

XV



Surrender

Adrienne
Kama

The Devil

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By

Adrienne Kama

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Dedication:

As always for Bruce, my eternal love. For my mother and all of the wonderful stories she told me as a child. For Kit Kat who spent countless hours listening to me tell stories. And for Melsy, just for being.

Tarot Card: The Devil

Upright position meaning – You or someone you know is dealing with temptation, addiction, or obsession.

Reversed position meaning – You or someone you know have freed themselves from self-imposed restrictions, broken a bad habit, or gotten yourself/themselves back together.

The topic of temptation goes hand in hand with erotic romance for me. Every heroine I've ever written about and probably will ever write about has to deal with temptation on some level. Whether it is the temptation to allow emotional and physical needs to take precedent over good judgment – in the manner of Charity who falls head over heels in love with Raven, a fallen angel – or if it is the temptation to turn away from long-held beliefs of what is right and wrong – as Al-Kenna and Alaric do. Either way, temptation is a major motivation in my character's lives.

With SURRENDER, I decided to make temptation the focal point of the story. As a little girl my mother used to tell me if I stared long enough at a picture in one of my picture books I'd be able to go inside of it. In SURRENDER, India is pulled within the pages of her book to Midworld, a place where Prince Adam can seduce his chosen at his leisure.

Chapter One

Prince Adam settled onto the hover seat, folded his arms over his very naked, oil-splattered chest, and mentally prepared himself for a lengthy lecture. He'd been in the fields when he received the summons. Dirty and tired from a day spent seeing to the repairs of his galaxy transport ship, he hadn't even been given time to go to his chambers and clean up before having to appear in the palace. That fact alone was grounds for concern. Whatever the reason for this meeting, it couldn't be good.

A further cause of alarm was the fact that the king had summoned all of his children to this little get-together. Petra had been in the training yard with his troops when he'd been called and still wore his fitted armor and weapons; Absolom, glasses tangled in the long strands of his black hair, had been dragged from the treasury; and Quelleman...who the hell knew what Quelleman had been doing. Who the hell *ever* knew what Quelleman did on a day-to-day basis? But whatever he'd been up to, Adam was sure it was inappropriate. All Adam need do was look at the smug look of satisfaction Quelleman was wearing. His clothes had the look of having been hastily thrown on. Buttons were askew, his pants were

horribly wrinkled, and he looked altogether too pleased with himself.

Still, they'd all been summoned. Something was most assuredly amiss.

A hard jab to the shoulder had Adam rounding to his right. Petra was staring at him, a deep frown creasing his brows. His close-shorn hair was dark with sweat and he positively stank of the terra sands where he trained his men. Clumps of the stuff clung to the legs of his body armor, and had crumbled and flaked in the crease of his legs. "What's up?" Petra asked, flicking a hand to indicate the windowless antechamber off the War Room where they now sat. The arm guards he'd begun to loosen jangled as he moved.

As one, he and Petra turned to Quelloman, who was presently reclined as far back as he could get in his hover chair. His hands were folded behind his head. Though his clothes were rumpled, Quelloman was anything but. His shoulder length hair was perfectly coiffed, he was freshly shaved, and he smelled of Berry Mist, a popular female scent. Though it was Quelloman's duty to oversee the vast lands that made up their father's kingdom, more times than not he was overseeing the women who populated their father's kingdom instead.

"Don't look at me," Quelloman said. "I don't know what's going on. But whatever it is it better be good, that's all I can say."

"More pressing matters on your calendar, eh?" Adam asked.

"Ever have dora pussy?" Quelloman paused to sigh and gaze heavenward.

Absolom grimaced. "Love slaves, Quelloman? I didn't think you had need of them."

"Don't knock 'um 'til you try 'um, Brain. To the dora, nothing is taboo. Things our females would never do are as common as walking to them. Even you can't knock that."

Adam knew the dora were a race of female love slaves created by the sorcerers at Witches Hall, a citadel on the outskirts of the kingdom in Sector Nine. Owned by the mysterious Lady Endor, all manner of debauchery was purported to take place within Lady Endor's estates.

Adam had been there a few times himself, but that was something he didn't care to share with his brothers, at least not at this juncture.

"I doubt they'd have the stamina," Absolom was saying. "But I'm sure they'll be talking about your visit for years to come. Perhaps we should consider adding another title to your growing list."

Adam raised his voice and spoke formally. "Prince Quelloman, heir to the throne of the Two Lands, Guardian of His Highnesses royal lands, Keeper of the royal flock, and loyal patron of Witches Hall."

"Not of Witches Hall. I've no need for their potions and conjurings, and you couldn't pay me to world hop, but those dora wenches..." He sighed again. "There's nothing like them in all the worlds. I was with three dora vixens when five royal guardsmen busted in on me and insisted I accompany them...or

else. The rotten bastards actually said that to me, said I better come or else." Quellemman jerked forward in his seat and fixed his eyes on Petra. "You're in charge of the royal guard, Petra, what do you know?"

"I thought I was. I sent no men to root you out."

"So nobody said anything to you about this?"

Petra shook his head, a move that set his weapons to jangling. "What about you, Brain?" Petra demanded of Absolom.

Absolom dragged a hand through his hair and shook his head. "I don't know."

"Did you find something in the Two Lands' finances we should know about? Shit, I'm jingling like a holiday fir."

Petra began removing items from his belts, his holsters, and his sheaths. Two daggers appeared and were laid on the table. A machete came next, then a sword, a laser gun...

Absolom frowned as the arsenal of arms grew. "Couldn't you have left those outside?"

"Wasn't given the chance," Petra said.

"It's highly inappropriate for you to bring those...utensils here when we're to meet with the king."

"Highly inappropriate?" Adam said before Petra could respond. "We're in the War Room, Brain."

"Ask me, that little computer thing you're always carrying around doesn't belong here," Petra finished. "Always beeping and chirping and talking to you. It's unnatural."

"Good, you're all here."

Adam looked up in time to see his father march into the room. The purple and red robes he wore fluttered behind him as he moved. A small smile split the king's face as he set his dark gaze on each of his sons. It was a predatory look, and Adam didn't like it one bit.

Adam would have gotten to his feet and bowed, as was the custom whenever one found himself in the presence of the king—father or not—but to his great astonishment, the queen appeared at that precise moment in the entrance, mere steps behind the king. Dressed in a bejeweled gown of light blue, she seemed an ethereal vision. The blue folds of the gown offset her ivory skin. She wore her blonde hair up, but long, pale ringlets had managed to escape their bonds to trail prettily down her back. She always seemed far too beautiful to be real and today was no different. The affect was more noticeable in her present surroundings. She looked altogether too lovely to walk in such common rooms. Indeed, Adam realized the queen rarely ventured to this part of the castle at all, preferring her lush rooms, gardens, and salons to the more functional areas of the palace.

For a moment, king and queen stood side by side at the head of the room, insidious smiles fixed to their faces.

No, Adam thought. Things were not looking good at all. The sight of the two of them standing there, allied in some venture against their children, made his blood go cold. The feeling was new to Adam, as typically the sight of his parents had always been a

source of pride.

Since his youth, Adam had envied the love his parents shared. They had braved many obstacles to be together. Complications that would have ruined many young lovers only served to bring his parents closer together.

His mother had been born a princess in the Northerlands, a realm of fair-skinned people whose kingdom had been three hundred leagues to the north. His father was born a prince in the Southerlands, a realm of honey-skinned folk whose kingdom had originally been two hundred leagues to the south. The two met per chance on the Starship Dumas and fallen in love before either considered the ramifications of what they were feeling.

Despite the aspirations of the then ruling King and Queen of the Southerlands to see their son married to a woman of their own kingdom, Prince Rufus went against their wishes and started seeing Princess Beersheba in secret, a fact that the King and Queen of the Northerlands would have been interested to know. Since Princess Beersheba was an only child, she was the only heir to the Northerland realm. The royal parents had set their hopes in seeing their daughter wed one of the Northerland nobles and continue the line. Princess Beersheba, however, had other intentions.

When word of the secret liaison came to light, a fervor unlike any either realm had ever experienced began. The peace that had existed between the two kingdoms crumpled as insults were thrown,

challenges issued, and war threatened. Small battles between the armies of each realm ensued. Adam was of the opinion that war would have been imminent, had not his mother become pregnant.

Prince and princess married in secret, despite the wishes of both sets of families. Beersheba refused to let her son be known as a bastard, and Prince Rufus refused to let his parents control his life now that he had a son to consider.

When Petra was born and Adam's grandparents saw the situation was out of their hands, a reluctant peace settled between the two families and thus the two realms. Almost immediately both sets of grandparents fell in love with Petra. Soon Prince Rufus and Princess Beersheba were living half the year in the Southerlands and half the year in the Northerlands, an arrangement that gave all of Adam's grandparents equal time with Petra.

Absolom, a nearly perfect hybrid of prince and princess, was born a year after Petra. Adam was born three years later, and Quelloman a year after that. Though Petra was the image of their father, Absolom a cross of both parents, Adam and Quelloman were very much like their mother. Adam even had his mother's fair hair, a fact that his brothers never let him live down. Blonde hair was rare among males, even in the Northerlands, where most men had the same sandy brown hair that covered Quelloman's head.

Over the years a peace settled between the realms, a peace that soon turned to friendship. Now, nearly

thirty-five years later, the kingdoms were united under Adam's parents. These days it was quite common to see fair-skinned Southerlanders and honey-skinned Northerlanders.

Adam was jolted to the present when King Rufus assisted the queen into the only remaining chair, took his place beside her, and cleared his throat.

Adam and his brothers only had a few seconds to scramble to their feet and bow before their mother was settled comfortably.

She waved a hand in dismissal. "No need for pomp when we're alone," she said.

"Alone?" Petra asked. "But what of your aides, father?"

King Rufus sighed heavily. "Just beyond the door. I simply cannot shake them."

"And the Royal Guard? If they've left you unguarded, I shall have their heads on a platter. And with the queen present, they should especially be on their guard."

"I assure you, Petra, I'm perfectly capable of protecting myself and my queen for a few minutes. And ten guardsmen are just beyond the door. I can't seem to shake them, either."

"Besides," the queen said with a smile, "you are here, Petra."

"But you should not be," Petra said.

"Father, surely you don't condone this," Adam added. "We could have conducted this meeting in the gardens, or in Mother's private salon."

"No, we couldn't," the queen said. "This meeting is

far too important to have in a garden."

"Queen Mother," Absolom said on a gasp as he settled into his chair. "What dire event has brought you from your rooms to the War Room?"

Adam and the others sat as well.

"Calm yourself, Absolom," she said. "There's nothing amiss. Your father and I have simply made a few decisions. The time has come for our sons to take responsibility for themselves and their kingdom. North and South."

Adam frowned. He didn't like the sound of this. "Haven't we? Petra stands at the head of the Royal Guard, Absolom manages the Royal Treasury, I oversee our interstellar interests, and Quelloman—"

"Sees to the happiness of the women in the kingdom," Petra finished.

The brief laughter that followed was perfunctory. Just like his brothers, Adam was too anxious to laugh.

"But have you not felt something missing from your lives?" the queen asked.

The brothers stared at each other.

"Like what?" Adam was the first to ask.

The king pulled something from the folds of his robe and came forward. "This is what you've been missing," he said as he made his way around the table. He paused beside each of them to slam a rectangular object on the table.

"You want us to read?" Absolom fingered the leather-bound book before him as the king finished his circuit and moved to stand beside Queen Beersheba again.

King Rufus rolled his eyes. "No, I don't want you to read."

"Then what are we supposed to do with books if not read them? I've read all the classics, the histories of our world and others. Mother saw to it that our education was complete."

"You would have me reading books when I should be on the fields training your men?" Petra asked.

"Time does not stand still," the queen announced, "not even for princes."

Adam and his brothers looked at each other. He could see the mounting unease he felt in the worried expressions of their faces. No, Adam decided, whatever their parents were up to, it was not good.

"Time moves on," the king concurred, "and so do we. We are old. When your mother and I are no longer able to rule, only our sons will be left."

"Is that what this is about?" Adam asked. "You want to make sure we're prepared to rule after you? You needn't worry on that account. A king has never had more able successors to follow him to the throne. With Petra overseeing the army, Absolom overseeing the finances, me overseeing our interplanetary interests, and Quelloman overseeing the lands, our rule will be as efficient as your own," he finished, and set a wide smile on his face. "Isn't that right?" He looked at his brothers who, getting the hint, set matching smiles on their faces and nodded.

"Unfortunately, that isn't good enough," King Rufus said. "I know who will follow me to the throne, but who will follow you?"

Adam felt the tickling of unease creep back.

None of them had a response to this. It would be unacceptable for a bastard child to follow any of them to the throne, and as long as they all remained unmarried, bastard children were all they would sire. Stupid that none of them had foreseen. Of course the king would be concerned.

"We shall draw straws," Absolom announced.

Matching stares of bewilderment met those words, but Absolom plowed on. "We all have the same blood, after all, so what does it matter who of us has the next heir? He will be kin to us all. So I propose we draw straws and he who gets the shortest straw is he who must chose a woman, marry, and sire suitable heirs."

"Yes," Quelloman agreed, pouncing on the suggestion. "I would agree to that."

