fruitless search throughout the ship would prove useful.



"Your cabin?" Charlie asked, looking at her with a hopeful expression.

"Someplace better."

"Hmmm, I like the sound of that."

She took his hand and slowly started walking along the deck. "Me, too. I didn't expect to meet someone like you today."

"That makes two of us." He hugged her to his side. "Any second thoughts?"

"Second thoughts?" It took her a moment to discern his meaning. "About having sex? Oh, no. I'm looking forward to it."

"God, you're so refreshing. No woman has ever talked so openly to me before. I like it."

"You're easy to talk to, Charlie."

"And that's another thing. I'm so used to being Charles or Dr. Manning that when you call me *Charlie*, I feel like a kid again."

"Is that a good thing?"

"Considering that I feel as randy as a teenager, and I'm loving every minute of it, I'd call it a good thing. I think I've been spending way too much time behind my desk at work."

Swinging their joined hands, she said, "Tell me about your work. I know that you're an *astrologer*." The last word was accompanied by a wink, letting him know she was teasing.

"God forbid. I think that must be the bane of every self-respecting astronomer--being confused for a charlatan astrologer."

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe they aren't all bad."

In the dim light, his face looked crestfallen. "Don't tell me you believe in all that horoscope nonsense?"

Aurora paused a minute in their walk through the ship and ran her fingers over his chest. Toying with the long silky fabric knotted around his neck, she said, "Not necessarily, but I've learned to be open-minded about things."

He reached up and helped her untie the knot. "Such as?"

"Things I'm not familiar with." *Like human men*. "Or ... things I simply don't know anything about." *Like sex with human men*.

"But horoscopes? Astrology? That stuff is just drivel. A pure waste of time and money."

"Maybe someday you'll meet a fairy who will teach you about things you don't know..." She played with the top fastened button on his shirt and let the suggestion hang in the air.

"A fairy, huh?" Thankfully, he didn't laugh, and he abandoned his stubborn position on ancient star-science. "I'd rather *you* taught me."

Loosening the button from its hole, she ran her fingers along the edges of his shirt, feeling the heat

beneath. "I think that can be arranged."

\* \* \* \*

Charles ran his eyes over the deck, making sure they had privacy. They'd stopped near an open-air swimming pool, and fortunately, the area was devoid of people. From the muted music in the distance, most of the still-awake passengers likely populated the casino or one of the dance/karaoke bars.

A few strands of her long hair had escaped their knot and he wound them around his hand. "Since college, it seems like I've been so busy between work and research, I've forgotten how to relax. Tonight, with you, has been wonderful."

At his words, her beautiful amethyst eyes shone with pleasure. Her fingers on his neck sent coils of desire straight to his groin.

"So, what do you study, *Professor*?"

"Every time I've heard that tonight, I think I'm on Gilligan's Island," he laughed.

Her expressive face showed her confusion. "Never mind. I work in extrasolar planetary research. Most recently, I've been studying stars' gravitational fluctuations to determine if they could be caused by orbital motion, which would indicate the likely presence of a planet-like object nearby. Some scientists use a Doppler shift technique to measure variations, others focus on pulsar output. There've been many discoveries recently using the large Keck telescopes in Hawaii. That's why I'm headed there for an interview as their resident astronomer. The equipment I have access to is good, but this would be better."

During his explanation, her hands left his collar and wrapped themselves in the ends of his tie. She tugged, bringing his face level with hers. "I have absolutely, positively no idea what you just said, but I'm impressed anyway. You sound so ... sexy, saying those scientific things. Tell me more," she invited, kissing his lips.

Reluctantly, he pulled back. "That's enough about me. Are you here with anyone? Friends? Family?"

"No. I'm here alone." She hesitated before continuing. "I'm on assignment."

"Oh, you're a reporter?"

"You could say that. I do hope to be reporting..." She paused, then with a mischievous look finished quickly. "Reporting back to my sister with tales of the fantastic sex we're going to have."

"Damn, but you're amazing." So, at least he knew she had a sister. He tried again. "It's unusual to be alone on a cruise ship."

"Aren't you?" She started playing with his shirt once more, dipping her fingers in between the buttons and caressing his stomach. His muscles contracted in response.

