

INTERPLANETARY SURVIVAL EPISODE #495

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Chapter One

"What are they?" Katya whispered, never taking her eyes off the four men standing opposite them. Their skin tones varied from light tan to a deep brown but each had a mane of golden hair forcibly constrained at the base of the neck. Fur jackets that matched their skin tones hung open at the front revealing broad, powerful chests and rippled abs.

But it was their tawny cat eyes that warned they weren't "pure-human".

"Riabhians. Human *descendents*," MarKaln, the team's information officer, said. "Some very strange genetic experiments were done in the years before Earth vaporized. And who knows what they've intermingled with in the two hundred years since."

"Giant cats," Katya joked. The smallest of them was a good seven feet, maybe more. Humans had grown taller through the centuries but had stalled at the mid-six foot range. She watched the way they stood—arrogant, aggressive and sensual—like they were assessing whether Katya's team was worthy of their notice. There was something definitely feline about them—not the tame versions she'd seen in twentieth-C vids, but wild ones like they kept in zoos. Brutal, dangerous and sexual.

Her mind drifted to the possibility of curling up with a kitty like one of them. They all appeared quite capable of keeping her warm and toasty. A shiver skated down her arms. She'd been cold for three of the four weeks they'd been in this competition. Once they were done, she was leaving this frozen planet and going someplace warm. And if they actually won, she would use her share of the prize money to buy a beach on some planet deemed too close to its sun. She pressed the collar of her "all-weather" suit shut. The revolutionary material was supposed to keep the wearer warm through the worst conditions. Obviously the makers had never been to this planet. Cold, wet and occupied by a notoriously unfriendly race.

Jessup, their team leader, pushed his shoulders back and scraped his hair away from his handsome face as he approached the Riabhians. The saunter he used as he walked forward was pure sexual animal and Katya knew it was designed for the lone vid-cam that tracked them. The other vids had moved on ahead, keeping up with the race leaders.

All four giants listened intently as Jessup spoke. He was in his "I'm just one of the guys" mode. It worked with most males. It seemed to have no impact on these guys. The one in the middle shook his head and then spoke. The negotiation was on. Jessup listened intently, then slowly nodded.

The vid-cam swirled around, getting a shot of Jessup's face. The red light above the lens clicked on indicating the camera was being taken live. What could Jessup say that

would interest the race organizers enough to take their vid-cam live – pulling attention away from the leaders?

The Riabhians turned their catlike gazes to Katya.

Jessup spoke again. The four warriors listened and their eyes went from arrogant to appalled. Whatever Jessup had offered them wasn't what they'd expected. The lead Riabhian nodded but ignored Jessup's proffered hand. Jessup laughed like it was a friendly joke then turned to face his team, a confident smile on his lips.

Katya's heart pounded a little faster. They'd agreed to something. This might work. They were a day behind the leaders. If they could get passage through the Riabhach Forest, they could make up that time and more. They might *actually* win this thing.

In the four years she'd known Jessup, all he'd talked about was forming a killer team for the InterPlanetary Survival Race. Of the competition shows that had sprouted up on vid-nets everywhere in the past five years, this was the most brutal and prestigious. The challenges were hard and the rules few. They had to get from one end of the planet to the other using any means necessary.

Jessup glanced at the camera with a cocky smile and winked. Whatever he'd done, he thought they had a chance now.

When they'd started this game, she and Jessup had talked about a future together – sharing their half of the prize money – but now she didn't know. They'd drifted apart, which wasn't easy when there were only four of them traveling together. Jessup spent most of his time playing to the ever present vid-cams.

Jessup left the Riabhians but instead of returning to the team, he called Katya over.

The vid-cam floated behind him, the red light still glowing.

The center of her stomach began to burn as she crossed the small clearing. Conscious that their conversation was being recorded, she kept her voice casual.

"What's up?"

"They're willing to let us through their forest. Safe passage."

"Great."

"For a price."

"Can we afford it?" The organizers of the game gave them a set amount of credits to use during their travels. They were low on cash.

"They don't want credit. They want to barter."

"For what?" He didn't answer. The burning in her stomach turned into a slow, sickening roll. "Jess, what's the price?"

"You."

"What?!" She didn't attempt to keep her voice down.

"Their demand for safe passage is one night with you."

"You aren't serious." Even worse, he couldn't seriously be considering it. But when she looked at him, she saw he was. "You expect me to whore myself so we can walk through their forest."

"It's the only way we're going to catch up." Jessup's jaw tightened. "We're too far behind." *And it's your fault.* He didn't say the second part but she heard it just the same.

It *was* her fault they were behind. A violent bout of food poisoning last week had slowed them for a day allowing the other teams to outstrip them. Jessup would have left her behind but all team members had to cross the finish line for a win.

"We need this."

She opened her mouth protest but the glint in his eye stopped her. His gaze made a quick flick toward the vid-cam that hovered nearby. He was playing to camera. Jessup was setting her up to take the blame if they lost.

"How many do I have to fuck?"

A twitch in his cheek was the only sign she'd shocked him. "Uh, just one."

"Okay."

"You'll do it?"

Katya almost smiled. Jessup wasn't going to like seeing his jaw falling open and his eyes bulging broadcast on vid-screens across the tech-world.

"Sure." She leaned forward, placing her lips close to Jessup's ear, too close for the vid-cam to monitor. "But I want half your share of the prize money."

"Do you know what that'll leave me?" he hissed.

"Twice what you make in a season, and you'll have won." There were dozens of endorsements, interviews and appearance opportunities that would make up for what she was taking. And he'd get the fame he desired.

"Fine."

She smiled sweetly at Jessup and fluttered her eyelashes. "Then I'll go meet my date for the evening." With a flip of her hips, she spun around and approached the four huge men. The closer she got, the more intimidating they were, looking less human with each step.

Two of them grinned with undisguised interest as they scanned her body. One looked at the ground like he was embarrassed. But the middle one boldly undressed her with his eyes. Not the largest of the group, he was the most frightening. She glanced down, surreptitiously checking out his body, and imagined she saw claws poking out the ends of his fingers.

Please let it be one of the others.

With a confidence she didn't feel, she slipped her hands into her back pockets and lifted her chin in defiance. "So, who's my lord and master for the night?"

Bach stared down at the little bit of a woman before him. The saucy tilt of her head was in complete contradiction to the fear in her eyes.

"That would be me."

She took a long, deep breath as if bracing herself for the trial ahead and nodded. "Then let's get this going."

Bach raised his eyes to Jezran, his second-in-command, and nodded.

"Come this way." He opened his hand indicating the small thatched hut that stood on the forest's edge. The points of his claws were visible at the tips of his fingers. He left them out, warning what she would face if she followed through with this. The woman stared at his hand then pushed her shoulders back and walked forward, her eyes trained on the cabin. Never looking back for a moment of support or sympathy from her team.

The vid-cam sped toward them, as if intending to follow—but Bach held up his hand, sending it away. He wasn't part of their game. Obediently, the vid-cam stayed back but the red light didn't go off.

"If you don't want her, I do," Jezran said softly.

Bach's upper lip pulled back into an instinctive snarl. "If anyone's having her, it's me."

"You don't sound sure."

"I think she's playing me." He cocked his head back toward the remainder of the woman's team. "Watch those three. Any man who'd sell his woman can't be trusted."