"As would I," Adam said.

Petra smiled. "Me, too."

"Well, I would not," the king said. "Nor would your mother. It is time for all of you to find wives and settle down."

At this announcement Quelloman looked near to a swoon. He teetered on the edge of his chair and only managed to remain seated due to the firm hand Absolom placed on his shoulder. "Are you mad, father?" Quelloman whispered. "Marriage?"

"Do I look mad, Quelloman?"

"You look sane, but your words are those of a madman. What do I want with a wife and the stars forbid, children?"

"Bloody hell," Absolom said. "I haven't the desire nor the inclination to saddle myself with a wife. Not at this early stage in life."

"And I'm too busy," Petra added. "What would I do with a wife?"

Quelleman gaped, as if the words had struck him dumb a second time. The look of horror on his face would have been comical had it not been the perfect image of what Adam was feeling.

"No." Adam said finally. "I won't do it."

Queen Beersheba glanced at her husband briefly, a smug smiling curling the edges of her lips up. "I told you," she murmured.

"So you did," he said. "Your mother knew that your willingness to cooperate would be far less than we require, so we've taken the liberty of providing you with the appropriate motivation." He rubbed his hands together and smiled. "Absolom, my boy, I do think you'll appreciate the ingenuity of the venture."

"We've also," said the queen, "paid a visit to Lady Endor. She was most willing to assist us with what we needed."

Adam really didn't like where this conversation was going.

"The witch?" Absolom asked, incredulous. "Lady Endor, the witch of Witches Hall?"

"Indeed," their mother agreed happily. "She's a most interesting lady. I've invited her for tea later in the week, but that's not important to any of you, since I suspect you'll all be otherwise engaged."

"Tell me you jest, Mother. Witches Hall is no place

for a queen."

"Lady Endor is the provider of the lovely picture books you see before you," the queen said. "Lady Endor herself designed the books for each of you. All I had to do was bring her a few strands of hair, a personal object, and pictures of your most recent lovers." She paused to stare up at the ceiling as if deep in thought. "Though I must admit I was more than a little surprised to learn she didn't need the pictures, since she already knew the type of women you preferred. Why didn't any of you tell me you were fans of Lady Endor's dora love sl—"

"Mother!" Absolom exclaimed.

"He who is first to find his wife will be our heir," the king said, speaking over the lot of them. "He will inherit everything. Our kingdoms, our lands, and our castles."

Embarrassment forgotten for the moment, Absolom leapt to his feet. "But you can't do that. It's always been agreed that we will share rule. The lands are too vast for any one man to rule. Even you do not rule alone, but with the help of Mother. What you propose would rip us apart."

"And what about the others, the ones who find wives too late?" Adam asked.

"They shall serve the heir."

Adam sat back in his chair, unable to speak for a moment. "Your highness," he finally said, "you cannot mean to set us against each other in a competition of such import. It would be a disaster. Can't you see that?"

The king waved this off. "This isn't a discussion, Adam. If you haven't the stomach to compete, you don't have to. But I'd be wary of making such a decision. Even if your brothers promise to do the same, how can you be sure? You must ask yourselves if you're willing to risk everything on the word of one who has as much at stake as you."

"Chastity," Quelleman said in a hoarse voice. "Marriage means chastity. I'm too young for chastity. I want no part of chastity."

"And there is a shortage of virgins within the realm," Petra said. "You cannot mean for us to marry a woman whose past lovers are sure to be among our subjects. Even you didn't marry a woman from your own kingdom, father. You chose your princess from a neighboring kingdom. How can a man respect his king when he knows he's bedded that king's queen?"

Again, a smug smile played at the edges of the queen's lips.

The king sighed and set his hand through the kinky curls atop his head. "Again, your mother figured such, so we've taken the liberty of solving that problem. Open your books and I'll explain."

Adam flipped his book open and gasped when a swirl of black smoke drifted up from the pages. As the smoke cleared, he realized the page he was looking at held a picture of a woman. He quickly flipped through the book and realized every page held the image of a woman. Each woman was beautiful, very beautiful, in fact, and there was a two-column list of facts beneath each picture. The pictures

themselves seemed three-dimensional and somehow insubstantial. They looked as though if he set his hand to the page it would slide through the image and into...he didn't know.

"What is this?" Absolom asked, glancing up from his own book.

"Call it a portal of love," the king said with a grin. "That's what it is."

"Tell me you're joking."

"No, Absolom, I'm very serious. Now, if you look at your books, I'll tell you how they work."

But Adam had already blocked them out. His attention had been caught by the image of a woman in his book. A very beautiful woman whose name, it seemed, was India.

* * *

Making her way from the subterranean fantasy complex where she had spent a good hour and a half doing absolutely nothing, India found the stairs and started up, grumbling under her breath all the way. She would never understand the impulse that led perfectly normal, well-adjusted men to pay women to beat them. It didn't make sense. What kind of world did she live in when a grown man would enter a club and pay a woman two hundred dollars to beat the crap out of him? She'd already known men were inherently the weaker sex, this night had only served to prove her assumptions correct. Didn't the dominant male exist any more, or had decades of

feminism turned men into spineless, gutless, shadows of their former selves? Okay, so she'd only come to the club because Candace had insisted India get out of the house for a few hours, but she had hoped to at least have a little fun. This was India's first time in a BDSM club. She'd expected...something different. Hell, why mince words; she'd expected to see a few male doms. But she'd seen none. Zip, zero, nada, not a one. Plenty of dominatrix, but no doms.

As she neared the main level she could hear the thump of drums beating out a jungle beat against the melodic arpeggios of electric guitars. As had been the case for the last few hours, the deeper bass riffs had her chest rattling, as though the music was coming from inside of her instead of at her from every direction. Above she could see the dim lighting of the club brighten the dark stairway corridor.

Once she was on the main level, she headed through the crowds of people towards the bar. Everyone was dressed like her, in black leather and latex. Though they seemed perfectly comfortable in the clothes, she felt like her circulation was being cut off. The latex pants were so tight she could barely move, and her breasts nearly spilled over the bodice of the corset. Though she hadn't admitted it to herself when she'd purchased the clothes, she'd been hoping to attract the attention of some sexy male dom. Instead, she'd been getting offers all night from women.

She made her way to the bar, trying to catch a glimpse of Candace's bright red head amidst the

horde of heads crowded around the wide black counter. Candace had gone off to get them drinks near on thirty minutes ago. It couldn't take that long to get two little watered-down drinks.

"Hey, pretty lady."

Still grumbling at allowing Candace to drag her to El Diablo, India turned to face this new speaker. "For the hundredth time tonight, I'm straight and no, you can't ride me like a pony. I don't like being whipped either, so don't ask."

The face that smiled back at her wasn't what India had been expecting. The woman was small, fragile even, and had a good three decades on India. Her hair hung in frizzy curls that nearly reached her waist. She wore a long velvet peasant dress whose low neckline showed perky — albeit slightly wrinkled — breasts, and she had an orange, purple, red, and green shawl thrown over her shoulders. Everything about this woman said fortuneteller.

"I prefer the word seer. Fortuneteller has too commercial a sound in my ear," the woman said.

India wasn't impressed. She'd seen better tricks performed in a schoolyard playground. The woman couldn't have made herself look any more like a fortuneteller had she posted a sign to her chest that said "I read fortunes". Of course the first thing India thought when she looked at this woman was fortuneteller. It's what the outfit was designed to make perspective suckers think. Then, as said sucker thought, hey, this lady must be a fortuneteller, she delivered her prepared seer line.

"Can I help you?" India asked, trying to sound pleasant.

"I see you looking around. You are looking for someone...or something...am I right?"

India gave the woman a once-over. Yep, she thought, she's serious. "Not anymore."

"I can help you."

"Okay, I'll play. How much for a reading?"

The woman beamed. "I am Madame Selena and I charge only fifteen dollars for a tarot reading."

"I'll let you read me for ten."

"This isn't Pakistan. Fifteen dollars. No negotiating."

She was about to tell the lady she wasn't interested in blowing fifteen bucks on a tarot reading when she felt something cold pressed against her shoulder and yelped in surprise.

"Four beers!"

Candace had come to stand beside India and pressed a bottle of cold beer against her arm to get her attention. Candace's spiky auburn hair had wilted under the humidity caused by too many sweaty bodies stuffed into one place. She cradled three bottles of dark beer in her arm and held one out to India. "I never want to go to that bar again. It's a mad house. Took me forever just to get a bartender to acknowledge me. I got four, so that should hold us for a while. Who's that?" Candace jerked her head in the seer's direction.

"Fortuneteller," India said.

"Seer," the seer corrected.

"I was just coming to find you," India said, but Candace hadn't heard, or maybe she was ignoring India, or perhaps she was too busy grinning at the fortuneteller like an idiot.

"Cool!" Candace was saying to the lady. "I love having my fortune read. How much?"

The fortuneteller glanced at India and gave her a haughty smile. "Fifteen dollars."

"Perfect. Lead the way."

Fifteen minutes later, India and Candace were sitting in one of five booths lining a back room whose black walls and ceiling were painted with neon stars. Soft blue light came from a few wall-mounted lights. From this room the music was a distant thump.

India had already worked her way through one beer while Candace was having her fortune read. But what she couldn't figure out was how on earth she'd come to be in the hot seat. Maybe it was too much alcohol. All she knew was she was poised before Madame Selena, listening quietly as the seer spoke to her in somber tones.

"This," Madame Selena said, her features serious as though she were about to impart an important truth. "See this? This is very serious."

"More serious than that card that said I was brimming with creativity and will have money thrown my way?"

"That's not precisely what the card said. It said —"

"I'll be taken care of by some hunky male. So what's this one say? Am I going to meet Prince Charming tonight? Maybe he's here in this club."

"I would not make fun if I were you. The cards are not meant as fortunetellers but as guidance. And this card especially is not to be taken lightly." She held it up for India to see.

"The devil," Candace said in a low, ominous voice. She passed a glance from India to the seer and gave them both a dramatic shiver. "Glad I didn't get that card."

India sighed. "Must be my lucky night."

"Yes! The devil." The seer paused for affect and studied India's face. "This card is meant as a warning. Someone..." she paused again, squinting across the table at India. "I fear for you."

Suddenly the day seemed too much. From her first waking seconds, nothing had gone right. A kind of dread had dogged her steps all day. She'd lost an account with a major client, screwed up a cover letter, and owed another client a full refund, a sum of six hundred dollars. "Is this the part where I deplete my savings account to pay you to put a protection spell on me?" India pushed away from the table and got to her feet. "Sorry, but I'm not interested. But thanks for the reading."

"Wait!" Madame Selena clamped a hand over India's wrist. In the next instant she shrank away and slouched on the opposite end of the table. "It is too late," she announced. "You have been marked."

"Maybe this is how you get your kicks, but from my side of the table, this isn't funny."

"Listen to me," the lady whispered. "All may not be lost. He will come to you soon. You must fight

him. Never give in. He is vain and thinks nothing is beyond his reach." She stared up at India. "Nothing is."

India took a step back, the beginning prickling of fear setting her on edge despite herself.

"He is perverse," Madame Selena went on, "If he gets his hands on you he will use his carnal mastery of persuasion against you; to tempt you and enslave you; to bind you to him. You must resist him. He is not human, not a man but a thing. A beast."

"I'm ready to go, Candace."

"He'll want to claim you. Will watch you. But he'll grow tired of watching. And when he does, he will act."

India reached into her purse, grabbed a twenty and tossed it onto the table, and turned to leave. "Thanks for the reading."

"Go home," the seer went on, "and take a care the things you think. Even your mind is not safe from the beast."

Chapter Two

Two days later

Adam listened to the door as it whisked shut, then settled himself on the sofa in his private salon. He lay back on the cushions, waiting for the familiar calm that always settled on him when he was within his rooms. He waited. And waited. When nothing happened, he sat up and ran his fingers through his hair.

He was too tense to rest, too tense to do anything save think about his current situation. He'd been like this for days. He would have loved to blame it on that horrid meeting in the War Room, but he knew his tension had another source. Her face, the face that had lingered with him every day since he'd seen her in that accursed book. She was beautiful, exquisite, and most disturbing of all, he wanted her. He had tried closing the book, setting it aside, and forcing the image of her face out of his mind, but it was no good. He wanted her with an intensity he'd never experienced in relation to any woman before, and that scared him. That witch, Lady Endor, must have put a

spell on him.

He shook his head clear and tried to focus on the framed photographs around his room of the many worlds he'd visited. The lush gardens of Beta, the blue oceans of Lycos...but the pictures held no lure for him today.

He tried staring up at the ceiling, emptying his mind of all thought while the liquid sounds of the ocean beyond his windows filled the room. Usually the soothing blues and greens of his rooms were enough to calm him, but right now he felt too overwrought. Even with the sound of the ocean just beyond his window, he couldn't find calm.

Nothing in his life could have prepared him for what was happening to him. A wife? Children? Neither he nor his brothers had ever given such things any consideration, yet, he knew right now all of them were holed off in their own rooms making plans. His brothers had all been overtaken by the same romantic impulses that currently had Adam prostrate and out of commission.