"Yeah, but that's because I've got that interview. Fortunately, I had enough vacation time for this ridiculously long cruise." Should he tell her the rest? *What the hell?* He was pretty sure he was getting laid either way. "The truth is, I'm too chicken to fly."

"I *love* to fly." He heard a wistful note in her voice.

"Really? Scares the shit out of me. Why else would I take a month off this summer, supposedly for

vacation, when I really just didn't want to get on a plane? God, I can't believe I'm telling you this."

"Maybe you just haven't flown with the right person yet."

"Hmmm, maybe." Charles noticed her looking from his neck to the pool, and was eager to change the subject. "Are you contemplating a midnight swim?"

"Oh, no." Her fingers left his shirt, damn it, and she began weaving around the lounge chairs, touching each one as she passed. Over her shoulder, she gave him come-hither looks with every other step. "I'm not comfortable around a lot of water."

Those looks went straight to his groin. "Then why come on a cruise?"

She shrugged. "I don't really enjoy swimming or..." He watched her tongue reach out and caress her lips. "Getting wet."

God, she aroused him. In three strides, he caught up with her. "Woman, if you're even half as wet as I am hard, we're both in for one hell of a ride."

Instead of scaring her off, his words seemed to excite her. "I am. Wet for you. Are you ready ... for me?"

"More than you'll ever know." He traced the swell of her breast through her dress, his mouth watering at the remembered taste. His dick danced in his pants, ready to waltz in and tango with her twat.

"I think I do know. Follow me, Charlie." Trembling from his touch, she backed up a step, turned, and practically flew into a darkened corridor and down a staircase.

Pushing lounge chairs out of his way, he did as she instructed and stayed close on her heels. There were so many things he wanted to know. Why would she come on a cruise if she didn't like water? Why did she act so innocent and unschooled one moment, then so damn seductive and knowing the next?

Where had she been all his life?

It took all of his concentration to follow her progress through the ship. She moved swiftly, as if she knew every inch of the large vessel. Giving the noisy casino a wide berth, she skirted around it and into a sparsely populated nightclub, stopping a moment to grab two champagne glasses from a tray at the open bar before ducking outside and down another corridor. She stopped and waited for him at the entrance to the closed spa.

"Here?"

"Trust me." Pushing the door open with her hip, she walked through the waiting room, past the empty gym, and outside onto a lounging area at the stern of the ship. Small, yellow lanterns lit the deck. Thankfully, it was deserted.

She set the glasses of champagne on a table between two lounge chairs, and twirled around, holding her arms to the sky. "Isn't it glorious? It's my favorite part of the entire ship. I wanted to share it with you."

He looked inside the doorway and found just what he wanted. With a flick of the switch he turned off the lights, leaving the area illuminated by the stars and nothing else. Wrenching off his jacket, he threw it on one of the chairs.

"Aurora? Are we still going to do this?" His voice sounded rough, abrupt. The smooth scientist was gone. In his place was a wild man, his cock so damned stiff he could jackhammer concrete. He probably

would, if she changed her mind.

## Chapter Four

"So, Pops, what'd she drink?" The pink-haired, bubblegum chewing pixie sat on the back of a dragonfly, zooming around his ears.

Tragar thought hard. What did the humans call that sparkly libation? "Bubbles. Golden. With bubbles."

"Champagne?" Smack, smack went the gum. "Anything else? It's important."

"Grapes. Fermented, plum grapes." His lips puckered at the thought.

"Tragar, you silly troll, that's nothing. Wine and champagne? We can metabolize fruit-based beverages in our sleep. That kind of alcohol isn't affecting her at all." Trixie kicked the sides of her ride and whooshed by his ear, tugging on an errant hair as she passed. She always had been the most difficult one of the bunch. He should have called Muriel, or Rion, or, heavens save him, even Trip.

"Not affecting? Not?"

"Nah, it's gotta be the hard stuff." Smack! She flew in front of his face and landed between his eyes.

"What then? What?" He rubbed his ear where it still hurt, wishing he'd called anyone but Trixie.

"I don't know ... maybe she's batty about this human. But it's not the liquor." Smack, smack.

Cross-eyed, he watched her blow a bubble with the offensive human-manufactured gum.

"Zeus knows she's overdue for a fling. She probably just needs to get her rocks off, then she'll be ready to come home. Guess there goes your teacher of the year award."

Pop!