Bach stepped into the hut, his eyes immediately adjusting to the darker surroundings thanks to the cat genes integrated into his system. His ancestors had arrived on this planet as little more than animals with human forms—barbaric, more wild than tame. And they'd taken control of the land. After four generations of intermingling with humans Bach believed they had the right mix of instinct and thought. Neither gave him any clue why she had agreed.

Did she want to win this game so badly? Greed was a powerful motivator. Though his people avoided interaction with pure-humans he knew what success would mean to her. Money, notoriety.

A sorrow that a woman as appealing as she was would sell her body for a prize.

As she looked around the bare room, Bach took the opportunity to inspect her. Her hair was cut short like the women of his world, her body tight and sleek. She moved with the sensual sway of a pretty cat. The sight of her long legs and the sweet curve of her ass sent signals to his cock that his brain tried to ignore. He wasn't an animal that would mount any attractive woman. First he would discover why she was here.

After her exploration of the one-room cabin, she faced him. He approached slowly, drawing closer than a human would find comfortable. She leaned away then stopped as if realizing what she was doing. The human had strength. Courage. Intriguing qualities in a female.

She led with her chin, simultaneously pressing her chest forward. The slight mounds of her breasts were a delicious distraction but Bach trusted his other senses. The delicate fragrance of woman was smothered by the scent of annoyance and fear.

"You don't want to be here."

She raised her chin even higher, baring her neck, daring him to claim her, fuck her. He would have—if he thought she had any idea what her pose was inviting.

"Don't worry." Her voice held the arrogance of a woman used to being in charge. The sound sent him into a brief foray of fantasy. Her, commanding him in the bedchamber, ordering him to pleasure her repeatedly with his tongue. The sensors along the sides of his tongue tingled with anticipation. He crushed the feeling. She took a deep breath and said, "Jessup made the bargain and I'll fulfill it."

He swallowed to crush the laughter. This little bit was bold and blunt—but she wasn't as tough as she appeared. If he truly took her up on the offer, she'd run screaming from the hut, back to the comforting arms of her leader. They were lovers. Bach was almost sure of it. So why had the man offered up his woman?

"Are you sure, sweet one?" Her heart started to pound. The pulse vibrated into his body and settled into his shaft. He leaned down, brushing his lips against her ear. "I can smell the fear in you." As he said the words, he detected a new scent—arousal, muffled by fear, but growing. Bach stepped away. "What's your name?"

"Katya."

He smiled.

"Katya. It means 'bright kitten' in our world."

Her shoulders softened a little but with a quick pull she straightened again. "That's sweet. Now, shall we get on with this?"

He didn't move. With an annoyed sigh, she ripped open the snaps that bound her jacket closed. The thin undershirt she wore hid none of her form. Her breasts were on the small side but the nipples pressed tight against the stretchy material were clearly defined and ready for his mouth. Unfortunately, he knew it was from cold not desire. She grabbed the lower end of the undershirt, clearly preparing to strip before him.

"Do you not care about my name?"

She stopped. "Uh, sure. What's your name?"

"Bach."

"Nice to meet you, Bach, now can we do this?"

He laughed. He couldn't help it. She was determined to go through with it and equally determined not to enjoy it.

"Why? You don't want to do this and you clearly expect little pleasure from it."

"Don't worry. I can fake it."

He grinned. "So can I."

When he made no move toward her, Katya sighed. What was the problem? This had been his idea in the first place. She just wanted to get it over with. No, she *wanted* to be miles from here but she wasn't backing down. Not now. That damned vid-cam was no doubt circling the hut to see if she reneged on the deal. There was no away she was leaving.

If only Bach would cooperate. What was wrong with him? The inhabitants of this world were supposed to be highly sexed.

At least her would-be lover wasn't hideous. He was attractive enough though his eyes were disconcerting. Amber eyes with the oval iris of a cat—but what worried her more was the fear that he saw too much with those eyes. The long blond hair intrigued her. Her fingers twitched with the anticipation of feeling it on her skin.

Well-developed canines appeared when he grinned at her. He was definitely part animal. Unfortunately, he didn't seem to have any intention of attacking her. He didn't even appear interested.

"You aren't going to do it, are you?" she accused. "You never planned to fuck me."

"No."

"Why not?" *What's wrong with me?* She didn't dare ask the question. It sounded a little too desperate. It wasn't like she *wanted* to have sex with him but why didn't he want to have sex with her?

"A test. We had no intention of letting anyone through our woods."

"So, you demanded the price of fucking someone—"

"Yes, and each of the previous teams who requested passage decided the price was too high. Yet your leader offered you up as prize. I'm curious why you agreed."

"I have my reasons. But now, you have to let us through. We agreed to your price." He grimaced and it was her turn to laugh. "Shot with your own stunner."

"Exactly."

A ripple of relief ran through her. She wouldn't have to fuck him.

The bargain. Damn. If she didn't have sex with him, he could back out of it. She had to do it. There was no way she was walking out of the cabin not having paid the price for passage. Jessup would know. And the vid-cam would be tracking her every move.

But this big cat didn't seem inclined to follow through.

She was going to have to seduce him.

Chapter Two

It's time to end this game. Bach started toward the door. Katya jumped in front of him.

"No. Neither of us is leaving this room until sunrise."

For the second time this day, Bach was startled by this woman. She wasn't going to let him leave without a fight. He could understand. If he left now they'd think she wasn't willing. Her team captain looked like the type to remind her later that she'd failed the team.

"Fine. We'll stay until morning." He nodded to the high mattress. "The bed is yours. I'll—"

"No. The bargain was for sex. I fuck you—we get safe passage. We're doing this."

She couldn't be serious. One look at the determined glint in her eyes and the sharp jut of her chin warned him she was. What did she expect to do? Seduce him?

"Even if I don't want it?" His cock leapt inside his furs to voice its dissenting vote.

She tilted her head to the side and smiled. "Are you sure you don't?" In a move that was as old as time, she trailed her finger across his lips and down his chest, sliding his furs open, and tracing the tip of her finger around his nipple. The rebellious point popped forward. Her eyes held his as she leaned forward and opened her mouth against his chest, laving her hot tongue across the tiny peak.

Bach snapped his teeth together, fighting the animal instincts that clawed at him. With his lips squeezed shut to suppress a groan, he inhaled through his nose. The fragrance of fear had faded—arousal hummed beneath her natural scent. She liked what she was doing to him. Enjoyed the act of seducing him. She scraped her teeth across his skin, nipping at the last moment with a bit more force. He grunted and the perfume from her cunt filled the cabin. The cat senses bred into his people captured it, savored it.

She lifted her head and smiled at him—deliberately seductive with a hint of laughter. She knew she was getting to him.

He had to stop her. He wasn't fucking an unwilling woman. "Don't worry, I'll still—"

She grabbed the lower edge of her top and ripped it off. Before it hit the ground, she reached for the buckle of her pants, tore it open and dragged the material down.

Mere seconds and she was naked. The animal inside him roared. Instincts his ancestors cherished demanded he take what she offered. His cock pressed against the shaved fur that covered his legs. The sleek muscles of her legs told him she'd enjoy a

hard ride. The peaked nipples on her smallish breasts stretched toward him, silently begging for his mouth.

