



Hanging With a Time Surfer

Book Two of the Paranormal Lovers of St. Louis series

Celine Chatillon

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Chapter One

How can I say no to such a sexy man?

Shelby Schwartz moaned in her sleep and rolled onto her back. It had been difficult drifting off to sleep in the weeks since Graham had left her, but tonight was different. Exhausted by a long day at the office, she had collapsed into bed and fallen quickly into a deep sleep. A deep, erotic dream-filled sleep that made her hunger for a man's intimate touch to pleasure her throbbing pussy... Instead she knew she would have to gratify her own sensual needs. Half asleep she reached over to the bedside table and groped around for her well-used vibrator.

She screamed as she felt the warmth of a human hand instead.

"Who are y-y-you?" she stammered, sitting up in bed and reaching for the lamp switch. The stranger removed her hand from the toggle before she could switch on the light and cradled it tenderly in his.

"No need to be upset. I won't harm you. I was just passing through, and heard you moaning in you sleep. I figured you needed a little... help."

Help. Yeah, that's exactly what she needed—help to find her wireless phone and to dial 9-1-1 before she ended up chopped into soup-sized bits in this maniac's food processor.

"I... I didn't realize my voice carried quite so well through these brick walls." She slowly curled her legs beneath her, preparing to bolt from the opposite side of the bed, explode toward the exit and fly down the steps and out the front door before her visitor even had a chance to go for his machete. "Or maybe I need to replace the windows. Pity, since the contractor told me they were top of the line."

"Yes, they are. I can tell you've done a great job rehabbing this old brownstone. But don't worry—it's sound proof. I heard your sighs in my dreams, and I surfed on in to investigate. Is this twenty-first century Saint Louis?"

Shelby blinked and stared hard toward the man with the resonant baritone voice kneeling next to her bed and holding her hands. She could only make out his silhouette in the darkness—and what a silhouette it was!

He was built like a Rams linebacker with broad, muscular shoulders tapering down to svelte waistline to what she could only assume was a nice ass. And the big, strong hands that held hers made her imagine how well-endowed he'd be in the crotch area... What a shame he was a common criminal who broke into single women's homes and scared them half out of their wits at one o'clock in the morning. If she had brought him home from the bar she frequented after work, she would have been more than happy to put her vibrator away and ask if he'd like to help scratch her "itch".

"Twenty-first century?" she said slowly. Okay, maybe her visitor was just a plain ol' delusional psycho and not a chainsaw murderer or run-of-the-mill rapist. If she could keep him talking, she stood a chance of getting out of this situation unharmed. "What century do you think we live in? The eighteenth?"

He tossed back his head and gave a deep, throaty chuckle. The vibrations sent shivers of anticipation up her spine and directly to her aching clit. What a sexy laugh! Just the sound of it made her want to come. She wondered what would happen if she read

the funny paper out loud with him?

“Good one.” He sighed as his laughter faded. “Your house wouldn’t be standing here in the eighteenth century. It’s about one hundred-fifty years old I believe.”

Shelby nodded as her innate business radar clicked into gear. “You into fixing up old homes? I’m a real estate broker, and I can give you the scoop on a couple of real prizes in the neigh...”

“That’s not necessary,” he interrupted. He brought the back of her hand to his lips and kissed it. “I’m a traveler. I don’t really need a permanent home.”

She felt breathless at the touch of his lips against her flesh. Trembling, but not out of fear or terror, she longed for him to press his kiss against her lonely lips.

“Why, everyone needs a home of some sort,” she babbled, trying to keep the intriguing stranger engaged in conversation, “a place to park your assortment of Cardinal baseball caps and your treasured 1904 World’s Fair souvenir collection. Am I right?”

He chuckled and gave her hand a squeeze then let go. “Some do and some don’t.” She heard the squeak of the old floorboards as he rose to his feet. “Some of us enjoy wandering about eternity without a place to call home. We’re free agents—free to roam and explore without being tied down to a particular place... or time.”

Time. What was it about him and time? Shelby stared at the stranger through the darkness and tried her best to focus on his face. The dim light of the moon through her sheer bedroom curtains didn’t help her discern his features. He continued backing toward the door. He was going to leave her. She sighed. Yet another example of how her incessant questioning had driven a good-looking man out of her life. But desperation and desire compelled her to ask one more.

“You never answered my question,” she interjected as he reached for the bedroom doorknob. “What century do you think *you* live in?”