The bubblegum bubble landed in his ear and Trixie flew away, laughing.

\* \* \* \*

Aurora stopped spinning and watched Charlie approach. His white shirt reflected eerily in the starlight. The long ends of fabric dangled from his neck. Shadowed skin showed between the edges of his shirt where she'd unbuttoned it earlier.

He stopped inches away, and their eyes locked. His warmth enveloped her, banishing the chill from the night air. She scooted backward until the ship's rail pressed into her back. "I got the champagne in case I was nervous. Now I don't care. I want you, Charlie. I may not do it right, but I want to do it with you."

Still standing in the middle of the deck, his hands closed into fists. An astonished look came over his face. "You're not a virgin, are you?"

"No, but I haven't..."

He lunged forward and wrapped his arms around her, pressing his mouth to hers, stopping the flow of her words. His lips were hot, his tongue full and wet in her mouth. This ... *this* is what she'd craved almost from the moment she landed.

His big hands tugged at the neckline of her dress, easing the fabric past her shoulder and down her arm, revealing one of her breasts. Releasing her mouth, he looked where the sheer fabric caught on the swell of her other breast. He quickly dispensed with that as well, pulling the material until it rested on her hips,

freeing her arms and leaving her breasts exposed.

Aurora watched as both of her nipples beaded, begging for him. "Touch me again there, please. With your mouth."

"Gladly." His head swooped down and he took her nipple between his lips, running his tongue over the hardened tip and gently biting with his teeth. Exquisite sensations exploded in her breast. This was better than coasting on clouds or riding on raindrops.

Edgy from the desire building in her body, she pushed him away and frantically pulled the sides of his shirt apart, wrenching the tiny buttons from their holes. The moment his chest was bared, she sighed. "Oh, Charlie, you are so beautiful." Her fingers traced a path through the light covering of hair, from his collarbones, past his pectoral muscles, and across his hard stomach. Heat gathered in her palms. "And hot ... you are so hot..."

Gripping her arms, he turned her and placed both her hands around the rail in front of them. "Hold on, sweetheart. I think if we don't do something about it soon, we're both liable to go up in flames."

He pressed his chest against her bare back, the skin-to-skin contact almost scorching. The wind tossed her long dress around her legs, the fabric teasing her with its nebulous caress. Charlie's erection rubbed against her bottom and the moisture flowed between her legs. His hands cupped her breasts, his large thumbs rubbing over her nipples.

"Your touch is heaven..." she told him, "pure heaven." As she stood there, unsteady on her feet, the ship's wake trailing out behind them, Aurora looked into the sky, and thanked her lucky stars for this assignment.

\* \* \* \*

Charles wondered if he should pinch himself. He was standing in the starlight, with his shirt undone and his arms wrapped around the most beautiful, delicate creature he'd ever met. He must be the luckiest bastard alive. The gentle swells of her breasts filled his palms perfectly. He kneaded the soft flesh, growing impossibly hard at the sight of her nude torso glowing in the starlight. With his thumb, he tilted her chin to the side, pressing his lips against her mouth. His tongue swiped over her lips and into her mouth, sipping her nectar. "God, you're gorgeous."

He relinquished his hold on her breast and lifted her right leg to place her foot on the second tier railing, positioning her body to accommodate his. He aligned his left leg beneath hers, further supporting her weight as she balanced on one foot. Reaching past her dress, his hand slid along her thigh, bunching the sheer fabric until he touched the swollen folds surrounding her sex. Her hips jerked forward, searching for fulfillment.

Moisture covered his questing fingers. Against her mouth, he whispered, "You're so wet, so ready for me."

"Yes," she gasped. Tearing her mouth from his, she gripped the rail with both hands. The wind whipped her dress around them, waving the sheer fabric like a flag of surrender. Drenched, his fingers slid along the crevice of her body, caressing her skin from the hollow above her clit, through the moist depths of her sex, to the tender area just beneath her anus.

Slowly, he traced the path again. And again. Keeping a steady pace, he rubbed her entrance, preparing her for his eventual entry. Faster now, his own hips jerking in tandem with the motion, his fingers moved. He gritted his teeth, searching for control. She writhed in his arms, pushing her body against his

swiftly pulsing hand. "Charlie, please."