Katya stepped away, blatantly baring her body to the man before her. She arched her back to make her breasts look bigger. Bach's eyes followed the movement, going lower to her hips, legs, pussy. She peeked at his groin. There was a definite bulge. He was interested. All she had to do was get him to fuck her. Once – that's all she needed.

She considered reclining on the bed, touching herself while he watched but that left him too much opportunity for escape. Instead, she walked forward, slipping her hands beneath his heavy fur coat. Hot hard flesh slid beneath her palms as she eased the coat off his shoulders, sending it to the floor. Closer, she had to be closer. She pressed against him, brushing her breasts against his bared chest. Wicked heat shot from her nipples to her pussy, melting her insides and the moan that escaped her lips wasn't contrived.

Letting her body lead, she raised up on her tiptoes, startled by the growing pressure between her legs, the dampness in her cunt.

A sharp spike spun through her pussy as she circled her clit against him. It felt so good she had to do it again. Dazed and seriously confused, she moved into him, needing the delicious pressure building in her pussy.

"Kitten, you're going to get caught." The warning in his voice was clear but the need inside her demanded release. She rubbed against him as she scraped her teeth across his strong jaw.

Bach growled and spun her around. The sudden withdrawal jolted her from the sensual daze. Cool air brushed her nipples but Bach's heat covered her back. He held her there, his hands at her waist, his covered erection pressing against her ass. He was big. Her pussy twitched at the possibility of taking the thick rod she felt into her passage.

If only he would cooperate. A reminder of why she was doing this tried to seep into her brain but she pushed it aside.

Feeling like a sex show performer, she leaned forward, placing her hands on the mattress and pumping her backside against him.

Bach looked down at the perfectly formed ass massaging his erection. She canted her hips, sliding his cock between her ass cheeks. He couldn't stop the groan as he settled into that warm delta.

He grabbed her hips and thrust against her ass, warning her what would follow if she didn't draw back. She didn't retreat. She spread her legs and rocked into him. Wet heat from her pussy seeped through his furs.

His control wavered.

Take her. It's what she wants.

He could smell her arousal now. Her fear had faded and all that remained was hot, sexual female. Her cunt was wet and open. For him.

"Fuck me." Another slow pulse of her hips followed the breathless plea.

Animal instincts battled human restraint. The creature his ancestors had been rose to the surface and it wanted, *needed*, the sweet cunt that begged for his penetration. His mind faded to black as he ripped open the flap of his trousers. His cock leapt forward, settling between the sweet warmth of her thighs.

Soft, wicked heat enveloped him. Bach clenched his teeth, trying to convince himself that she didn't want this...but her wet pussy contradicted him.

Hunger drove him, pushing him on until he placed his cock against her opening. Hot viscous liquid slipped from her cunt, coating the end of his shaft, easing his way as he pressed inside her. A thin voice of restraint held him back.

"Damn it, fuck me!"

The human half of him fought, knowing she didn't truly desire this. But the animal ruled, needing the sweet fire of her cunt.

He thrust forward, driving deep and hard, listening to the ancient creature inside him. Her cry shattered the silence even as hot, wet flesh drew him deeper. The harsh rise and fall of her shoulders and the renewed tension in her hands told him she was preparing herself to take his brutal fucking. All for that damned bargain.

He stared at the tight connection of their bodies. What was he thinking? He wasn't an animal. He started to withdraw.

"No!"

The firm muscles of her ass tightened as she rocked against him. He froze, holding himself still as she moved on him, fucking herself on his shaft. The slow, steady pulses were like a band around his cock, tightening, squeezing until he thought he would explode.

The sharp pumps continued, hard and shallow, mechanical.

Bach bared his teeth and snarled at the dying light in the room. The kitten thought she could make him come. Thought she would force him to climax inside her while taking no pleasure for herself. She just wanted him finished.

She should have thought of that before she dared me to fuck her.

Bach wrapped his arm around her waist and held his cock inside her.

Katya groaned and struggled against his grip, the delicate little pulses blinding him for a moment. He smacked his hand across her ass. She snapped her head back and glared at him. It was the first real emotion he'd seen from her. He tapped her butt again. Her pussy clenched around his shaft.

She likes to have her ass spanked.

"Just get on—"

He repeated the smart tap, a little harder. She groaned and this time when she rolled her hips into his, he knew it was desire not design that moved her body.

"You wanted this, you'll have it." He held her still and gave a shallow thrust inside. "My way."

She dropped her head forward, resting her forehead on her crossed wrists. "Yes. Do it." The martyred tone made Bach smile.

"Don't be too upset if you enjoy it some."

Bach withdrew slowly, letting every inch of his shaft caress her pussy as he retreated. The sleek line of her back called to him and Bach stroked his hands down the smooth length, letting one claw scrape across her skin, reminding her she wasn't dealing with a human she could control. Her body undulated, moving into his touch.

"That's it, kitten. Feel me." He pushed into her. "So sweet. I'll have all you." The clasp of her pussy eased, luring him deeper. He fucked her slowly, in and out, finding the perfect rhythm until they both wanted more.

"Bach." His name—breathless on her lips as she accepted him—released the animal inside him.

Basic energy surged through him, making him push deeper, harder. The sweet pussy around him opened to him, hot and commanding. No power could stop him. He needed to come inside this cunt, needed to feel her climax around him. Bach dropped his head back and roared at the ceiling. The claws curling from the tips of his fingers gripped her flesh. It felt so good, so hot.

He held her hips and rode her hard, driving every inch he had deep into her cunt. Her cries filled the cabin and Bach accepted them, taking them as his prize. He pounded into her, losing himself in the sweet grasp of her cunt, feeling her take him again and again.

"Aaah." She groaned and pulsed against him. He pushed into her and held himself there, giving her shallow thrusts, sensing the deep caress she needed. "Noooo. Too much." The whimper drew him back.

"Come for me, kitten."

Her groan was like a fist around his cock. He couldn't resist. He drew back and fucked her, hard and deep. The ripple of her climax and muffled cry sent him over the edge. He filled her again and let the power take him, flooding her cunt with his seed.

She collapsed onto the mattress but their bodies stayed locked together. Bach held his breath, listening to his heart pound, staring at the delicious form beneath him. He wanted more, wanted all of her.

His cock hardened inside her.

She gasped and moaned, moving against the rising pressure. Her pussy was still wet. She could take more. Take him again.

Animal instincts demanded he drive his teeth into her, marking her as his, claiming her. Mating her.

But he wasn't an animal led only by his urges and she wasn't a woman for his world. In the morning, she would leave.

She'd fulfilled the bargain. He could expect no more of her.

Take her, fuck her.

Fighting the rising desire, he withdrew and stepped back. She pushed up from the bed and faced him. Her cheeks were red from the exertion and her eyes glittered with a stunned kind of satisfaction.

His cock bobbed between them.

Her gaze fell to it and Bach waited. She'd fulfilled her part of the bargain. She could leave.

She lifted her eyes and a mixture of satisfaction and wicked intent stared at him. The pink tip of her tongue slipped out and traced the upper curve of her lip. Watching the blatant motion, he realized he hadn't tasted her, not the flesh between her thighs or her tempting full lips. It was a craving he couldn't ignore.

Katya's mind clouded as he leaned closer. This was probably a bad idea but with the traces of a killer orgasm singing through her veins she couldn't remember why. The ache in her pussy grew as his lips floated over hers. She groaned, imagining his mouth on her cunt—soft and delicate, deliberate.