Shelby could have sworn she heard a smile in the stranger’s silky voice as he answered, “Why, the forty-second, of course.”

* * * *

“You’re looking better rested today. Love the new hairstyle.”

Shelby frowned and put down her half-empty triple-mocha-latte on the small café table. While she adored her ditzzy cousin Melynda Kerpanik, this Sunday afternoon she didn’t quite feel up to making small talk.

“This thing? Well, I just thought the mini-pigtails would make me appear younger—softer, more feminine. Not quite as harsh as I usually come across when I’m in my heels and business suits.” Shelby took another sip of her coffee and edged slightly away from her cousin’s probing gaze. “Oh, all right. I couldn’t get the tangles out after I tossed and turned all night long. I gave up and stuck my hair into rubber bands hoping to hide my sin and shame.”

Melynda laughed. “You saying you and ‘Freddy the Vibe’ got it on fast and furious all night long? Huh, Shel?”

Shelby felt her pale cheeks warm. Mel was one to talk about her kinky sex life. She lived with a guy who slept days and worked nights, and she frequently wore turtleneck sweaters or wide velvet chokers to hide her growing number of hickeys. So what if she, boring Shelby Schwartz, soon-to-be-divorced and thoroughly lonesome, engaged in some autoeroticism now and then?

“Sure. I drained every battery in the house.” Shelby slurped the rest of her latte and put down the cup. “Can we change the subject now? How are you and Mr. Val Drakul doing these days? Pose nude for anymore exhibition photos?”

Melynda shrugged, tossing her glossy black hair over her broad shoulders for good measure. “Nah, just the one. But I have to admit it’s one of Val’s biggest sellers. The tenant up in 6B wanted the print blown up to practically life-size to decorate his boudoir wall.” She took a big bite from her cream-cheese lathered bagel and mumbled, “Weird, isn’t it, thinking that some stranger is looking at my nude silhouette every time he’s lying in bed? Wonder if he jerks off staring at it?”

Shelby sighed and shook her head. Her cousin’s morals had definitely gone down the tubes since she moved to the big city. She wondered... did her sexy, chuckling stranger remain in the corner of her bedroom and watch as she pleased herself last night? Did he enjoy their late-night encounter as much as she did?

She certainly hoped he did so he’d be tempted to return again tonight. After he left she had tossed and turned and moaned even louder, climaxing with just the lightest touch of her finger against her clit, the stranger’s mysterious silhouette firmly imprinted in her mind. Who knew that a bold bedroom intruder with a deep voice and a sexy profile could be such a turn-on?

“Luckily, Val’s okay with it,” Melynda was saying as Shelby came out of her erotic reverie.

“He’s okay with what?”

Melynda’s green eyes twinkled. She began to snicker. “You weren’t listening to a word I said. How unlike you to zone out like that, Shel. And our folks have always said that I was the flakiest cousin in the batch. Yeah, right! Don’t tell me you’re finally living up to your potential as a dizzy blonde, munchkin?”

That was it. It had been a long and horrible two months since Graham walked out on her. Shelby didn’t possess the patience or good nature anymore to put up with people’s snide comments—including her dear cousin’s.

“Mel, you stop picking on me right now, or I’ll call your mother and tell her all about your wicked hickies and your Goth boyfriend.”

“You wouldn’t!” Melynda frowned. “Would you?”

“I don’t know anymore.” Shelby exhaled a long, pain-filled sigh and rested her weary head in her hands. “I’ve been under a lot of strain recently. I think I’m going nuts. I could be absolutely crazy and not even realize it.”

“It’s not like you’re hearing voices, though, right?”

Shelby involuntarily shuddered. Voices? Well, maybe. Could a person hallucinate touch as well?

“No, I’m not hearing voices,” she insisted out loud as much for her own sake as for Melynda’s. “But you know I don’t care for being called a ‘dizzy blonde’. And nobody who has to shop the petite department to find adult-looking clothes enjoys being labeled a ‘munchkin’—especially when compared to your gorgeous, dark-haired, Amazonian form. I can’t help it if I’m a short, blonde, blue-eyed, business whiz. Get over it.”

“All right already.” Melynda’s eyes flashed hurt. Shelby instantly felt a twinge of regret. “I’m sorry to call you a dizzy blonde and a munchkin, Shel. You are a business whiz—and I mean that in a good way. Speaking of which,” she lowered her voice and leaned forward, “are you still thinking of turning over the business to your partner Sara

Shaw?”