What had the king been thinking to set them against each other in this way? He didn't want to compete against his brothers. He had no desire to compete against them. The concept was foreign to him. Still, that is where he found himself. And now, his desire not to war against his brothers was weakening in the face of his need to have the woman. He didn't know what was greater, his desire to maintain peace or his need to claim the female. What he did know was despite their pledges not to seek out

a wife, they were struggling in the same way he was and steadily losing the battle.

Adam lifted the book from the side table where he'd left it the previous night and gazed down at the cover. It was made of plain black leather, and seemed too ordinary to be what it was. Indeed, looking at the object didn't give any indication of what lie within.

"Midworld," the king had called it. "A plain between the worlds. A world connector where travel to the outer reaches of the galaxy is possible."

"Give me the coordinates and I will go there in my ship," Adam had insisted, but his father had shaken his head.

Apparently Midworld was an incorporeal place, not so much an actual world as it was an idea. But one could travel there, and more importantly, bid others to travel there. The books were the portals. And because it was incorporeal, formed by the ideas of the book owner, anything was possible within that realm. In Midworld Adam could be anything he desired...could be anything his perspective princess desired. Midworld was to be a place where he could seduce his chosen and persuade her to return to the Kingdom of the Two Lands with him.

Adam opened to page one and the familiar eddy of black smoke swirled from within and quickly filled his room.

"Midworld," Adam said aloud. "Where I'm to go to find her."

He could have found a suitable wife within the kingdom, but Petra was right, virgins were few and

far between. He didn't mind marrying a woman with experience, but not if that experience was with one of his subjects. That would be too humiliating to be borne.

If the queen was correct in her ascertains, and Adam had no reason to doubt she was, each of the women within the pages had been chosen with each brother's own particular sexual preferences in mind. That meant Quelloman's chosen had a sexual appetite as voracious as his own...and Adam's chosen had a sexual appetite as adventurous as his own. Only with the dora love slaves had he ever been able to indulge his predilection for bondage and domination. His own women were too delicate for such play, but dora females, though delicate in their own way, reveled in his domination of them. He'd spent countless fantastic hours within the private rooms of Witches Hall with dora love slaves.

But now even that was at an end. His desire to visit his dora lovers had seemed to evaporate under his need for her. The only desire he felt now was the desire to claim her.

Grumbling to himself, he flipped through the pages. Maybe he could find another woman. Maybe two more would speak to him. True, he'd been trying for the last two days to distract himself with the images of other woman to no avail, but he couldn't help but think if he became enamored of another woman, it would somehow steel him against the draw of the one he really wanted.

He turned pages until he came across Christine, a

flame-haired beauty who practically scorched the pages. Letting his eyes rove over her body, he knew he could easily imagine himself steeped deep within her. He glanced to the bottom of the page where her stats were listed. He read:

Age: 173

Body Type: athletic

Pets: none

Education: Bachelors of Social Science

Profession: sitcom star

Sexual preference: dominant male

Sexual Type: bisexual/ submissive Nature:
curious/bold

Realm: Lycos

Fantasy Male: bi-curious military man

Virgin: Yes

She sounded good. He especially liked the fact that she preferred her men dominant. Still...

Over the next few hours he went through the book, desperately searching for another face to lose himself in. As the moon rose in the west and the sun began giving off pale pink light, Adam came across her image. As always, her beauty was a shock. She was truly a vision, more beautiful than any whose picture had come before her. The simple act of looking at her quickened his heart.

"India," he read aloud, testing her name on his tongue. It felt good.

She had the most exotic, honey-brown skin he'd ever seen, eyes as brown as chestnuts, and a mass of hair that fell in waves to her waist. Her body was

lush, round, and all woman. He wanted to steep himself inside of her and claim her so thoroughly she never looked at another man again.

He scanned down the page to her stats, though by now he had them committed to memory:

Age: 33

Body Type: petite/voluptuous

Pets: none

Education: MBA

Profession: business support services professional

Sexual preference: dominant male

Sexual Type: submissive

Nature: shy/adventurous

Realm: Earth

Fantasy Man: cowboy, rock star, vampire, starship captain

Virgin: no

Shy, adventurous, and submissive...his type of female. And she was enamored of starship captains. That was a definite plus.

He couldn't explain it, didn't really want to think too hard on the subject, but he knew she was the one. If he had to choose a woman from this book to be his, and indeed that is what the king had ordered, it would be India. India would be his princess.

He sat up when he heard his door whisk open. His intention had been to stand and greet whoever had entered his room, instead though, he dropped his head into his hands and gave his temples a vigorous rub. But his fingers were so tense they hurt more than

they provided comfort.

"You look as lousy as I feel."

Adam looked up and wasn't surprised when he saw Quelloman with Petra and Absolom a step behind him. The three stepped into the salon and started towards him.

"I need a drink," Quelloman said. While Petra and Absolom settled themselves on hover chairs, Quelloman went to a small bar set into a corner of the room and went about mixing drinks. "This is really archaic, Adam," he complained. "If you had a DRD, I wouldn't have to manually mix these drinks."

"The SIM stuff doesn't taste as good," Adam said of the drink replication devices that had become so popular. "Just grab us a few beers. I brought a few cases home with me after my last visit to Lycos."

"I love the Lycos breweries."

"Who cares," Petra interrupted. "What the hell should we do? I don't want to rule alone."

"What makes you think you'd win the bet?" Quelloman asked.

Petra smiled. "You're joking, right? Even if you won, Quelloman, the army is loyal to me. I could overthrow you in a second."

"And the subjects are loyal to me, since I'm among them on a day to day basis. What good is a king and his army if he has nobody to rule?"

"The current situation is as follows," Absolom interrupted before Quelloman and Petra could begin arguing in earnest. "We've all been waylaid with some horrid need to romantically entangle ourselves

with certain female creatures from other planets. We've been unable to work, barely able to eat, and altogether useless at performing the simplest of every day functions. I believe that sums up the situation nicely."

Adam sat back on the sofa and glared at nobody in particular. "What did that witch do to us? Yesterday I sat here and stared at my female's picture for nearly an hour. What the hell is up with that?"

"We've been tricked, hexed, enchanted, and bamboozled."

"Yeah, and it pisses me off," Quelloman said, coming around the bar carrying a silver tray with four glass bottles atop it. "But damned if I don't still want my wench."

He set the tray on a low table set in front of the sofa and they all grabbed a bottle.

"It's worse than that." Petra said after taking a slow swallow from his beer. "I don't want to *not* want my female. I can't imagine not having her, not thinking of fucking her. I've gone way past the point of no return. I have to have my female."

They were all quiet for a moment. Petra had vocalized precisely how they all felt. Adam himself was past believing he could resume his life as it had been before the king and queen had brought those books into it. There was no question in his mind, he had to have India.

"Okay," Adam said. "I think we should all retrieve our women. It's obvious we all feel like Petra. We have to have those females, no others will do."

"Yeah, but who gets to be heir?" Quelloleman asked.

"Simple. We all refuse to rule alone. Father can't make us rule, after all. He needs an heir and we're all he's got. As long as we stand allied in this, he won't have any choice but to give in."

Absolom nodded. "I like that. I think it will work, too, as long as we all promise not to give in to him."

Adam exchanged a look with all of his brothers. "So we're agreed?"

They nodded.

Petra got to his feet and thrust his right hand into the air. "On my honor," he said. Immediately the others followed suit, standing and giving the Two Lands pledge of honor.

After a moment, Quelloleman stepped back and grinned. "Well, my brothers, I've enjoyed our time together, but I've got to go. There's a princess on Earth with my name on her."

"We'll meet back here in twenty-four hours for an update," Adam said to the retreating forms.

They all agreed.

"One thing before we go," Absolom said, pausing at the entrance to Adam's chambers. "Care is to be taken as we go forward. These women will have no idea what is going on, and we need to be especially cautious that we do not frighten and or alarm them. Do take care not to make too much a spectacle of yourself, Quelloleman."

Quelloleman rolled his eyes.

"I agree," said Petra. "We will all be careful. Agreed."

Adam swore also, then Petra and Quelloman filed out of the door. After they left, Adam set his locks in place to ensure he wouldn't be disturbed while in Midworld. Formulating a plan, he walked out of the salon, down a wide corridor and to his bedchamber. The procedure was easy enough. He'd been doing test runs every day since the meeting in the War Room — only as a precaution, of course.

He settled on his bed and propped himself up with a pile of pillows. Holding the book open to India's page, he focused on her face and worked at conjuring an appropriate cowboy scene. He knew well what cowboys were and didn't foresee a problem in emulating one. He'd just have to get the scenery right. He'd never met any cowboys in real life, but then again, neither had India. At least not any from Earth year 1882.

He breathed deep and began.

* * *

India tossed in bed. Her thick, downy comforter tangled around her legs and her nightgown had somehow gotten bunched under her. It formed a mountainous mass beneath her lower back and prevented her from finding a comfortable position. Agitated, she tugged on the gown until she managed to loosen it. She settled on her back and stared up at the ceiling, determined to find sleep if it was the last thing she did.

Ten minutes later she was no closer to sleep than

she'd been at one-thirty when she'd gotten into bed. She knew the culprit of her unease and gave herself a series of mental kicks. "She's just a crazy lady," India said to the dark room, "a crazy hustler who knew a sucker when she saw one."

Saying it out loud didn't make India feel any better. Especially since she was the aforementioned sucker who'd spent three sleepless nights tossing and turning in bed. "Not a man but a beast. What a pat thing to say."

India shoved the covers aside and rose from the bed. She wasn't going to get any sleep tonight, at least not as long as she lay in bed staring out into space, going over what Madame Selena had said to her over and over again.

She padded down the hallway, flicking on lights as she went, a fact she didn't care to think about. Hell, it was close to three in the morning and black as pitch in her apartment. If she didn't turn on a few lights, she wouldn't be able to see. 'Least, that's what she told herself.

In the kitchen she flicked on two lights, the one hanging over her center island and the softer light above the stove. She went to a cabinet and found her favorite oversized mug, filled it with water and set it into the microwave for two minutes. While she waited for the water to heat, she tread down two stairs to the family room area just off the kitchen that she'd converted into her home office. The sight of her mother's pocked desk with India's laptop and stacks of resumes and cover letters scattered over the surface

began to settle her. Her mother and father had died five years earlier—leaving her orphaned at age twenty-eight, she always joked—but the sight of the desk where her mother had spent so much time was always a comfort. The overstuffed bookcases lining one wall also had a calming effect. Nothing like tomes on ancient history, colonial history, and volumes of mysteries and steamy romance to make a girl feel sane. Out beyond the window framing her desk the city skyline of Baltimore shimmered back at her.

Nothing had changed she realized as she twisted the switch on a lamp. Soft light flooded the room, chasing away the last remnants of her mental goblins. Everything was as it should be. Nothing the seer said mattered. It was crazy talk, nothing more. She was behaving like a twelve-year-old who'd watched one too many horror movies and become too spooked to sleep alone.

Shaking her head at her own behavior, she went to a bookcase and began scanning the books for a good read.

The bell on the microwave chimed, pulling her from her reverie and sending her into the kitchen. In the corner cabinet where she kept her snacks, she took down a tin of French Vanilla Café Vienna. While she stirred in three heaping spoonfuls of the sweet powder, she made her way back to the office. She picked through her new romance selections. Susan Grant, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Dara Joy. But she was in the mood for a good gothic romance tonight. A nice ghost story with a touch of romance was what she wanted.

She fingered three Barbara Michaels books, undecided. She'd already read *Stitches in Time* and *Shattered Silk*, but she'd never had a chance to read *Ammie Come Home*. Deciding that was her choice for the night, India pulled the book from the bookcase and settled herself on the well-worn loveseat. The fat cushions cradled her as she settled her head back on the armrest and raised her feet onto the cushions.

She'd only read ten pages when she realized something was very wrong. This story wasn't reading like a Barbara Michaels book. For one thing, none of the character names matched the characters described on the back book cover. There was a virginal female named Minaret in this story who was never mentioned on the back flap, and a male character named Adam whose physical characteristics could only be described as WOW. Long sandy blonde hair, tight as sin britches, a body sculpted by some carnal minded goddess, and a tan and brown cowboy hat he wore tilted at an angle.

It wasn't the story India had been expecting, but she kept reading anyway.

According to the story, Adam was a drifter from the west who'd arrived on scene two weeks earlier and persuaded Minaret's husband to allow him to work on their farm. It wasn't long before Adam was working more than the lands. Apparently this Adam wasn't above using his body—a body bred for sin—to seduce Minaret into any number of sexual situations. India was on page one hundred thirty-two when Adam persuaded her to follow him into the unused

stables. Minaret, a woman who professed herself to be a Christian woman of the highest moral fiber, eagerly trailed Adam through the stables and into a barn, careful to keep one eye on the muscles playing across the broad expanse of his naked shoulders and one eye on his 'tight ass'. Dressed only in a cowboy hat and denims, Adam was apparently impossible not to watch. Minaret had all she could do not to pull Adam into the barn behind her, throw herself at his feet, and beg him to plunder her there and then. Adam took his time about it, though, leading her within the cool dark recesses of the barn where the smell of wood and earth filled the air. On his hip was a looped coil of rope that he'd begun to remove and uncoil as he ordered Minaret on her back in the hay.