"Please what?" he asked, slowing the frantic pace of his fingers, and praying he wouldn't come in his pants.

"Touch me!" Her pelvis jerked backward, searching for his hand.

Sexual frustration made him abrupt. "Good God, woman, what do you think I'm doing?"

"My ... bottom. I want..." She pushed her butt against his groin, sending bursts of white lightning straight to his cock. Shaking her head, practically bent over in half, her long hair flew out and wrapped around him, ensnaring him further. Almost yelling, she tried again. "I want you. To touch. My bottom. I..."

Eager to oblige, he rimmed the edges of her pussy one last time, before pressing his thumb against her clit and sliding his long fingers past her wet tunnel, not stopping until they rested at the entrance of her ass.

Covered in her juices, he circled the puckered hole of her anus before inserting his middle finger up to the first knuckle. His thumb spasmed against her clit. She moaned and rotated her hips. Licking her neck, he asked, "Like this?"

"Ummm." Rocking her hips from side to side, her ass circled his finger. He felt her muscles clenching and unclenching around him. "Yes, only..."

She broke off, heaved a sigh, opened the muscles of her rectum further, and pushed against his finger until he was embedded to the hilt.

Charles felt his control slipping. "Only ... what?" he growled past a tight throat, lightly biting her neck.

"Only..." She swiveled her hips against his hand again. "I feel empty. I want..."

"Say it, Aurora. Tell me." The wind blew her hair against his face. He took a deep breath, and several strands tangled between his lips.

"I want you. I want to feel you inside me now..."

The arm around her torso jerked reflexively. With a groan, he pulled his finger out of her ass and unfastened his pants. Pushing them down, his engorged cock sprang free, eager for a piece of the action.

He fisted it and ran it down the crack of her ass, to her still-soaking pussy lips, where he guided it just barely inside. Had he ever before been this big? This hard? Her feminine juices covered him, and he squeezed his phallus, so excited he was shaking.

"Please, Charlie ... now!" She was almost crying.

Releasing the hold on his cock, he rammed inside of her. Then stilled, waiting for her response.

\* \* \* \*

The torture was finally over. Big, strong, sexy Charlie filled every empty part of her.

"Ahhh, yesss," Aurora breathed into the wind as her body stretched to accommodate him. He felt wonderful! She gasped for breath, lurching against him in exhausted relief.

Instantly, her muscles started milking him and he began to move, pumping in and out.

"Sweet heaven. Sweet..." His voice was hoarse.

Pushing her bottom into his groin, she pounded against him over and over. The sensations were unlike anything in her realm. Feeling wild, out of control, she held onto the rail to keep from floating into the sky. Her hips pumped back and forth, her body devouring every inch of him repeatedly.

"Aurora. My God!" His hot mouth opened over her shoulder. The flat of his tongue bathed her skin, sending heated chills down to her toes.

She squirmed, itchy with unfulfilled need. Frantic. "Charlie! I didn't know..." She broke off. "What's..."

He licked a trail to her ear. Panting, he said, "Slow down, baby. It's all right. It's..."

Every particle of her being centered in her core. With her inner muscles, she clamped around him. Pulling forward, holding him tight, then releasing, and sliding to his root, only to do it over again. Until finally, the tension coiled tighter, then exploded in a firestorm of sensation.

Exhausted, replete, she collapsed against him. Her body trembled. "Charlie!" she cried, her fingers sliding from the rail. "I can't hold on ... not any longer."

Still embedded in her, he pulled her hips closer, then stumbled backward until they fell on a lounge chair. Holding her tightly atop him, his hands brushed across her breasts and stomach. She relaxed along his body, hot from the inside out.

"You still with me?" he asked.

In answer, she clenched her feminine muscles around him and nodded.

"Hold on, baby, there's more." Before the words were out, he resumed thrusting, plunging in and out of her at the speed of light. One hand kneaded her breast, the other slipped between her legs.

Amidst the fire his driving member raised in her, she felt him spread her folds and with amazing accuracy, press against a part of her that almost sent her soaring through space.

"Sex and solar flares, Charlie ... again?" she gasped out, wondering if it was possible. "That feels ... spectacular."

His grip on her tightened. "Just wait."

The twin motions of his thrusting penis and rotating fingers caused her to coil into a ball of writhing need. A small cry escaped her lips and she joined in, bucking wildly in his arms, as if trying to escape.