Shelby crumpled her paper napkin and bit her lip. “Maybe. Sara is capable of running the business even better than I have, and it would take some of the strain off me.” She shrugged. “It would also give me some free time.”

“Free time to try and win Graham back?”

Shelby swallowed hard and shook her head. “No, we’re history. Any chance we had to get back together was destroyed the other day when he told me... told me about...”

She averted her eyes and sniffed back a tear. She hated crying in front of anyone, including her cousin, especially in a public place like the TriplExpress coffee shop.

Melynda reached across the table and patted her hand. “He told you about what?”

Taking a deep breath, she blurted, “He told me about the baby.”

“You mean he and that cocktail waitress are going to have a baby?” Melynda squeezed Shelby’s hand and gasped. “I’m so sorry, Shel. I didn’t realize he’d gotten that far into a relationship with her. So you’re going to go through with the divorce?”

She nodded. “Yes, there’s no point trying to keep him tied to me when he wants to be with her.” She crumpled in her chair as a sudden pain stabbed her heart, and the tears flowed unbidden. “Oh, Mel. What did I do wrong? Why, does he want to be with her? What’s she got that I don’t have? I wanted to have children I told him—and send them to decent private schools, too. What’s a poor cocktail waitress with no social connections got that I don’t got?”

Melynda stood, came over to her side of the table and wrapped a comforting arm around her shoulders. “Who on earth knows what gets into guys’ minds sometimes? They just go crazy and forget what a terrific wife they’ve got and start fooling around with the first thing in a miniskirt that looks their way twice. I never understood why my ex fooled around on me. It’s not like I’m an ice princess in the bedroom.”

Shelby laughed in spite of her tears. “No, you’re definitely not an ‘ice princess’, Mel. But maybe I was—or I was just plain too busy with trying to become a millionaire before I turned thirty-five to notice that our marriage was going downhill fast. Graham and I were both always working, always on the road. You know since we finished the rehab project, we were never home more than one or two days together at any one time? You can’t build much of a relationship if you never see each other.”

“True, very true.” Melynda squeezed her shoulders again and smiled. “But I think you’ve learned your lesson. Turn the business over to Sara and get back out there and meet people and do things and see places. Enjoy life, Shel! You’ve always been so hard on yourself that no one else ever wanted to be hard on you. Maybe Graham’s leaving you is the experience that will help you change for the better?”

Shelby swallowed hard. Could she change? Could she stop thinking of business and making money twenty-four/seven and transform herself into a well-rounded human being? In the process perhaps she could attract a man who appreciated her for herself—not only for her checkbook. It seemed a huge challenge, but it was worth a try.

She slapped her hands palm on the table surface. “All right. I’m going to do it. I’m going to look at this divorce as an opportunity to change. What do you think I should do first?”

Melynda bit her lip and wrinkled up her nose. “Get a decent hair cut?”

Shelby laughed. “Agreed! I’ll make an emergency appointment this afternoon. Okay, what else?”

“Hmm... Why not go on a short vacation or even a long vacation. Relax—unwind. You need to rest, Shel, and it’s not like you’re hurting for money. Take a trip and meet different people and see the world. You’ll feel better, look better and, best of all, you’ll think better. Give your poor brain a break.”

Shelby nodded. After her hallucination—or whatever it was—last night with the sexy stranger at her bedside, her brain could definitely use a break.

“Perfect. That’s exactly what I’ll do. I’ll take a long, relaxing vacation to unwind. I’ll start scanning the Internet for ideas right away.”

Chapter Two

“Around the world in eighty days on a cruise ship or take an eco-tour of the rainforest and live in a tree house? Hmm...”

Shelby absentmindedly tapped a pencil against the high kitchen countertop and rubbed the back of her neck as she considered her choices. Her new short, close-cropped hairstyle was both sporty and sexy. Her natural curl added volume that softened her features according to her stylist. Since she had decided that she'd no longer actively play the part of real estate tycoon, she could now wear her hair in a comfortable fashion without fear it would make her look more like a munchkin than normal.

She clicked on yet another travel agent link and surfed the listings. So many places to visit and so many things to do in the world nowadays. It boggled the mind. The task of choosing practically overwhelmed her. She just needed to get away from the bustle of the city for a spell, to sit still and re-think the direction her life was heading. She needed nature and peace and quiet... and perhaps a bit of adventure to spice things up a bit.

