

Changeling Press

Aubrey Ross



Forced Alliance

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ISBN: 978-1-59596-652-0
Formats Available:
HTML, Adobe PDF,
MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
PO Box 1046
Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Maryam Salim
Cover Artist: Reneé George

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Genetic manipulation and generations of selective breeding have created a race of hybrids more ferocious than any the Froswick or Terran dimensions have ever faced before. The only hope of defeating these creatures is to strengthen the alliance between *Nac O'te* warriors and Earth's paranormal elite.

Rhys approaches Arabel hoping to outline the new alliance, but she turns him away. She will protect her dimension and he should do the same. Infuriated by her arrogance, Rhys summons Javier, a reformed Setti hybrid who has been specifically engineered for seduction and virility. Javier takes Arabel captive and launches an erotic campaign on her senses. In the arms of this feral hybrid, Arabel learns the pleasure of surrender and the true meaning of leadership.

Prologue

Kamn crept across the moonlit yard a step behind Noretta. His instincts balked at following a girl. It was not the Phylehan way. Females were to be protected, not looked to for guidance. But he was not Phylehan anymore. He was a genetic mixture of Creation knew what and Noretta had effortlessly incapacitated four armed men with her bare hands.

Had she only incapacitated them? The guard she'd dragged into his cell was still alive, but Kamn hadn't seen the others. Why should he care if she'd killed them? He was free! For the first time in his adult life he was free and Noretta was the reason.

"We must move quickly," she told him in a soft yet stern voice. Pausing in the shadows of a massive, leafy tree, she placed her hand on his upper arm. Could such a small body house power and ruthlessness? It seemed unlikely. He must have misunderstood what happened at Resistance Headquarters. She was a lab rat, just like him, a Setti captive desperate for freedom. If the famed Resistance fighters were unable -- or unwilling -- to grant them freedom, then she'd had no choice but to take matters into her own hands.

"What is this place?" he asked. She raised her face to the sky and scanned their surroundings.

"If what I'm sensing is accurate, this is the hideout of the last of Garret's handlers." She looked up into his eyes, waiting for the significance of her simple statement to sink in. Garret had conducted the research and proposed each hypothesis, but it was his handlers who performed the actual experiments.

"They're interrogating one of the handlers inside this house?" Kamn could hardly force the words past the tightness in his throat. Every indignity, every horror

he'd suffered flashed through his mind in a sickening rush. Pain and isolation stretched into bleak hopeless years until even the fire of fury sputtered out.

"We can wait until they're finished." A certain catch in her voice made it obvious she had something else in mind.

"Why did you bring me here if the situation is under control?"

"I don't fully understand what the Setti did to you, but I know you're able to create a powerful mental connection, especially while a person is sexually aroused."

He twisted his arm out of her grasp. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"We don't have time for games." She stepped closer and her gaze flashed in the moonlight. "I heard the Setti bitch talking to you before she had Javier brought to her bed."

That wasn't exactly how it had happened, but he wasn't about to split hairs now. "And?"

"I know what you and Javier were engineered to do."

"We were all engineered for something." He stalked toward her. Using the growling power of his voice and the brilliance of his gaze, he commanded her attention. "Phylehan males are naturally predatory. The Setti enhanced our ability to seduce, to create sexual cravings both in the physical and metaphysical realms." He placed his palms against the tree's wide trunk and caged her with his body. "What's your special skill?"

"If you're a very good boy, you'll never find out." She shoved him backward with both hands, obviously unaffected by the pheromones swirling around him. Her Setti blood must be stronger than she let on. During the final phase of his transformation a safeguard had been added to ensure that he couldn't turn on his makers. The effectiveness of his abilities decreased in direct proportion to the amount of Setti DNA a hybrid had incorporated into their physiology. Suspicion rolled through his consciousness like distant thunder. Nothing about Noretta added up. She look like a homeless waif but acted like a seasoned general. Which was the true Noretta?

She paced restlessly without leaving the relative protection of the shadows. "I'm not sure what the hold up is inside. Either Sylina is weakening or the handler is female. This place should have been in flames by now."

"Who is Sylina?"

Noretta chuckled and motioned him toward the house silhouetted by the moonlight. "Sylina is your new partner."

They hugged the side of the building as they inched toward the lounging guards. Noretta grabbed one, draining his life force and casting him into unconsciousness before his partner could shoulder his weapon. Kamn wrested the rifle out of the second guard's hands and brought it up under his chin. The guard flew backward and landed near the first with a muffled grunt.

Before Kamn could kick in the door, Noretta shot him a warning look and waved it open with her slender hand. The longer they spent together, the more Setti she seemed. He wasn't sure how he felt about that. Blood of the Setti flowed through his veins as well, but the Setti were the cause of his life-long captivity. He had always thought of the Setti as the enemy.

They found Sylina and the handler in one of the bedrooms on the second story of the house. A hairless, reptilian-looking hybrid was with them. Kamn wasn't sure if Noretta was shocked or angry to find him there. They stared at each other for a long, strained moment and Kamn realized they were communicating telepathically. How had a lab rat come in contact with this brutal hybrid? More inconsistencies.

Kamn looked at the bed and sneered. He didn't know the handler's name. Handlers never spoke directly to the lab rats. She was female as Noretta had supposed. Sylina and the hybrid had tied her spread-eagled and gagged on the bed. Her wide gaze followed the action with obvious dread. Judging from the condition of her flesh, they had not yet begun to interrogate her.

Noretta strode to Sylina and said in a calm, autocratic tone, "Your clothing offends me. Your gaze offends me. But most of all, your incompetence offends me. I

should not be here. We should all be at Garret's main complex, but we still don't know where that is."

Kamn watched with a mixture of confusion and mistrust as Sylina lowered her gaze. Noretta turned her icy gaze on him.

"You have a choice to make, Phylehan. Project Prism molded you into a weapon of extraordinary power. I would like to access that power, but unlike Garret I will not demand your subjugation. I believe agents are more effective when they see the value in what we're trying to accomplish. If you honestly think you can find a place where you will be accepted and allowed to live without the interference of a government, then go. I won't try to stop you."

He searched her gaze and her calm expression. He could slip into anyone's mind and create sexual frenzy. He could use that sexual frenzy to manipulate a person's will. What government would allow such a creature to move freely among its population? He shuddered.

"You'll be hunted and incarcerated," she predicted. "The rest of your life will be similar to the past twenty years. Or you can offer your services willingly to Midox Genaudi."

Bile rose into the back of his throat. Garret had been subordinate to Midox Genaudi. Working for Genaudi was like --

"Garret is dead and my father is more forward-thinking than your average Setti Midox."

"Your father?" Kamn shook his head. "Did the Resistance realize they'd captured Midox Genaudi's daughter?"

"Of course not. The Resistance sees what they want to see. According to the Resistance, all Setti are evil and so consumed by greed our actions are easy to predict. I suspect they will find me more challenging than my predecessors."

"But... you're just a child."

"Terrans would call my mother a Pixie. I was born one hundred and fourteen years ago. Now make your choice." Noretta glanced at Sylina who knelt at the foot of the bed, naked and submissive. "We have work to do."

"What do you need to know?"

"The exact location of Garret's labs and as much information about Project Prism as you can strip from her mind before there is nothing left."

"Why would your father not have this information already?"

Noretta glared at him. "Just interrogate the handler."

With one final glance at the reptilian hybrid and Sylina, Kamn approached the bed. "When is the last time she was infused?" Kamn addressed the question to the male hybrid.

"The pain of withdrawal is just beginning to ease. I was going to infuse her before we began. It won't do for her to believe she can actually survive detoxification."

"Who are you?" The hybrid stood there naked with his massive cock in one hand and a braided whip in the other. Somehow it just seemed appropriate that Kamn know his name.

"You couldn't hope to pronounce my real name. Sylina calls me Five."

"Five?" Noretta chuckled. "Was that how many times she came while you interrogated her?"

Five grinned. "Something like that."

The woman on the bed bucked and twisted drawing Kamn's attention. Of all the handlers, she had interacted with him the least. She didn't like to get her hands dirty, preferring to stand back and let others push and prod, cut and mutilate.

Kamn entered her mind, sickened by the fear and loathing he found there. This woman would do anything and kill anyone for the slightest chance of escape. His pity fragmented and scattered like grains of sand. This was Garret's pride and joy, his prodigy. If Sylina hadn't captured her, this woman might well have continued Project Prism under her own volition.

Easily finding the synaptic pathways he'd been trained to locate, he stimulated her primitive libido, creating a savage, burning hunger, a demand for fulfillment rather than a simple need for release. The handler groaned and panted, tossing her head from side to side.

"Give her a few minutes and you might not need to waste your essence on the likes of her," Kamn told Five.

Closing her hands into fists, the handler dug her heels into the bed and thrust her hips up as if some imaginary lover were riding her hard. Kamn could smell her arousal. Five's gaze locked on the damp thatch of hair between the woman's thighs.

"How did you make her wild so fast? I've never seen a woman lose control like this." He leaned closer as he spoke, obviously attracted by the scent of her pussy.

"Lick her if you must," Noretta said from the other side of the bed, "but don't let her come. I'll use that whip on you myself if she reaches orgasm."

Five needed no other encouragement. Slipping his hands beneath the handler's bottom he raised her mound to his mouth and lapped up her cream. He traced her slit and sucked on her folds, but carefully avoided her clit. The handler whimpered and cried out, her body trembling.

"Open your mind," Kamn coaxed. "You don't have to say a word. Feel his mouth moving over your flesh and let me take what I need."

"Will you... let me come?" She twisted and rocked, trying to rub her clit against Five's agile tongue.

"For each significant piece of information you surrender, I'll grant you one orgasm."

"The lab... the main lab... look into my mind and you can see it."

Thrilled by this development, Kamn quickly absorbed the information and told Five to let her come. Kamn would use everything he learned to barter with Noretta as soon as the interrogation was finished. Never again would he let himself be powerless.

Five drove his long, thick tongue up into the handler's cunt and she screamed as her body shuddered with violent release.

"Feel better?" Kamn let mockery ring in his tone and he poured a fresh stream of sexual compulsion across their telepathic link.

"No." She turned her face to the side and gritted her teeth. "What are you doing to me? I need more. I... I don't know what I need."

Five cut through the ropes restraining her legs and pushed them wide, bending her knees and rocking her hips up off the mattress. Kamn saw him place his cock at the entrance to her pussy, then reach lower and position a smaller appendage against her anus. This must be the elusive Setti infuser. Kamn had heard whispers, rumors that even the females possessed these mysterious tubes.

"Show me the rest," Kamn urged. "Tell me everything there is to know about Project Prism and Five will give you the best fuck of your life."

Naked and trembling, Sylina watched Five hold the handler's legs wide as he pushed his cock into her pussy and his Setti infuser up her ass. The woman moaned and tugged against the ropes restraining her arms. Sylina had no idea if the bitch wanted to escape the invasion or pull him closer. The entire room reeked of her excitement.

This is what Sylina had come here to do, so why was she upset by Noretta's presence? Sylina had expected Five to assist with the interrogation. That's what he did best. Perhaps it was this other man that had her so off balance. She'd never seen anyone quite like him. Tall and lanky, his rawboned appearance made her wonder where Noretta had found him.

She looked more closely and his strange golden gaze locked with hers. Harsh and angular, his features were too arresting to be truly handsome. He'd drawn his hair straight back from his face and tied it at the nape of his neck. The shiny strands mixed every color between brown and gold. Tawny, she supposed described it best.

"Magnificent, isn't he?" Noretta moved up beside Sylina as the man returned his gaze to the handler. "Kamn is a Phylehan."

Sylina didn't give a damn what he was called. She wanted to know how he'd turned the handler into a writhing heap without even touching her. "I've never heard of a Phylehan."

"His abilities are not that different from yours. As soon as Five starts fucking the handler, Kamn will slip back into her mind. When he does, I want you to join him."

"Why?" Anything Noretta suggested had to be dangerous.

"If you two can combine your powers, it will be interesting to say the least. If he won't allow you to work with him, try and control him. I have more reason to trust you than him."

"You want me to control *him*?"

"Only if your powers can't be combined or he is unwilling to work with you."

By the time Sylina joined Kamn in the handler's mind, he had finished extracting the information.

I'm supposed to assist you, she told him as he sensed her presence.

I've got it under control.

It might work to our advantage if Noretta doesn't realize that.

Fair enough. He groaned and sagged toward the bed. *Pretend to pass me energy.*

Sylina raised her hands and shot sparkling particles across the bed and into Kamn's chest. He shivered and took a deep breath. *Nicely done.*

Five pounded away between the handler's thighs. They both seemed oblivious to everything except the pleasure exploding within their bodies, so Kamn and Sylina withdrew from the meld. They paused, staring into each other's eyes. Awareness arced between them, intense and unexpected. Who was he? Were these abilities natural or the product of Setti experimentation?

"What did she tell you?" Noretta's impatient question drew their attention away from the couple thrashing on the bed. "Did she cooperate?"

"She filled my mind with facts and figures, coordinates and equations." He glanced at Sylina. "A lot of information was lost when the Resistance freed Javier and me. That facility was a sort of archive."

Noretta advanced on Sylina, her hands fisted on her hips. "We should have gotten there first. If it weren't for me, the Resistance would have Kamn as well as Javier."

"We have the location of the main complex," Kamn reminded her. "Javier can't lead them to it. We were always sedated when we were moved from one lab to another. He knows nothing."

With one final glance at Five and the handler, Noretta led Kamn and Sylina out into the corridor. "I've had about all the grunting I can stomach. Rhys has called a summit of sorts. All of the Resistance leaders are gathering at his villa."

Sylina squared her shoulders and took a deep breath. Finally, an opportunity to demonstrate her worth. "The villa is protected by Guardian shields. There is no way to attack --"

"Don't presume to know what I'm going to suggest. If you were half as useful as my father claims, Rhys would be dead. Were you or were you not inside his mind?"

Why did Noretta have to bring that up now? "Rhys was not my target. Garret --"

"Garret was almost as incompetent as you." Sylina glanced at Noretta and the hybrid growled. "Do not speak again and do not offend me with your gaze. I am the heir of Midox Genaudi. You should be on your knees, begging to please me in any way I see fit."

Tension gripped Sylina's belly. Would this vile little creature demand sexual homage? Sylina had shared sexual pleasure with females before. That's not what bothered her. The thought of demeaning herself in front of Kamn was far more upsetting than it should have been. She needed to learn all she could about him as quickly as possible.

"I find the thought just as repulsive as you do, vampire whore."

Sylina's father had been a vampire. Her mother was a succubus. Why did Noretta find her vampiric heritage more objectionable than her demonic?

"Would you pay attention?" Noretta snapped. "Your chaotic thoughts are making me dizzy."

"Yes, Mistress."

"The inhabitants of the Froswick dimension are becoming far too chummy with these Terran upstarts. So, Arabel is going to become progressively more unreasonable. She is going to refuse to attend Rhys' spontaneous summit and any subsequent attempts to garner her support are going to be turned away as well."

Unwilling to give Noretta a reason to punish her, Sylina raised her hand.

"Did you have a question?"

The smug pleasure in her tone made Sylina want to smack her childish face. "I have no influence over females. I presume Arabel is female."

"It's hard to tell under all that armor, but that's the rumor. Yes."

"Then, how am I to assist you in this?"

"We can't influence Arabel directly. If Kamn so much as touches her mind it will leave a trail and Rhys is sure to scan her for traces of Setti energy. We need to create a conflict so pressing that nothing else will matter."

"May I speak?" Kamn asked and Noretta nodded. "What could possibly be more important -- from this Arabel's perspective -- than ending the Setti threat?"

"Nothing is more important to Arabel than the *Nac O'te*. She has lived for them, bled for them, and she would die for any of those bulging warriors." Noretta shivered, making her distaste obvious.

"Isn't Arabel Prime *Nac O'te*?" Sylina asked. Where the hell was Noretta going with this? "Forgive my ignorance. I thought Prime *Nac O'te* was their leader in all things."