"Oh, yeah ... that's it. We're both gonna fly now..." His deep voice held her prisoner.

"Charlieeee," she cried out, when her body reached the pinnacle of fulfillment for the second time in moments. She felt the muscles beneath her shoulder blades flutter and twitch. She was so hot inside, she feared she would melt.

At his release a moment later, his body jerked against hers several times before stilling. "Ummm," he growled. "You are one amazing woman."

Pleased by his words, she might have drifted into the sky if not for his strong arms wrapped around her. "I feel amazing."



"Damn, Aurora. I swear, you're glowing like your namesake."

She felt herself glow even brighter.

\* \* \* \*

Coronal mass ejection, indeed.

Charles reclined on the lounge chair, practically numb in the aftermath of his mind-blowing orgasm. He held Aurora snugly against his bare chest, her legs intertwined with his. She'd draped his jacket over them both. He'd fastened his pants, and pulled up her dress, but he still felt completely exposed.

He wanted to talk, to say something debonair ... something impressive. Hell, he wanted to tell her that was the best damn fuck he'd ever had.

And he wanted more. Much more. Of the sex, yes, but of her, too.

She was kissing and nuzzling his chest, while her fingers idly traced patterns across his muscles. He rubbed the dark spot on the back of her neck. His lips still tingled from being pressed against her during his climax. He only hoped that in his excitement he hadn't bitten her too hard.

"I didn't hurt you, did I?"

She stopped toying with his chest hair and looked up. "Not at all," she said with a sultry smile. "What makes you think that?"

"You're so small, so delicate. I'm not used to women like you."

"What kind of women are you used to?" She bit her lip and glanced away. "I probably shouldn't ask that. I'm sorry."

"I don't mind." He thought of the few women he'd dated seriously. Intellectual, scientist types with short hair who were also short on femininity. Colorless women that didn't inspire or incite near the desire Aurora did. "Because right now, you're the only woman I'm interested in."

Her eyes lit with pleasure. "Good. I don't want to hear about anyone else. You said you're from New Mexico?"

"That's right." The sudden shift in topic surprised him.

"I found it on the map in the ship's library earlier. I wanted to see where you live. That's in the middle of the desert, isn't it?"

He probably should button his shirt, but couldn't bring himself to move. Lying there, talking with Aurora was perfect. "The Chihuahuan Desert covers part of the state. My home is in the mountains."

"Really? I've always wanted to see mountains. I live in the woods, surrounded by lush trees and colorful flowers." She gestured beyond the railing. "It's pleasing, on the ocean, but I wouldn't want to live here. I'd miss the trees."

"I think you'd like my home." Strangely, he wanted to take her there. "And, trust me, we have plenty of trees." If he took the job at Mauna Kea, he'd be surrounded by water, and, he probably wouldn't see her again. Suddenly, the new job didn't seem quite as exciting as before. "Where are you from?"

She seemed startled by his question. "Um. Oh, you know... I like to say that I make my home in the stars. Pleiades, Rigel, the Orion nebula, Witch Head..."

He cut her off with a kiss. "A smart ass, huh? I'm impressed you remembered so much. The way your hands were roving all over me, I don't know how you heard a thing I said."

"I paid attention. I'm a good student, Professor."

"I'll say." Her recent words echoed in his head. "Wait a minute. I didn't discuss the Witch..."

She rose over his chest, bringing her lips to his. "Is there anything else you'd like to teach me?" she asked with a purr.

"Aurora? How do you know about the Witch Head nebula? It's not a common object."

She shrugged and looked away. "Didn't you point it out during your constellation tour?"

"No, I didn't. And why are you being so secretive?"

"Why are you being so stubborn? It doesn't matter."

"For some reason, I think it does. But I'll let it go." *For now.*

"Good." She settled against his chest again, trailing his damn tie across his pecs. Why hadn't he tossed it overboard sometime during the night? "You seem fascinated with that thing."

"Why do you wear so many clothes? Even on vacation, you're all covered."

"I don't know. I guess I'm used to dressing this way for work. It didn't occur to me to change."

"I think you spend too much time working. When do you have fun?"

He reached down and cupped her ass. "I had fun tonight."

"Me, too." She smiled, gazing into his eyes. "When the ancient woman asked you about Orion's sword, I thought you..." She laughed.