He sampled her lips, light sweet kisses that teased and tempted her until she was chasing him, needing more. She lapped her tongue along the peak of his upper lip then snagged his lower lip between her teeth, gently biting down. When she released him, his eyes burned with the ancient passion of his ancestors. He dragged her body against his and angled his mouth over hers. *Now* he conquered, tasted, controlled, his tongue filling her mouth, calling her to accept his power.

His hands gripped her thighs and he lifted, pulling her up and spearing his cock into her cunt. Her startled gasp lasted only a second. She blinked and stared up at him.

The dare was visible in his eyes. Would she accept him again? His hard length filled her, reaching parts she hadn't known existed. The power to speak was gone. She wrapped her legs around his back showing him that she wanted him.

His hands held her ass, pumping her up and down his length. She tried to convince herself that she was doing this for the bargain but, oh, she wanted him. Wanted that delicious cock riding within her.

He slipped his hand between their bodies and rubbed his thumb across her clit, shooting Katya to a quick bright orgasm.

As she opened her eyes she realized he was still hard...and she was in for a long night.

Chapter Three

Dawn crept above the horizon. Bach felt it in his veins, felt the power of the land as it awoke. His cock arose with the same energy. The warm sexual body beside his immediately consumed his attention. Katya. Goddess. Sexual. Sweet. Moving without thought, he rolled over, easing himself between her thighs, his cock finding the warmth of her cunt. He slipped into her as she came awake. Her green eyes fluttered open and she stared at him. He waited, knowing she could reject him, knowing she wouldn't. He pressed deeper, soft and slow, feeling her pussy ease for him. He kept his thrusts gentle. She had to be sore. He'd lost count of how many times she'd come, and he'd filled her with his seed at least four times.

"Once more," he said, needing the final pleasure.

Part of her mind whispered she'd fulfilled the bargain but she knew the truth. This was no fuck for safe passage. She wanted him. Needed him. Inside her.

"Yes," she said, curling her arms around his neck. They didn't speak. No teasing or whispers. Their moans and sighs speaking for them. His gaze held hers—the gold flecks in his cat eyes glowing as he pumped inside her, deep heavy thrusts.

Her chest tightened, making it difficult to breathe. Before last night, she hadn't understood that so much pleasure was possible. And now she would have it, one last time.

He dug his elbows into the mattress and held himself above her, his cock riding sweetly inside her. The angle pressed the tip of his shaft against the top of her cunt. Each push magnified the pressure, one sensation on the next, until she was clinging to him, begging him. She covered his chin and jaw with desperate kisses, whispered hunger.

"Please, let me come. I need to come." Her cries became desperate pleadings as he rocked deep. "Bach, I need you. Please."

"This cunt belongs to me," he growled. Vicious need filled her core, flowing into her sex. "Mine to fuck."

"Yes!" Even as she cried out, he moved, his hips pumping hard, filling her deep with each thrust.

"Take me," he commanded.

"Yes. Mine. Yours. Oh yes." She knew she was moaning random words. It didn't matter. The delicious pressure grew until she couldn't contain the sensation. She screamed, clutching him to her as he roared and his cum shot deep inside her body.

Bach dumped the wash water out the back door and watched Katya dress. Her movements were quick, efficient. The seductive woman from the night before was gone. Pushing her shoulders back, she walked to the door, not looking at him as she said, "Thanks."

Thanks? Bach shook his head, feeling ill-used by the wench. She'd fucked him, welcomed him into her body and walked away.

A nudge from his conscience reminded him that he'd arranged the bargain in the first place.

Now he had to ensure them safe passage. He could send Jezran along with them. Jez knew the woods better than anyone. Bach opened the door.

"Good morning." Jez greeted him but his eyes tracked Katya's ass as she walked away. Bach's teeth stretched downward and he knew he wasn't letting Jez guide them into the forest. He'd have Katya on her knees as soon as they'd disappeared around the first bend.

Bach followed Katya down the path, keeping a small distance, not wanting to add to her embarrassment of facing her companions. As she reached their camp, the two other men stood. The looks of concern irritated Bach. Where was their concern last night when their team leader was offering her as a passage price?

"Are you all right?" the shorter one asked. The huge man beside him nodded. The vid-cam swirled around them focusing on her face. Its red light glowed like a demon's eye.

"I'm fine."

"But we heard a cry —"

"I stubbed my toe."

Bach choked on his laugh. The garbled sound drew the others' attention. The short one pulled himself up to his non-impressive height and glared in Bach's direction.

"Don't, MarKaln. Jessup made the agreement." Katya patted the warrior's shoulder. MarKaln relaxed but didn't take his eyes off Bach.

"About time you're here." Jessup approached, his hair wet. And no doubt chilly. Jez would never direct these men to the hot springs.

As Jessup neared Katya, her body changed, going from calm to tense. Her chin jutted out, her breasts pressed forward. Jessup moved close, closer than most humans would like. Too close for Bach's pleasure.

"Are you all right?" Jessup's voice dropped to an intimate tone.

Katya raised her chin even higher and stared him in the eye—daring him to contradict her. "Why wouldn't I be?"

The concerned look on his face didn't match the anger in his eyes. "Did he hurt you?"

Her tinkling laughter sounded real as she shook her head. "Don't worry your little head about what happened inside that cabin."

She turned away, leaving Jessup alone. They all watched as she knelt down and checked the pouch of her backpack. Whatever was going on in her mind, she wasn't sharing.

Jez approached, giving Bach two water gourds which he draped over his neck and shoulders, forming a crisscross on his back. The sun was just breaking the horizon. The heat of the day—not that it differed much from the night—was on the rise and they needed to travel while it was light.

"We should go," Bach announced.

"You're not going with us," Jessup said stepping close to Katya. The move was intimate and protective and it was all Bach could do not to rip the human's arms off. A bright tingling crept up his neck and his canines lengthened at the sight of Jessup so near his woman. Before Bach could move, Katya stepped away, out of Jessup's protection. She wasn't letting him claim her. The animal inside him growled its gratitude. She would never belong to the human again.

"The bargain was safe passage through our forest. You'll need an escort to survive."

Jessup grimaced then nodded. "Fine. We're moving quickly so you'd better be able to maintain a steady pace."

Katya laughed and earned a glare from Jessup. She pulled her pack on. "Trust me. For him, stamina is *not* a problem."

After two hours of steady running, the forest had become a blur around her. After four, she focused solely on placing her feet in Bach's footsteps. Lack of sleep began to weigh on her. The patented material of her suit was designed to wick moisture away, keeping her cool but when they stopped she remembered how cold this planet was. She looked at Bach. He'd removed his fur coat and had wrapped it around his waist. The strong etched muscles of his back were marred by faint scratches on his skin. Katya knew she'd put them there and the sight was a constant reminder of the night.

He'd stuck to her side all day. Not intrusive or commanding. He'd talked when he had something to say—pointing out interesting sights in the forest—but otherwise kept quiet. When they'd stopped, he'd stepped close. Giving her the protection of his body, a sip of his water, offering her his coat. He hovered near as if ready to guard her from any danger.

She could have told him she didn't need pampering or protecting but for some reason the words wouldn't come. It was nice to have him beside her. Their conversations though limited were interesting and enlightening. He clearly loved the forest. His pride and loyalty to the land allowed him to creep into her heart a little. She'd always wanted a place that she could claim, one that called to her soul. Bach and his people had found it.