"They are about to betray her. Her strongest supporter, her life long friend, is going to challenge her right to rule. He is going to garner support and attempt to overthrow poor Arabel. At least he's going to try until she's forced to kill him. He just needs to keep her busy long enough for me to clean up the mess Garret left behind."

"It's this life-long friend I'm going to influence?"

Noretta smiled, a cold bowing of her thin lips that fell short of her glimmering eyes. "The *Nac O'te* are disciplined in body and mind. This is no simple assignment.

You and Kamn seemed to work well together with the handler. Come, I will show you what I have in mind."

Noretta led them to a bedroom a short distance down the hallway. A muscle-bound man stood in the center of the room with an assortment of weapons that would have been overkill on most battlefields. In the dimly lit bedroom he looked ridiculous.

"Are we under siege?" Sylina couldn't help but ask.

"You are both adept at creating sexual compulsions," Noretta muttered. "Apparently you can feed each other energy, which is a very good thing. This is much more complicated than inciting a man to lust."

Sylina glanced at Kamn and found savage hunger burning in his eyes. "Are you a hybrid?"

Noretta answered for him. "It's not his Setti blood you need to worry about. Practice on this *Nac O'te*. If you fry his brain, we'll get you another one. We can't afford to be subtle. We're running out of time."

Chapter One

Warm water streamed over Javier's naked body, soothing his muscles if not his mind. He was free. The Resistance had delivered him from his Setti captors, so why was he still so restless? He turned around and faced the shower spray, hoping the heat would ease the tension from his forehead and temples.

Unwanted images rolled through his mind. Adara and Rhys smiling at each other. Adara and Rhys making love, sharing life's most intimate embrace as he looked on in envy. Her eyes filled with warmth and tenderness. Rhys responded with passion and fierce protectiveness. Each touch, each gasp made Javier feel more alone. He'd intruded on something precious and rare, and they'd selflessly allowed it to free him from his mating frenzy.

His chest felt tight and blood rushed into his groin, hardening his cock. Damn it! He didn't want to think about the pleasure he'd found with them. Even the memory seemed intrusive. Stepping closer to the wall, he let the water saturate his hair and cascade down his back. Maybe a little cool air would settle down his overenthusiastic body.

Hybrids often melded telepathically and shared their sexual fantasies. It was the only form of comfort allowed to them. That's how he'd first encountered Adara. But the villa was shielded. He'd have to find another way of relieving this frustration.

Reaching blindly for one of the dispensers inset in the wall, he filled his palm with a creamy liquid and stroked it up and down his shaft. His hand glided smoothly and he sighed. He braced one hand against the wall, while he pumped himself with the other.

Silvery light erupted behind his closed eyelids, then the fresh scent of pine filled his nose. It had been years since he'd been outdoors, running through the forest. He embraced the image and allowed it to clarify.

Moonlight shimmered on the rippling surface of a forest pool. A woman stood waist deep in the water, her face raised to the waning moon. Dark hair flowed down her back, the ends fanning out on the water. Smooth and pale, her skin provided a sharp contrast for her night black hair. She lifted her arms and pushed her hair back from her face. The beauty of her features made Javier gasp. Her long, slender neck drew his attention to the graceful slope of her shoulders and her full round breasts. The rest of her body was a slim shadow beneath the water's surface, but it didn't matter. Desire, hot and demanding, surged through him.

He'd thought Adara was beautiful until he saw this woodland spirit. He would give anything to touch her, to find out if her skin was as soft as it looked. He imagined cupping those breasts and stroking her nipples until they pebbled against his thumbs. To his utter astonishment, she skimmed her hands up from her waist and covered her breasts.

This was no fantasy! Somehow he'd slipped past the shields and connected with this goddess. Stroking his cock faster, he strengthened the meld. Was she aware of him? Did he dare speak to her? Her thumbs caressed her nipples just as he'd imagined and he moved his legs farther apart, finding a more secure stance on the slick tiles.

He hesitated to send his voice, not willing to disrupt their fragile link. If she thought this was a fantasy, better to let her continue with the misconception. As long as he could see her and sense her pleasure, he would let it be enough.

Arabel rolled her nipples as the moonlight caressed her face. Everything was changing. Ripples of discontent disrupted the rhythm of the forest. The crisp night wind played across her damp skin accenting the ache building between her thighs.

For nine long years she'd led the *Nac O'te*, among them yet separate from them. She took lovers out of necessity, finding comfort in their strong bodies as they

exchanged energy. Still, she longed for the soul deep connection she'd once known with her mate. No, it was better that she be unencumbered by emotional attachments. It made her a stronger leader and a better warrior.

Slipping one hand beneath the water's surface, she cupped her mound and closed her eyes. She paused, listening and alert to any change. Tingles erupted across her shoulders, like warm droplets of rain. The sound of rushing water flowed into her mind and then an image formed.

A man stood in a shower stall, one arm braced against the wall. Though tall and lean, his body was unusually pale. His head was bowed and his hair partially obscured his face. She could see the firm line of his jaw and his sensually curved lips.

Don't stop. His deep voice had an odd growling quality to it. Arabel shivered. A wave of heat accompanied his voice and she watched his hand slide up and down the length of his erect cock. He was long and thick, the wide head flushed nearly scarlet with his arousal.

Her pussy fluttered and her knees wobbled. This was insane. She was afraid to open her eyes, unwilling to release the wonderful fantasy. She saw a flash of his strange golden eyes before he dropped his head back on his shoulders and thrust more forcefully into his hand. She circled her clit with her middle finger, but watching him was more exciting than the sensations triggered by her touch. She wanted to close her fingers around his shaft and feel him throb, absorb his heat. She wanted to kneel in front of him and swirl her tongue around his tip, then slowly suck him into her mouth. Would he gasp or moan? Would he let her set the pace or would he grab her face and fuck her mouth until he lost control and pumped his cum down her throat?

Lie down in the grass. You're too distracted standing there.

She took two steps toward the shore, then shook away the sensual haze. Was she really this desperate for a man? Her guards were just beyond the tree line. All she had to do was call out to one -- or all three of them -- and they'd gladly sate her hunger. It was nothing they hadn't done before. If she started moaning, they'd come running and

find her sprawled in the grass finger-fucking herself. This was ridiculous. No more fantasies, regardless of how stimulating she found them.

Picking her way along the sandy riverbed, she twisted her hair into a thick coil and let the brisk wind clear the cobwebs from her mind. The molten gold of the stranger's eyes lingered despite her determination to ignore her neglected pussy. She concentrated on the task at hand, squeezing the excess water from her hair. It would be more practical to cut the waist-length mass, but it was the one vanity she allowed herself. She donned fine linen underclothes, then her supple leather pants. The molded cups of her bodice protected her breasts without restricting her movement or limiting her reach. She pulled the cords tight, then tucked the ends down between her breasts, before reaching for her weapons.

Debate had been boisterous and heated around the evening fires. Many of her warriors wanted to withdraw from the Resistance, to focus entirely on the safety of their world. Arabel could see the wisdom of this position. The old, separatist ways had served them well for hundreds of years. Still, the Setti were the most daunting foe they had ever faced.

She clung to the Creed, used the ancient teachings to guide her thinking and light her path. It was the sacred duty of the *Nac O'te* to protect the inhabitants of Froswick. She understood her purpose. The way in which that sacred duty should be upheld, however, was not nearly so clear.

A surge of negative energy pulled at her chest. Not one to ignore her instincts, she locked on to the sensation and analyzed her body's reaction. It hadn't felt like danger, more like... she couldn't identify the odd twinge. Rapidly strapping on her sword and her two favorite knives, she headed off through the trees, following the trail of energy.

"We no longer owe allegiance to the Mistress if she has abandoned the Creed." Leeds had been running his mouth at supper. She wasn't surprised to find him at the center of the untidy cluster of her men.

"What makes you think she's lost sight of the Creed?" Holt saved her the trouble of knocking some scene into Leeds. No one mistook Holt's long suffering demeanor for weakness. He'd been her trusted lieutenant as long as she'd been Prime *Nac O'te*.

"Show me where the Creed charges us to populate the galaxy with mixed race bastards." Leeds raised his brow in challenge, his tone cold and brittle.

"The Day Warrior bond is one of the blessed unions," one of the others interjected. "How can you object to these new mates?"

Arabel moved closer. The debate earlier had been far less specific. Many were leery of the influx of new blood into the *Nac O'te* population. Her sister was bonded with a Terran police officer. Was that union the cause of Leeds' discontent?

"If Arabel has her way we'll all be mated to aliens before this thing is through," Leeds sneered.

Arabel could hold her silence no longer. Leaving her hand on the hilt of her sword, she stepped into the clearing. "I have never pressured anyone to accept a bonding, for the good of the *Nac O'te* or otherwise. My opinion of any potential mate is irrelevant. Bonding is between two people and the Creator. What is really bothering you, Leeds?"

"Commander Brock prefers to spend his time with that Guardian, the camp is crawling with vampires, and there appears to be no end in sight." His tone grew more impassioned with every word. He moved forward, his eyes narrowed and fever bright. "How is all this cultural interaction helping us vanquish the Setti?"

"The Terran vampires are our allies whether you like it or not." She stood her ground, meeting his hostile stare without flinching. "We have made significant progress since the exchange began."

"I'm not sure your definition of progress is the same as mine. If I'd wanted alien pussies to sniff, I'd have --"

"Leeds!" Holt jerked him back by the neck of his leather vest. "If you have official complaints bring them before the council. You're finished here." It took a firm

shove toward the trees to get Leeds moving, but he finally left. The others followed until only Holt remained.

"What set him off?" Their temperaments and appearance were so different it was easy to forget Leeds was Holt's youngest brother. Arabel pulled her hair over her shoulder and worked it into a thick braid. "Resentment like that has to fester."

"He isn't the only one uncomfortable with the new direction. Multiply what they say in front of you by ten and you get a more accurate picture of the true level of hostility."

She counted on Holt for his candor, but that didn't keep the truth from chaffing. "We are a planet of nocturnal people. The only real wonder is that it has taken this long for a malevolent force to exploit that vulnerability."

"The Terran vampires are nocturnal too."

"Yes, but they have lived in cooperation with paranormal beings who guard them during their solar trance. We must adapt or we will not survive the coming --"

A crystal sphere flashed into being directly in front of Arabel. It was possible to establish telepathic links with other members of the Resistance, but long range transmissions were generally established with these comcrystals. It was less taxing than maintaining an open link.

"I'll meet you on the training field."

"Of course." He offered a stiff nod and disappeared into the trees.

The crystal beeped and she shook her head. Patience was not Rhys' strong suit. She snatched the tiny sphere out of the air and used her breath to activate the link.

Rhys, or at least his image, appeared in all his regal glory. Dark hair flowed across his shoulders and down his back, framing his nearly perfect face. He was far too refined to be a man. Men were meant to be rough hewn and rugged. His bright blue eyes flashed as he began to speak.

"It is vitally important that you join us tomorrow at dusk. I have information I will only detail within the safety of my villa. Are you available?"

“Us” meant the other Resistance leaders would attend the gathering. This was only the second time everyone had been invited to his villa. She thought about Leeds and his cronies and sighed.

“This is *really* not a good time.”

His jewel-bright eyes narrowed as Rhys shifted his weight from one foot to the other. “I don’t think you understand the severity of this crisis.”

Translation, this wasn’t an invitation it was a summons. “I’ll see what I can do.”

“No, you’ll see me tomorrow at dusk.”

“The *Nac O’te* have agreed to cooperate with the Resistance. I don’t take orders from you. I will do my best to attend the meeting. That is all.” She reached into the center of his image and crushed the comcrystal. The transmission blinked out and she turned toward the trail that led back to camp.

This was just what she needed. A chill ran down her spine and she automatically reached for her sword. The Guardians were damn close to omnipotent, but Rhys was only half Guardian. Whenever anyone took that supercilious tone with her, she was guaranteed to rebel. She had been defending her position for too many years to bow and scrap for anyone.

A figure launched out of the shadows. She pivoted and drew her sword before they made contact with her body. They dematerialized and she spun, anticipating their next move. An unseen fist slammed down on her forearm. Rotating her shoulder, she brought her blade up and caught her assailant somewhere in the torso before they could retreat. Blood showered the air, droplets peppering her chest and arms. She still couldn’t see the bastard.

She circled, sword ready for another slice, listening and scanning.

“Mistress!” Holt rushed toward her, stopping well out of reach of her sword.

“Where is Leeds?”

His eyes widened and he shook his head. “My brother did this to you? Is that his blood or yours? Shall I call for a healer?”

"Someone ambushed me, a feeble attempt, but still. I caught the coward with my sword. It will be easy enough to determine who did this." She released her fury and refocused her energy as she paused to swipe her fingers across her blood smeared chest. "Assemble the camp. I will inspect every warrior personally before the sun rises!"

* * *

"That bitch stabbed me!" Kamn snarled and caught Sylina's wrist as she reached for the gash in his side. "You turn vampire on me and you're dead."

"I can heal you with my mouth." She shrugged, her gaze fixed on the oozing wound. "If you'd rather leave a trail of blood for them to follow... I can wait until you're unconscious."

Their plan had worked perfectly until the barbaric she-devil jabbed her sword into his side. Deciding Noretta's approach was far too "unimaginative," Sylina had set her own convoluted strategy in motion moments after they materialized in the Froswick dimension. Holt needed a strong motivation to turn on Arabel. Anything too abrupt would be questioned by the other warriors. These *Nac O'te* were smarter than they looked.

"Won't drinking my blood upset your system?" He pressed his palm to his side, damning the genetic recoding that hindered his ability to transform. A natural Phylehan could shift from one form to another and most injuries would be healed. All he could do now was render himself invisible for very short periods of time. "I thought you avoided all things Setti."

"I avoid direct contact with Setti *essence*. If I feel a similar effect when I taste your blood, I'll bind the wound."

"I told you I control when my essence is released. I'm not your average hybrid." Lifting the hem of his shirt to expose the cut, he glanced at Leeds. "He won't remember any of this?"

"I've completely suppressed his curiosity. He couldn't care less why we're here. As soon as we finish with him, I'll wipe his memory clean."

She knelt in front of Kamn and ran her tongue up the center of the gash. He hissed and grabbed her hair with both hands. Fire crawled along his ribs and sank into his gut, making him tremble. Pain had never excited him before, but tension gathered and his cock hardened at an alarming rate. He watched her eyes. Gleaming in the moonlight, the sheer ecstasy reflected in her gaze sent another wave of desire cascading through his body. Her tongue stroked again and again, each swipe intensifying the heat and the pleasure.

Come here. Lick me as I lick him.

It took a moment for Kamn's befuddled brain to realize she had sent the command to Leeds. The warrior shook his head, his eyes wide and filled with rebellion. His curiosity might be suppressed, but not his pride.

"What are you doing?" Possessiveness gripped Kamn's stomach. If she needed release he would give it to her. "Just make it stop bleeding and I'll --"

"You need me and I need him. The energy must come from somewhere." She turned her head and glared at Leeds. *Now! Lie on your back and lick my pussy.*

Lust shot through Kamn, blending heat and pain and the need to claim her into one all consuming hunger. Leeds continued resisting. She growled low in her throat and snapped his brain with a burst of energy. The disobedient warrior cried out.

I can bestow pleasure as easily as I deliver pain. Now get over here. Leeds crawled toward her and she moved her legs apart. He panted, clearly fighting her compulsion with all his strength. *Why are you being so stubborn?* Another, stronger snap drove him to the ground. He rolled to his back and scooted between her legs.

Kamn was fascinated by her abilities and intoxicated by the unexpected combination of pleasure and pain. Her lips slid against his skin, which was nearly smooth again, and Leeds stopped struggling. She bombarded the warrior with carnal hunger, creating a need that would not be denied. Kamn sensed a current of resentment boiling beneath the desire. Leeds was unable to control the demands of his body, but a portion of his spirit remained untouched.

Hold up my skirt so Kamn can see your mouth. I want him to watch you eat me.

She angled her head and moved away just enough so Kamn could see her thinly clad breasts and quivering abdomen. Leeds closed his eyes and pressed his mouth against her slit, his tongue mimicked her movements, licking as she licked.