"What?"

"I thought you were going to expire on the spot."

"Yeah, it felt that way. Between arguing about the little dipper, dodging their astrology questions about Capricorn, and enduring your questing fingers..."

"Enduring?" she almost shrieked.

"Forgive me. Poor choice of words."

"I'll say. About those astrology questions. I've been doing some thinking, Professor Manning..."

"Uh, oh. It sounds like I'm in trouble now."

"I don't know ... you tell me. Stubborn. Ambitious. Serious about life. And work." She punctuated each statement with a light kiss to his chest. "You're starting to sound suspiciously like a Capricorn yourself."

\* \* \* \*

In the starlight, Aurora's keen eyes saw a guilty look appear on his face and an idea began to form. Outrageous, something she'd expect Trixie to do, but still ... it just might work.

"You caught me. My birthday's tomorrow." He raised his arm and pressed a button on his watch, causing the face to glow. "Uh, today," he corrected with a smile.

"So, you *are* a Capricorn?" She wanted to be one hundred percent certain.

"Guilty as charged."

"I guess that means we're going to have to celebrate. Lucky for you, I have a few ideas." And, lucky for her, implementing her *other* idea could wait. Running her hand along the length of his body, she slipped it inside his pants and grasped his rapidly firming cock.

Rubbing her fingers over the head and tugging gently, she confessed. "That's the first time I've ever done that, you know."

"Had an orgasm?" His voice was incredulous.

"No, I've done that. Just not twice." *Or, with a real man.* The memory of what she'd recently experienced caused her body to flood with moisture. Her hand squeezed him, gliding up and down in response to her need, making him ready again. "Can we do it again? Now?"

He lifted his hips and pushed down his pants. "Be my guest."

Her eyes flicked to his ever-lengthening erection, and she licked her lips. "May I?"

Without waiting for an answer, Aurora crawled over him and hovered directly above his strong penis. Removing her fingers from around him, she positioned both of her hands at the base, keeping him upright with her thumbs and curling her fingers into his dense pubic hair. "You're so different... I never knew. Trixie was right. Oh, stars and satellites, you make me so hot, I feel like I'm going to burst into flames."

His surprised laughter stopped the moment her lips wrapped around him.

\* \* \* \*

*Thump. Thump.*

Half asleep, something about the familiar sound niggled his mind. Charles tried to roll over and tuck Aurora closer, but something prevented him from moving. He yawned.

*Thump.*

Behind them, a door swung open, and he awoke with a start. Disoriented, he blinked and saw the amber-rose of dawn reflected on the water. "Aurora," he whispered. "Wake up."

She sighed and kissed his neck. "I'm awake. Red dwarfs and daisies, but you're warm."

"Aurora, we need to..."

A screech sounded above his head.

"Fornicators!"

*Thump.* "Good heavens, Mabel. Put a sock in it."

"B-but Ha-Hazel, they've..."

"Enjoyed themselves thoroughly, if I'm any judge. Now, make like a wave and disperse before I tell the professor to toss you over the rail."

Charles thought throwing the blue-haired bitch overboard sounded like a plan. But he wasn't too sure the idea would fly with Aurora or the captain.

"I-I'm going to faint," the annoying woman threatened. "I've got to find Harriet." The door banged behind her with a thud.

"Sorry about that. Guess that's what years of repressed sexuality will do to a body. Glad to see it's not something either of you have to worry about." Hazel chuckled at her own joke.

Relieved that his pants were on, if barely, Charles tried to rise, but was jerked back down by pressure on his wrist. "What the--?"

Aurora sat up in front of him, smiling. Placing her hand over his wrist, she looked at the sky. "I did it. Do you see, Tragar? I tied up the goat, and a very sexy one at that. Since..."

"Goat?" Charles croaked.

"Capricorn, the goat. Never mind, I'll explain later," she whispered to him. In a louder voice, she continued. "I completed my assignment. Since I get to choose the next one, I choose to stay here. With Charlie."

Charles glanced from his wrist to Aurora to Hazel, and back to his wrist where his necktie was knotted around his arm and secured to the lounge chair. "Huh?"