They pulled up to a stop and Katya gratefully sipped some of Bach's water. She had her own but his tasted fresher and cooler.

Jessup scanned the sky. "Where's the vid-cam?"

"Called back," MarKaln said. "Something about its batteries. It's supposed to catch up with us later."

"Fuck." Jessup glared at Bach as if it was his fault. "If we had any chance, they never would have pulled it away. After all we've done, we're still going to lose this damn thing."

Katya looked at Bach and rolled her eyes. He winked at her and took off, walking until the team had caught up with him and then moving into a slow jog, making sure Kat was behind him. They ran for two more hours. The sun was on the decline when Bach pulled to a sudden stop and slapped his hand out, catching Kat across the waist.

"What?"

"Don't cross that line," he said, indicating a thin line of rocks that intersected their trail.

"Why the fuck not?" Jessup demanded, stalking to the front of the line. "We're trying to win a race here."

Bach shrugged but wrapped his arm around Kat's waist, holding her to him. "Your choice." He paused just long enough for Jessup to consider the idea. "We'll just step over your body as we pass."

Jessup moved forward.

"It's his forest, Jessup," MarKaln called.

"He's just fucking with us," Jessup said. Hatred filled his eyes as he glared at Bach.

"Then go." Cold surrounded Bach's voice indicating he didn't care if Jessup lived or died.

"Don't," she said, adding her plea to MarKaln's. She didn't love Jessup anymore. Didn't even respect him as a leader but she wasn't ready for him to die. "Bach knows these woods. If he says stop, we stop."

Jessup looked down at her. The hatred turned into a snarl. "Fine. But if we lose you get nothing. Remember that."

Katya looked up at Bach, silently apologizing for Jessup. Bach just shook his head and she realized she didn't need to apologize. Nothing would ever change his opinion. Jessup had sold her and for that Bach would never forgive him. Pleasure swirled through her stomach. He would never sell her. He would never even consider it. If the offer had been made to him, the man would have been dead before the words left his mouth.

On impulse she stretched up and planted her mouth square on Bach's. She felt his shock as she grabbed him but seconds later he was fully involved, his mouth, his hands, caressing her, moving across her back, holding her against him. She lifted her head and couldn't conceal her smile. It made no sense but she felt good around him.

A breeze swept by them and Katya couldn't stop the shiver that zipped down her back.

"Come, you're cold." Bach moved to the side of the path and sat down on a large rock. He picked her up and settled her on his lap. Warmth immediately flowed into her skin. He untied his coat and draped it around her, creating a warm, dark tent.

"What the fuck are we supposed to do?" Jessup demanded, planting himself beside them. Bach didn't even acknowledge him. "If you won't let us move forward, what are we supposed to do? Watch you two fuck?"

Bach's jaw began to ache. Before this trip was over he was going to throttle this human. Until then, he would play with him as only a cat could.

"Wait."

"What the fuck for?" Jessup demanded.

Bach stared at the other two men on the team. They looked away as if ashamed of their leader. Bach dismissed them. They didn't support Jessup but neither had they protected Katya when he'd sold her. They would be punished by their own Gods.

But Jessup. He would be made to pay. Not only had he offered Katya, he'd once been her lover. For that, Bach would kill him.

"We wait for Bresnak."

"Who the fuck is Bresnak?" Jessup demanded.

Bach looked to Katya. "Why does he use passion as a curse?"

"He doesn't understand."

"What *the fuck* are you talking about?" Jessup demanded.

Katya laughed and Bach felt himself smiling along with her. Strange since meeting her, he'd smiled often.

She makes me smile.

He heard his father's voice whisper through his memory. Bach had asked his father how he'd known his mother was the right woman for him and he'd answered "she makes me smile". Bach turned to the woman lying in his arms. He could tell from the light in her eyes and the taut strength to her body that she wouldn't make life easy but it would be fun.

"Who is Bresnak?" Since the question came from Katya, Bach answered it.

"He's a...I'm not really sure what he is. Definitely not human, or not totally. Only a few of his kind exist." He shifted, pulling her closer, feeling her tight ass press against his growing erection. Her eyes twinkled as she felt the pressure. "They're vicious, strange and nomadic. Bresnak moves his camp when he chooses and wherever he marks his territory belongs to him."

"And you never know where that's going to be?" Her voice sounded hazy and slow.

Bach shook his head, tightening his arms.

"Aren't you guys supposed to be the tough ruthless killers?" Jessup demanded. "Just get rid of it."

"Why? He doesn't harm our land. Takes little for his needs. And his ancestors were here first. I see no point in denying him passage through our land."

Jessup didn't seem to have an answer for that. Pure-humans rarely did. Katya was silent and Bach realized she'd fallen asleep, her head against his chest, her body curled into his. His ass was going to freeze if he sat there much longer but there was no way he was moving her.

"Seek you access to the great and powerful Bresnak's lands?" The ringing voice yanked Katya from her sleep to see the nearly naked man before them. *Nearly* naked because he was wearing a leather shoulder covering and boots, but the rest was bare. Even in the dying light she could see the full erection between his thighs.

Bach lifted her off his lap, gently setting her on the ground before he stood. Her body was stiff as she stood and the sun was set. She had no idea how long she'd been asleep.

"We seek to cross Bresnak's lands, taking nothing, leaving nothing behind."

The man bowed sharply, wrapped his hand around his cock and spun away, disappearing into the trees. He must be freezing.

"Uhh." Katya held up a finger, trying to phrase her question.

"Bresnak demands that his servants be ready to fuck at any time," Bach answered before she spoke.

"And the women?"

"My women are wet and eager for me at all times." Katya turned to find the source of the voice and gasped. He sounded human but the creature that walked out of the trees was clearly not. It—he—was huge, a foot taller and wider than Bach. His skin was brown and scaly, mimicking the tree bark around them. His eyes were bright red—all three of them. The only part of his body that appeared smooth was the huge cock that swung between his legs. Like his servant, he was hard. A small crowd of naked people hovered behind him. Their greedy eyes skipped from person to person and Katya had the distinct impression they were deciding who to fuck first.

Bresnak approached and Katya struggled not to retreat. The predatory gleam in his eyes made her tremble.

"Who do you belong to?"

Her first reaction was "no one" but she realized that was a bad idea. Every independent impulse in her body rebelled but she pointed to Bach.

"Him."

Bresnak didn't look away.

"He fucks you and gives you pleasure?"

"Yes."

"He fucks you well and each night?"

"Yes." *Oh yes.*

"You bear his kits?"

The thought made her heart stutter. Kits? As in children? It was rare for women of her world to bear children. They had droids for that. But this creature would know nothing of this.

"Not yet, but soon."

Bresnak dragged his gaze down her body, his third eye focused solely on her sex.

"You are a prized mate," Bresnak announced. "Bach claimed you. He may keep you." Bresnak swung around and faced Bach. "If you do not honor her, I will take her, fuck her until she screams with pleasure and cannot remember your name."

Bach bowed his head, acknowledging Bresnak's command and hiding his own smile.

"Come. We will eat and you will pleasure your woman."

Bresnak and his minions turned and walked back into the dense trees.

"Stay close tonight," Bach whispered to Katya as they followed. "Things could get interesting."