Anger shoved through Kamn's desire. She wouldn't let him fuck her! This was a cruel tease. He found the hem of her cropped tee shirt and pulled up the clingy material, baring her breasts. The scent of her arousal caressed him as tangibly as her lips. He focused on Leeds, watching the other man's tongue move and his lips suck.

Now fuck me. Cram that hard cock inside my cunt and don't stop.

Kamn shook with fury and lust. *He* needed to fuck her. He wanted to feel her tight pussy grip his cock. Why had she started this in front of him? She could have replenished her energy after he was healed.

Leeds scrambled out from beneath her and had his pants around his knees before Kamn could shove her away. She guided Kamn back until his back pressed against a tree.

"Lock your hands behind your head. You can't come in my mouth and I'll only trust you once."

He'd already told her he could control the release of his Setti essence. Still he couldn't blame her for her caution. Setti essence was highly addictive and made the recipient easy to control.

Clasping his hands behind his head, he watched her unfasten his jeans. Leeds knelt behind her, panting harshly, his eyes wild. Sylina smiled as she eased Kamn's pants below his hips and closed her fingers around his shaft.

"Very nice." She stroked up and down a couple times, then glanced over her shoulder. The *Nac O'te* warrior moved into position. His expression tensed as he pushed into her core. Kamn groaned, imagining the heat and the firm grip of her inner muscles.

She wet her lips and sucked the tip of his cock into her mouth. Kamn clutched his fingers until his joints ached. He wanted to thrust, to fuck her mouth, then make her

swallow his cum. He wanted to take her over and over until she whimpered and moaned.

It isn't going to happen, so find pleasure in what we can share.

Sensations inundated his body and Kamn groaned again. Her head bobbed as she moved her lips along his shaft. Leeds pumped strong and steady behind her. Kamn listened to the slap of flesh against flesh and sucked in the scent of her arousal.

She grew more aggressive, sucking harder and taking him deeper. The bark scraped his back and he welcomed the burning. If only...

Use him to fuck me. I want it as desperately as you do.

Kamn gritted his teeth. He knew what she was suggesting, but he'd never fucked another man before.

You're not fucking him. You're fucking me!

With a strangled cry, Kamn pulled out of her mouth and moved behind Leeds. His body was solid, rippling muscle. There was nothing feminine about him. Leeds continued fucking Sylina, unaware or uncaring that he was about to have a very hard cock shoved up his ass. She tossed her head and pushed up against him with each downward thrust.

Kamn squeezed the base of his cock, groaning as the glands there reluctantly discharged. Setti essence seeped out until the entire length of his shaft glistened and the head dripped. He knelt behind Leeds and watched the rocking of his hips, the bunch and flex of his ass. A thrill shot through Kamn, as unexpected as it was exciting. This man, this battle hardened warrior, was his for the taking. He had never felt so *free*. With both hands he spread the warrior's ass cheeks and aimed for his puckered hole.

Leeds drove deep into Sylina and waited while Kamn worked the tip of his cock past the tight collar of muscle. "Have you... done this before?" Kamn asked in between panting breaths.

"Yes." Leeds shifted, changing the angle of his hips. "Let me push back onto you. It's easier that way."

Sylina chuckled. "Maybe I should have let him suck your cock while I healed your side. I wondered why he was fighting so hard against my compulsions. I didn't realize he'd never tasted pussy before."

"I've tasted plenty of pussy," Leeds growled. "I just don't like being forced." He pushed back with steady pressure. Kamn watched the thick length of his cock disappear inside the other man. Tight and so incredibly hot, Leeds' body welcomed him with a firm squeeze.

"Fuck me hard, together," Sylina cried.

Leeds held tightly to her hips as each of Kamn's thrusts drove his cock deeper into her pussy. Kamn didn't hold back. He pounded into Leeds, enjoying the feel of the warrior's hard body against his thighs and his pelvis. Pleasure built and Kamn fought against it. He didn't want this experience to end.

"Now! We all come now!"

Just to spite her, Kamn wanted to keep up the motion as long as possible, but she shook as her orgasm tore through her and Leeds went still beneath him. The deep, rhythmic pulse of Leeds' body was just too tempting to ignore. Kamn reached around Leeds and clasped Sylina's thighs, then he came in forceful spurts pressed against the warrior's back.

"Well, I certainly feel better." She wiggled away from the men and righted her clothing as if this were an every day occurrence. Perhaps it was for her, but physical contact had been a rare and wonderful thing in Kamn's lonely world. "Get off him so I can make him forget how much he enjoyed this."

Kamn pulled out and Leeds rolled over onto his back. Gods, the man was wonderfully made. Just the sight of his tall, sculpted body made Kamn want to explore every inch of him.

"We can play some more later. He needs to scurry back to camp reeking of sex, so Arabel will realize her mystery is going to be a lot harder to solve than she thought."

"This will give him an alibi for the attack," Kamn mused.

“And when she can’t find so much as a scratch on any of her people, the others will start wondering if she invented the entire episode to cast doubt upon poor Leeds.”

“Which will infuriate Holt.”

She flashed a sly grin and knelt beside Leeds, her gaze shining in the moonlight. “And after Holt starts to doubt her, we’ll make our next move.”

Chapter Two

Javier tried not to fidget while the Guardian performed his scans, but two decades as a Setti lab rat had left Javier leery of anything resembling a medical procedure. Xenos was more or less solid as he moved around the chair on which Javier sat. It was only when he turned sharply that Javier could see through him. How had he fathered Rhys if Xenos was unable to completely solidify? It was a fascinating question. He just didn't know either Rhys or Xenos well enough to ask.

"When did you notice the first -- how did you put it -- surge of awareness?"

Rhys was in the dining room with the other dimensional leaders as he'd been all evening. Javier wasn't sure how much he'd told his father or how much Xenos needed to know. "Do you understand what I am?"

A smile bowed the corners of Xenos' lips. "The Setti have been toying with genetic transcription for longer than I can remember, and that's a very long time. Their failed attempts are partially responsible for their aggressive breeding program."

One way or another the Setti would produce hybrids with the sorts of abilities needed so they could escape their home dimension and spread their control throughout the universe. Javier shook his head. So many shattered lives, so many wounded worlds.

"I was captured shortly after puberty and my transformation was done in phases." The Guardian looked at Javier with his shimmering blue eyes and Javier tensed. Was Xenos really as powerful as they said? Did the Setti avoid confrontations with the Guardians? The Setti weren't intimidated by anyone.

"The more information you share with me, the easier it will be for me to figure out a treatment."

Javier pushed to his feet, too anxious to sit still. The spacious rooms and elegant furnishings only made him feel more out of place. Everything was smooth and cold,

sculpted and artificial. He crossed to the fire, absorbing the energy pulsing from the flames. Even surrounded by priceless luxury he felt trapped.

He needed to run through the forest and feel the sunlight on his skin. He needed to find his black-haired goddess and complete the fantasy. What had made her terminate their meld? He'd been so disappointed by her departure that he'd lost his erection. That had never happened before.

Forcing her image to the back of his mind, he began, "I had completed three of the four stages of my transformation when... another Setti hybrid inadvertently melded with me." He stared into the fire and detached himself from the horror that had been his life for so many years.

"You're referring to Adara?"

"Yes."

"I know she triggered a sort of mating frenzy and you had to be intimate with her to end the cycle. Do you still hunger for her?"

"No. These feelings are far more complex. An element of what I'm feeling is sexual, but it's much more complicated. I know things now that I didn't know before, things that only could have come from Adara." He could feel Xenos studying him. Javier's pulse sped and he clenched his fists as perspiration gathered on his upper lip.

"Did any of the other people you melded with leave you with information and impressions other than the sexual act?"

"Yes. A flash of memory here, a stray fact there, but nothing of this magnitude. It's as if my brain copied massive chunks of knowledge while we were... I hear thoughts in several languages I didn't understand before."

"Adara had an extensive education. That's not surprising."

Not surprising? What was wrong with him? How could he make these people understand what it was like to have your identity stripped away layer by layer, to feel yourself changing into someone you no longer recognized?

"I know little about your people. What was it about the Phylehans that attracted the Setti?"

"Our home world is a volatile, unforgiving place. The climate changes rapidly and without warning. Only the strongest and most adaptable species survive on our planet. We are shape shifters in that our physiology takes on the qualities needed to exist in most any environment."

"Your outward appearance doesn't change, just your --"

"I was once able to shift into whatever physical form best suited my surroundings." He waved away the topic. "It's all irrelevant now. The transformation has made me unable to shift. I remain locked in the form that best suited the needs of my Setti captors."

"I'm not sure that's true." Xenos paused until Javier looked at him. "Your body is in a state of flux. Even as we speak it's evolving. Your contact with Adara changed you in ways the Setti didn't intend."

Panic spiked through Javier before he could control the reaction. He turned his face back toward the fire and took a deep breath. "Am I becoming one of them? Did her Setti blood bind with mine? What does this mean?"

"I honestly don't know."

Javier laughed. He couldn't help it. "I thought Guardians knew everything. Even the Setti fear you."

"We are long lived and extremely well traveled, but we are not gods. The Setti themselves may not have any idea what you'll become at the end of this evolution."

"How comforting."

"Was I summoned here to comfort you? I hadn't realized." Xenos moved away, his voice taking on a wispy quality. "Did the Setti make other Phylehan hybrids?"

"Kamn and I were the only two who survived."

"Is Kamn related to you?"

"Yes, he's my cousin. We figured that's why we both made it. Whatever they were looking for must have been present in both of our genetic makeups."

"An astute conclusion. Is his transformation complete?"

"Yes. They began the process with Kamn before they started on me." Javier raked his hair with his fingers, desperately needing an outlet for his anger. "I thought this was over when Rhys opened that cell. But they still have Kamn and the mutation is inside us. How can we ever be free?"

"You are free, Javier. You have more control over the outcome than you realize."

He pivoted on the ball of his foot. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?" Xenos was gone and Javier's frustrated question echoed back from the cavernous room. "Perfect," he muttered.

"How are you feeling?" Adara must have sensed Xenos' departure to time her entrance so seamlessly.

"Restless." He'd spent several hours in the dining room with the Resistance leaders when they first arrived, detailing what he knew about Project Prism. Xenos had saved him from the rest of the tedious discussion. "I'm worried about Kamn. I can sense that he's still alive, but he's either out of range or blocking me."

"Keep trying. At least you know he's alive. Have you eaten anything today? You look rather pale."

He shook his head. It was hard to look at her without remembering all the things they'd done together, all the ways they'd touched. Tension gripped his belly, but the image of another woman materialized within his mind. Long black hair and high round breasts, her face lifted to the moonlight. How would he even begin to find out who she was?

"Let's find you something to eat."

If he could find his forest goddess, he'd do a whole lot more than just eat her. He might start by devouring her pussy, but he wouldn't stop until he'd... He cleared his throat and shook away the useless desire. He'd have to find her first.

"If you point me in the right direction, I can take care of myself." His cock was hard as a rock again. He suspected he'd be taking care of himself a lot in the days ahead.

A door banged open, drawing their attention to the corridor behind Adara. The dimensional leaders filed out of the dining room, followed by Rhys.

"He has to disable the shields before they can teleport out," she explained.

A tall dark-haired man didn't follow the others. He joined them in the villa's main room and introduced himself to Javier. "I'm Commander Brock Sihngal of the *Nac O'te*. Rhys asked me to speak with you."

Adara placed her hand on Javier's arm. Her fingers were warm and gentle. He tried to ignore the pleasure caused by her simple touch. She didn't realize how stimulating he found any form of touching. He'd been deprived for so long.

"I'll make you a sandwich. Come to the kitchen when you're finished talking with Brock."

He nodded, not trusting his voice.

"I've been cross training with the Paranormal Elite. They're a mixed group of Terran inhabitants who..." Brock chuckled and offered an unapologetic shrug. "They're mercenaries, but damn good fighters. Rhys thought you might benefit from the training and enjoy meeting others with paranormal abilities."

Javier smiled. Getting him away from Adara was probably a good idea. He had only to look into Adara's eyes to see how much she loved Rhys, but Javier wasn't sure how much control he'd have until this "evolution" stabilized.

"I welcome the opportunity."

"Good."

Sharp footfalls echoed off the walls as Rhys stomped across the room. His long blue/black hair rippled out behind him and his angry gaze landed on Brock. "Why would the Prime *Nac O'te* blow off this summit?"

"She didn't blow it off," Brock replied. "She sent me as her emissary."

"Bullshit! Your focus has been on Earth for the past month and she knows it. Are the *Nac O'te* pulling out of the alliance?"

Brock averted his gaze and clasped his hands behind his back in a transparent attempt not to fidget. "If Arabel is leading the warriors in that direction, I think she's a fool."

"Meaning you haven't got a clue what she's up to." Rhys shook his head, anger making his gaze gleam like his father's. "She should have been here. She should have been the first one to arrive. The Froswick dimension is at greater risk than Earth. How can she be so myopic?"

"You've seen the Setti in action and so have I," Brock said. "I think in some ways this isn't real to Arabel. She's seen their handiwork, but she's never come face to face with a Setti hybrid."

"Maybe it's time she did," Javier said with a menacing smile. The other two just stared at him. "I could scare the shit out of her, help her see just how vulnerable she is, and then educate her once she's ready to listen."

After a long pause, Brock said, "She's unbelievably stubborn and proud. I'm not sure anyone can *talk* sense into Arabel."

"Which is why you'll help Javier snatch her right out of her camp. She thinks she's safe and we have to show her the danger of her complacency." Rhys crossed one arm over his chest and stroked his chin with the other.

"If half of what you told us about Project Prism is true, we have to act now." Brock didn't sound happy about the conclusion. "Our one advantage was being able to spot the enemy. Setti shifters were few and far between. This will allow them to infiltrate any world and move undetected."

"Then you'll help us?" Rhys asked, and Brock nodded.

"There's a private island used by the Paranormal Elite for survival exercises. We'll take her there and I'll keep everyone else away until I hear from Javier."

* * *

Awareness pulsed through Javier the instant he emerged in the Froswick dimension. Brock would need all the energy he could muster to teleport three people

back to Earth, so they'd used the Nexus Chamber in the villa to gain access to Brock's home world.

"The *Nac O'te* are creatures of habit." Brock blended into the trees, Javier close behind him. "We find security in our routines, rituals, and ceremonies. Each night follows the same pattern, unless we're on a mission."

Javier inhaled the crisp night air, listening to the rustle of leaves and the scurry of woodland creatures. "I've been here before."

"In this dimension or in this forest?" Brock illustrated his skepticism with a sidelong glance.

"Places have rhythms just as people have energy signatures. I've felt this rhythm before."

Brock pulled him deeper into the shadows and lowered his voice to just above a whisper. "You told us you were moved from lab to lab. Are you saying there's a Setti facility on this planet?"

"I'm sure of it."

"You can't be serious." Javier just stared at him.

"It makes perfect sense. The Setti have no fear of detection once the sun rises. This whole planet goes to sleep."

"Fuck." Brock shook away his shock. "What about Arabel? I need to let Rhys know what you're sensing. Do we continue on with the original plan?"

"Absolutely." Javier was surprised by his own vehemence. It was as if some instinct had snapped into focus. He was meant to continue this mission. "After I've sufficiently rattled Arabel, I'll explain that she's not dealing with scattered attacks. Her dimension has already been compromised."

Brock pulled a thin alloy strip from his pocket and uncoiled it. "This will disrupt her paranormal abilities. She's a Phantom warrior, so she can dematerialize for short periods of time. This should keep her from disappearing on you."

"What other abilities does she possess? Can she read minds?" He took the strip from Brock's outstretched hand and it coiled around his fingers, the metal cool against his skin.

"She would only be able to access your thoughts if you willingly established a link. Telepathy is not her strong suit. Her mental shields, however, are impenetrable. Even without her Phantom abilities she's a force to be reckoned with. I'll make sure she's in restraints before I leave you in the cave. Don't be fooled by her gender. She is a seasoned warrior."

Javier smiled. "I'll be fine."

"She bathes each night at a bend in the river. Her guards are stationed within shouting distance, but I've arranged for them to be gone for a short time."