"But Adam, my husband is in the main house not two hundred feet from the stables. I cannot – "

In answer, he captured her face between his hands and pulled her towards him. The kiss made Minaret forget her husband, her lands, and everything else.

"Oh, Adam," Minaret whispered after he pulled away. She fell to he knees before him and tugged at the zipper of his pants. "Ooo, Adam, you don't have anything on under your pants."

Adams' erection spilled free of the thick material and bobbed.

Minaret licked her lips.

"That's for later. For now, I want you to lie down. Right there." He motioned a few feet behind her to a pile of hay.

India closed the book, but was careful to keep her finger tucked in place between the pages. She gazed up at the ceiling and focused on getting her hormones

under control. This was the fifth time these two were going at it. And damned if every sexual encounter hadn't gotten her more aroused than the last. She could feel a soft trickle of moisture wetting her panties. Adam was so sexy, the simple act of reading his name on the printed page sent a thrill of pleasure through her.

Candace wanted her to meet a man, but the choices available to India weren't promising. But if a man like Adam came into her life...She let the thought go unfinished. Adam was a creation, a fiction. While she knew with a certainty he wasn't Barbara Michaels' fiction, she knew he was the creation of some author. The printers had probably screwed up somehow, putting this story between the Barbara Michaels' cover and Barbara Michaels' story someplace else. At present she didn't care. Her biggest concern was taking the edge off her arousal.

She rose, placed the book face down on the page where she'd left off, and went to her desk. She spent most of her waking hours in her home office, so she kept a number of things readily available in her desk drawers.

Lifting her keys off the desk, she located the small file key on her key ring, crouched before the desk, and fitted the key into the bottom file cabinet lock. In seconds she had her favorite dildo and was settled with the book on her couch, panties discarded on the floor beside her.

Biting her lip, she eased the dildo in deep, flipped the page of the book and read on.

Minaret tugged her skirts up and unbuttoned her blouse; she licked her lips in anticipation of what was to come. With breasts bared and her sex exposed, she draped herself prettily across the hay and spread her legs for him. "Now, Adam. Like last night."

Adam didn't bother with the formality of removing his pants; instead he pressed the flaps of his britches further apart and advanced. Minaret smiled up at him.

He paused a moment to study the triangular pelt of curls between her legs and grinned at the soft pink folds beneath.

"Do you love me, Minaret?"

"You know I do. If I didn't, I would never risk so much to be with you."

"Tell me, then."

"I love you."

When he crouched between her thighs and covered her, a low sigh issued from between her lips as the full weight of him crushed her into the hay and soft packed earth.

India moved the dildo faster, her need growing with Minaret's.

"Now, Adam, I need you inside of me right now."

He drove into her with one slow thrust.

Minaret moaned beneath him as pleasure surged through her body. He felt so big, nearly too big, but so good.

She flexed her muscles around his length, bringing a groan of satisfaction from him.

"Fuck me, Adam. Fuck me hard."

With an eagerness that surprised even him, he moved within her, pulling out then driving into her with a force that set her teeth on edge. Every thrust was deep and so

good Minaret had all she could do to keep her screams at a minimum.

"Ooo, Adam," she moaned.

Their flesh was slick with sweat and the delicious suctioning sound of bodies joined in pleasure filled the cool, dark barn.

Dropping the book, India moaned and closed her eyes. She could almost smell the moist Virginia air, could nearly feel the sharp sprigs of hay poking into her back as her fantasy Adam drove himself into her. The sweet smell of earth was all around her and she tightened her eyes shut so as not to lose the fantasy.

A breeze played across her legs, tickling the sweat-dampened flesh and causing her to tighten her legs around the mechanical prick.

Damn, it felt good, and so real. Every thrust was sure and deep, every minute tinged with the sweetest of erotic sensations. Feeling on the very edge of sanity, she felt the beginnings of an orgasm playing around the periphery of her consciousness.

In India's mind, Adam steeped himself deep, then pulled nearly out of her, drove deep, then eased back. His hips slapped noisily against her, sending the soft thud of flesh meeting flesh through the room.

"Oh, God," India murmured.

"Feels good?"

"Ooo, yes."

"Do you want me, India?"

India was about to say she did when realization struck.

Her eyes flew open.

She opened her mouth to scream, but the man on top of her clamped one large hand over her mouth, effectively cutting off any sound. Instead of the scream she intended, all that came from her was a muffle of distress.

Adam gazed down at her, a wicked grin playing across the edge of his lips. His blonde hair fell around his face and tickled her cheeks and throat. He was naked, save the unfastened denims whose rough material she could feel against her thighs. His cowboy hat was askew on his head, but he didn't seem to notice.

She wasn't in her office anymore, or anywhere in her apartment, for that matter. Above, the high ceiling of the barn rose nearly forty feet into the air. Beams ran crisscross above her and she could tell by the bright sunshine blazing in through small nicks and holes in the wood that it was a sunny day.

Where was she?

She looked up at the man, at Adam, confusion in her eyes.

"I wouldn't try to scream if I were you," he said. "You're in Midworld now."

Chapter Three

India struggled beneath him, but his weight was immovable. She could see by the bulging biceps of his arms that he was a lot stronger than she was. But how was she here? How was any of this possible?

Lying wasn't her style, especially when it was to herself. She knew exactly who this man was at first sight of him and her mind boggled at the ramifications.

"Adam?" she asked. Her voice sounded too thin, too weak to actually belong to her.

All thought evaporated when he rotated his hips and flexed his cock. The intense pleasure of that simple movement had her falling back into the hay and moaning against his hand.

"That's a girl," he crooned. He removed his hand from her mouth and captured her wrists in his hands. "I'm gonna fuck you slow and hard the way you've always wanted to be fucked."

She sighed and arched her back. She didn't have time to wonder where the dildo had gone. Clearly something had happened to it, because what she felt between her thighs now wasn't the gel-filled object she'd been using a minute ago. What was between

her legs now was all man.

He levered her arms over her head, pinioned them to the ground, and rose above her. "Welcome to Midworld," he said, then began to move slowly within her.

He slid deep inside, and she moaned. She'd never felt anything as good as this. Abandoned to the feel of him, she lost herself in pleasure as he set a rhythm slow enough to torment even as it satisfied. Her hips moved of their own accord; she met his thrusts with an enthusiasm that sent shudders vibrating through her quim every time he eased out and sank in.

"You feel so good, India. So tight."

She couldn't speak, didn't even try. Words were beyond her. Her entire world had narrowed to the delicious sphere of erotic sensation administered to her by a man who didn't exist. But what he was doing to her now felt real enough.

He rocked his hips, thrusting in, then gliding out. The movements were smooth, his cock hard and sure. His breath was cool, frankincense scented bursts of air that peppered her face as he panted above her.

She struggled in his grasp, wanting her arms free so she could touch him, pull him closer, but his grip was too sure.

When he saw her struggle, he tightened his hold. He gazed down at her and slid his tongue over his lower lip. He had a look in his eyes that said he knew the sight of it made her hungry for the taste of him. "You're not going anywhere," he said as he rode her. "Not yet."

"No," she managed to gasp.

He grinned. Then he fell on her, capturing her mouth with his. The kiss was possessive. A ravenous plundering by a starving man. His tongue met hers and the two danced, gliding against the other and demanding satisfaction.

Her entire body felt lit by a thousand tiny sparks of flame, each threatening to explode into an inferno at any second. At the very edge of reason, on the precipice of sanity, she felt the most intense orgasm of her life building deep within her.

"Harder, Adam," she begged as Minaret had begged before her.

He eased back, gentled his thrusts, rose above her and grinned. "Not a chance."

"You're killing me."

"And you love it."

"Please. I need it harder, faster."

He stilled atop her and stared into her eyes. The blue-green sparkle of his intent gaze had her biting her lip when she would have screamed in protest with any other man.

"I love the way you beg, India," he said. "You can't imagine how much it turns me on."

He flexed his erection and she squirmed.

"Please," she gasped.

"Please what?" he teased.

She wanted to scream in frustration. "Please fuck me. Hard!"

India knew he'd come to some silent decision when he gritted his teeth, loosened her wrists, and

braced his arms at either side of her head. Before she could tighten her legs around him he withdrew, sending tiny erotic vibrations along her moistened inner channel. He drew back until he nearly slipped free of her. She was about to protest but the look on his face stalled her. He'd set his mouth in a humorless grin, focused on her with an intensity that had her squirming again, and drove into her with such force she did scream.

He drew back again and thrust in hard, drew back and thrust, hard and sure as a piston. The movements were quick, deliberate, and they felt too good. Better than anything any person had a right to feel. India could scarcely catch her breath. He'd become an animal atop her, growling through every thrust with a look in his eyes that challenged her to refuse him.

She tightened her legs about him, gloried in the feel of being so completely taken.

"Adam!" she screamed.

"So...Fucking...Good," he said with each thrust.

She screamed again, too far gone to control herself. Writhing beneath him, she scored his back with long, red stripes. His cowboy hat fell off and she took the opportunity to tangle her fingers in his hair, pull him close.

Their tongues met and bright light flashed before her. He claimed her so thoroughly she thought she'd explode. His tongue darted in and out of her mouth, accented by his thrusts. Pleasure came at her in waves, each stronger than the last, each powerful enough to pummel her into a higher level of abandon.

Teetering on the edge, the orgasm churned within her, closed in, then drove her completely over. She came hard, bucking beneath him. They writhed together, mouths joined and bodies locked. He thrust harder. Again and again, until thrusting deep, he held fast and emptied himself into her.

On a long groan he collapsed atop her, gasping for breath.

India listened to his gentling breathing as calm returned to her. She panted. Gloried in the feel of his hot wet body atop her. If this was a dream, she never wanted to wake up.

Too soon, though, he stirred, a wicked smile splitting his face. His hair was wild on his head, but the look only heightened his appeal.

She wanted to ask him how this was possible, how she had come to be here within the pages of this book, but that sexy grin of his had the hunger churning inside of her all over again.

Wrapping her arms around the back of his neck, she pulled him close for a kiss. Their tongues met and a blaze alighted within her. He kissed her slowly now, leisurely, as if time was not an issue for them.

She murmured protests when he drew away from her. She tried to lock her arms around his waist, but her hands slid over the slick, wet surface of his skin. When he drew his length out of her, she fell back in the hay and moaned. Her entire body had become sensitized to his every touch.

"Sorry," he said, "but we should talk."

That was the understatement of the century.

"Adam?" she asked tentatively.

He nodded, sending his fair hair spilling over his shoulders and against her skin. "That's my name here and in my own world." His smile broadened.

* * *

Adam wasn't sure how to go about this. He'd never had to convince a woman to leave her world for his before, especially when her world was so many light years from his. He was accustomed to traveling among the stars, visiting planets within the five galaxies, but he'd never ventured out this far. This was a new experience for him. He could only imagine what it was like for her.

She'd been reading on her couch when he'd latched onto her and brought her through. He'd had to wait until she'd been consumed with thoughts of him—that was how the portal worked—and once she'd set the book down and began masturbating in earnest, he knew the time to act was at hand. And he did.

But what was she feeling now? What would she do when he informed her of his plans? If she tried to run away, would he chase her down, bring her to his world against her will? No, he decided as soon as the thought had come to him. He didn't want to take her by force, at least not until that was his only alternative. Ideally, she would come willingly with him.

By the stars, she was more beautiful in the flesh

than her image had been within the book. Her body was soft and pliable and he loved the way she came alive under his touch. And this was just the beginning. They had a lifetime of joining to share, he would see to that.

"What are you thinking?" he asked when he realized she was still staring up at him, a look of awe fixed to her face that made her pretty features seem almost comical.

"Who are you? And where am I? And how did I get here?"

"I'm Prince Adam of the Kingdom of the Two Lands. You are in Midworld. And you're here because I will it. Now, my little beauty, ask me who you are."

Her look went from confusion to down right bewilderment in the span of two seconds. He would have laughed had he not been afraid he'd scare her off.

"Okay," she said at last, "who am I?"

"Princess India of the Kingdom of the Two Lands."

Her mouth fell open and for a moment she simply stared at him, obviously aghast. Then she frowned and started working her mouth. When the sound finally came, it exploded out of her. "Do what!"

"You're my princess. I've come to Midworld for you, to bring you home with me."

"Me?"

"You are my princess," he said in the voice he reserved for his young cousins, "and I am your prince. I've come to bring you home."

"I've never heard of the Kingdom of the Two Lands, and I'm not a princess. I'm—Mmm."

Her words ended on a moan when he captured her lips. He slid his tongue into her mouth and moved it with a liquidity that had her pressing herself to him. She returned his kiss with a hunger that said a lot about her need for him. As it was, when he drew away it took her a few moments to remember what she'd been saying.

"I just—" This time her sentence was stalled when he pressed a finger to her lips.

"Two Lands is a beautiful place, India. It's like the Eden described in your Genesis story. Our lands are covered in lush forests. We reserve our natural resources and allow building only in specially designated areas. There is no pollution in my world; our waters are so pure you can drink from them. Can you imagine that, India. Imagine going to one of the earth's lakes and drinking from it?" Before she could answer, he went on. "I've read much about your planet." He grimaced and began ticking points off on a finger. "Murder, rape, terrorism, and the stars forbid, sexually transmitted diseases."

"You don't have STD's or crime?"