Chapter Four

They fought their way through ten feet of thick brush until they broke through and came to a clearing.

A fire burned brightly in the middle of a rock circle. Bresnak's people had cleared the snow away and placed therm-pads on the frozen ground, giving them ample sleeping space. Around the fire, women scooped a hot liquid into chalices. Bach removed one of his water gourds and handed it to MarKaln.

"The food should be fine but don't drink anything that's offered to you."

MarKaln raised his eyebrows but accepted the water.

At Bresnak's command, Bach led Katya forward, sitting across from Bresnak in the inner fire circle. Heat from the blaze warmed the air but Bach still guided Katya to sit between his thighs. It was a blatant sign of ownership and Bach wanted to be sure Bresnak saw it.

One of Bresnak's women approached, smiling as she offered them a chalice. Bach waved her away. MarKaln and Terance watched him and did the same. He'd enjoyed Bresnak's hospitality before but doubted Katya was ready for it.

After a short time, food was brought around and Katya ate the bits Bach picked out for her. Bresnak sat across the fire, his third eye locked on Katya. Women and men approached the strange creature, kneeling before him, stroking him. He accepted their caresses then sent them away.

Katya sank deeper into Bach's embrace. The therm-pad kept the snow from freezing their backsides but the air was still chilled. It was hard to believe Bresnak's people were naked. She looked around the fire circle. Bresnak's people cuddled in small groups, couples and threesomes—touching each other, kissing. No doubt keeping warm.

"I warned him."

Katya followed Bach's gaze and saw Jessup accept a cup from the man who'd greeted them on the trail. Jessup looked defiantly at Bach and took a long swallow.

"Is it poison?" Katya asked.

Jessup was smiling as he lowered the cup. "No, but he'll have an enlightening night." Another man joined Jessup and the first guard. Jessup smiled and kept drinking, talking with the two men who watched him with avid interest.

"Come, Bach, past time to be fucking," Bresnak called.

Bach swore under his breath.

"What?"

"He's waiting for us to start."

"Start what? Fucking? Here?" Bach nodded. "In front of everyone?"

"They won't watch long. As their guests, they want proof we have found pleasure." Bach tilted his head toward MarKaln and Terence. "Have you a place for them? It is not allowed for kinsmen to see their women engaged." Bach's people had no such rule but he didn't want Katya embarrassed. She would be uncomfortable with her teammates nearby and watching.

Bresnak nodded. The two women kneeling at his feet stood and led MarKaln and Terence out of the clearing. Two other women left their partners and moved to Bresnak's side.

Bach scanned the crowd. Jessup was gone as well. Good. Bach grabbed a blanket from a pile behind him and stretched out, pulling Katya down beside him. He tossed the blanket around them.

"Bach?" The disgruntled call came from across the fire.

He raised his head and smiled at Bresnak. "My woman is modest." He covered them with the blanket up to their heads. "Don't worry," he whispered to Katya. "We don't have to do much. Just enough to give them some inspiration."

Her eyes twinkled in the pale light and Bach found himself smiling again in return. "Oh, I think we can inspire them."

He realized she rather liked the idea. His little kitten had as exhibitionist streak in her.

Katya glanced toward Bresnak. He nodded, giving her permission to begin.

She rolled on top of Bach, pouring herself over him until her knees straddled his hips. The hard bulge of his erection fit perfectly between her thighs and she was tempted to stay but she wanted more. She wanted Bach's eyes to glow with golden light and hear that delicious roar as he came.

The smooth skin of his chest was barely visible through the opening of his jacket. She pressed the fur aside, baring more skin, slipping beneath the blanket as she kissed her way down. His stomach tightened as she lapped at the hard muscles.

As she reached for his trouser flap, Bach lifted the blanket edge. "You don't have to do this," he whispered.

She looked up and her lips spread into a wide grin.

"I know."

He dropped the blanket and stared up at empty night sky. Devilish heat followed her mouth as she worked her way down his body. Her hot little tongue, tasting him like he was her favorite sweet, the delicate stroke of her fingers.

He fought the pleasure, knowing she would stop. When she realized she didn't need to follow through, she would stop.

She opened the flap of his furs and freed his shaft. Her breath warmed his skin an instant before her tongue fluttered against his cock. He held himself still, enduring,

loving the long strokes, her lips, tongue and fingers worshiping his cock. The multiple caresses wove a fiery web around his shaft hardening it further.

She wrapped her hand around the base and licked her way up to the thick head. Bach held his breath, waiting, needing. Eternity passed before her mouth engulfed his cock, accepting more than half inside. He cried out, his hips punching up in a compulsive thrust. He needed more. Katya seemed to hear his silent pleas. She rose up and knelt, her ass a delicious shadow beneath the blanket as she bobbed up and down, her hands working along with her lips and, oh, Goddess, her tongue was pure earth-fire.

A low hum rushed from beneath the cover, a groan as if she enjoyed it as much as he. The delicate caress compounded the pressure in his tormented body and Bach released it, struggling to hold still and not drive himself to the back of her throat as his cum exploded into her mouth. She didn't pull away. Instead she licked and soothed him until his shaft began to wilt.

Bach turned his head and met Bresnak's fiery eyes. The creature nodded his approval.

Energy and need surged through her as she climbed up Bach's body. His amber gaze greeted her as she emerged from the blanket. It had been delicious having his cock inside her mouth, feeling him hard against her tongue. She licked her lips and felt his cock twitch against her leg. Her pussy fluttered in anticipation.

Low groans rang through the air and blended with slaps of flesh meeting flesh. Katya looked at Bresnak. Two of his three eyes were closed, the third was still locked on Katya. He knelt behind one of his women, his huge cock pounding hard into her pussy. The glorious pleasure on the woman's face made the ache between Katya's legs worse.

She needed to be fucked.

With a smile for Bach alone, she bent down and stroked her tongue across his nipple. His quiet gasp told her clearly he wasn't finished yet. She pushed up on her knees and reached for her trouser snaps. Bach's eyes tracked the motion of her hands even as he held the blanket over her.

"No one's watching," she whispered, though the possibility that someone might see was ever present in her mind.

"Vid-cam."

Her heart melted at his consideration. He had no reason to care. He lived in the forest and had little contact with the tech-world.

Under the blanket's cover, she wiggled and shimmied until her pants and underwear were gone. It felt deliciously wicked with both of them mostly dressed, only their groins bared and ready for each other. She knew from the previous night that Bach recovered quickly and wasn't surprised to feel his erection pressing against her thigh.

She curled her hand around his cock and petted it, loving the smooth, hard shaft, tracing her fingers along the thick vein. And while she stroked him, she sensed his cat eyes watching her. The pure fire that burned in them rushed moisture into her sex. She had barely been touched but she was eager to take him. His hands held her knees as she shifted, positioning his shaft to her opening.

Slowly she sank down, remembering how big he was – how tightly he fit inside her. Two inches slid into her but soreness from last night's fucking slowed her. Taking a deep breath, she drew back, riding those first few inches until her pussy begged for more. She pushed farther, sending him deeper. That's what she wanted, more. All of him.

"Open your top." The growled command broke her concentration and she sat up, settling him fully inside her pussy. Their groans joined the sexual sounds around them.

She smiled and took a few breaths, letting her body adjust to the fullness.