"Why would her guards leave their posts?"

"Because Arabel's sister, Kylie, is going to take on Arabel's shape and lure them away for us."

"And why would Kylie do this for us?"

"Because she's one of the Paranormal Elite. Now enough with the questions. We need to strike fast and quietly. If Arabel sounds an alarm, we're screwed."

Could one female warrant all these precautions? He followed Brock through the trees, staying low to the ground. Moonlight streamed through the branches and Javier's heart leapt in his chest. Why did this seem familiar? It wasn't just the rhythm of the planet. He'd been in this forest before.

"Damn," Brock muttered. "She's almost finished. We have to grab her before she puts on her weapons. I'll cover her mouth. You get the band around her neck."

Their target stood near a boulder dressed in simple white underclothes. Her back was to them, but the wavy length of her dark hair made Javier's gut clench. It couldn't be.

Brock lunged, snapping Javier out of his stupor. She made it halfway around before Brock got his arms around her. He covered her mouth with one hand and trapped her arms against her sides with his other arm. She smashed her heel down on

his insole and slammed her head back into his chest. Through it all Brock managed to hold on to his thrashing captive.

Javier took the alloy band and snapped it against her neck. The metal obediently wrapped around her throat and snaked beneath her hair until the ends connected. She kicked out at him twice, the second strike knocking him backward. Damn, she was strong. She whipped her head from side to side and her hair streamed over her face.

With one lightning fast motion, Brock released her arms and touched his hand to her forehead. She sagged against him and Brock let out a ragged breath. "Grab her legs. Let's get the hell out of here."

Chapter Three

A violent shiver shattered the comfortable oblivion and propelled Arabel back into wakefulness. Her shoulders ached and her head throbbed. What had happened to her? Pain sliced into her brain as she tried to open her eyes, so she stilled, using her other senses to determine her surroundings.

She knelt on something soft, fur perhaps, but her legs were spread and secured by some sort of restraint. Her arms had been wrapped around the pole that was putting pressure on her shoulders. Restraints also banded her wrists. The faint tang of smoke teased her nose and her front was slightly warmer than her back.

Shame crashed in upon her, far more devastating than her body's discomfort. She'd been taken captive. Like an untrained fool, she'd failed to anticipate an attack. She searched her memory, forcing herself to concentrate through the pain. For just an instant, she'd caught a glimpse of her first attacker. But it couldn't have been Brock. She'd known Brock her entire life. He would never betray her.

Someone came up behind her. She felt the heat of their body along her spine and inhaled their unfamiliar scent.

"I know you're awake," he said in a quiet, gruff voice. "Brock said this would help with the headache."

"Who the hell are you? Brock would have no hand in my abduction unless he was being coerced."

"Actually, we executed his plan." His words rang true, but there had to be an explanation.

Ignoring the pain, she forced her eyes open and turned her head as far as her awkward position allowed. "Why are you hiding behind me? I want to see the face of my enemy."

"Drink this." He reached around and pressed a cup against her lips.

"Fuck you."

"We'll get to that soon enough." He pulled on her hair, tilting her head back, and drizzled a bitter liquid into her mouth. She sputtered and spit, doing her best to expel it all. "If I intended to poison you, why would I go through all this trouble?" He poured more of the liquid into her mouth, then held her head back and massaged her throat until she swallowed.

"How did you get into my camp? How many of my men were lost? Was I your primary target?" His soft chuckle sent tingles down her spine and she clenched her jaw. He meant to rape her, that much was clear, but what was his ultimate goal?

"You have a rather inflated opinion of yourself." He released her hair and stepped back. "You're still alive because you're a woman, not because you're Prime *Nac O'te*. We have vast armies of highly trained warriors, but strong, fertile females are not so easily procured."

Bile rose into the back of her throat and she shuddered. There had been little doubt that he was a Setti hybrid, but his words scattered the remains of her hope. She'd heard stories of the Setti breeding pens and the horrors forced upon the slaves. And Brock had delivered her to such a fate? It was unthinkable.

"Where am I?"

"Where do you think you are?"

Firelight danced on the walls of the cavern making the true color impossible to see. The fire pit rested near enough to the mouth of the cave that most of the smoke escaped. They could be anywhere, on one of countless worlds.

"I arrived in your dimension eight weeks ago and began infusing your men." He remained behind her, his voice barely a whisper. "I only made a few mind slaves. The rest, like Brock, are motivated by their addiction. They will join with my hybrid forces and capture the capital at dawn."

She snorted and raised her chin. "You haven't been in this dimension eight weeks if you planned an attack for dawn."

With predatory grace and agility, he moved in front of her. Shock slammed into Arabel, knocking the breath from her lungs. It was *him*. The golden-eyed man from her fantasy. "Who are you?" she whispered, feeling her first real tingle of fear.

"My name is unimportant. You will call me Master." Her treacherous mind swam with images of his lean body in all its naked glory. It hadn't been a fantasy. He'd stalked her, prepared her for their eventual meeting. The corners of his mouth curved in a sardonic smile. "I'd hoped to give you a taste of the pleasures awaiting you, but you ran away."

Her mind rebelled against his words even as her core pulsed with ready acceptance. He was Setti! How could she feel anything but revulsion for this creature?

Because Setti or not, he's the most captivating man you've ever seen.

"Have you wondered what would have happened if you hadn't broken the link?" He circled her hardened nipple with his index finger, his gaze fixed on her breast. "I think you have."

"If you're going to rape me, get it over with. I despise games."

He caught her nipple between his thumb and forefinger and looked into her eyes. "How unfortunate for you. We Setti adore them." Pinching and rolling the tender peak, he dragged a gasp from her throat before he let go. "I'm not as ignorant of your ways as you presume. Each time I infuse one of your men it imbues them with my abilities. As I am not nocturnal, this enables them to resist their solar trance, at least temporarily."

"What do you want with our world?"

"What do we want with any world? Your resources and your energy. We'll feed off this dimension until it's depleted, then we'll move on."

"You're locusts."

"I've been called worse." He tilted his head and inhaled deeply. "You're starting to cream. What is it about this situation that you find arousing? Do you enjoy being bound or does danger excite you?"

Javier had anticipated her anger. He'd also expected fear, yet she knelt before him and followed his gaze with defiance and... desire? Her musk wasn't strong, just a faint hint that she wasn't entirely repelled by his threats. The inhabitants of Froswick were sustained by sexual energy. Brock had warned him that she might need to feed.

"Are you hungry?" He had to maintain his role. If he told her the truth too soon this would have been for naught. "What did you do when you left the river last night? Did you have one of your guards suck on your nipples?"

Modesty was a luxury no Setti breeding slave was allowed, so Javier pulled up her top and bared her breasts. A jolt of white hot lust stabbed through his body and lodged in his groin. Gods, she had the most spectacular breasts he'd ever seen. Their brief telepathic connection hadn't prepared him for the details. Her areolas shimmered and her nipples were velvety -- and green.

Mesmerized, he sank to his knees and curved his fingers around the bottom of her breast. He bent his head and closed his lips around her nipple. The harder he sucked the louder she moaned, so he used his teeth. His first nip made her gasp, then she was twisting and shaking.

"Don't do this. If you're going to fuck me, just fuck me. Don't play with me."

He growled against her damp flesh. "Why? Is it shameful to find pleasure at the hands of your enemy?"

She squeezed her eyes shut and turned her face away. Javier was about to pull her top back down when her scent wrapped around him. Evocative and warm, her cream drew him like a beacon in the night. He cupped her mound and she went wild, jerking against the restraints and tossing her head.

"You cowardly pervert! Is this the only way you can get a woman?"

If her cream hadn't dampened the material beneath his fingers, he might have retreated. Instead he squeezed and she moaned. "I think you've been simmering since you broke free from the meld. I don't think you've fed or fucked. I'm not vain enough to imagine I'm the cause of all this heat, but I'm sure as hell not willing to waste it."

He got to his feet and went to the pulley that controlled the tension on her restraints. Reeling the cables with steady insistency, he drew her to her feet. She glared at him, her lips trembling and her cheeks deeply flushed. Oh, she needed it bad and he was in just the mood to give it to her. He secured the pulley and returned to stand in front of her, his gaze moving from her face to her breasts and back.

Palming both her breasts, he stared into her eyes as his thumbs brushed over her nipples. Her pupils dilated and her nostrils flared, still she remained silent. He tugged her underpants down as far as he could, but her legs were spread wide by the ankle restraints. With a few unrelenting tears, he rid her of her clothing and stepped back to enjoy the display.

"I think I could come just looking at you," he murmured. "I've never seen a more desirable female."

Her gaze narrowed mutinously. "Am I supposed to be flattered?"

Her mound was hairless and the folds peeking out from between her soft outer lips were the same rich green as her nipples. His cock bucked against his pants and primal urges gripped his abdomen. Even during the mating frenzy he hadn't felt this savage, this Phylehan.

Crouching in front of her, he inhaled deeply, memorizing every nuance of her scent. He leaned forward and pushed his tongue into her slit, savoring her taste. She twisted her hips, but he couldn't tell if she was trying to avoid his mouth or bring his tongue into contact with her clit.

He licked and she whimpered. He sucked and she abandoned all pretense. Grinding her pussy against his lips, she did everything in her power to bring herself off. He nipped her inner thigh with a menacing growl and she shuddered. "Be still. You will come when I'm ready for you to come."

Still avoiding her clit, he explored her creamy folds and silken inner thighs. She was trembling by the time he finally raised his head. "Say my name."

"Bastard."

Parting her with his thumbs he sucked hard on her clit once, then released her. "Say my name."

"I call no man master."

"Fine, then stand there and burn." He stood and unfastened his pants. "Do you remember what I was doing last time you saw me?" Watching her eyes, he drew out his cock and stroked himself from base to tip. "I was imagining your mouth while I did this." He reached between her legs and coated his fingers with her cream.

"Stop it!" She looked away and then back twice.

"Just say my name and I'll let you come."

"Never."

"Wrong answer." Staring into her defiant eyes he stroked his shaft. Her cream made his skin tingle and enhanced the building pleasure. Feral demand guided his speed. He aimed at her mound, an unmistakable declaration of his intentions. Before this was through, he would feel the hot embrace of her snug cunt.

His balls drew up tight and the glands at the base of his cock burned. He suppressed his need to expel his Setti essence by indulging his sexual hunger. His fist slid faster and faster, until he came in long, streaming jets. She flinched away from each spurt, which only made him more determined to claim her. Scooping the milky liquid off her skin, he smoothed it over her mound and into her folds.

Fear flashed through her gaze before she could conceal it completely. "Will that..."

"I won't infuse you until I'm tired of fucking you." He slid his fingers back and forth, mixing his cum with her cream. His cock started hardening again. The quick burst of pleasure had only whetted his appetite for more. Dragging his fingers away from her heat, he righted his clothing and walked to the fire. He needed a moment to gather his thoughts, to feel something other than lust.

This was taking on a life of its own. He hadn't known who Arabel was when he'd suggested this to Rhys. Had the meld been sheer coincidence or some sort of

premonition? Phylehans weren't clairvoyant, but some of the Setti were. A lump formed in the pit of his stomach. He wanted nothing that came from the Setti.

"How long do you intend to keep me?"

"Until you carry my child or I've determined we're not compatible."

"I'm barren," she said a bit too quickly. "There's no reason for you to keep me."

Retreating into his role, he turned and looked at her. "You better pray that isn't true. Haven't you heard what happens to females who are unworthy of breeding?" She just stared at him from behind her expressionless mask. "You'll be given to my men, or better yet to yours. There's nothing quite as exciting as ramming your cock up the ass of your former commander."

"Have you ass fucked many of your commanders?"

Her bravado returned in the blink of an eye and his admiration grew. Any true Setti hybrid would snap her neck for her insolence. He couldn't decide if he should slap her or fuck her senseless.

"Why don't I start with you?" He'd meant it to sound like a threat, but the question came out in a caressing whisper. His aching body couldn't take much more of this. She licked her lips and her nipples hardened. Her heavy lidded expression could be feigned, but her skin didn't lie. She was excited by the thought. "Just say my name and I'll give you more pleasure than you can imagine."

If her hands had been free Arabel would have beat the shit out of the smug bastard. She went for weeks without sexual sustenance when she was on a mission. Did he honestly believe he could bend her to his will with a few averted orgasms? His mouth had felt wonderful against her... She was not going to think about how well he controlled his tongue.

The corners of his lips quirked as if he were fighting back a smile. "Are you always this stubborn?" he asked.

"Always." He stalked toward her, his gaze narrowed and bright. Her pulse kicked up another notch making her ears buzz. She needed his mouth on hers. Just a

brush or two across her clit and she'd come. But she could see that wasn't his intention. He wasn't finished toying with her.

"I'm genetically engineered to blend in with humanoid species. Have you ever seen a hybrid who wasn't?"

Confused by his sudden change of topics, she let anger drive back the burning in her blood. "What the fuck are you talking about?"

"I think Brock is right. It's going to take more than words to make you see reason."

The thought of Brock extinguished the rest of her desire. This creature had infused Brock, made him so desperate for Setti essence that he'd betrayed her. What other indignities had her men been forced to endure?

He took her face between his hands and lowered his head toward hers. She tried to pull away and his hold tightened.

"I'm not going to hurt you. Relax."

"Why?" There wasn't much slack in the cables. He easily followed her retreat, kissing her eyelids shut before covering her mouth. His warm lips pressed over hers, patient, yet persistent. She felt a gentle presence push against her mental shields and automatically reinforced them.

Let me pass. You need to see this.

If he'd pushed, she would have fought him. It was her nature to resist. Instead he waited for her to accept him, quiet and still.

What do you want to show me?

Images, nothing more.

She created a weakness in her shield, a small opening still protected by filters.

He chuckled. *You're not going to make this easy for me, are you?*

Did you honestly expect me to?

A thin stream of information passed through the opening. She scanned it and sensed only images as he had indicated. It was impossible to activate the images without increasing his access to her mind, so she pinched off the link.

I wasn't finished.

I want to see what you're up to before you send me any more.

He didn't argue, not that it would have mattered. His lips continued to move, restless and distracting. "You better hurry or I'll find something else to occupy my attention." He trailed his fingers along her neck and across her shoulder, his destination obvious.

With her eyes squeezed shut, she allowed the first image to form. A nondescript man with sandy brown hair and common brown eyes stood before her. Anger hardened his expression and his face shifted. The features undulated from one shape to another, transitioning through several phases before setting into their final form. Nearly triangular, his new face had wide oval eyes and a tiny lipless slit for a mouth.

"That's only a small portion of his transformation and he is only half Setti," her captor whispered, his lips teasing the underside of her jaw.

"Who is he and why do you want me to see this?"

"Accept the rest of the transmission and I'll explain."

After a moment's hesitation, she reestablished the link and allowed the images to pass into her mind. He continued to touch her. His fingers drifted along her arms and down her sides, while his mouth moved over and against hers. Was the teasing hint of a kiss even necessary for the transfer?

She closed her eyes and watched the rest of the transformation. The man grew taller and his neck elongating as angled slits formed at regular intervals. The slits quivered with each breath he took and Arabel shuddered. The bottom portion of his body thickened and odd appendages hung from his hips. Were they tentacles or malformed limbs?

"This is what the Setti look like?"

"No. Pure blood Setti are massive and even more grotesque. They thrive on their home world, but you take them away from the unique atmosphere and the specific gravitation provided by their planet and their twin hearts stop beating."

“I’m aware of all this.” She looked into his eyes, feeling breathless and unsure. This felt like a campaign to win her support not an attempt to intimidate her. “Why are you suddenly saying ‘they’ and not ‘we’? Do you deny that you’re a Setti hybrid?”

Chapter Four

Instead of answering her question with words, Javier slowly lowered his head. He covered her mouth with his and slipped his tongue past her lips. She stiffened, waiting for the punishing demand, the forceful intensity. Again his touch was coaxing, caressing instead of brutal. He tasted her mouth and shared his taste with her. She clenched her hands and closed her eyes, damning her helplessness.