Yeah, that was the ticket! She needed to get out into the fresh air and hike and swim and climb and all that back-to-nature stuff. She typed “whitewater rafting” into a popular search engine. Her jaw dropped open as the listings appeared.

“Five and a half million listings for whitewater rafting? Oh, puh-lease! I'd better narrow this down some more.” She typed in “whitewater rafting holidays.” Almost six hundred thousand listings appeared. “Stars above! How's a girl supposed to decide when there's so much information being dumped in her lap all at once? Let me narrow this down again.”

“Need any help?”

Shelby froze in place, her hands dangling in mid-air above her laptop keyboard. That voice... No, it couldn't be him, her imaginary lover from the night before. She shook her head and scrunched up her eyes. She was going stark raving mad. She couldn't get away from this haunted house any faster if she tried.

“Okay, that settles it.” She opened her eyes and clicked on the site link then began typing in her contact information. “Before I commit myself to a state mental institution, I'll go on an Arkansas whitewater rafting cruise. Wonder if Mel would like to go with me? Getting wet and tossed about in a small rubber raft with a bunch of burley oarsmen is probably right up her alley.” She scrolled down the page to the bottom to make payment. “Oh, it says I need to call to see if there are openings before I submit my credit card number.”

Shelby absentmindedly reached for the phone on the edge of the counter. A large hand covered hers. She let out a blood-curdling scream.

“Agh! I have a gun—you better not try anything, mister, or you'll find yourself six feet under before you know it,” she lied.

The intruder jumped back several feet. “I won't. Promise.”

Slowly she looked up at his face. The profile seemed familiar. Could it be her late night visitor?

“Are you... him?” she asked, breathless.

He bowed briefly and removed his hand from hers. “If by ‘him’ you mean the person

who chatted with you last night then yes, I am.”

Her mysterious caller smiled, a warm and friendly smile. He didn’t act like a homicidal lunatic. But, then again, how would she know? In her thirty-three years of existence she hadn’t met any that she knew of, and she possessed a fairly trusting personality.

The mischievous twinkle in his deep ebony-brown eyes sold her on his sincerity. *What a fascinating mixture.* She stared at him as if he were a statue and not a handsome, virile-looking male. She couldn’t place his accent, but with his roundish face, full lips, small nose and almond-shaped eyes he looked part Asian or part Polynesian—except for the fact he sported a rusty-red shock in the middle of his blunt cut, jet-black, shoulder-length hair. The punk stripe slapped across his forehead at a jaunty angle perfectly offset by a smattering of freckles across the bridge of his nose. His smooth, tanned skin and firm biceps proudly displayed by his sleeveless muscle shirt and Hawaiian print board shorts indicated he was the outdoorsy type. He stood at least six foot—almost a full foot taller than Shelby, but she didn’t feel the least bit intimidated by his height.

“I’m Quentin,” he introduced himself. “That’s what you were thinking, isn’t it? ‘Who is this strange man in my dining area and how the hell did he break into my home?’ I know that’s what I’d be thinking about now.”

Actually I was wondering what you’d look like in a nice tight Speedo on a whitewater raft. Shelby tried hard not to reveal her carnal longings on her easy-to-read face.

“Quentin? Nice name. Um, ‘Quentin’, are you from around here?”

He chuckled. “You’re supposed to ask me what high school I attended. I did my thesis on this era and locale. This is St. Louis, early twenty-first century, right?”

The absurdity of the local custom suddenly struck Shelby as the most hysterical ritual in the world. She began to giggle uncontrollably. “Oh, yeah—you are so right! Okay, what high school did you attend, Quentin?”

“None. I was home-schooled.”

Shelby laughed harder. “No, no, no... You can’t answer that question without giving me a name of a school. I have no way of knowing which neighborhood you grew up in and what parish you belonged to. You’re not playing by the rules.”

He leaned against the countertop, licked his full lips slowly and grinned. “I don’t play by the rules—ever.”

Shelby felt her heart racing, her palms growing moist and a pleasurable tension building in her lower regions. A mysterious, handsomely exotic stranger who doesn’t play by the rules... Just what the doctor ordered to help her relax?

“Really?” She leaned closer toward him. “You never, ever play by the rules?”

He shook his head and flashed his pearly white teeth. “No. Not if I can help it. I’m what you’d term a ‘free spirit’. I work for myself, by myself. I don’t try to box myself in by following the dictates of fashion, political correctness or the late-great, blessed Saint Oprah.”