Bach licked his lips as she undid the snaps of her jacket. She started to slide it off her shoulders but he stopped her. "I'm not sharing."

Her nipples were clearly defined against the thin material of her undershirt. He closed his mouth over one peak, sending a renewed need into her pussy. She pulled back and yanked the bottom of her shirt up, baring her breasts. For once, she had no worries that she was too small. Bach's pleasure was reflected in his eyes and the wicked strokes of his tongue.

Katya moved with him, rocking in sync to his licks, riding her pussy along the hard shaft inside her. It didn't take much. Her body grabbed the sensations and shot her to a quick, hard climax. Bach lifted his head and smiled.

"Pure pleasure."

He latched on to her nipple and began to suck. Katya dropped her head back and moaned. It was too much. She wanted more. She wanted to fuck him. Drive him insane. Barely finding the strength to deny her body, she pushed on his shoulders. A disgruntled look crossed his face as he fell away.

"Kitten –"

"My turn," she said.

Chapter Five

She leaned forward, holding herself over him as she began to ride him, sliding his cock in and out, hard fast pumps. "This is what you want, isn't it?" she whispered against his ear. She nipped his skin with her teeth, still fucking him. "To fuck me. Feel my cunt holding your cock."

Bach's neck arched up and his lips pulled back revealing long, sharp canines. The human was struggling for control.

His hands left her thighs. She looked down. Claws popped from his fingertips. He buried the sharp talons into the pad beneath his hips, tearing the thick material. He was fighting the beast inside him. Letting her fuck him as she wished. She knew he could have pulled her down, plunged his shaft into her but he was letting her lead.

Power and pleasure exploded inside her. She moved faster, taking him deeper, pulling back until he almost slipped from her but stopping, keeping him inside her where he belonged.

"You feel so good inside me." She covered his mouth with hers, driving her tongue between his lips. When she drew back he chased her but she shook her head. "So hot and hard. For me. All this for me." She bit his shoulder, pumping against him, faster and harder, each stroke pressing against her clit until she rode him for her own release. Hot spikes pierced her hips as Bach's hands gripped her, pulling her down to meet his upward thrusts. The hard fuck was just what she craved. She sat up, not caring who could see her. Throwing her head back, she cried out as the pleasure broke inside her. Bach's roar joined hers as his cum filled her again.

They settled on their sides, facing each other. Her body pulsed with the lingering embers of her climax, filling her with heat even as he warmed her from the outside. She lifted her head and smiled.

"I'm warm."

Bach's satisfied eyes turned to her. "What, kitten?"

"The only times I've been warm since I came to this planet have been when I'm next to you." He placed his hand on her back and drew her near. Katya draped her knee over Bach's hip, opening her pussy to his renewed erection. Bach raised his eyebrows in question. She wrapped her hand around his cock and snuggled closer, positioning him at her entrance. Answering her silent command, he pressed his palm against her ass and guided them together, his shaft easily sliding into her.

She groaned deliciously as their bodies reconnected. "Hmmm, now I feel warm inside too."

Light flared in Bach's eyes, rewarding her for letting him see her pleasure. They lay together, bound, and talking in low voices. Shouts of climax occasionally shattered the silence, reminding Katya that she was filled with Bach's cock.

She stroked her hand over his tightly bound hair. "Do you ever let your hair down?"

He rocked his shaft inside her, the subtle movement blurring her senses.

"When a boy reaches manhood, he lets his hair grow and binds it back until he is mated. From that day forward, only his woman will see his hair down."

"Why?"

The edge of his mouth kicked up. "Tradition. Warriors wore their hair back during battle and only when they felt safe did they release it."

She reached up and slid a single finger into his hair. "So no woman has ever seen your hair?"

He shook his head. The air around them seemed charged as he pulled her hand down to his mouth. He gently kissed the tip of her finger, nipping the end with his teeth. Lengthened canines glittered in the dark light and Katya remembered how easily he could harm her. His strength could overwhelm her but even at that first meeting, she hadn't feared him.

Their eyes stayed locked together as he moved inside her, slow, shallow pulses. She'd never be able to come from this but it was lovely to feel him move inside her.

He tensed and placed his hand on her lower back, pushing her hard against him.

"Close your eyes. Don't move." The click-whir of the vid-cam reached her seconds before the red scanning pattern began tracking the fire circle. She closed her eyes and dropped her head on Bach's chest. Sleeping wasn't interesting. The vid-cam's controllers would move on. With her eyes shut, she sensed the scanner moving over them. It paused and she knew it was recording the fact that she was sleeping in Bach's arms. But after a dozen heartbeats, it retreated.

Bach watched the camera spin and twirl, searching for the other team members, no doubt hoping for something more interesting. It flew in the direction of MarKaln and Terance but returned moments later. The bright lens spun back and forth and then headed into the woods, tracking Jessup's path. Bach smiled. It would be interesting to see what the camera found in the forest.

Katya returned from the river, shivering but clean and dry. The other women ran naked through the cold back to the warmth of Bresnak's camp. They laughed as they huddled around the fire. The camp was empty except for the women. Katya slipped around the crowd and crawled back under the blanket still warm from Bach's body.

Seconds later, he walked out of a small hut. MarKaln and Terance followed. The three came to her side—Bach kneeling behind her and sharing his warmth. Heat returned as he surrounded her.

"Where's Jessup?" MarKaln asked after they'd finished breakfast. As the question left his mouth, the team leader appeared, walking from the trees. He glanced at Katya and she could swear he was blushing.

The two guards appeared from the same stand of trees.

"Just what was in that drink?" she asked Bach.

"Something that reduces your inhibitions and heightens senses."

"So they...?" The question about what they'd been doing evaporated as the vid-cam flew out behind the guards.

Jessup nodded toward the trail, ignoring the two men behind him. "I'm assuming we can leave now."

Bach stood and approached Bresnak. The two males talked and shared a laugh before Bach returned. "Bresnak's cleared our path."

They trudged through the brush back onto the trail. Again Bach took the lead. He didn't take off in a run today but a fast walk, keeping Katya beside him.

Though physically tired, energy pumped through her well-loved body. They talked as they walked. She learned more about Bach's people and the ancestors who'd come two hundred Earth years ago, and why he stayed in such a frozen world.

Two hours after they started, the trees came to an abrupt stop. The sharp spires of a city were visible in the distance, no more than a few miles away.

"That's Piscian," Back said, nodding to the bright city before them.

They'd made it through.

Bach turned to Katya. It was clear he wasn't going any farther.

"Uh—" She looked up at him and the words wouldn't come. They'd only known each other for two days so why did it feel like she was leaving part of herself behind?

"Good luck, kitten." Bach raised her hand to his mouth and kissed the back of her fingers. That delicate caress wasn't enough. She needed one more taste. She pressed up on her tiptoes. He met her kiss with a groan and their tongues tangled together, sharing flavors, remembering tastes. Breathless, she stepped back.

"You're disgusting," Jessup sniped. Bach lifted his head, his lips pulling back in an instinctive threat. But Jessup wasn't looking at him. He was staring at Katya. She lifted her chin in defiance of Jessup's disdain. "He's not even human."

Bach laughed and placed another kiss on Katya's fingers, drawing Jessup's attention. "You hypocrite." He pierced Jessup with his stare. "You expected her to fuck me but you're pissed that she might have enjoyed it."