He pushed into her mind with the next thrust of his tongue. She scanned his energy as it passed through her shield. Images, memories, echoes and emotions, nothing harmful, at least to her. He wrapped his fingers around the back of her neck and deepened the kiss. She squirmed against him, wanting to touch him, yet needing to shove him away.

Hunger swirled through her, building momentum with each pass. His shirt abraded her nipples and her skin tingled. Her abdomen quivered as tension gathered, her core pulsing with demand. She needed him inside her, filling her, moving, thrusting, and feeding.

I won't fuck you until you understand what I am. His voice sounded breathless and urgent inside her mind. He moved his fingers into her hair and stroked her face as he went on kissing her.

Cold, desolate isolation swept over Arabel and she groaned. He stepped closer, pressing his chest against her breasts. Darkness surrounded her. She shivered, terrified yet numb. Gray walls emerged from the darkness, suffocating and impenetrable. Searing pain spiked into her brain. She screamed and the memories rushed onward, flashes and impressions, sickening and jumbled. Tests and procedures, years of torture and neglect. He was no invasion force. He was a science experiment, a victim of the Setti like so many others.

She relaxed and the images flowed more smoothly. His suffering tore at her heart and infuriated her spirit. He'd been little more than a child when the Setti captured him. They'd beaten him into submission and subdued him with chains until they could lock him in a cage. Reminded of her own restraints by the images in her mind, she tore her mouth away from his and shoved him out of her mind.

"If you're truly an innocent victim, why kidnap me?" She jerked on the wrist cuffs to illustrate her resentment. Desire smoldered beneath her anger, so she focused on the stronger emotion. She would not be manipulated by her body's need for sexual energy.

"You refused the summons." His gaze narrowed and fixed on her mouth. This was not a man in the mood for conversation. "Rhys found me and realized the Setti have developed hybrids who can pass for humanoid. You were supposed to come to the villa like all the other leaders, but you had other things on your mind."

"Someone tried to kill me!" It was a damn good thing she was still restrained. This deluded fool might be Rhys' henchman, but she'd still enjoy kicking the shit out of him. "Your boss is the most arrogant asshole in the galaxy. I knew the information was important. I also knew Brock would relay whatever they said. The universe does not revolve around Rhys, regardless of what he believes."

Her captor laughed and she was amazed by the transformation. Gone were the hints of neglect and abuse. Firelight accented the sculpted contours of his face and the golden streaks in his sleek hair. He emanated feral strength and dangerous beauty. Unwilling to identify the sensations coursing through her body, she looked away from his mesmerizing gaze.

"If I release you, will you promise to behave?"

"Hell, no." Why was she being honest? If she fought back her temper, she could be out of here and... and what? They were no longer in Froswick, beyond that she had no idea where he'd taken her, or how he'd gotten her here. "I promise not to kill you. Pain will definitely be involved."

He drew her head back around and smiled into her eyes. "I'm not afraid of a little pain."

"Who said anything about 'a little'?"

"Have it your way." He ran his hand from her shoulder to her hip in one smooth motion. "Brock told me to watch the color of your skin and the highlights in your hair. The brighter they glow, the more desperate you are for energy. I'd put you somewhere between hungry and ravenous. We have a ways to go before you're desperate."

"Brock is so damn helpful. We're definitely going to have a long heart to heart when I get back."

"If I decide to give you back." He arched his brow and caught her nipple between his thumb and forefinger. "I've been on fire since I saw you worshipping the moon that night in the forest pool."

"How exactly did you accomplish that by the way? No one else has been able to slip into my mind uninvited."

"That's what I was bred to do. I establish a connection telepathically, then arrive in person to..." He lowered his hand and stepped back. "The ability to meld was part of my transformation. I can't explain how or why my mind locked on to you."

She thought back through the sequence of events. "I refused Rhys *after* our little adventure. Did you know who I was when you agreed to kidnap me?" He shook his head, his gaze clouding with emotions she couldn't decipher. Was he regretting his part in this ridiculous scheme or remembering how readily she'd responded to him?

"When we arrived in your dimension, I was surprised by many things." He stayed just out of reach, using only his gaze to caress her.

"How did Brock convince my guards to cooperate with this nonsense? I know they're loyal to me."

"He didn't. Someone named Kylie took on your shape and --"

"Kylie? Brock got my sister to Mimic me? This is treason or mutiny or blasphemy."

"Wouldn't that make you a deity?" She just glared at him. "As soon as we arrived, I recognized the rhythm of your planet."

"You'd been to Froswick before? How is that possible?"

"The Setti must have a lab somewhere on your planet. I've been trying to visualize the facility, but we were moved around a lot."

Could this have something to do with their telepathic connection? Mystic energy flowed along the most readily accessible path, those well established and familiar. How long had the Setti been conducting their experiments in her backyard, and on her watch?

"Did you tell Brock about this?"

"Of course. He was going to report everything to Rhys as soon as..."

"As soon as he helped you get me into restraints?" He didn't deny it. "What's this thing around my neck?"

"It disrupts your mystic abilities."

"I figured that out already. How?"

"He didn't explain how it works." He heaved a ragged sigh and crossed to the control panel inset in the stone wall. To her utter astonishment, he released the cuffs and said, "My name is Javier." Arabel jerked her arms out of the restraints and stepped forward, freeing her legs as well. Javier pulled his shirt off over his head and tossed it to her. "It was never my intention to hurt you."

"What *was* your intention?" The tee shirt barely covered her ass, but it was better than being naked. "The things you did to me are criminal on any planet." His body heat sank into her chilled skin and made her pulse leap. Even as the words passed her lips, her body branded her a liar. Her core ached with unfulfilled longing. Despite the head games, he had forced nothing on her and they both knew it.

"You had never experienced the ruthless brutality of a true Setti hybrid. It was my intention to give you a taste of what life would be like if the Setti are allowed to --"

"Allowed to what? How have I failed to support the Resistance? That's what I don't understand." Ignoring the stiffness in her muscles through sheer strength of will,

she advanced on him. Anger and hunger tumbled over each other. She needed to feed more badly than he realized and he was the most tempting male she'd ever seen. "What does Rhys want from me?"

"Rhys can't be blamed for this. We all played a part. Rhys was angry, but Brock said the conflict might seem more real to us because we have all directly interacted with the Setti."

"So you offered to introduce me."

"Basically."

He didn't apologize or make excuses for his behavior. He simply explained the events leading up to her kidnapping. "You did a bit more than shake my hand."

"I demonstrated, to a very slight degree, how you would be treated if you are ever captured by the Setti. If I had been a true breeder, I wouldn't have tried to master you. I would have raped you repeatedly until it was determined whether or not you were compatible with my seed. A Setti doesn't have to bother with seduction. They have highly trained sexual slaves who see to their pleasure. Breeders are for fucking. Why do you know so little about your enemy?"

The question annoyed her. She didn't know as much as she should about the Setti. The more she learned the more repulsive she found them, so she'd focused on fundamental battle strategies. "All I need to know is how to kill them."

"How can you kill them if you can't recognize them?"

"The one raping me with no regard to my pleasure will be the Setti. Correct?"

He crossed his arms over his chest and shook his head. "Why do you continue to provoke me? I'm trying to make peace."

She rolled her shoulders and rubbed her wrists. Kneeling had kept her ankles from chaffing, but that damn bar had played havoc with her neck. "Why did you try to master me?"

"Because you long for mastering more than any woman I've ever seen." He punctuated the statement with a growl that sent shivers down her spine. "I'd be happy

to do that for you." She immediately stopped the self-massage. "Something drew me to you. Our connection has nothing to do with your kidnapping."

A palpable tension arced between them. She tried to look away, but his gaze commanded her attention, paralyzing her muscles with nothing more than the liquid intensity of his stare. "If I had said Master, would you have fucked me?"

"If you had said Master, you would have wanted me to fuck you."

"I call no man Master."

He closed the distance between them and tangled his hand in the back of her hair. "My name is Javier."

"Javier," she whispered before he could issue the command. This couldn't become another battle of wills. She needed him too badly.

Sweeping her into his arms, he carried her to the pile of furs near the fire and laid her on her back. She tore off the tee shirt and made room for him between her legs, unashamed of her hunger. Their mouths found each other as he knelt between her thighs. Lips clinging and tongues sliding, they devoured each other. She explored his chest and back, excited by the hot, hard ridges of muscle, yet saddened by the conspicuous absence of excess flesh. Harsh training and intentional conditioning hadn't produced this physique. Javier had been starved.

"I know you call no man *Master*," he whispered against her lips, "but do you call any man *Mate*?"

Many wouldn't have cared. If she was willing to share her body, why should it matter if she had a mate? "My mate lost his life years ago." He accepted the information with a brusque nod and continued kissing her. She pushed against his chest. "You don't think this makes us mates or anything, do you? This is how my people feed. I agreed to eat dinner with you."

"I understand." He unfastened his jeans and pushed them past his hips, but she hadn't missed the possessive gleam in his eyes.

"Maybe we'd better --" He cut off her words with his mouth and braced his weight on his forearm so he could caress her breasts. His fingers rolled her nipples,

pulling and pinching with just enough force to launch darts of sensation into her abdomen.

She needed his weight pressing her down and his teeth locked against her shoulder, controlling her. How could she make him understand? Raising her arms above her head, she clasped her wrists as if she were bound.

He glanced at her hands, his warm breath wafting across her parted lips. "Do you need the restraints?"

There was a wealth of meaning in the question. He didn't seem put off by the possibility. "Yes, but I can't wait that long."

His gaze gleamed and a wicked smile curved his lips. "You'll wait if I say you'll wait. Fortunately for you, I'm going crazy too." He slid down along her body and draped her legs over his shoulders. "I think I owe you one," he parted her folds with his thumbs, "or two."

He'd just given her permission to come. She understood the rules. He flicked his tongue against her clit driving her to a fast, sharp orgasm. She cried out as her inner muscles released a fraction of the tension that had built up over the past few days.

Moving one hand above her mound, he kept her open and accessible as he drilled her with two fingers from his other hand. The heat of his breath teased her clit, while his fingers slid in and out. She reveled in the smooth slide and enjoyed the fullness. He twisted his wrist and bent his fingers dragging the front wall of her passage.

Tingles burst and her clit throbbed. "Oh," she gasped, "do that again."

He chuckled, then closed his lips around her clit and sucked. His fingers never paused in their strong, steady rhythm.

She could feel the sensations building with alarming speed. How could he trigger another orgasm so soon after her first? Before she could disrupt the cycle with worry, he withdrew his fingers and pushed his tongue into her core. His cream-soaked fingers found her clit and she writhed and moaned as he fucked her with his tongue.

No sooner did she slide down from one orgasm than another one built. Her nipples felt raw and tender, and he'd hardly even touched her there. As if sensing her discomfort, his arms curved around her sides and he cupped her breasts. His thumbs circled her tender nipples, soothing, yet stimulating.

She locked her ankles behind his head and rubbed her pussy against his mouth. He kept right on licking. His lips worked her folds and his tongue danced from her clit to her core over and over. He lapped up her cream as fast as her body produced it, pausing to savor the abundance each time she came.

"I'm... still hungry." She tugged on his hair. "I need *you* to come."

He chuckled and shifted her knees to his elbows. With effortless aim, he found her opening. "I apologize." But his wicked grin was anything but apologetic. Her folds parted and her pussy stretched around the flared head of his cock. "I'm really hard."

"I can feel that." He drove in and in and in until she cried out with the fullness. "Stars! You didn't look this big in the shower."

"I wasn't this excited in the shower." He pulled back and thrust deep. "Or when you watched me a little while ago." Another impossibly long stroke followed. "I don't know if I've ever been this hard before."

He kept his movements slow and steady until her body adjusted to his size, then he grabbed the backs of her knees and pushed her legs up and out. She couldn't move, could only feel the long, thick heat of his shaft sliding in and out of her body. His gaze bored into hers, possessive and hot. The penetration of his gaze was nearly as tangible as their physical joining. Harder and deeper, he took her.

Never ceasing the steady pounding of his hips, he bent over and latched onto the side of her neck. He sucked and scraped his teeth against her skin until she cried out. "Yes! Do it." Instinct brought his mouth to her shoulder and he bit just hard enough to spike sensation to the soles of her feet. He held her, pinned beneath him as he claimed her with his cock.

She clenched her jaws to keep from screaming as scalding pleasure erupted inside her. He gasped and released his hold on her shoulder. She wrapped her legs

around his waist and pulled his chest to her mouth, sinking her fangs deep as waves of orgasm swept through her. He clutched her to his chest, shuddering violently as she pulled energy directly from his body. His chest heaved and his arms trembled as the sensations began to recede.

Stunned by the shattering pleasure, she withdrew her fangs and averted her face. What had just happened? Nothing had ever felt like this before. She was sated, yet disconcerted at the same time. There was no way he was going to convince her that this was just sex.

"Are you all right?" He eased back far enough to arrange her legs more comfortably without separating their bodies.

"Why wouldn't I be?" She already knew the answer. She felt the soul bond strengthening with each moment that passed. How had he done it? It usually took several nights and complicated ceremonies to establish a soul bond.

"I think we exchanged more than energy."

"And how exactly did *we* do that? I'm damn sure I didn't do anything other than what I agreed to do."

"You bit me," he argued.

"You bit me first."

"You wanted my bite. I could sense your need and it was every bit as strong as mine. When we exchanged bites my Phylehan physiology interpreted the mating as, well a *mating*."

"And let me guess," she glared up at him, "Phylehans mate for life?"

"I don't know. I've changed so much since I was taken from my home world..." He pulled out and sat up, raking his hair with both hands. "It's worse than that. When I came, both sets of glands released. I think I might have --"

"You infused me?" She sat as well and scanned her internal organs for any sign of abnormality. "I don't feel any different, well except for the soul bond knitting with record speed."

"Setti essence isn't addictive to other Setti hybrids or to our mates."

"Well, that's comforting," she snapped.

"How is a soul bond usually established? Were you soul bonded with your first mate?"

"It should have taken a whole hell of a lot more than what we just did. Have you ever injected someone with your Setti essence before?"

"You and Adara are the only women I've been with physically. She is also a hybrid so it wasn't dangerous. All of my other encounters were telepathic."

"Who is Adara?"

"It's a long story."

"If we're truly soul bonded, we've got the rest of our lives. You might as well get started."

* * *

Kamn stood in the shadows, undetectable to the couple fucking a short distance away. He'd been gone less than an hour and Sylina had already found another cock to ride. He watched her bounce up and down on top of Holt. The warrior gritted his teeth, keeping his grunting to a minimum. She was saturating his mind with sensations, no doubt. The more intensely her partners enjoyed her luscious body, the more concentrated their energy became. She was a voracious leech, always demanding more.

Don't just stand there. Join us.

Her back was to Kamn and he hadn't sensed her awareness of his presence. Of course, he'd been a bit distracted watching her impale herself of Holt's thick pole. *I don't know how you walk as often as you cram yourself full of cock. No one can be that hungry.*

She stood up and turned around, staring right at him as she squatted over Holt's hips and reached for his cock. Instead of returning him to her well used cunt, however, she pressed him against her anus and smirked at Kamn while she took the other man deep into her ass.

Jealousy, hot and unwanted, expanded within Kamn's gut. Noretta knew he'd react like this. She knew he'd be dazzled by Sylina's beauty and sensuality. He'd spent his whole adult life in a cage pretending telepathic masturbation was all he'd ever need.

Twice he'd experienced the wonder of physical fulfillment and both times it had led to misery.

You're a worthless whore.

Spreading her legs wide, she played with her pussy while she slid up and down on Holt's shaft. She licked her lips and smiled at Kamn. *Bring it over here, jungle boy, and this worthless whore will suck you dry.*

Disgusted, Kamn turned away and stared off into the night. He sucked in the cool night air, drawing comfort from the fresh smell of pine and damp grass. How long were they going to wait for Arabel to return? Her men insisted she'd gone into seclusion, but Kamn knew better. She was with Javier. He wasn't sure how, but he sensed his cousin's connection to the Prime *Nac O'te*. Was Javier protecting Arabel or had Noretta sent in backup? Kamn's spirit rebelled against the possibility. Javier was free. He'd remained with the Resistance instead of being fooled by an innocent face. Kamn could endure this degradation if he knew Javier was free.