"Oh, we have crime, but not of the caliber of the crimes committed on your earth. And if you came with me you'd live in a palace...and have a family."

"How do you know—"

He lowered his mouth to hers and kissed her deeply. She realized he kissed her whenever she was about to ask questions he didn't want to answer, but

she couldn't generate any real anger over it. The kisses were simply too good.

"You taste so good, India," he said on a sigh. "My parents—the king and queen—are still married. I have three brothers and a large extended family on my father's side. All would welcome you with open arms."

She opened her mouth to speak, but no sound came. India felt too confused to think. She couldn't make heads or tails out of what was happening to her. Was it really happening or was she dreaming? She couldn't tell.

Sensing her confusion, Adam decided his best course of action was to give her some time. "Don't answer me now," he said. "Just think about it. It's too great a decision for you to make immediately. For now, come." Adam got to his feet and pulled her up with him.

Her long skirts fell to her ankles, but her breasts were still bare and her nipples hard as pebbles. He led her into a dark corner of the barn and backed her against the rough wooden planks of the barn wall. When he pressed his body into her, she sighed as his heat enveloped her. The peaks of her nipples grew harder when they came into contact with his chest.

"Close your eyes," he said.

"But—"

"Just do as I say. Think about what I've told you. We'll discuss this again next time."

"Can't we make love again?" she asked. "I've never, in all my life, had such great sex. It was

amazing. You were amazing."

He grinned, "Baby doll, you don't know what great sex is...yet. If you think today was good, you have no idea what I intend to do to you when you return with me to Two Lands."

She bit her lip and stared up into his blue-green eyes. "But can't we do it one more time? I think it'll help me decide."

"Nice try, but you'll just have to wait until next time. And only then if you have an answer for me." He paused. "An answer I like. I want you, India. You have no idea how much."

"I...you're...my gosh, I can hardly think. When will the next time be?"

"Tomorrow night. Same time. All you need do is read a book; any book will do, and think of me. That's the important part. Focus all of your attention on me."

She nodded. "How can I be sure I'm not dreaming?"

"Oh, you'll realize soon enough," he assured her. "For now, I want you to close your eyes."

"You promise I'll see you tomorrow?"

He nodded. "Promise you'll have an answer for me."

She gazed up at him for a moment longer, imprinting her memory with those beautiful eyes, his lush mouth, and that perfect face. Then, against her better judgment, she closed her eyes. "I will. I promise."

She felt him press in closer, felt the hard planes of his pecs against her, flattening her breasts as he

wrapped his arms around her. Then that lush mouth was there, warm and demanding against hers. He forced her lips open with his tongue and kissed her slow and deep.

She moaned against him, reached out to close her arms around him.

Her arms closed over air.

She gasped.

Slowly, afraid of what she would see, she opened her eyes.

A low, miserable moan whined out of her. She was back home in her apartment lying on the sofa. Alone. The morning sun was streaming in through the window over her desk, and everything looked as it had when she'd entered the room in the middle of the night.

"Adam," she called, but nobody answered.

She got to her feet and searched the office. When she didn't find him there she broadened her search to include her entire apartment. When she caught herself probing the depths beneath her bed and within linen closets, she forced herself to step back and analyze the situation.

She'd been reading a book, started masturbating, closed her eyes and...

Had Adam been a figment of her imagination? A very detailed, very realistic figment of her imagination?

"Tonight," she said, repeating his promise. "Read a book and think of me and I'll come for you."

She went back to her office.

The dildo was sitting head up and the book was resting face down on the floor beside the sofa. The sight of the two made her last remnants of hope vanish. Adam was most likely a very vivid dream. But he had seemed so real. Yet, why would a man like Adam come to her, of all people, and tell her she was his princess? The very idea was comical. But damn, what a dream it had been.

Taking up the dildo and bringing it to the kitchen sink to clean, she found herself wishing the dream had been true. To be princess to a man whose sexual prowess matched his good looks...it didn't bear thinking about. Damn, he'd been gorgeous. Perfect. In real life, if a man like Prince Adam had come to her and calmly informed her she was his princess and must accompany him to his kingdom, she would have happily agreed and trotted off with him. What did she have to leave behind? She'd started her own business, true, but she'd never meant to spend her entire life writing resumes and cover letters. Writing resumes bored her to tears. Her parents had died years ago, she was an only child, and the only true friend she'd ever had was Candace. Dream Adam had been right. She didn't have anybody here, save one person. She didn't have any ties that would keep her.

As hot jets of water streamed over the dildo, she forced thoughts of Adam and sex from her mind. She'd only make herself miserable thinking about him. And it was already eight. Candace would be there soon.

As though Candace was conjured by her thoughts, India's doorbell rang.

"Damn it, I'm not even dressed," India groaned as she rushed to the file cabinet, shoved the cleaned dildo inside, and locked the drawer. She'd gotten to her feet and was about to run to the door when she felt something oozing from between her legs. In a rush she hiked her nightgown to her thighs and saw thick white fluid seeping from inside of her.

"Hey India, open the damn door!"

India's heart kicked up a beat as a continuous stream slid down her inner thigh. She'd never gotten this wet before, not even when a man was in the room with her. Reaching for the box of tissues on the end table, she marveled at how much a simple dream had affected her.

The doorbell rang again.

"I'm coming!" India screeched as she mopped up the fluid with a few quick swipes.

She'd open the door and tell Candace she'd overslept. That would explain why she was still in her nightgown. Anything else, India had to think about later. Candace always showed up on her door every morning ready to work. Today they had three resumes and two cover letters to get done, so they'd be busy.

She moved to the sofa, pressed her knee into a cushion, tossed the soiled tissues into a trashcan tucked into a nook beside the desk and froze. Slowly she stood and gazed down at the sofa.

"Shit!"

"Come on. I have hot bagels and they're getting cold. Open up."

"Shit, shit, shit."

A milky white fluid was puddled on the sofa. It had to belong to her, too, but she didn't know how. While she was able to reach amazing heights of arousal when she masturbated, she'd never oozed that much.

"What the hell is going on?" India asked herself

She dipped a finger into the liquid. At the same time, she realized a fresh stream of fluid had started oozing out of her. Ignoring her steadily dampening thighs, she brought her finger to her mouth and darted her tongue against it. The salty-sweet taste was unmistakable.

"Oh, shit, this is cum. This is cum! Oh, shit, oh, shit. Cum!"

She heard keys jingling in her lock and let loose with a fresh flurry of curses. Why in the hell had she given Candace a set of keys to her apartment?

India had time to flip the cushion so the wet stain was hidden from view and snatch another handful of tissues before Candace came stomping into the kitchen, bag of bagels in one hand, cup of coffee in the other, and a scowl on her face.

"What the hell, India? You plan to leave me out there all day?"

India didn't know what to say. She was too confused. She didn't know exactly what had happened here last night, but clearly something *had* happened.

Surrender

Shaking her head at Candace, she opened her mouth with intent to apologize. Instead, one word spilled from her mouth.

“Adam.”

Chapter Three

Adam sped through the fortress gates without bothering to stop at the sentinel's station to check in and announce his return. He was too anxious to worry over such mundane things as procedure. And anyway, by now Sam knew Adam was the only one who chose this particular mode of transport. To his brothers the motorcycle was archaic, but Adam loved the feel of all that power humming between his legs.

He groaned.

India should have been between his legs right now. And soon she would be. He'd see to that.

After returning from Midworld, he'd left the castle, hopped on his motorcycle and been riding through the forests ever since. The plan was to be alone. He had to think, to plan.

Now there was no question in his mind. He would have India. He wanted her with a desperation that astonished him. He hadn't meant to leave her so abruptly, had initially planned to stay with her in Midworld while he convinced her to return with him, but the impulse to carry her off against her will was nearly too strong to resist.

Now, back at the castle, Adam mounted the wide

marble steps to the entrance in threes. It was time to meet with his brothers. He was anxious to hear how their trips had gone.

"Your highness," the doorman said with a low bow before opening the doors for him.

"Is my father home?" Adam asked.

"No, your highness."

"My mother?"

"No, your highness."

"Thank you, Jerold," Adam said, then rushed inside. He scaled the stairs to his rooms at a jog. When he reached his chambers, he wasn't surprised to see his brothers were already there, talking in quick voices.

"There he is," Quelleman announced as Adam pushed through the ornate double doors and entered his salon.

Petra was seated on Adam's overstuffed sofa, Quelleman on his lounge, while Absolom paced beside it. Quelleman's booted feet were propped on Adam's very expensive beaded satin coverlet. His hands were interlaced under his head and he was looking very pleased with himself, as usual. Petra, on the other hand, sat with his feet firmly planted on the floor. He seemed to sense Adam's unease and had thus had stationed himself on the very edge of the bed, poised and ready for whatever Adam might do. Absolom, his mass of dark hair falling over his face and shoulders and down his back, paused mid-step to look up. Quickly looking down again, he resumed his pacing.

"Yes, here I am." Adam agreed.

Quelleleman was the first to start the conversation. "Seems Absolom is closest to winning father's competition. As we speak his chosen princess is in his bedchamber —"

"So soon?" Adam stared at Absolom, impressed. "Stop pacing and tell me how you did it. I had to leave India time to think over my proposal. She was too confused to make any decision when I left her."

"Oh, don't be unduly impressed," Petra said. "You didn't let Quelleleman finish."

Absolom paused and swung round to glare at Petra. His hair was positively wild on his head. Adam could barely make out his face.

"Indeed." Quelleleman laughed. "She's bound and gagged. Trussed up like a field animal."

"Is he kidding?" Adam asked.

Beneath all that dark hair Adam saw Absolom's lip curl. "No," he said, then resumed his pacing.

"You? But what happened to proceeding with caution and taking care not to frighten?"

"I don't know."

"You tied her up and kidnapped her?"

"Should I draw you a diagram, Adam?"

Adam exchanged glances with Quelleleman and Petra. Quelleleman was far too amused to elaborate, so Petra took up the story.

"Seems our Brain has more spirit than we thought. And better taste. She's a lovely creature. Soft, round —"

"She wouldn't come with me," Absolom

complained. "I set the situation before her, explained the part she must play, informed her of the necessity of her compliance."

"So what happened?" Adam asked.

Absolom frowned at the floor and shrugged. "She refused me."

Quellemen burst into a fit of laughter. "And what do you think our well-mannered brother did then?"

"Oh, shut up, Quellemen."

Petra's smile wavered, then he too was laughing.

Absolom clenched his fists. "What choice did I have?"

"Let's see," Quellemen said. "Let's examine your choices. A. Give the girl some time to process the situation. B. Offer to bring her here on a trial basis, promising her she can return home at any time if she decides she doesn't want to stay. C. Choose someone else. Or D. Follow the girl back to her own world where you proceed to hog-tie and gag her," he held up a hand to stall Adam's words. "No, Adam, that's not the best part. After he stalks the poor girl to her world and ties her up, Mr. Brain here realizes he has no idea how he's supposed to get back home. He knows how to get out of Midworld, but how's he supposed to get out of her world? Hmm, A,B,C, D, what a hard choice. I think I would have opted for A. myself. What about you Adam? You went with A too, right? What would you have gone with, Petra? Who in their right mind would go with D? Oh, wait a minute, before you answer it's only right to tell you that someone in this room, who shall remain

nameless, did in fact opt for the brilliance of plan D. Care to wager who that was?"

"It was an honest mistake," Absolom argued.

"Honest, my ass. We should have left you there."

Adam studied Absolom whose gaze was still fixed on the floor. "How did you get back?"

Racked by a fresh fit of laughter, Quelloleman rolled off the lounge, onto the floor, and guffawed. He seemed to be explaining something, but Adam couldn't make out a word he was saying.

"Mother sent Quelloleman and me to retrieve him," Petra explained.

"Oh, big deal," Absolom said. He'd taken a step closer to Quelloleman and seemed on the verge of kicking him.

"You know in order for us to bring our females into Midworld they have to be thinking about us. Well, with Brain trapped in the great beyond with his chosen mate, who was he supposed to think about?"

"Petra had to go through," Quelloleman gasped from the floor.

"Can you imagine how terrified that poor female was when she saw me appear in her bedroom?"

Adam had been trying to hold back his mirth but he didn't know how much longer he could manage. If he'd been bound and gagged and saw Petra appear out of nowhere in his bedroom he would have been terrified, and he'd grown up with the man. Petra was a huge mass of man that any person in their right mind would be afraid of. No matter he was good-looking, the first thing people noticed about him was

the sheer size of him.

"What happened then?" Adam asked.

"Well," Petra said, "I told Brain that Quelleman was waiting on the other side to pull us through. So he grabbed up his chosen one—who by the way had the look of murder in her eyes—and the two of us focused our thoughts on Quelleman—"

"And I pulled them through."

"I've no doubt," Petra continued, "she will murder our Brain when he gets up the courage to release her. I've never before been in the presence of such undistilled fury in all my life. I plan to recruit her to the Royal Guard. I've no doubt my men have much to learn from her."

"That's enough," Absolom said.

Quelleman labored to lift himself off the floor. "Just one other thing," he pleaded. "Adam has to see—"

Absolom launched himself at Quelleman and the two tumbled to the floor in a mass of hair, arms, and flailing legs.