"Let's go." Jessup grabbed Katya's arm and yanked her toward the city. Katya ripped her arm out of his grip. She looked up into Bach's eyes and saw the true power that he held. Jessup saw it too and began to back away.

"I'm fine," she said, drawing Bach's focus. "Forget about him."

"If he puts his hand on you again, I'm going to rip his arm off and beat him to death with it."

Despite the fury that buzzed through Bach's system, she smiled. He was still defending her.

"Thank you," she said, placing a light kiss on his cheek. "For everything."

"Good-bye, kitten."

"Good-bye, Bach."

Trailing behind her team, she took off in a run, her feet crunching on the hard snow. They reached the crest of the first hill. Jessup raised his fist in triumph. The finish line was in sight and the glowing green ball indicated no one else had crossed.

"We can do it. Let's move."

Katya looked back. The entrance to the forest was empty. Bach was gone. Her heart hung heavy as she turned and followed her team down the hill.

Katya fidgeted as the camera turned toward Terence. It scanned him, then MarKaln, her and on to Jessup. She had to admit, he looked stunning, rough and ready, a little dangerous. Many women would dream of him tonight.

Katya would be dreaming of another — Bach.

The hostess smiled at the camera and began. "So, of course, we're going to start with the unprecedented move that put this team in the lead, ultimately winning the game for them." Jessup resting his arm on his knee, his face proud and confident. "To get passage through the Riabhach Forest, Katya, the female on this team, agreed to a night of sex with one of the dangerous creatures who control that part the planet." The hostess spun around and faced them. The woman's eyes twinkled with anticipation. "That was an amazing sacrifice you made for your team. Katya, tell us how you survived."

Katya shared a woman-to-woman smile. "Trust me, it was no sacrifice."

The first interview over, Katya walked away to loosen up her muscles. Jessup chased her down the corridor. "What the fuck was that? You made it sound like you won this race for us."

"She did," MarKaln said. Terence nodded his agreement.

"She spread her legs for that genetic freak."

Katya glared at Jessup and turned away. She wasn't listening to this. He grabbed her arm and jerked her back. "When we go back out there —"

"Never touch her again."

Bach's soft deadly voice froze them all into position. Katya recovered first, stepping between Bach and Jessup, knowing Jessup would die if she didn't.

"I'm fine."

"He put his hands on you."

"I've had more than my hands on her," Jessup sneered. There was no way she could stop it. Bach set her aside and slammed his fist into Jessup's jaw. The team leader crumpled into a pile.

"She belongs to me now. And I will erase any memory she had of you."

The click-whir of multiple vid-cams activating put Jessup into performance mode. "Katya, honey, are you sure this is what you want? He's not human. What kind of life would you have? His kind are documented killers, barbarians. Imagine how they treat their women."

Bach tensed and she saw his fist rise again. She grabbed his arm before he could strike, using her weight to hold him back.

"Bach might not be pure-human, but he'd never sell me either."

Jessup thrust himself to his feet, glaring at her and keeping out of Bach's reach. "Fine, when we're done with this, go with him. Live in dirt huts with no tech and no running water. I don't care."

"I never thought you did."

"Two minutes," the hostess called, her voice sweet, her lips twitching with questions. "We need you in place."

MarKaln and Terence walked off. Jessup ignored Bach and tipped his head toward the set. Katya shook her head. "You have to. This is part of the agreement. You'll forfeit everything if don't complete the interviews."

She shook her head again. She was tired of it all. If she went back she'd have to pretend she didn't despise Jessup and she couldn't do it. She thought of the prize money she was giving up. It would have been nice but it wasn't worth it. She'd just have to keep working.

Jessup shrugged and grinned. "More for us then." He took his place on the set, explaining to the hostess that Katya wouldn't be joining them.

"Are you sure you want to do that?" Bach asked.

"Yes." A sudden wave of relief spiraled through her chest. This was the right decision. "What are you doing here?" she finally thought to ask. They'd left him miles away at the forest's edge. How had he found them?

"Jez met me at the forest edge and reminded me I'm not an idiot and it would be idiotic to let you go."

The statement left her breathless. "I don't know what to say."

"Say you'll stay. To see where this goes." He lifted her hand and placed a kiss in her palm. "I'm not the barbarian he says but he's right, I'm not fully human either."

She smiled. She'd seen glimpses of the animal side and knew the human struggled with that part of his personality but as a man—she'd never met his equal.

"I can handle it. I think."

His eyes glittered with the heat she'd grown used to.

"Come. I will take you to my lodgings."

Katya shivered as she followed him from the vid-set, partly from sexual anticipation, partly from the dread of the chilly room and cold wash water. What was she getting herself into?

Bach smiled at her as they walked into the sunlight and she knew it would be all right. He would keep her warm.

Epilogue

Katya rolled over and groaned. Her body ached — deliciously. Since leaving the vid-set, Bach had been ravenous, demanding and awarding sexual pleasure beyond her wildest fantasies. She glanced around the room. The shining white furniture glowed in the evening sun. From the window, she could see the entire city. On the walk here, Bach had casually explained that he didn't live in a single-room hut but instead at the top of the tallest building in the city, situated at the edge of town, overlooking the forest his people protected.

Bach strolled into the room, his long blond hair loose and hanging down his back as he sank down onto the bed.

"Good evening," he said against her lips, kissing her breathless. She slid her fingers into his hair and held on, loving the sensual stroke to her skin. Early in the morning, as she cried out her hunger and need, he'd loosened the tie to his hair. Strangely, the implication didn't frighten her as it should. Bach groaned as she tugged on the thick strands. "Wait, kitten, I came in here for another reason. Jez buzzed through. They are re-showing yesterday's interviews. Said we should watch. Wall activate." The far wall lit up. The hostess smiled to the camera.

"We've had a slight change in personnel. Katya, who sacrificed herself to the Riabhians for safe passage through the forest, has left the team. So, we'll continue with the remaining members." She faced the team, smiling as the camera picked her up. "Team leader Jessup Starmart also had an exciting race." Jessup winked into the lens. "One night in the Riabhach Forest, the team was hosted by a creature from that world. I don't think you've seen this footage, Jessup."

The vid-cam stayed on Jessup's face as they showed clear footage of him and the two guards. His mouth dropped open as the vid showed him kneeling and sucking the guard's cock between his lips. Jessup's recorded groans echoed through the studio followed by the guard's harsh cry as he came in Jessup's mouth.

Bach shook his head. "I warned him not to drink anything."

"Well, it's good to know someone can get an orgasm from Jessup," she said.

Bach flipped her onto her back and rolled on top of her.

"You mean you never came with him?"

She shrugged. "I told you I could fake it."

Bach threw his head back and laughed. He pulled her to him and rolled onto his back. "I'll work hard to make sure you never have to."



About the Author

Tielle (pronounced “teal”) St. Clare has had lifelong love of romance novels. She began reading romances in the 7th grade when she discovered Victoria Holt novels and began writing romances at the age of 16 (during Trigonometry, if the truth be told). During her senior year in high school, the class dressed up as what they would be in twenty years—Tielle dressed as a romance writer. When not writing romances, Tielle has worked in public relations and video production for the past 20 years. She moved to Alaska when she was seven years old in 1972 when her father was transferred with the military. Tielle believes romances should be hot and sexy with a great story and fun characters.

Tielle welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

Also by Tielle St. Clare

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