The slapping of flesh against flesh increased until Sylina cried out. Finally!

"Oh, my love, you are amazing," she murmured and Kamn wanted to retch. He glanced over his shoulder in time to see her stand up and help Holt to his feet. The warrior shook his head, his expression still dazed.

"When Arabel returns, what are you going to do?"

"Challenge the Prime *Nac O'te* for the right to lead," Holt said without hesitation.

"On what grounds will you issue the challenge?"

"She ran in the face of danger and left her men without a leader."

"Very good. And what proof will you provide of her incompetence as a protector?"

"She has always hated Leeds, so I will snap my brother's neck and lay his body at her feet. Then I will demand her life as retribution for his."

Chapter Five

"My cousin and I were the only Phylehan captives who survived the transformation. One by one we watched the others die." Javier had spent the past hour with Arabel curled against his side trying to make sense of his memories. So much of his past was a jumble of fragmented concepts and blurry images interspersed with long periods of isolation. "If it hadn't been for Kamn, I might not have made it. We talked each other through the worst of it."

She brushed his hair back from his face, the simple touch sending tingles across his skin. "What happened to him?"

"He's back with the Setti, but I have to believe he was tricked into... I better keep the events in order or you'll never understand. You asked me about Adara. She's a hybrid like me. I say 'like me' because she's considered a traitor by the Setti. She was not created in captivity."

"How was she created?"

"A Setti shifter took on the appearance of her father and seduced her mother. As I understand it, this is a strategy the Setti have been employing for generations. Unfortunately it requires a shifter and Setti shifters are rare."

Worry knitted Arabel's brow as she rested her chin on her palm. "Deception seems to be the weapon of choice for the Setti. I prefer an enemy who fights honorably."

"There is nothing honorable about the Setti. If you hope to be effective against this enemy, you are going to have to start thinking like them, or at least understand how they think."

She conceded the point with a subtle nod. "Is Adara a shifter?"

"I don't know. Her powers are still largely latent. Her brother is training her. He was conceived in the same manner as Adara."

“What does all this have to do with you?”

“When Adara and I melded telepathically, it inadvertently triggered a sort of mating frenzy.” It all seemed a lifetime ago when in reality it had been a matter of days. He remembered the events with a sense of detachment and wondered if this was another symptom of his evolution. “I wasn’t engineered to interact with other Setti and my abilities basically back-fired.”

“That’s why you had sex with her?” An undercurrent of possessiveness ran through her tone, though her expression remained impassive.

He traced the full curve of her lower lip, pleased by her reaction. “Her body produced the antigen that neutralized the chemical imbalance. It was medicinal,” he assured her with a hint of a smile. “Besides, Rhys wouldn’t let me touch her without watching every move we made. It was all very awkward.”

“Wait a minute. You lost me. What does Rhys have to do with Adara?” She sat up, depriving him of her warmth while providing him with a fabulous view of her breasts.

“I got the impression they’d been together for a long time. Their emotions certainly ran deep.”

She dismissed the subject with a wave of one slender hand. “This telepathic link with Adara led to your rescue, so how did Kamn end up back with the Setti?”

“There was a female at Resistance headquarters when we first arrived. Kamn told me she’d been found during an earlier raid. I think Brock led that assault. Anyway, while I was detoxifying my system with Adara, this female killed three guards and incapacitated another. She took Kamn with her when she escaped. We don’t know if she forced him to accompany her or if he went willingly.”

“Why would he willingly escape from the people who had just rescued him?”

“Because he was still in a cage.”

Her expressive eyes reflected her understanding and a depth of compassion Javier hadn’t expected. He had just begun to scratch the surface of Arabel’s complicated nature.

"Can you contact him, find out what's happening?"

"I've tried. He's either blocking me or he's out of range. I know he's still alive, but he could be controlled by the Setti. I have no way of knowing." He pulled her onto his lap, needing to touch her. "Tell me about this ambush."

Combing her fingers through his hair, she searched his gaze as she explained, "Many of my men are uncomfortable with recent changes. The *Nac O'te* have always guarded our secrets closely and kept to ourselves. We're fiercely protective of those entrusted to our care, but our sacred Creed encourages us to focus on our own people and our own dimension."

"The Setti have made that impossible."

"I'm beginning to see the truth in that statement, but my men might not be so easy to convince." She slid her hands from his hair and placed them on his shoulders. "I think their frustration is what led to my attack. Holt has been my lieutenant for as long as I've led the *Nac O'te*, but his brother, Leeds, is a pain in the ass. Leeds was running his mouth about the influx of alien cultures. Holt pulled him back just before I was forced to shut him up."

"You think Leeds attacked you?"

"I did at the time, but Leeds had an alibi. Besides I caught my attacker with my sword, sliced them pretty good."

"You didn't see him?"

"They had Phantom abilities, so it's conceivable the villain was female. I'm not the only woman among the *Nac O'te*. Anyway, we searched every person in camp and found no one with a wound, least of all not Leeds."

"How odd." She tucked her hair behind her ear, looking delightfully vulnerable. It was all Javier could do not to clutch her to his chest.

"I saw it in their eyes. My men think I'm the victim of an overactive imagination."

"Maybe the attack wasn't meant to harm you, just cast doubt upon you."

"Or keep me away from the summit. I was ambushed moments after I spoke with Rhys."

"If the Setti have a foothold in your dimension, you can bet they'll fight to keep it."

"Damn."

"I can't argue with that."

She heaved a sigh, inadvertently drawing his attention to her breasts. "How did this get so complicated? I'm a warrior. You point me toward the fight and I swing my sword until the enemy is defeated."

"Well, this enemy likes to play dirty. They're not going to meet you head on, they're going to throw their weapons from the darkness and slit your throat from behind."

"No, they're going to creep across our planet while we're trapped in our solar trance."

"That too." He paused for a long moment, searching for just the right words. "If your closest friend asked you to describe your perfect mate, what qualities would you list?"

Her eyebrows drew together and she licked her lips. "It's a little late for wish lists. Regardless of how either of us feels about it, we are soul bonded. Wouldn't it be more productive to --"

"Just answer the question." He caught her nipple and squeezed.

"Strong, capable, skilled, fierce in battle, and courageous."

Moving his hands to her hips, he pulled her closer. "Do you really want to spend the rest of your life with a mirror image of yourself? I'm cunning and unpredictable. I'm nothing you wanted, yet everything you need. We complement each other in ways we never would have anticipated on our own."

"You believe we were brought together by some higher power?"

He shrugged and grasped her bottom, rubbing her heat over his rapidly hardening cock. "I don't know what I believe. I was alone and starving, and Adara

found me. My body stabilized enough for me to realize I was incomplete and there you were, a goddess bathed in moonlight.”

His words thrilled her far more than they should have. He’d kidnapped her and seduced her. How could she blithely accept that their souls were now entwined? She was Prime *Nac O’té*! How would her men react if she returned to camp with an alien mate? They’d accuse her of being controlled by the Setti and banish her on the spot. This was a disaster.

He grasped her hair with one hand and kissed her, his mouth firm and demanding. Her treacherous body ignited with the first brush of his lips, not caring about the complications. Her soul cried out for his, her body ravenous and needy. She couldn’t do this again. She must be logical and... His tongue swept over her lower lip and she sucked it into her mouth. *Mine. He is mine.* He groaned and angled his head, fitting his mouth more tightly to hers.

Fire raced through her veins, driving rational thoughts from her mind. It didn’t matter that he was not of the *Nac O’té*. He was meant for her. She pushed him over backward and framed his face with her hands. Delving into his mouth with her tongue, she staked her claim, tasting him as boldly as he had tasted her.

A chuckle rumbled his chest. “Easy, sweetheart,” he whispered as she came up for air. “I’m not going anywhere.”

“This is insane.” She stared into his eyes, surrounding herself in the heat of his smoldering gaze. “My life is well ordered and disciplined. I don’t make rash decisions.” Scooting down, she explored his chest and abdomen as if she’d never touched a man before. She dragged her nails along his ribs and moved both her legs to one side.

He closed his eyes and folded his hands behind his head, content to let her play. She’d surrendered to his touch and his kiss more times than she cared to count. It was his turn to writhe and moan.

Spreading her hair across his belly and thighs, she bent and dragged her tongue from the base of his cock to the tip. His thighs tensed and his abs rippled, but he didn’t

hurry her, didn't attempt to take control. She needed this, needed him to trust her with his pleasure, needed him to let go.

She cupped his balls with one hand and lifted his shaft with the other. He spread his legs, giving her plenty of room to move, to discover the different textures and temperatures that made up his body. She sucked on the tip of his cock, then took him deeper into her mouth, swirling her tongue as she descended.

With a muffled groan he rocked into her mouth. Her tongue danced along his throbbing length and he hardened even more. Unable to remain passive, he slipped his hands into her hair. She made each stroke longer, taking him deeper, then pausing for a firm suck.

He arched off the fur and thrust to the back of her mouth, releasing his seed in hot, rhythmic spurts. Wonder surged through her and her pussy clenched. His salty taste fascinated her. She swallowed and sucked, licking until he had surrendered every drop.

Pulling her up and over his chest, he took her mouth in a demanding kiss. His tongue swept over hers, undaunted by his own taste, or perhaps thrilled to find it there. He moved her farther forward, kissing his way down her neck and across her chest.

"Up," he whispered against her breasts, "on top." Giving her nipple a firm nip, he encouraged her progress, guiding her with both hands. She moved her knees above his shoulders, brazenly straddling his face. "Hold yourself open. I want to fuck you with my fingers." The husky demand in his tone made her tremble. She parted her folds and closed her eyes, already teetering on the brink of release.

He pushed two fingers into her core and twisted his hand. His fingertips found the patch of nerves that made her entire pussy tingle. Gasping, she moved forward and his lips closed around her clit. One slow suck and her senses rocketed, going off in sharp little bursts.

She tried to move off him, but he grabbed her hip and growled in warning. He took his slick finger and traced a path back to her anus.

"Javier?"

"Trust me," he murmured against her sex. His fingers were soaked with her cream and her senses were on fire. Still, she'd never allowed anyone to take her like that. He pushed into her a little and she stiffened. "I won't hurt you. Rub against my tongue."

She shifted her hips, pressing her clit against his stroking tongue. As she pulled back to reposition, it pushed her body onto his finger. Clever man. Finding a smooth circular motion, she rocked her hips between his mouth and his hand.

"Oh, oh gods!" She pushed back onto his finger and came hard, her pussy clenching enviously.

Before the last spasm passed, he gathered her in his arms and sat up, bringing her down across his lap. She tried to get her legs under her, but he wrapped them around his waist instead. With both hands beneath her bottom, he pulled her onto his jutting cock. The slow, steady drive sent her senses reeling.

"Now squeeze me as tightly as you can." She did and he groaned. "Again." He made a wonderfully savage sound each time she clenched, so she did it again and again. He squeezed her nipples in time to the tightening of her passage and soon they were groaning in unison. "I need... all of you." He sounded desperate and his eyes burned into hers. "At least this once." She pictured herself bent over, head bowed, while he pounded into her ass from behind. "Not like that. Never like that."

He kissed her, soothing her with his tongue and the heat of his breath. A very different image formed within her mind. They faced each other, her fangs buried in his shoulder and her legs hooked over his arms. She wanted to taste his vibrant energy, to feast on his pleasure.

"My body releases a unique lubricant when it's needed. I won't hurt you." He gathered his hair away from his neck and gazed into her eyes. "Even if you say no, I welcome your bite."

Amazed by his offer, she felt her defenses crumble. No one offered something for nothing. Life didn't work that way. She bent her legs and got her feet beneath her, then

dragged her body off his cock, mourning the loss the entire way. His hands moved under her, lifting her and shifting her legs to the outside of his arms.

She clutched his shoulders, balancing on her feet while he positioned himself against her virgin hole. They were doing this... Why the hell was she letting him do this?

"Arabel." She didn't want to look at him. His eyes were too damn beautiful. She felt his cock press against her, warm and slick. "Arabel." She lifted her gaze and he lowered her onto his shaft. Fullness expanded to the edge of pain, then eased back to aching fullness again. "Thank you."

His whispered words and the tenderness shining in his eyes shattered her composure. With a ragged sob, she shoved his hands away and folded her legs beneath her. She pulled up, nearly off of him, then sank onto him again and again. He grasped her hips, slowing her frantic movements, helping her find a smooth rhythm.

She tangled her fingers in his hair and kissed him, unwilling to separate their mouths even to breathe. His body glided in and out of hers, the physical pleasure minor compared to the emotional tempest raging within her. She clung to him and took his full length, feeling unfettered and complete.

He slipped one hand between their bodies, finding her clit with his fingertip. Needing the final connection to complete the carnal circuit, Arabel worked her way down his neck and opened her mouth against his shoulder.

The angle of her head slowed the movement of her hips. He didn't seem to notice. "Do it," he whispered. "I can feel how much you need this."

She bit into his flesh and he cried out, his cock jerking as he came. Sexual energy coursed into her, saturating her with intoxicating heat. She rested with his full length deep inside her. He rolled her clit between his thumb and forefinger. Her orgasm unfurled and expanded like the waves of an ocean. She shivered and sighed, tingled and soared -- then a voice erupted inside her mind.

Don't let her relax! I don't think I can maintain the link if you do.

She opened her eyes and looked at Javier. He appeared as shocked as she felt.

Kamn?

Tell her to keep moving. This is even harder than I thought.

Dazed and frightened by the intrusion, she resumed her movements with far less enthusiasm. Javier caressed her hair and touched her face, offering silent encouragement as his mind opened to the other Phylehan.

Where are you? Why did you --

Just listen. This might not make sense to you, but Arabel should understand. Holt and Leeds have both been compromised. Sylina is controlling them. You have to capture them separately or Holt will kill Leeds and blame it on Arabel. I'm the one who ambushed her. We're staying in some sort of shrine. I think it's used for fertility rites or something. If we work together we might be able to control Sylina. I'm not strong enough to take her alone.

Who is Sylina?

Rhys should know. I can't hold...

The link slipped away and Javier panted harshly. "Did you hear all of that?"

Nodding mutely, she cursed Kamn's timing. Then she shook away the selfish thought and focused on the larger picture. They had the rest of their lives to savor perfect orgasms. She crawled off his lap, putting some distance between them so they could think.

"How do we know this isn't a trap? They could have a Setti army waiting for us."

"Do you know where he's talking about?"

"It has to be one of the purification houses near the Awakening Circle. Mystic energy pulses through the entire area. It makes sense that they would choose that location for their hideout."

He struggled up from the furs and retrieved his jeans. "You better put something on. I'm going to contact Brock."

She snatched his tee shirt off the floor and slipped it on over her head. It was probably better if they slowed things down a bit and thought about something other

than sex. The ache deep in her pussy disagreed with the new direction, but there was no help for it, at least for now.

They put out the fire and waited for Brock in the fresh air just outside the cave. When he stepped through the Veil, he had a lovely dark-haired woman with him. After glancing at Javier, she stared at Arabel, her expression openly curious. Though the newcomer looked human, Arabel suspected she was some form of shifter.

"Don't think I won't kick your ass just because there are others present." Arabel stalked toward Brock. "The only way I'll forgive you for this insult is if you assure me I will never have to speak with that insufferable Guardian again."

Brock shot a questioning glance at Javier. "If you want to blame this whole thing on --"

"Don't even speak his name."

"Fine by me, but it wasn't even his idea."

She ignored his vehemence and crossed her arms over her chest. "Who is your companion?"

"Chevon Rankin. You knew her sister."

"Everyone knew her sister." Everyone knew her sister had been a Setti spy.

"Deception is the favorite weapon of the Setti," Javier interjected. "A wise woman once made that observation."

An enemy that struck from the shadows and twisted every truth. Arabel took a deep breath and extended her hand toward Chevon. "I am Arabel, Prime *Nac O'te*."

"You require no introduction." They clasped wrists and the tension eased. "What's going on? Javier made it sound urgent."