"Had Absolom shown such spirit with his chosen," Petra said dryly, "he would not have wound up with a blackened eye."

"She hit him?"

"She not only hit him, she destroyed his spectacles."

Adam wanted to know more, but he was distracted by the low grunts and groans emanating from the floor beside the lounge. The sounds were peppered with curses and threats, all of them issuing from

Absolom. The two rolled over the floor, each jockeying for a dominant position.

Seeing the wisdom of setting distance between himself and them, Adam moved closer to the sofa. "Shouldn't we do something?" Adam asked as Quelloman got Absolom into a headlock. Quelloman's huge bicep closed over Absolom's throat and squeezed. Adam grimaced. Even though Quelloman wasn't at his best just now, laughing as he was, the hold looked painful.

"Let them have at it," Petra suggested, "it'll do them good."

"If Absolom gets loose there's a good chance he'll kill Quelloman. Quelloman's only just managing to keep hold of him—shit. That had to hurt. No hitting below the belt, Absolom."

Quelloman groaned and rolled onto his back, holding his crotch.

"Let him kill Quelloman. That will leave us one less person to share the kingdom with."

Absolom threw himself on top of Quelloman and landed a series of blows to his gut that had Quelloman gasping for air."

Really, the fight wasn't fair. Quelloman was in no condition to defend himself. "Stop laughing, Quelloman." Adam looked at Petra, who was watching the fight with eager interest. "I really think you should do something."

"Oh, all right." Petra rose and moved forward into the melee. He quickly ended the brawl by grabbing hold of Absolom by his ankles and dragging him

across the room on his stomach. Freed from abuse, Quelloman rolled onto his knees and tried to catch his breath. Blood oozed from a gash in his lip and he held tight to his stomach with one arm and his crotch with the other. He teetered on his knees for a moment, held firm, then fell over. Laughing.

"I had to bind her," Absolom said, wiping non-existent dirt from his person as he got to his feet. "She kept attacking me."

When Adam had calmed Absolom, and Petra had bound Quelloman's wounds, the four settled onto the floor of Adam's salon and finished updating each other.

"I'm returning to India in a few hours," Adam finished. "I'm confident she'll return with me."

"Okay, then," Absolom said, rising to his feet. "I think we should meet again tomorrow night. Same time. If you have your India in tow, you should bring her. I think seeing her will put my intended at ease."

Chapter Four

“You’re shitting me, right?” Candace said when India finished telling her about her strange night.

“Does this look like the face of a shitter?”

“You really want me to answer that?”

India shoved her uneaten bagel aside and slid from the desk. In one quick move she hiked her gown to her thighs so Candace could see the drying semen.

“What the hell, India? You mean to tell me you let some guy screw you and you didn’t make him use a condom. Dang, girl, you crazy or what?”

“I’m not crazy.” India let the gown fall into place. “That’s what I’m telling you. Forget the stupid condom. He wasn’t wearing a condom because —”

“Because there are no STD’s in his world.”

“Then why are you making me repeat myself? Get up. I wanna show you something.”

Candace stood from the sofa, set her coffee on the end table and leveled a hard gaze on India. “If everything that’s happened since I got here is anything to go by I bet this is gonna be good.”

India ignored Candace and flipped the sofa cushion.

The milk-white stain had dried some, but it was

still there.

Candace stepped close, then scrunched her nose when she realized what the stain was. "Oh, India. On your couch?"

The rush and confusion of the morning finally caught up with India. She collapsed onto the sofa and pressed her hands over her face. "Damn it, Candace, I'm not joking. Something happened to me last night, something I can't explain." She dropped her hands and looked up at Candace. "What happened to me last night?"

Candace's smile faltered. When India continued to stare miserably up at her the smile fell away completely. "You're serious, aren't you?"

"Yes. That's what I've been trying to tell you. Last night I had sex with a man who, far as I can tell, doesn't exist. But I have his semen all over me."

Candace kneeled before India and took her hands. "Do you think this has anything to do with what Madame Selena said Saturday night?"

India remembered well what the seer had said. It was what the seer had said that had kept her from sleeping and led her to search for something to read in the first place.

"Not a man but a beast," Candace was reminding her. "Any man who can screw a woman and not even have the decency to exist sounds like a beast to me."

"But he wasn't evil. He was kind. And the way he moved when he was inside of me." Her eyes crossed involuntarily as a shudder of recollection went through her.

India didn't see the look of worry cross Candace's face. Once she thought of Adam, remembered how he'd driven himself into her, her legs had turned to mush. She closed her eyes, but when an image of Adam's face danced behind her lids she quickly opened them. She had to clear her head and as long as she was thinking about Adam, that was impossible.

Maybe she shouldn't have said anything to Candace. Adam had said he'd come for her. God knew she wanted to see him again. She'd never known sex with another person could be so good. She wasn't a virgin by a long shot, but all of the men from her past had had sex with the self-indulgence of a fifteen-year-old boy. They'd always been too concerned with their own pleasure to worry about her. But Adam had been different. And he'd been so kind. So...she didn't know, but she felt like she'd known him all of her life. Looking into his eyes had filled her with such peace.

"If it wasn't a dream," India began, but Candace cut her off.

"What do you mean if it wasn't a dream? Of course it was a dream. What else could it have been? We just have to figure out where all this white stuff came from. Who says it has to be cum? It could be anything. It could be you, for all we know."

"I tasted it. It tasted like semen."

"So you know how semen tastes. Since when did you know enough about how female cum tastes to rule it out of the running?"

India's lip curled. "Yuck. I've never tasted a

female's —

"My point exactly."

"If it wasn't a dream, if Prince Adam really exists somewhere and he comes for me tonight..." She paused to meet her friend's gaze. "I'm going with him." Candace waved this off. "I'm serious, Candace. Something happened here last night, and the more I think about it the more I know it wasn't a dream. If you come here in the morning and I don't answer the door, just know that I went with him."

"You're talking crazy, India."

India shrugged and got to her feet. "I'm gonna shower. The resume questionnaire forms are on my desk if you want to get started on the resumes. I'll only be a few minutes."

Chapter Five

India paced her apartment, tried to find something to soothe her. She and Candace had finished the resumes hours ago. They'd watched two movies, three television shows, then finally, Candace went home.

India loved Candace, but around midnight India started to wonder if her friend would ever leave. Having Candace's company was nice, but the only companionship India was interested in tonight was Adam's. Jeez, India wanted to see him again.

The day had dragged on, each second seemed a minute and each minute seemed an hour. She thought bedtime would never come. But now that it was here and Candace was gone, she didn't know what she should do first. She'd already taken an hour in the bathroom to shower again, wax her legs and do her hair and makeup. Then she'd put on a pair of jeans and a sweater, though she knew chances were that her wardrobe wouldn't matter. If indeed Adam came for her, she'd be dressed as Minaret again.

Deciding it was time to get started, India went to her office and head towards her mother's desk where

she'd locked the book. Adam had said the book didn't matter, but she felt better using the one she'd read last night. As she unlocked the file drawer and retrieved it, she went over what she planned to tell him...if he really existed.

"I think we should get to know each other," she said in a whisper, "before jumping into a serious relationship. You can visit me in Baltimore and I can visit you at your hou...castle, and over time, if we think it appropriate, we can discuss the issue of living together."

She liked the sound of that. Now all she had to do was hold up her end of the bargain and refuse to be overly impressed by his heavily muscled thighs, broad chest, beautiful face, massive cock... "Jeez, who was she fooling? Just the thought of him had her legs turning to jelly beneath her."

She settled onto the sofa and opened the book to page three hundred. She figured she shouldn't bother covering old territory. But when she'd begun to read she realized it was another story. A different story.

Adam moved across the stage with feline grace. The sleek leather fit like a second skin, displaying heavily muscled thighs to their best advantage. Every female in the audience watched with rapt anticipation as he ripped the thin silk shirt he was wearing open and let the shredded remains glide from his thick arms and puddle on the floor at his booted feet. A guitar let wail with a machine gun rhythm riff and Adam raised his hands overhead just as the lights went dim and an explosion of laser lights backlit him. Only his silhouette was visible to the audience, but that was enough. The crowd went wild.

"Adam! Adam! Adam! Adam!"

He sauntered to the edge of the stage, set one booted foot on a speaker and pointed into the crowd with a bejeweled finger.

"How you doing tonight, Roanoke!" He yelled

The arena became pandemonium. There were people screaming and hollering for him to come closer while others bounced up and down and pointed back at him. The lights came on, a second guitar player appeared from stage left just as a bass player came running from stage right. The two met center stage and the three musicians went into "Love Slave".

Adam glided across the stage in beat with the staccato jungle rhythm the drummer beat out and the melodic arpeggio riffs of the guitar players. The bass riff rumbled from the speakers as Adam began crooning into the mic.

"I will make you mine somehow, fate will come and show you how, you will seek me when it's done with you..."

"I'll be your love slave, Adam," females were screaming. "I want to suck your dick, Adam," others yelled, getting right to the point of the matter.

Nearly every one of the thousands of people packed into the Roanoke Civic Center had waited a good two years to see Adam come to Roanoke, Virginia. And those who hadn't come to see a show, those who intended this to be Adam's last night in the limelight progressed steadily forward through the crowd, weapons held at the ready beneath their overcoats.

Sarah and Lisa oozed through the crowd. Anyone who caught sight of the pair quickly moved aside and out of their path. Both women were dressed in simple black, but

the thick fur skins they wore as overcoats were as much attention grabbers as was the look of deadly intent in their eyes. If any of the concertgoers they shoved past knew of the arsenal of weaponry tucked deep into the inner pockets of their coats, they would have forgotten the two years they'd waited to see Adam and fled like hell on wheels. As it was, they simply scurried aside and out of the way.

Lisa swore. "You missed a perfectly good shot, Sarah."

"Closer," Sarah said over the music. "I want to be sure I get him. I don't want to cause a riot." Sarah knew if she shot him from this distance, chaos would ensue and that wouldn't be good for either of them. If they weren't trampled to death by the stampede out of the arena, they were likely to be attacked by some overzealous fan and end up forced to defend themselves. As a huntress it was Sarah's duty to dispatch the undead, but she wouldn't hurt a human if she didn't have to. Anyway, headquarters didn't want Adam dead. They wanted him brought to them alive. And that was how Sarah planned to get him. Alive.

India gazed up from the book and glanced around the room, making sure she was still alone.

Adam wasn't a drifter in this book but a rock star. A leather clad rock star who apparently wasn't human. At least the female named Sarah had alluded to that.

Try as she might to focus on the ramifications of someone who called themselves a huntress stalking Adam, India couldn't. All she could think on was the fact that he was probably even sexier in leather than he was in his cowboy getup.

She felt her heart kick up a beat as she thought of him shirtless and moving across the stage with a

microphone in his hand. A sudden and overwhelming need to see him came over her. She had to get into the story. Adam had to keep his word.

"I don't know why everyone always makes such a big deal over Adam when Tizzy's so much better looking," Lisa yelled.

Sarah gave her partner a brief look, then rolled her eyes. "Tizzy is invisible next to Adam," she screamed back.

"Adam is an egomaniac. Look at him dancing across the stage. He's so full of himself. It'll be a pleasure to catch his immortal ass and drag it to headquarters. Let's see how arrogant he is after he's been interrogated for a few hours."

"I'm sure he'll look as sexy then as he does now."

Lisa fluffed her hair and waved her hand in dismissal. "We'll get him." Lisa reached into a pocket and came up with a pack of bubble gum. After unwrapping and popping a cube in her own mouth, she offered the pack to Sarah. "Here, have one. It'll make you feel better. Give you a sugar high." Sarah grabbed a cube, unwrapped it, and popped it into her mouth.

The sugary sweet taste of cotton candy gum exploded in India's mouth. She gasped, staggered back a step.

Her eyes went wide.

Music thundered at her from every direction. The press of sweaty bodies had her spinning around to get her bearings. Then she heard it, the sound of Adam's voice amplified and filling the room. It sent an erotic thrill through her.

She was there. She was in the book. In Adam's domain. In Midworld.

She glanced down at herself and wasn't surprised

to see her nightgown was gone. It had been replaced with a heavy fur coat and some bizarre, black, one-piece leotard thingy.

As for Adam, he looked better than she remembered. He dwarfed the musicians onstage with him, such was the size of him. His chest was damp with sweat and the sculpted mass of it glistened under the stage lights. His hair was loose and hung down his back as he ran to the edge of the stage, mic in hand, threw back his head and howled.

A delicious chill made her shiver and a nearly overwhelming ache began to throb between her legs.

"Adam," India whispered. Even his name on her lips was enough to arouse her.

As if he'd heard her small voice over the blaring guitars and pounding drums, he froze onstage and looked out into the crowd. Though it took only seconds, time stood still for India as she watched his blue-green eyes rove the audience. She knew he was searching...for her. The knowledge was nearly too much for her. Her knees suddenly felt like jelly and she would have went down if so many bodies weren't packed tight around her.

When he found her she felt the shock of his eyes on her and nearly swooned. She looked up and their eyes met. In that instant something passed between them. Something hot and electric, a promise of things to come.

"India," he mouthed. He licked his lips slowly, hungrily, then reached between his legs and cupped his crotch with one hand. The audience went wild,

but he didn't acknowledge them. He narrowed his eyes and gave his cock a squeeze. "To...night," he mouthed. "All...for...you."