Shelby eyes widened with awe and excitement. Her desire to be with this mysterious stranger increased exponentially as her yearning to feel his powerful arms about her grew. He lowered his voice and focused directly on her face.

“I’m my own man, and I enjoy meeting women who are their own woman. I believe this describes you perfectly. Am I correct in my thinking, Shelby Schwartz?”

“You know my name?” she whispered.

“It’s printed on your mail sitting on a pile on the table. I’m not psychic—just resourceful.” Quentin caressed her cheek with the back of his hand. “I have a feeling you’re fairly resourceful yourself.”

Her breathing came fast and shallow. She continued to stare at him, slack-jawed, unable to unglue her gaze from his kissable lips and dazzling smile. He may not be psychic, but his presence was positively mesmerizing.

“I’ve been known for my resourcefulness,” Shelby said at last. She hoped she sounded intelligent because at the moment she felt more like a quivering mass of desire than a confident businesswoman. “I sold over thirty million dollars worth of real estate last year alone. Not bad if I say so myself.”

He arched an eyebrow and flashed a curious look. “So, you’d say you were a successful business person?”

She nodded. “Yes, very.”

“And you own this lovely brownstone and live in it all by yourself?”

“Yes that’s right.”

It wasn’t quite a lie, but Shelby averted her eyes quickly so Quentin couldn’t see the hurt mirrored there. Technically Graham still owned half of the house until the final divorce decree was granted, but he had told her that he was more than willing to sell her his half in lieu of her paying alimony to him.

“There’s no other person in your life now? No other lover?”

She shook her head. He tilted her chin upward. Their gazes locked. “I believe you’re only telling me a half-truth, Shelby.”

She swallowed hard. How did he know? “I thought you said you weren’t psychic?”

“I’m not—just resourceful. Who’s this ‘Graham Goddard’ who receives mail at this address?”

Shelby sighed and closed her eyes. “All right, you got me. Graham is my soon-to-be ex-husband. He left a few months back, and I have neither the time nor inclination to forward the lying, cheating, son-of-a-bitch bastard’s second class mail on to him. Satisfied?”

Quentin chuckled. “See? A little honesty goes a long way. Not a happy break-up I gather?”

“No, not at all. I didn’t see it coming. I was blind-sided by the whole thing.” She sniffed back a tear that threatened to spill onto her cheek. “I’m not the brightest bulb in the lamp at times, at least not when it comes to human relationships. I wish I could turn back time and change my ways and see what all I did wrong so it didn’t have to end this way. But I can’t. I’ll have to learn to live with it.”

He dropped his hand from her chin and turned away from her. “Shelby, what if I told you that you could turn back time?”

Time? What did Quentin tell her last night? That he wasn’t from this century or something foolish like that?

“Impossible. I read *A Brief History of Time* and watch the Discovery Channel occasionally. Time travel isn’t possible. It’s merely a fantasy.”

“It happens all the time in *Star Trek*, doesn’t it?”

Now she knew exactly what kind of loony bin this guy escaped from... She had met his type before but not since her college days. Quentin was an escapee from a sci-fi

convention, a thirty-three old virgin who still lived in his parents' basement and collected *Star Wars* action figures. She should have known it all along. It was his surfer dude clothing style, his devastatingly deep voice, big, bulging muscles and strong hands that had lead her astray.

She shook her head, trying to guide her thinking back on track. Maybe he was simply a very sexy geek with a few screws loose upstairs. He seemed harmless enough, except for the fact he kept breaking and entering her house without triggering the burglar alarm. How in the hell did he do that? Was he an escaped felon as well as a sci-fi nerd?

"Is *Star Trek* you're all time favorite TV show?" She grinned at his back like he was half-brain dead as she slowly sidled over to the alarm control pad near the front door to press the emergency button. "I'm a *Doctor Who* fan myself," she continued. "I attended a few sci-fi cons myself a few years ago before I became obsessed with becoming the number one real estate broker in the greater St. Louis area."

She glimpsed behind her to make sure she didn't fall over the coffee table. Almost to the door now... "I've always wanted to take a ride in the TARDIS and visit all kinds of fascinating times and places," she babbled. "Too bad the Doctor always ended up in contemporary London most of the time. You'd think with a fantastic time machine like that he would have been able to land it in North America more often—like at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904. That would have been a cool episode, and they could have filmed it here, and everyone who was a fan could have been an extra. Neat idea, huh?"