"We have a possible opportunity to catch a true Setti spy." She shifted her gaze to Brock. "Do you know a Setti operative named Sylina?"

"I know of her. Rhy... err the nameless Guardian rescued her and detoxified her only to have her go running back to her Setti captor. She's half vampire and half succubus."

"What a delightful combination." Arabel rubbed her upper arms and looked at Javier. "Kamn said you could subdue her if you work together. I understand the succubus similarity, but what about her vampire half?"

"What choice do we have?"

"She's already slipped through our hands twice," Brock told them. "It will *not* happen again."

* * *

Arabel fastened the last buckle on her armor and smiled. Brock and two of her guards had rounded up Holt and Leeds while she prepared for the upcoming confrontation. No one commented on her return or the two strangers who had accompanied her through the Veil. She saw suspicion in many expressions, but no one dared to question the Prime *Nac O'te*.

The plan was simple. Chevon would Mimic Leeds and cause enough of a distraction so the others could get their hands on Sylina. Then the Phylehans would trap the succubus inside the vampire until the vampire was destroyed.

"I want Kamn subdued as well," Arabel said as they started across camp toward the Awakening Circle.

"We'll likely need his help with Sylina," Javier pointed out.

"We'll make that decision on site. Until I have concrete proof of his loyalty, they are both hostile."

Javier didn't argue, but the flash in his gaze told her he wanted to. Arabel moved ahead as the trail narrowed. Tall leafy trees filtered out most of the moonlight. Her steps never faltered. If the Setti expected a frontal attack, they would slip in from the side. This was adapt or die, and Arabel was a survivor.

A massive obelisk marked the center of the Awakening Circle. Three identical houses rested along the perimeter of the ceremonial clearing. Arabel paused, listening to the wind, feeling the rhythm of the night. Javier nodded toward their right and she agreed. There was no light or movement to indicate habitation, still mystic energy flowed around instead of through the low stone structure.

It's shielded, he whispered in her mind.

She returned his nod and motioned to Chevon, watching as the Mimic transformed into the likeness of Leeds. One effortless ripple reshaped the young woman's body into the taller, lanky body of the man. Arabel had been raised around Mimics and still the sight never failed to send a shiver down her spine.

Brock activated his Phantom shield and blended in with the night. Arabel looked at Javier. *I'm a Phantom warrior too,* she told the Phylehan. *Give us a minute or two to bring Sylina out and if we don't succeed, come in after us.*

He smiled and shook his head. *I don't think so.* His body faded a bit with each word until he was invisible as well. *Kamn is the one who ambushed you, remember? Our abilities are not that different from yours.*

Is this part of your transformation or are all Phylehans able to cloak themselves?

We don't have time for this, Brock cut in.

"Let's go," Chevon said in Leeds' voice and set off across the clearing. The other three fell into step behind her. She marched right up to the front door and found the handle locked.

That handle doesn't have a lock, Arabel noticed.

Not a physical one, Brock agreed.

Chevon pounded on the door. "Open up. We've got big trouble. Open the damn door!"

The door swung inward and Chevon rushed into the small ceremonial house, leaving plenty of room for the others behind her. Kamn stood with his arms crossed over his chest, his gaze sharply assessing.

"What's wrong?" Kamn asked.

"Where is she?" Chevon replied.

"You know Sylina. She's *always* around."

"Arabel is back and Brock is with her. They're up to something. I know they are."

A stunningly beautiful woman faded into view half a step behind Kamn. Wavy auburn hair framed a face so delicate she hardly looked real. "When did she return?"

"How about now?" Arabel deactivated her Phantom shield and pressed her sword point to the base of Sylina's throat. "Decapitation should take care of the vamp, but how do I kill a succubus?"

"You don't." She blinked out of sight, but not before Javier got his arm around her waist. They flashed back into view on the other side of the room wrestling madly. Kamn lunged forward and grabbed Sylina's arms, dragging them to the small of her back. "What the fuck are you doing? Are you crazy? Noretta will kill you -- if I don't kill you first!"

Arabel sheathed her sword. She couldn't slice the vamp without risking injury to the Phylehans. Javier twisted Sylina's long hair around his fist, forcing her head back. She writhed and twisted against him, snarling with fangs bared. They took her to the ground and Brock held her legs as the other two pushed into her mind. She screamed and hissed, spittle peppering her face, and theirs.

"Why don't they just kill her?" Chevon turned her face away, obviously uncomfortable with the brutality. She had returned to her human form. That was odd. Had she been surgically altered while she was on Earth?

"They are killing her. She might sacrifice her vampire body and escape in spirit form. We can't allow that to happen."

"Does she have information we need before --"

"No!" Kamn cut off Brock. "She knows nothing I don't know."

With a final push, the Phylehans forced Sylina's brain to shut down. Javier never took his eyes off her pale face. "Your sword," he panted. "Take off her head."

Arabel drew her sword and raised the blade in a controlled arc as the others scurried out of her way. With dispassionate accuracy, she chopped through Sylina's neck and watched her head roll to one side. Blood gushed out, spreading across the floor, contaminating everything in its path.

"Everyone out." Arabel motioned toward the door. "Burn it to the ground."

Chapter Six

A crowd awaited them as they returned to camp. Arabel's hand covered the hilt of her sword and Javier moved closer to her side. She was a warrior to the marrow of her bones. If the sea of hostile faces was any indication, this situation called for diplomacy.

A lad separated himself from the throng. "You set one of the purification houses on fire."

"My brothers were locked up without explanation," another said from somewhere in the crowd.

"Holt and Leeds will be released as soon as their bodies have metabolized the Setti essence pumped into them by the creature we just killed," Arabel said in a calm, clear voice.

Javier gauged the reaction of the others, ready to intercede if he was needed. So far they were willing to listen to their leader, if a bit begrudgingly.

"The Setti are here in our dimension, on our land. While we sleep they exploit other races, creating hybrids who are indistinguishable from us."

"That's ridiculous," someone called out. "Setti hybrids are monstrous creatures with four legs and two hearts."

Javier stepped forward. "I am a Setti hybrid. I was imprisoned in a lab on this planet. Everything she says is true. This is my cousin, Kamn. We are one of many species the Setti have created for the sole purpose of fooling people like you. Why conquer a population when you can infiltrate them?"

Metal flashed in the moonlight and bodies lunged. Arabel drew her sword and took a defensive stance in front of Javier and Kamn. "No one harms them. They are here at my request."

Brock and Chevon moved behind them, shielding them from the other *Nac O'te*.

"They are Setti. All Setti must die!" someone in the crowd cried.

Javier pushed against Arabel's sword arm until she lowered her blade. As soon as he moved his hand, the sword sprang back into position, so he ignored the posturing. "I was created by the Setti, but I'm Phylehan, as is Kamn. We were captured as children and would be captives still if it weren't for Brock and the Resistance." He thought it best not to mention Rhys given Arabel's current mood.

"Is this true, Commander? Was he some sort of slave?" Holt's brother, Leeds asked.

"Yes. The Phylehans were rescued from a lab on Earth not long ago. And if we hadn't locked up your brothers Holt would have killed Leeds."

"Holt would never harm anyone."

"I would have done anything for that bitch." A deep voice rang out over the assembly and the people moved aside, allowing Holt to approach Arabel. "My mind is still muddled, but I felt Sylina's hold over me sever when she died." He knelt in front of Arabel and bowed his head. "These people have no idea how close we came to defeat. I would follow you into hell. Hail, Prime *Nac O'te*!"

"Hail, Prime *Nac O'te*!" the crowd echoed.

"I didn't do this alone and that's the lesson that must be learned from this night." Tension eased and blades disappeared as stances began to relax. She offered her hand to Holt and drew him to his feet. "We can't turn a blind eye to our vulnerabilities. We must have protection during our solar trance."

"We have Day Warriors," one of her men called out.

"Not nearly enough. They are expert fighters, but they can't begin to protect everyone."

"What are you proposing?" Holt asked.

"The paranormal population on Earth is growing rapidly. I would like to offer a place of refuge, a haven where such people can live without the fear of discovery or

prejudice. The vast majority of our population sleeps during the day, so this would be a peaceful place.”

“And yet the Setti would know we are no longer alone,” Brock said.

“These are the first two refugees?” Holt’s gaze narrowed as he looked at Kamn. “This one was in league with Sylina.”

“Kamn pretended allegiance to Sylina until he could bring us to him. If it weren’t for him, she would still be alive and you would still be under her control.”

“It was a damn convincing act,” Holt grumbled.

“Kamn is returning to Earth with me,” Brock announced.

“I am?”

“I think it’s best.”

Kamn nodded.

“What about this one?” Holt motioned toward Javier.

Arabel looked at him, her face expressionless. *Should we tell them?*

Not tonight. Let them get to know me first.

One corner of her mouth curved up. *Are you sure that will help?* She turned to Holt and said, “Javier is my guest.”

* * *

Five’s sharp talons bit into Noretta’s hips as he fucked her from behind. No one believed her when she told them she liked it hard and fast. No one but Five. He was more than happy to shove his massive cock into whichever orifice was aching and ride her until she screamed. She held on to the far side of the table and gasped each time he slammed his hips against her ass. He was wonderfully hard and blissfully thick and she couldn’t get enough.

She came in a sharp, fast burst of sensation and he paused while her inner muscles convulsed. Then he wrapped his arms around her hips and dragged her off the table. Still impaled on his cock, she pushed against his muscular arms as he made a beeline for the door. He couldn’t mean to leave the office like this. She’d have him killed if he humiliated her.

“What are you doing?”

“Don’t panic. I just wanted a different angle.”

He stopped well short of the door and set her down, urging her forward until her forearms rested on the seat of one of the chairs. The first firm thrust of his massive cock obliterated her concern. Gods, he knew how to use that thing. Hard and deep, alternating the speed of his strokes just enough to keep her body guessing.

She tilted her hips, giving him a better angle and he took full advantage of the offer. His hand sneaked around and cupped her mound, grinding her clit against his shaft. Pleasure stabbed up her spine and she cried out. He pinched her nipples with his other hand and she understood the new position. Just fucking her hadn’t been enough. He’d wanted to hear her gasp and scream, feel her shake and moan as he wrested sensations from her body.

If it hadn’t felt so good, she would have sent him away, but each pinch sent tingling darting from her nipples to her clit, keeping her core pulsing with heat and pleasure. The hand covering her mound began to echo the pinches. He pressed her nipple, then her clit, her other nipple then her clit. She threw her head back and screamed, shaking with another violent climax.

“On your knees.”

Lethargy chased away the surge of rebellion and she allowed him to turn her away from the chair and guide her to the floor. He forced her head down and held the back of her neck while he adjusted the position of her legs. When she was wide open and utterly submissive, he pulled out.

“You know what I want.” He scraped his claws across her upturned ass, making both cheeks burn. “Have you ever granted the right to another?”

“Use your fingers this time and maybe I’ll let you fuck my ass another day.” Her head cleared enough to realize she wasn’t ready to surrender control -- even to Five. For a long time he didn’t move. He stood behind her debating his options. She reached between her legs and pushed two fingers into her cunt pumping lightly. “If you’re finished, send in my guard. I’m not quite satisfied.” Feeling his gaze on her reddened

ass, she moved her middle finger up to her puckered anus and circled the sensitive hole. "Oh, that's good."

With an impatient growl, he knelt behind her and pushed her hand aside. He slipped a finger into her pussy coating it with her cream, then slammed his cock back into her hole the instant he pulled his finger out. She gasped at the violent invasion and hid her smile. Her core fluttered and tightened. She'd felt so empty without him there. Disturbed by the thought, she reached down to pinch her clit. It wouldn't do to let him know how much she craved these sessions.

"You promise?" He teased her anus with his claw, keeping the sensation just short of pain.

"Promise?"

"You'll let me be the first?"

Carefully angling his finger, he pushed his claw into her ass. The sensation wasn't unpleasant, just strange. "If and when I decide I want to be ass fucked, you'll be the first."

He accepted the promise with another growl and pulled his hips back slowly, forcing her to acknowledge the full length of his shaft before he shoved into her again. She rested her head on her forearm and rubbed her clit, content with her small victory.

His thrusts remained steady and his balls slapped against her mound. She relaxed into the rhythm, letting the pleasure flow. He twisted his wrist and pushed a second finger into her ass. The sensation built from a tingle to a blaze and spread through her abdomen. She screamed, seared by the intensity.

Ramming his shaft balls deep into her cunt, Five laughed while she shuddered uncontrollably. Her core pulsed and pulsed, each thrust of his fingers sending a new wave of orgasm crashing over her.

"You bastard," she whispered, so shaken by the prolonged climax that she wasn't sure she'd taken him with her. A discreet knock drew their attention to the door. "See who it is." She crawled away from him and gathered her discarded clothes, rushing into the supply closet.

She was fully dressed and composed when she returned a few minutes later. Five had pulled on his pants, but he looked far too smug for her liking.

"You have a message." He motioned toward the comcrystal on her desk. It must be from one of her spies. The Setti didn't use comcrystals.

Her pride insisted she tell Five to leave, but he knew more about Project Prism than she did. He had been with the project since its inception and she had not. She picked up the crystal and activated it with her breath. The image was scrambled, the figure intentionally distorted.

"Knowing your temper, Mistress, I am glad I am not there to deliver this news in person. Sylina is dead. She was over confident in her influence over the Phylehan and she ultimately paid with her life. Kamn has returned to the Resistance and all the information he extracted from the handler went with him. You must abandon the Froswick site. There is no other alternative. I won't presume to offer advice. I await your instructions."

The image blinked out and Noretta sagged against her desk. "This can't be happening."

Five shot to his feet and grabbed his shirt off the floor. "I'll prepare the others for immediate evacuation." He paused by the door. "Where shall I tell them we're going?"

"Cobra Complex. No, it's near capacity already." Everything was moving in slow motion. She could hardly hear his question through the ringing in her ears. "Terran Two, we'll go to Terran Two."

"Yes, Mistress." He snapped a quick salute and left the office.

Coward. He didn't want to be here when the shock wore off. She turned around and braced her hands against her desk. All her well laid plans... This was the ideal location. The ignorant Froswick slept all day, allowing her people to move about unhindered. Why had she trusted that useless vampire whore?

Her hands closed into fists and she screamed in frustration, clearing her desktop with one powerful swipe of her arm. The next burst of fury sent her desk crashing against the wall. She picked up the table Five had fucked her on and threw it through

the nearest window. Panting and not nearly appeased, she dug her nails into the palms, welcoming the sting. She could not fail. She *would not* fail. This was just an inconvenient setback. She would relocate and refocus. This was not the end.

* * *

Arabel looked around the deserted lab with a mixture of horror and relief. Kamn had led the recon team right to the complex, but it was immediately apparent that the buildings had been abandoned.

"How did they know?" she muttered as she followed Javier from room to room.

"You have a spy among the *Nac O'te*."

She'd been thinking the same thing. She just needed to hear it. "Is this a typical facility?" The holding cells could house six, perhaps as many as eight. There were two procedure rooms, one fully equipped for major surgeries. A row of offices and staff quarters made up the top level of the main structure.

"This complex is actually rather small. I'd guess its isolated location outweighs the advantage of going unnoticed during the day."

"Our dimension is not isolated."

He chuckled. "I meant no disrespect. Froswick relies on magic rather than technology. Few scientific advancements have come out of this dimension."

She neither conceded nor argued the point. "Where did they go? How could they have relocated so quickly?"

"That's the danger of this sort of operation. With numerous labs, it's easy to shift resources from one center to another."

They caught up with Brock and Kamn in one of the corridors. "I can't decide if this is a victory or a defeat," Brock muttered. "I was really spoiling for a fight."

Arabel couldn't have agreed with him more. Though this was technically supposed to be recon, she'd been hoping to bash some heads together. Kamn hesitated before a door, his gaze shooting to Javier.

"Noretta's energy pulses from this room," Kamn said. He eased the door inward and looked inside.

"Did someone beat us here?" Arabel stepped past him and entered the office. The room was a shambles, overturned furniture and smashed equipment littering the floor. Wind whistled in through the broken window, the blinds beating against the frame.