The throb between her legs quickly turned into an insistent ache.

Then the moment was over. He danced back to center stage in time for the arena to go black and the song to end.

When the lights blazed on the riff to "Surrender" began. Adam appeared on the top of a riser, arms held wide. He pulled the mic close to his lips and started singing.

"Surrender everything to me; surrender, give me what I need; and I'll make love to you till the morning light. Surrender's what you're gonna do; surrender, I'll be good to you; Gimme your heart, your mind, your soul, I'll guide you to..."

"Do it now," Lisa yelled from beside India. "Incapacitate him before he realizes we're here."

The reality of the situation hit India like a ton of bricks. She was in the damned book, all right. She was in the book and had landed smack dab in the person of the huntress. That meant she was there to capture Adam. She suddenly felt the weight of the coat she wore and remembered reading that Sarah was carrying weapons.

One feel inside her coat was enough to tell India she was carrying a mini arsenal on her person. She was just processing this information when a flutter of unease had her whirling around. She felt Lisa beside her fumbling within her own coat for a weapon, but it

Surrender

was no good. India saw a man raise his gun and train it on her. A quick flash of light expelled from the weapon a moment before India felt a stab of pain in her head. Before she collapsed, she saw another flash of light as the strange man took aim at Lisa and fired off a second shot.

Chapter Six

India moaned. Her first thought was of Adam, but quick on the heels of that thought was a memory of being in a packed arena. Then someone had shot her. Her next recollection was of waking up here. But where exactly was here?

She tried to open her eyes but couldn't. The hard press of something stiff was set across her eyes and forehead. From the weight of it against her face she could tell it had been expertly applied. It was tight, hot, and very effective. She couldn't see a thing. And she wanted it off. But when she tried to move her arm to feel for a release or tie of some sort, she realized this action too was beyond her present abilities.

She tried to flex her arms, to bend them, but when she could do neither, she began to struggle. For a good two minutes she writhed around and fought to free her arms. In the end her efforts netted her nothing. She was blindfolded, bound, and worn out.

"Okay," she said, pleased that she hadn't been gagged as well. "I'm blindfolded and my arms are tied behind my back." She wiggled her legs. "But my legs are free." She caught her breath and lay still so she could assess her surroundings. "I'm on my

stomach and whatever I'm lying on is soft and furry. A rug, maybe, or a comforter." She sighed. "And I'm helpless as a baby."

"Indeed."

She froze. She hadn't realized anyone was near. How long had they been watching her? "Who's there?" she demanded.

"Who do you think?" the man asked.

Her mouth got very wet. She could feel the erotic ache between her legs throb in earnest and fought to control it. "Adam?"

There was no answer. Instead she heard a door shut and the soft click of someone setting a lock in place. For a moment she was in a near panic, thinking she'd been locked in the room, but when she felt the pressure of a new weight settle in beside her she realized she hadn't been locked in the room but trapped inside with her assailant.

"Who's there?" she said again, but this time she forced a bit more steel into her voice.

Still, she received no answer.

In a move meant to catch her assailant off guard, she made to roll over. He was quicker, though. She'd barely rotated an inch when two impossibly large hands gripped her by the shoulders and forced her flat on her stomach.

"Sorry," he said, "you're not going anywhere."

Forced down into the fur as she was, when she spoke her voice was muffled. "Damn it, who are you?" she said into the tufts of fur beneath her.

"How long have you been tracking me, huntress?"

"I'm not the huntress."

"You look like the huntress. You had a small arsenal of arms on your person when my guardian took you out. But now..." he let the sentence trail off as he ran a finger down her spine, sending a frisson of pleasure through her. "Now I'll be the first to admit you don't look very threatening."

"I'm India, not the huntress."

"Now that's where you're wrong." He flipped her onto her back and straddled her chest. It was a move that had her bound arms ensnared beneath her. Even so, she kicked and tried to roll from beneath him. But her efforts were to no avail. The sheer weight of him was enough to keep her pinned and immobile.

She felt the gentle flutter of his fingers against her face as he manipulated her mask. When he pulled it free, she lay blinking up at the ceiling. It took a few seconds for her eyes to adjust to the soft candlelight.

A brief scan of her surroundings told her she was in a room. A very lavish hotel room, from the look of it. With its wood paneled walls, ornate candle stands, and lush accoutrements, the room obviously cost a pretty penny.

Then she saw him. And her mind went completely blank. "Adam," she whispered.

Without a doubt he was more beautiful than she remembered. Still clad in those skin-tight leather pants, knee-high boots, and shirtless, he was better looking than any fantasy man she'd ever been able to conjure. But Adam was real. Had he not been sitting on her chest she may have convinced herself

otherwise, but as it was, the feel of his weight pressing down on her was undeniable as was her inability to take in a full breath. Fat droplets of sweat made slick paths down the hollow of his chest. He was still sweaty from the stage and she could feel the heat radiating off of him.

He rested his hands at either side of her head and stared down at her. "I'll explain this once, India," he said, and she shuddered at the feel of those toned, leather clad thighs pressed tight against her. "You're in Midworld now. In Midworld India doesn't exist, at least not in the way you're thinking. Right now you're Sarah, the huntress. That's today's story. If you want to be India again, you'll have to come home with me."

She cleared her throat and prepared to launch into her speech. "I think we should —"

"Get to know each other," he finished. "I already know I want you. I'm not the sort who enjoys wasting time."

"I don't even know you."

"So you want to remain here as Sarah?"

"No. I don't want to be Sarah. She's trying to capture you, and probably kill you. I don't want to kill you."

He grinned. "Sarah's chances aren't looking too good right now." To emphasize his point he let his eyes slowly rove her body. In her present state of helplessness it wasn't hard to guess at his thoughts. "What do you think of Sarah's chances of suddenly overpowering me and dragging me off to be interrogated?"

She only had to consider the questions for a moment. She was completely helpless and completely at his mercy. Just the thought of this had the aching throb between her legs doubling. This time, though, she didn't fight it. She let the erotic sensations build.

She met his gaze. "Sarah's chances don't look so good," she admitted.

She realized with some surprise that she wanted to know more about Sarah and Sarah's quarry. Maybe she didn't want to be India from Baltimore just yet, but Sarah the huntress, captive of Adam the vampire. Things would be a lot more interesting as Sarah.

A flutter of anticipation had her grinning up at him even as she wondered what Adam would do.

As if he'd read something of her thoughts, Adam began speaking in a low voice. "Sarah is a huntress, part of an immortal sect of warriors born and bred to rid the world of vampires. She and her partner Lisa are very good at what they do. They alone are responsible for dispatching many of Adam the vampire's kind. But Adam has been something of a thorn in the side of Sarah's order. He refuses to live in darkness and has taken to making a spectacle of himself. He chooses victims from the voluntary offerings of his fans. He's a deadly devil and I can't blame Sarah for wanting to capture him, but since at present I'm Adam that simply wouldn't do. For Adam's part, he's known about Sarah for quite some time. He's been amusing himself with her, letting her think she was near to catching him than disappearing from sight for weeks on end. He's been planning to

dispatch her when he tired of the game...but I don't think he'll be doing that tonight."

"That's a relief."

"He's had a change of plans." There was that smile again.

"Care to elaborate?"

"He's going to play with Sarah, torment her until she's so turned on she can't think. Then he's going to take her home with him, mount her and fuck her senseless."

India's mouth fell open. His blunt manner of speech was such a turn on.

He ground his hips into her so she could feel the hard length of his erection between her breasts. A long sigh spilled from between her lips. "If you have any objections to that plan, I'd voice them now," he said.

"I love that plan," she said before she could stop herself. She plowed on. "But are you going to tell me how I got here and how any of this is possible?"

He lifted the mask from where he had laid it earlier. "Later," he said.

Chapter Seven

After he secured the mask and checked that its fastenings were tight, she felt his weight lift off of her chest. Coolness chilled her body where his heat had been. She felt oddly bereft at the loss of that nearness and had to remind herself that he wouldn't go far. Nor would he be gone for long. Though she didn't know exactly how she had come to be here, she knew her presence in Midworld was due entirely to Adam's desire to have her here. That was the only explanation that made sense. He'd known her name that first time, even though she'd come as someone else. Though she entered the world with someone else's name, she did retain her own physical characteristics. She was Sarah the huntress, but she still looked like India the business support services professional.

She inhaled in surprise when she felt the touch of something cold and sharp just below the hollow of her throat.

"Still not telling me where your partner is and how she managed to escape?" Adam demanded from somewhere above her.

She knew then that he was playing Adam the

vampire again. That meant she had to be Sarah the huntress. But she didn't know how well his interrogation would go, since she couldn't possibly answer any of his questions.

"Nothing to say?" he went on. "Still determined to keep your secrets. We'll see how long that lasts."

She opened her mouth to protest, to remind him that she wasn't really the huntress, but she realized suddenly that was probably his point. He didn't want her to be able to answer his questions. He wanted to torment her. The realization had her reeling.

She screamed in surprise as the cold metal dipped beneath her catsuit. The snip snip of scissors cutting into material filled the room as Adam dragged the sharp steel down the length of her one piece. As the front of the outfit was cut away, she felt the warmth of the room envelop her.

All of her.

She realized suddenly that Sarah hadn't put any panties on. What in the hell kind of vampire hunter went around in a catsuit with nothing on beneath? You'd never catch Buffy the Vampire Slayer going around without her underwear on.

"Adam," she called in a tentative voice.

"Change of heart?"

He dragged the scissors down her leg.

"You have to stop. I don't have any clothes on underneath."

She could hear the smile in his voice when he said, "You're blind, baby, I'm not."

"If you keep cutting, I'll be naked."

"Does this sudden reticence mean you're prepared to answer my questions?"

He cut away the material on her other leg.

"I..." she stalled. Either she was going all the way with this or she wasn't doing it at all. And she wanted to go all the way. "I'll never give Lisa up to you."

He chuckled. The sound was luscious as cool water on a hot summer day. "We'll see," he said. She heard him move around the bed. He was silent for a moment, but with a sudden move he came forward and pulled the remains of her shredded clothes from under her. She gasped as she found herself suddenly naked, blind, and bound.

* * *

Adam stood at the side of the bed, struggling for control yet again. Damn it all, tonight had to last. The last thing he wanted to do was pounce on her like a hungry adolescent and drive himself into her so hard and fast that the night was over before it had a chance to start. But that was exactly what he felt near to doing. He had to control himself. He didn't want to give India what she wanted. He could tease and tempt, but not fulfill. Not until she returned home with him. Absolom had chosen to use force to get his way, but Adam would use lust. He thought his way was far more practical.

But as he looked at her he wondered if indeed he would be able to keep from using brute force. India's breasts were large and round. They were far more

than a handful, and he couldn't wait to indulge himself with a taste of them. He wondered what human flesh would taste like, or more importantly, what India's flesh would taste like. From the look of her she'd be as sweet as the expensive chocolates his mother was so enamored of. Despite the warmth coming from the fire he'd built in the hearth, her nipples looked hard as pebbles. He decided he'd indulge in them, too. Then he'd run his tongue over that firm stomach and down to where he really wanted to taste. He gazed hungrily at the thatch of dark hair between her legs and smiled. Her pussy looked luscious, and it was all his. Her legs were long and sleek, and he couldn't wait to feel them wrapped around his waist and urging him on.

A rush of pride surged through his veins as he feasted on her with his eyes. This was his princess, the woman who would be queen. She belonged completely to him, or at least she would.

"You're beautiful," he said reverently, breaking the silence.

India started at the sound of his voice. She'd begun to wonder if he was still in the room or if he'd taken one look at her nude body and run for cover. Never in her life had she laid before a man nude, so this feeling was completely new to her. And she could only imagine the picture she made with a mask covering her eyes and her arms bound behind her back so her breasts were forced forward as if in invitation. She felt completely carnal, and she loved it.

"Do you know how lovely you are?"

She swallowed and forced her face to remain impassive. She wasn't India after all, she was the huntress. The huntress wouldn't be impressed. "Should I be flattered?" she said in her most cutting voice. It sounded like something Sarah would say.

She started at the touch of his hand against her stomach. His fingers were as gentle as a thousand dove feathers. With tickling light touches, he ran them over the plains of her stomach towards her breasts. When he palmed one in his hand, rubbing the pad of his thumb over the swollen nub of her nipple, her body tensed. Her back arched of its own accord and she sighed. His strokes were tender little circles that set a fire burning between her legs. The thrill of his touch felt so good it pained her to be bound and unable to pull him closer.

"Most woman would be...flattered, that is. But I digress." He increased the pressure. "What do you know about me?"

"You're a killer," she managed to gasp a moment before he closed finger and thumb over her nipple and squeezed. "Ooo, Adam."

"Feels good?"

"God, yes."

"How about this?"

Something wet and hot closed over her nipple. She writhed at the contact and struggled to free her arms from the rope that was holding her so thoroughly in place. Blind to everything that was happening around her, she was left with the sensations of smelling, hearing, tasting, and most stimulating of them all,

touching. And she knew what was touching her now. Adam slid his tongue over her tortured peak, moaning against her skin as he moved over it. She felt his teeth graze over her nipple, chirped when he gently bit down.