She was almost at the alarm control pad. Just a few more steps and—

"What are you doing?" Suddenly her visitor was standing next to her. He grabbed her by the wrist and pushed her finger away from the emergency button.

Shelby blinked—then blinked again. "There are two of you. How are you standing right here beside me and over by the counter at the same time?"

Quentin dropped her hand and smirked. "The ability to turn back time. You said it yourself, remember?"

The first Quentin whose back was still turned to them suddenly vanished.

"What the...?" Shelby suddenly felt dizzy. She collapsed against her visitor. He scooped her in his brawny arms and whisked her up the stairs to her bedroom.

* * * *

What the hell am I doing? Quentin Takahashi, former licensed Time Agent and now renegade time surfer, knew he was taking a big risk exposing himself to a twenty-first century denizen. But he couldn't seem to help himself.

Shelby Schwartz... Sexy and vulnerable—the two traits that suckered him every single time. How did he hear her sighs echoing in the corridors of time? What possible link to the time strands did this woman from the primitive twenty-first century possess?

Could she be a 'Chosen One' as well?

He gently laid her on her bed, fluffed the pillow under her head then took a long step backward. The temptation to look behind her left ear for the mark indicating she belonged to the rare breed that could safely travel the fabric and threads of time was overwhelming.

What would he do if he found it there? No, he couldn't turn her into the Time Regulation Agency anymore than he could turn in any of his fellow time surfers to those self-absorbed, egotistical bastards. They'd never train an old-worlder to keep the purity of

the time strands. They'd probably erase her from the very beginning of her timeline just to play it safe... just in case she turned out to be *the* Chosen One of All Times, the prophesied time surfer who intuitively understood the concept of time travel without the rigorous training and bureaucratic interference of the TRA.

But what if she turned out to be *the* One? Didn't he owe it to all of creation to protect and defend her at all cost? The entire existence of this plane of reality depended on the Chosen One. He hadn't forgotten the oath he made when he joined the Time Regulation Agency...

...To protect and to serve the integrity of the time strands... To eliminate any who would destroy, damage or otherwise contaminate the threads of time ... To erase all occupants of timelines that would pollute and forever alter the fabric of time itself...

No! He wouldn't allow anything to happen to Shelby. He quietly approached the edge of her bed and knelt beside her unconscious form. Gently he turned her head toward the right and looked behind her left earlobe.

The mark!

"W-what happened?" She looked up at him blankly then did a double take and grabbed his wrist. "Y-y-you! Something is seriously weird about you. I saw you—I know I saw you standing in two places at once. Do you have an identical twin?"

"Yes, I do. Colin is my parts clone, but he's at home right now resting in cold storage. What you saw was me standing in two places for a few seconds. My instructors at the academy said my sloppiness when it came to near time re-entry techniques would embarrass me someday and possibly destroy the universe."

"Re-entry techniques?" She licked her lips as if starving for more than mere nutrients and held fast to his arm. "You mean your zipping around rooms and freaking people out by breaking into their homes without tripping alarms. Did you happen to train with David Blaine?"

"I'm not a... 'magician'. Do they still use that word in the twenty-first century?"

"Of course they do. You know they do. You're a very good magician. Do you practice your 'technique' on the sci-fi con circuit?"

He'd have to check his time/space dictionary for 'sci-fi con'. She kept referring to him as being a person who frequented such places. Perhaps it was for the best if he didn't try to dissuade her from her erroneous assumption.

"Yes, I do magic tricks all the time at cons. People love them. They find me very entertaining."

Shelby turned onto her side and brought his hand to her cheek. Sighing, she murmured, "I bet they do. I find you very entertaining—even if your 'technique' is a bit maddening. So tell me... what other types of tricks can you do?"

Quentin swallowed hard as she stroked his hand from the curve of her chin down the column of her throat and to the deep vee of her sweater top, nestling it between her surprisingly ample cleavage.

She grinned. "Hmm, I know I'm not half as sexy as my tall, dark and gorgeous cousin who can seduce a man in twenty seconds or less, but you must find something about me pleasing enough to keep showing up in my bedroom."

He swallowed again and cleared his throat. Allowing her to seduce him was one way to distract her from all the information about time travel he'd inadvertently spilled already. If the Time Cops ever did manage to follow his trail here, he could honestly say

it was just an innocent sexual liaison and not a concerted effort to alter history and irrevocably change time itself.