"Way to go, girl," Hazel commented to Aurora, thumping her cane up and down with glee. "You caught you a good one, if I'm any judge of character. From the first moment I saw you together, I thought it was written in the stars. Ha!" She laughed at her own joke. "You just worked a little faster than I expected, Professor Charles," she said with a wink. "I can see it's best if the sun rises without me today. I'll do what I can to ensure you have privacy for a few minutes, but you might want to move things into your cabin before long." The cane thumped again and with a chuckle, she exited the lounging area and returned to the spa.

\* \* \* \*

"Failed. So sorry. Failed." Tragar hung his head, desolate to be standing before Queen Arlene and her King.

"No, Tragar, on the contrary, your star pupil did just as we desired."

Tugging on the hairy lobe of his right ear, Tragar felt hopeful for the first time since he'd sent Aurora off on her last assignment. "Oh? Oh?"

The queen continued, her soft words flowing over him. "The good professor will be far too busy to continue his research. In fact, he'll soon be a devoted husband, and eventually, a doting father, who will choose to take the recently offered full-time teaching position so that he can be with his wonderful wife

Aurora, and daughter Splendor, instead of languishing hours away at the research lab as he has done much of his life.

"Had Charles Manning, Ph.D., continued his current field of study... Well, suffice it to say that our home world is now secure from discovery for another millennium or so.

"We're very pleased at how this turned out. So pleased, in fact, that you, Tragar, will once again be receiving the esteemed Educator Award this cycle. Congratulations."

Cherlon's howl of frustration could be heard across the galaxy. Tragar just smiled, scratched his nose, and thanked the heavens for Miss Aurora, his star student extraordinaire.

\* \* \* \*

Charles looked at Aurora. "You tied me to the chair?" He gave his wrist a tug. "With my necktie?"

"I hope you don't mind. It was ... ah ... something I needed to do." She flushed a becoming shade of pink.

"I don't mind at all, but I am a little disappointed."

"Oh?"

He gave her a quick kiss. "Yeah, if there's any tying up to do, I think I'd rather be awake so I can enjoy it."

She smiled. "Do you have more neckties in your cabin?"

"That I do."

"Good. Because, I'd like to tell you some things and I think I want you bound first."

"Seeing as how it's *my* birthday, I think it's my turn to tie you. To my bed. Besides, you've had this old goat tied in knots since the moment he saw you."

Pleasure shown from her beautiful eyes. "Really?"

"Yes, really. Now help me get this undone. We have a date--in my cabin--and I for one am eager to get going."

She bit her lip, then nodded as if coming to an important decision. With a blink and a flick of her hand, the necktie fell away from his wrist without either of them touching it.

Stunned, Charles gazed into her amethyst eyes, their depths sparkling with mischief and a touch of uncertainty. "You're going to have to tell me how you did that."

"I will. After I tie you up. I promise."

"Give me a hint."

"It's magic," she whispered against his lips.

Magic. From the moment he'd seen her ... magic.

**The End**

## **About the Author:**

After doing stints in community theater and stand-up, Larissa decided it was more fun putting words in *other* peoples' mouths and turned her focus to writing. Her first erotic romance, *Written in the Stars*, was the winner of Liquid Silver Books' Capricorn Zodiac contest. Larissa divides her time between working on her next sensual story and devouring chocolate covered peanuts, which she swears is good for the creative muse. Readers are invited to visit her web site at [www.LarissaLyons.com](http://www.LarissaLyons.com), where they can sign up for her ezine "Wicked Escapes" which includes a free short erotic story each month, and read about her attempts to work homemade brownies into a healthy diet. E-mail Larissa at: [Larissa\\_Lyons@yahoo.com](mailto:Larissa_Lyons@yahoo.com)

**Meet LSB Authors At Silver Net, Aka The House Of Sin <http://lsbooks.net>**

**We invite you to visit Liquid Silver Books**

<http://lsbooks.com>

for other exciting erotic romances.

## **Featured Series:**

### **The Zodiac Series: 12 books, 24 stories and authors**

Two hot stories for each sign, 12 signs

### **The Raven Series by Rhiannon Neeley**

Seven books about the brooding Raven family of vampire hunters

### **The Coven of the Wolf by Rae Morgan**

Benevolent lusty witches keep evil forces at bay

### **The Max Series by JB Skully**

Meet Max, her not-absent dead husband, sexy detective Witt, his mother...

And many, many more!