"That feels so good," India said.

"And tastes better."

He moved to her other nipple and slowly tortured it as he had the other. It was nearly too much for her, the languid laving of her breast and the gentle nibbling on her nipple. Her quim positively vibrated with a need to be filled. It was all India could do not to beg him to stop with the questions and take her.

Only the sound of his rough exhalation and inhalation gave her hope. It was a sound that said he was as turned on as she was.

"Please, Adam."

He stepped away from her and she nearly went mad.

"Had I known, huntress, that you would be so responsive to interrogation, I might have done this sooner."

"You're killing me."

"Tell me where Lisa is?"

"Who?"

"Don't play coy, huntress."

"Please, Adam. I don't want to play anymore. And neither do you."

"Who said I was playing." As he spoke, he trailed a finger down the length of her leg. His touch sent a delicious shiver down her spine.

It was hard to think with him so near, but she searched her mind for an appropriate response, something similar to what Sarah might say. "My people know where I am. It's just a matter of time before they arrive."

"Baby doll, you don't even know where you are." His finger stopped, stroked the sensitive skin just below her toes. "Spread your legs."

Finally, she thought. "Yes." With an eagerness she didn't care to think too long on, she spread her legs wide. Need had her hormones wound so tight she wouldn't have been surprised if one touch was enough to drive her over the edge.

The bed dipped as he moved onto it. She felt his knees and the brush of leather against her inner legs as he crawled up the length of her. He smelled sweetly of leather and frankincense. She took in deep lungful after deep lungful of his scent. Everything about him turned her on.

"Where did Lisa go?"

India had no earthly idea where Lisa went, nor did she care. "I don't know."

She was going mad, she decided. Mad, crazy, and out of control. He cupped the triangle between her legs and held still for a moment. "Are you sure?" he asked.

"Just fuck me, Adam. I can't take this."

"You don't have a choice. You're the captive. You have to take whatever I decide to give you."

"I don't want to be the huntress anymore, I want to be India."

"India doesn't exist in Midworld." He eased one finger inside of her and a scream of pure, unfiltered desire erupted out of her. "I'm sorry, but I can't have sex with the huntress." He slid his finger in deep, then pulled it out. Slipping another finger in, he pressed deep a second time, then eased out. "But I'd love to fuck India."

The fingers were good, but not nearly good enough. Even when he pressed his thumb to her clit and tickled, it wasn't enough. She writhed and moaned, and begged, but he was relentless.

"You know what I want, huntress."

She felt the press of his weight as he lay across her naked body. Her skin was on fire where his flesh met hers. All she could do was gasp and struggle beneath him as he continued to work her with his fingers.

"So what's it gonna be, huntress?" he whispered against her ear. She opened her mouth to speak but was cut short when he sucked her bottom lip into his mouth. "You taste so good, huntress."

While working her with his fingers, he ground his hips into her and eased his tongue into her mouth. Sighing into him, she arched to meet his kiss. She gloried in the slick feel of his mouth, of his tongue against hers. Their first kiss had been one of hunger and urgency, but this was a kiss of pure need.

Too soon he eased his fingers out of her and pulled away. She could almost see those blue-green eyes of his as he stared down at her, a smug grin pulling at the corners of his lips.

"I want to fuck you so bad, India. Why won't you

let me?"

"Okay," she gasped. "Okay, you win. I'll go with you."

He didn't waste a second. He fell on her, covering her face with kisses.

"You won't regret this, I promise. Close your eyes now," he said against her skin. "It's not safe for travelers to travel with their eyes open. You could get lost in Midworld and I might not be able to find you."

"What?"

"Just close your eyes and focus on me. That's how I was able to bring you into Midworld in the first place. Because you were thinking about me."

"What if something happens?"

"Trust me."

She took a deep breath and focused on remaining calm...and Adam.

"Are your eyes closed?" he asked. "I can't see them."

She smiled. "Yes. Whatever it is you do, do it now before I change my mind."

"That wasn't so bad, was it," he said after a moment.

"Do what?"

"Don't you dare move."

She didn't know what to say, let alone where she would go if she were able to move. "We're here?" she finally said. "Already?"

He didn't answer. But she had an inkling as to why when she felt his heat leave her a second before she heard the unmistakable sound of a zipper being

worked. She hoped he was pulling it down, though she couldn't imagine why on earth he'd be pulling it up. Unless he was about to go somewhere...without her.

"Adam?"

"How are your arms?"

She was caught off guard by the question and floundered for a second. "They're fine."

"Are they numb? I don't want to hurt you, but now that you're here I'm not sure I can wait to untie you. I want you so bad."

"Don't wait, then. Untie me later."

He was on her before she'd gotten the last word out. He kissed her with a hunger that had her heart dancing in her chest. Unable to see, the feel of him was nearly too much. He tasted as delicious as he smelled. If it were possible to taste frankincense, the taste of his tongue would be it.

The long hairs that covered his forearms tickled either side of her face where he'd rested them. As he laid against the length of her body he reached between her legs and dipped a finger inside of her.

"Ooo," she moaned.

"You are so wet, India. Are you ready for me?"

"You didn't ask last time."

"Last time," he paused to push his pants further down his hips, "it was a simple matter of displacement."

"Do it."

"As you wish," Adam said.

He settled himself between her thighs, took a

breath, then thrust deep inside of her with one long and slow stroke. He froze as the hot, wet length of her wrapped tight around his thick erection. He hadn't thought it was possible but this time felt even better than the last. When he was pressed in to the hilt, a ravenous moan oozed from between his lips.

"By the stars, you feel good," he groaned. He stared down at her. Realized he'd forgotten to remove that damned mask. He wanted to see her face. Needed to see her face.

"Fuck me, Adam. Please."

"Shh," he crooned, then captured her lips and kissed her. She met his kiss and moved her body against his. It was a near thing, but he managed to maintain control even after she wrapped her legs around his waist and pressed closer, her tongue forceful and needy in his mouth.

"Adam," she demanded.

He worked his hands around the back of her mask, undid it, and cast it aside. "Open your eyes," he said in a rough voice. "Look at me."

She opened her eyes and blinked at the unexpected brightness of the room. He knew it was a stark change from the candlelit room they'd just left and he didn't want to give her too much time to consider this. But he took a moment to take her in. To lose himself in her wide, chocolate eyes and those lush lips he could dine on forever and never grow tired of. She was beautiful. And completely his.

Another rush of pride surged through him and he reared back and drove into her again. Hard.

"Oh!" India screamed in surprise and delight. She locked her ankles and closed her eyes against the pleasure.

"Like that?" he said.

"Yes. Oh, yes."

"Want more?"

"Yes!"

India gazed at the bulging muscles in his arms as he hovered over her and drew back. She gritted her teeth in anticipation of the heady feel of having him fill her so completely. It was like his body was made for her.

He plunged in deep, rotated his hips, and sent a series of erotic sensations from the core of her belly to every part of her body that could feel. Sucking in a deep breath, she clenched her bound fists and bit down on her lip.

Then he did it again, thrust into her so hard she cried out. He set a frenzied pace and she matched him thrust for thrust. His movements quickened with her mounting pleasure. The sculpted mass of his body was like a well-oiled piston. His hips slammed against her as sensation built upon sensation.

"You belong to me now," he gritted through clenched teeth.

Before she could answer he bent his head to hers and kissed her slow and deep. It was such a sweet torture. She was so desperate to feel him; to hold him. She struggled to free her arms even as she gloried in her helplessness.

He reached under her with one hand, cupped her

backside, and thrust deeper. "Your face," he said on a thrust, "your body," he said on another, "your pussy...every inch...belongs...to...me."

"Yes!" she screamed, unsure if she was responding to his words or his cock and not giving a damn either way.

He fixed her with a look of triumph. A look that said he'd known all along that he would succeed. He was so sexy, so perfect she didn't know how she ever could have doubted it herself.

She rocked back when she felt an orgasm hovering close and tried to fight it off. She wasn't ready for an orgasm. This felt too good and she wasn't ready for it to end. But even as she tried to fight down the mounting pleasure, tried to ignore how her body quivered under his erotic assault, the orgasm drew nearer.

"Oh, God, Adam. Harder. Faster. Ooo, I'm so close," she heard herself saying.

He closed his mouth over hers and did as bid. Each thrust sent pleasure exploding out of her inner core and filled her entire body. She became mindless with the pleasure, drunken on it. And when she thought she'd go mad from it, her body exploded with an orgasm more powerful than any she'd ever known.

"Ooo, Adam," she sighed into his mouth. She thrashed beneath him, arched her back, and screamed.

Seeing her have her release was all Adam needed to push him over the edge. With a force that had him screaming her name, he came hard and long.

He drove himself deep and gave her a series of tiny pulses as he spilled his seed deep inside of her.

He let his tongue rove her mouth, leisurely plundered her as her inner muscles milked him dry. Even after their orgasms were over they remained joined, each lost in the heady feel of their achingly slow kiss.

With more than a little regret, Adam finally pulled away from her. He grinned. "Welcome to the Kingdom of the Two Lands," he said.

"Thank you," she said, then fell asleep.

Adam curled up beside her and pulled her into his arms. He was tired himself. And now that he had her, he could finally rest.

Epilogue

She woke to the feel of Adam moving inside of her. Sometime in the morning he'd rolled her onto her back, moved between her thighs and began a slow, measured ride. Staring into his face, at the sandy blonde tips of his golden eyelashes as they fluttered, she saw he was lost to the sensation of having his body joined with hers.

Eyes closed, pink lips pursed as if to give a kiss, and body damp with sweat, she would have been turned on at the mere sight of him, even if he weren't buried deep within her. But since he was she decided she should take full advantage, even if she was a little sore.

She cupped his muscular ass, let her fingers dip into the slick crevice between his two cheeks, and pulled him closer. The movement had the direct effect of driving him further inside of her. They both gasped at the sudden pleasure and his eyes flickered open.

His gaze was hot and full of need and her body immediately responded.

"I know I promised you rest today," he said, "but I can't get enough of you. Are you very sore?"

She was, but she wasn't going to tell him. "No."

"Liar. Tell me if I'm hurting you," he said as he thrust deep and rotated his hips.

Inexplicably, John Cougar Mellencamp popped into her mind. She'd never understood how anything could hurt so good, but now that she'd met Adam, she understood those lyrics completely.

"It hurts, but it feels so good," she said. "Don't stop."

And he didn't.

She'd spent the last four days within his private rooms in precisely this state. Pinned firmly beneath him and lost in erotic sensation. She'd scarcely ever left his bed. He was ravenous when it came to sex and had taken her so thoroughly and in so many ways she was amazed she could even walk.

In the shower that first day—before taking her to the Great Hall to meet his family—he'd washed her. He'd soaped his hands until they were sudsy with foam, then run them all over her body. He'd bathed every inch of her with unhurried, methodical strokes that made her want to scream with frustration. Then, when she thought she could take no more, he'd pressed her against the wall and taken her there. He thrust in and out of her with such force she didn't realize she was biting his shoulder until she felt a trickle of his blood in her mouth.

Then there were the trysts he allowed to the woods surrounding the castle. On one such trip he'd made her crouch in the soft packed earth on her knees while he unlatched his pants and pressed his crotch to her mouth. He'd fucked her mouth with a vigor that

nearly bruised her lips, and when he came she eagerly swallowed every drop of him. By now, the taste of his cum was as familiar to her as was the taste of a Snickers Bar, and she loved it.

But it was more than just the sex that she loved. Over the last few days she'd gotten to know him as she'd come to know no other person. He was kind, generous, and the affection he and his family shared for one another was genuinely one of love. Even without the castles, the lands, and the wealth, she would have jumped at the chance to be a part of this family. Yet she didn't have to do anything. Adam wanted her. All she had to do was accept what he offered and all she'd seen in these last days would be hers.

The only thing she would miss from her former life was Candace. Candace, who India knew had gone to India's apartment four days ago and found it empty, Candace, who India had known since they were both children. Thus far Adam had refused to allow India to return home to right things, but she hoped he'd soon relent.

"Come back to me," Adam whispered against her ear.

He moved faster, breathed harder.

Pleasure surged through her.

"I never left."

The pleasure had become intense, overwhelming in its force, and as he moved within her moist warmth she felt a sudden, crazy urge to weep with joy.

How had she gotten so lucky?

He drove himself harder and she met him stroke for stroke. The climax built slow, gradually growing until she could feel the force of it near to breaking her in two. Each thrust was better than the last, each rotation of his hips had her sucking in air.

"Adam."

"India."

"Never want this to end."

"Fuck me, you feel good." He thrust harder.

"Surrender, India. Give in to me."

"Yes!" Her climax erupted up and out of her, sending her body into a series of tiny spasms that had her writhing beneath him. "Yes," she said again, "Yes, yes, and yes. I surrender."

About the Author

Adrienne has always loved the arts. As a young girl she used to entertain her friends by writing stories for them, then acting them out. She had a particularly good time creating unpleasant scenarios for certain characters, then naming those characters after annoying schoolmates.

As she matured, her forays into writing matured as well. Currently, she spends all of her free time creating new characters and writing stories. She views books as the ultimate form of escape. "Within the pages of a book you can go anywhere and be anything you want to be," she says of reading. "Anything is possible with a book."