"Look." Javier pointed to the shimmering sphere balanced on the edge of the overturned desk. A penlight had been angled to illuminate the crystal. "Is that what I think it is?"

"A parting shot from the retreating foe?" Brock snatched the crystal off the desk and breathed on it. Nothing happened. "Wasn't meant for me." He tossed the crystal to Arabel, but her breath had no effect either.

Kamn intercepted the crystal as she passed it to Javier. "I'd lay odds it was meant for me." He breathed across the crystal and it came to life. A slender column of light shot up from the top, spinning as it expanded. An image formed within the column, ethereal and delicate.

"That's Noretta?" Arabel couldn't believe her eyes. The messenger appeared more child than woman, almost impish with her up-tilted eyes. No wonder Kamn had trusted her. No one would have believed this person was a malevolent commander.

"Don't be fooled by that face," Kamn muttered. "She's a vicious little bitch."

"Welcome to Froswick Three, home of the fearless *Nac O'te*. If it hadn't been for Sylina's jungle boy, this would have had a far different ending. Speaking of the little jungle boy," she paused and her gaze turned cold, "there is no place in this universe you can hide and no one who can protect you. Kamn, you will pay for crossing me." As quickly as her tone turned lethal, the whimsy returned. "Until then, enjoy the empty buildings. Project Prism has relocated to more hospitable surroundings."

The comcrystal blinked out.

"Good thing she doesn't hold a grudge." Brock slapped Kamn on the back. "Don't worry, jungle boy, we'll find her before she finds you."

"Do you have any idea where she's gone?" Arabel asked.

"Not so much where she's gone as what her next move is likely to be. Kamn interrogated one of the handlers, so they would be foolish not to evacuate all the facilities he knows about. We intend to be there when they do."

Javier nodded. "That makes sense."

"So at least for the time being," Brock went on, "it looks like you're off the hook."

"Not necessarily," Arabel said. "She called this Froswick Three. We need to find the other two labs and identify the spy."

Kamn snorted. "That shouldn't be hard. Each time they communicate telepathically with Noretta they'll taint their energy. Javier is more sensitive to shifts in energy patterns than anyone I know."

"He recognized this dimension as soon as we stepped through the Veil," Brock agreed.

"People are a little more complicated," Javier glanced away, obviously uncomfortable with the praise, "but Setti energy should stand out rather well among the *Nac O'te*."

"And we've got paranormal trackers like Vilok on our side of the Veil. If Noretta 'relocates' her spy as well as her project, they won't get far. Besides, I didn't say Arabel was out of a job, just out of the spotlight." Brock motioned Kamn toward the door. "I suspect everyone will find something to keep them busy."

Javier wrapped his arm around Arabel's waist. "I suspect you're right."

She left half of the recon team behind to guard the buildings until she could assemble a research team to sort through the rubble. When they returned to her house an hour later, Brock diverted her attention while Javier and Kamn said goodbye.

"What are they saying that you don't want me to hear?" She stood with Brock on the front stoop of her cottage, out of earshot of the Phylehans.

"It's not Javier. Kamn needs his cousin's support right now and you intimidate everyone."

"I do not."

Brock laughed and shook his head. "Is Javier going to be able to handle you?"

Heat crawled up her neck and blossomed across her cheeks. "You have no idea."

"Glad to hear it."

"When will I see you again? The *Nac O'te* have lost one of their finest warriors and I'm not happy about it."

"Remember how you reacted to Chevon? Everyone she meets has the same reaction. Her sister was set up by the Setti, but someone way up in our government allowed it to happen. They even had me believing she was guilty. She's better off on Earth."

"And you're better off with her?"

"Absolutely."

"You didn't answer my question."

"That depends on Project Prism. We have strong indications Noretta fled to Earth. We have to shut this thing down once and for all, and round up as many of the lab rats as we possibly can. Not all of them are as... civilized as the Phylehans."

"You know a lot more about this than I know, don't you?"

"And learning more every day." Javier ambled toward them, so Brock gave her a quick hug. "I'll return when I can, but the Veil parts both ways."

Javier pulled her into his arms and held her close as Brock and Kamn disappeared into the trees. "Will Kamn be all right?" she asked.

"He needs to kill Noretta. I'm not sure his spirit will heal until she's dead."

"What about yours?" She pressed her hand to the side of his face and searched his gaze. "What will it take to heal your spirit?"

Chapter Seven

"My spirit has already found its cure." Javier smiled at Arabel yet restlessness tinged his happiness. "The cure must be administered through my body, though. Do you have any idea how to initiate my convalescence?"

"I might have one or two." Desire ignited in her eyes and she reached for his hand.

Javier drew her toward him, but stopped short of embracing her. "I can't spend another day indoors."

Her brow creased and she glanced over her shoulder at the cottage where they'd slept the day before, or where she'd slept while he prowled to be more accurate. It wasn't that he resented her nocturnal nature. He wanted to be near her, protecting her while she was unable to protect herself, but he had to feel the sunlight on his face.

"Come."

She shot him a sidelong glance filled with mischief. "That was high on my list."

He led her along the path leading to her favorite bathing pool. Her guards shadowed their movements. He couldn't see them, but he could hear their careful footsteps just beyond the trees.

"Unless you want an audience, you better dismiss them for the night."

"I doubt they'll actually leave."

"They can't follow where I'm taking you."

Confusion knitted her brow and her hand tightened against his. "They all wished me a good day, but I can still sense my captain's presence. He's withdrawn to a discreet distance."

Finding no fault with the guard's loyalty, Javier continued down the path. He loved the musical jingle of her armor. Her chest was protected by a solid plate that

conformed to the unmistakably female shape of her body. A mythological beast had been etched into the polished metal and accented with every imaginable color. A hinged piece encircled her neck and extended over her shoulders. Heavily engraved plates had been strapped to her forearms and shins. A flexible fringe of overlapping sections extended from waist to mid-thigh protecting her lower body without hindering her movements. The entire ensemble would be far more interesting without the black leather garments she wore under the armor.

"While you were sleeping yesterday, I had a long conversation with Adara's brother, Lord Nyx."

"He's the one who's training Adara?"

"Yes."

"And who trained him? You said his unusual abilities alerted him to his Setti heritage. Are hybrids accepted among his people?"

"No, but sorcerers are. Nyx and Adara live in a place called Zylott. Their brother is king and Nyx heads a powerful sect of sorcerers."

"Why did you contact him?"

"I was curious if he had formed a soul bond with his mate and what he knew about Setti bonds."

Her steps faltered and her hand moved to the hilt of her sword. "You want to break our soul bond?"

He pressed his lips together to hide his smile. She'd misunderstood the nature of his curiosity. Trust did not come easily to his feisty goddess, but in time she would learn.

"Setti abilities are curious. They increase in direct proportion to the amount of energy a Setti has consumed. As it happens, bonds are the same. Our soul bond formed with incredible speed because I inadvertently discharged my essences into your body. You could argue that I'm an irresponsible bastard or you could consider the possibility that my body sensed its mate and instinctively staked its claim."

"Your essence didn't harm me as it would have anyone else."

He looked into her eyes, their progress halted for a moment. "I would never harm you, never."

"But if you don't continue infusing me our soul bond will... What are you trying to tell me?"

"Our soul bond will fade and eventually disintegrate if I don't infuse you on a regular basis. I'm more than content to explore our relationship, but I want you to understand that you're not trapped. This is easy for me. I have a whole hell of a lot less to lose."

She inclined her head and continued toward the pool without offering any further response. Was she relieved he wasn't offering to dissolve their soul bond? She'd looked like she was going to attack him when she'd thought that was the case. Would her pride not allow her to bend even a little?

"You said my guards couldn't follow," she reminded him as they reached the moon drenched clearing. "Where are you taking me?"

"Here." A hip-high boulder often served as her dressing table. He moved to the massive rock and leaned back against it, crossing his arms over his chest. "You were naked in that pool when I first saw you and it's here our life together will begin."

"The soul bond is already formed. We're a bit beyond beginnings." An odd hush crept into her voice and her gaze darkened. Her mind had already raced ahead, wondering what he intended to do, how he intended to take her, what pleasures they would share.

"What happened in the cave could be blamed on heightened emotions and your need for energy. Tonight you will accept me with your eyes wide open. You will take me willingly -- eagerly -- or I will follow Kamn through the Veil."

Pride flashed for a millisecond in her gaze before passion consumed it. Without saying a word, she unfastened her sword belt and held out the weapon, scabbard and all. His heart leapt within his chest as he took the blade and placed it in the sand to one side of the rock. Her knives followed and then her breast plate. He stacked them neatly beside the rock. Watching a warrior disarm had never been so exciting.

Her gaze never left his. She couldn't speak the words, but their emotional connection allowed her to express her feelings with actions. He smiled. Arabel understood actions far better than words anyway. She kicked her leathers aside and stood before him naked as she raised her arms and took down her hair. Spreading the strands for the wind, she angled her body toward the moonlight.

Javier tore his shirt off over his head and attacked the rest of his clothing with equal haste. Her lips twitched as she watched his antics. He couldn't help it. Her skin glowed in the moonlight and her hair streamed out around her in all its silken glory. The need to fuck her, hard and fast, pounded through his entire body.

He draped his clothes over the rock and said, "Come here." He hadn't meant it to sound so commanding, but the pressure in his groin stole his breath.

After a momentary hesitation, she crossed to him. He turned and pressed her against the cloth draped bolder, caging her with his arms. "I can no more change my nature than you can change yours. Phylehans are dominant and feral. It is our nature to command and *master* our mates." He trapped her objection with his mouth and continued his explanation mind to mind. *I would never hurt you, never force you, but you must stop hiding behind your pride.*

His mouth moved over and against hers. His tongue swept inside. She wrapped her arms around his back and drew one of her legs up against his hip. He combed her hair with his fingers, reveling in the thick softness, the sheer mass of the long strands.

Do you want me, Arabel? Do you welcome this bond?

Can't we just --

"No." He pulled back and looked into her eyes. "Adara and Rhys showed me the difference between fucking and making love. I want to make love to you."

"You want to *m-master* me." Arabel tripped over the hated word.

Javier shook his head and sank to his knees. "Don't get lost in words. You're more intelligent than that. I'm on my knees before you. Would the type of master you fear ever allow such a thing?"

Before she could over analyze his question, he lifted one of her legs to his shoulder and pressed his mouth against her sex. Despite her uncertainty, she was already damp and hot. Her pride might resent the label, but her soul had no objection to the bond. He traced her slit and flicked his tongue. She clenched her hands at her sides and leaned against the boulder.

Agile and strong, his hands stroked her hips and squeezed her ass, all the while his mouth aroused her core. With a little gasp of surrender, she pushed her fingers into his hair and angled her hips, fitting her pussy more closely against his lips. In and out, in and out, he fucked her with his tongue. He was avoiding her clit, making her throb and wiggle.

He slid his hands up her torso, his fingers splayed against her abdomen before they curved around the fullness of her breasts. He rolled her nipples, pulling firmly on the hardened buds while she rocked against his mouth.

"Please," she whispered, shocked by how quickly she'd begged.

His lips closed around her clit and synchronized the pull of his fingers to the draw of his mouth. It felt as if he were passing tingling cords between the trigger points. She arched her back and spread her thighs. He increased the pressure until she cried out. The swell of sensation burst and sparks of pleasure showered down upon her.

Instead of getting to his feet, he lapped at her cunt, scooping her cream into his mouth. She braced herself against the rock and held on to his shoulders. Is this how he felt when she fed -- hot, tingly, and consumed? A giddy rush rippled through her body when he finally released her. If this was being mastered, maybe it wasn't so bad.

She looked to her left and shuddered. The tree line was starting to glow. "We're going to have to finish this --"

He reversed their positions and urged her to her knees, a wicked smiled parting his lips. "My essence will protect you from the sun, but I can only release it when I'm really excited."

Licking her lips, she knelt in the sand and reached for his erection. Suck him dry or die. That wasn't much of a choice. Fear was a powerful stimulant, she soon

discovered. She took his cock in her mouth and sucked ruthlessly, rolling his balls with one hand.

He chuckled and took her face between his palms. "I won't let anything hurt you. We have plenty of time."

"What if it doesn't work? We haven't been bonded very long."

"Then I'll carry you into the trees and cover you with my body. Nothing will hurt you."

She slowed, moving her hands to his hips and savoring the feel of his hard shaft against his tongue. His skin was incredibly soft, yet his cock revealed the level of his arousal far more dramatically than anyone else she'd ever seen. His erection continued to grow in both length and thickness from the first moment of interest until climax.

He thrust to the back of her mouth. His hands tightened against her face and his ass flexed. She felt his shaft twitch. He groaned and tilted her head back, and then his cum splashed into her throat. She swallowed and gagged and swallowed again. His taste wasn't offensive. His cock was just so damn long she could hardly take all of him. Understanding her struggle, he pulled back a bit as she continued to milk him with firm sucks and patient licks.

Pulling her to her feet, he pressed her against his chest and kissed her deeply, his tongue moving boldly in her mouth. *Now turn around and watch the sunrise. I know you're nocturnal and I won't try and change who you are. I just want you to see my world at least once.*

She turned slowly, shaken by the possibility that he could actually give her the sunrise. He leaned against the rock and pulled her back against him, banding her with his arms. She rested her head on his shoulder, mesmerized by the glide of his hands and the beauty surrounding them.

The treetops gradually faded from scarlet to gold while his fingers moved from her nipples to her slit and back in a ceaseless dance. The colors were so vivid they hurt her eyes, yet she couldn't look away.

"Are you ready to greet the day?" He circled her clit with his middle finger and rubbed his erection against her bottom.

Too emotional for words, she slipped to her hands and knees and moved her legs apart. He knelt behind her and teased her sopping folds with the head of his cock. She clawed the sand and tossed her head, willing him to thrust into her.

His entry was slow and smooth, an intentional joining of his flesh with hers. She trembled, keeping her hips arched so he could push his full length into her aching pussy.

"Gods, you feel so good," he murmured against her hair, pausing to play with her nipples.

"Move," she gasped. "I need you to move."

"Watch the sunrise."

She whimpered. Her cunt rippled around his shaft, accenting just how well he filled her. The sunlight was starting to warm her skin. Instinct told her to run, to seek out the shadows, the darkness.

"You're safe with me." He pulled back and thrust deep. "Always with me."

Bracing her forearms against the sand, she pushed up into each of his downward drives. He held her hips, moving harder. She needed to bite him, wanted to be intoxicated by his vibrant energy.

To her astonishment, he pulled out and scooped her up out of the sand. She gasped. "Are you always empathic?"

"Not always, and only with you." He sat her on the boulder and spread her legs wide, thrusting back in with violent urgency.

Yes! Oh gods, yes! She kissed him once, then drove her fangs into his shoulder as forcefully as he'd filled her pussy. He hooked her legs over his arms and pulled her hips up off the rock. She sated her hunger and surrendered her body, reveling in the perfection of the union.

Thrusting to the balls, he grasped her butt and threw back his head as he shuddered and cried out with his release. The pleasure pulsing through him flowed across her receptors and triggered an orgasm every bit as powerful in her. She gasped, then clasped his shoulders as wave after wave of pleasure buffeted her body.

Shaken and dazzled, she blinked up at him, then smiled. "Is it better in the daylight or have I finally accepted the idea of being mastered?"

He grinned and drew her against him. She wrapped her legs around his waist. "I guess we'll have to keep doing this until you make up your mind."

She kissed his mouth in between chuckles. "Such a sacrifice."

Aubrey Ross

Aubrey Ross writes an eclectic assortment of erotic fiction. From power struggles between futuristic clans, to adventurous Mystic Keepers, her stories are filled with passion and imagination. Some of her recent awards include an EPPIE finalist, two Passionate Plume finalists, and a CAPA Nomination from the Romance Studio. With a pampered cat curled on the corner of her desk, Aubrey dreams of fascinating worlds and larger than life adventures -- and wouldn't have it any other way! Visit her at www.aubreyross.com and join Aubrey's newsletter group at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Anything-but-Ordinary/>.