"I find everything about you pleasing, Shelby Schwartz." He cupped his caught hand around her breast and gave it a squeeze. She instantly pulled him on top of her and planted a soul-stirring, breath-stealing kiss on his lips.

Forget the friggin' TRA! He wanted her to seduce him right now and right here!

Shelby sighed against his lips as his tongue delved inside and met her own. She groaned and arched her back, her juices flowing, threatening to flood the bed with her need to feel his cock deep inside her.

What the hell was she doing? Shelby felt genuinely shocked by her actions. She'd never brazenly pulled a man into her bed before—and a very odd-acting stranger at that, too. She must have lost her mind, but she couldn't seem to help herself. It had been so long since she had made love to anyone except her battery operated sex toy. There was something about this Quentin that just seemed to "click" for her. Perhaps now was the time to give up being Shelby the workaholic real estate agent and transform into the impetuous sex goddess she had always envisioned herself to be?

Her hands wandered across Quentin's broad shoulders and meandered down to cradle his firm buttocks. The man was solid muscle, his scent musky maleness and raw in its primal sexual appeal. The kiss deepened as their tongues danced together with a perfect harmony of lust and desire. Several minutes later he rose up on his elbows and looked down at her face through half-closed eyes.

"Is toppling guys into your bed an everyday occurrence for you?"

"No, of course not. I... I just couldn't seem to help myself. From the second you mysteriously popped into my bedroom, I can't get you out of my mind. It's like you're a part of my very existence somehow. Weird, huh?"

He kissed her cheek, trailing feather-light kisses across her neck and behind her left ear. "No, it's not weird at all. We're a part of each other's timeline. I don't know how, but I was meant to surf the time currents until I heard you calling for me. You're a chosen one like I am. Perhaps I was meant to be your teacher and guide."

Shelby furrowed her brow. A 'chosen one'? Was this guy heavy into *The Matrix* as well as *Doctor Who*?

"You don't believe me?" Quentin pulled back and scanned her confused expression. "It's really not that important unless..."

"Unless?" She playfully squeezed his ass and rocked her pelvis toward his already rock hard cock. "What all can you 'teach' me Quentin-without-a-last-name-or-address?"

His throaty chuckle was answer enough. "You'll see."

Their lips locked again. Hands raced to remove clothing barriers at breakneck speed. Quentin's electric yellow muscle shirt and tropical board shorts landed in a growing pile of clothing beside the bed. Shelby squealed as he made short order of her jeans and sweater, giggling as he pondered the catch on her bra.

"What is it? Don't they don't wear bras in the forty-second century?"

He grinned. "No, they don't. I've only seen these contraptions in museums. Why do you force your lovely breasts into such a painful device?"

"To keep them from sagging. Gravity is a cruel thing here on planet Earth. And though it may not look like it, I've got an above average-sized rack on my short frame. It wouldn't do for a business woman to walk around with her jugs bouncing up and down

all day in the office while meeting with clients.”

“I don’t know. You might sell a whole lot more real estate if they did. I know I’d buy anything with these gorgeous globes hypnotizing me from across the room.”

Finally he mastered the hook and eye closure and released her breasts from bondage. “Ah, perfect.” He took a nipple into his mouth and began to lick and nibble and suckle until Shelby’s toes curled with excitement.

“Ooo! I’m going to come this minute if you don’t stop.”

He paused. “Is it considered ill-mannered of me in this century—making my partner come several times before my own climax?”

“Why, no, it isn’t. Not at all. It’s just that I, uh...”

He began to eagerly suckle the other perky point until her toes curled then pointed, the tension building in her pussy. Her breathing came fast and shallow as the exquisite torture of pleasure sensations began to mount in ever increasing intensity.

What am I doing? Her mind raced, trying to reason with the overload of input from her love-starved body. She was allowing a stranger to boldly have his way with her. She wasn’t even putting up a protest. What had become of calm and controlled Shelby Schwartz the business tycoon and bitter divorcee? Had Quentin already killed that lonely bitch and brought forth a new creation in its place?

“Oh, God if you don’t fuck me now I’ll die!”

His low, husky chuckle zinged a tingle down her spine. “Even I know that’s a physical impossibility for *Homo sapiens*. Now, with a few other alien species that’s not far from the truth, but it’s not so with humans. But don’t worry. I won’t make you suffer...”

He thrust a hand down the front of her damp panties and began to finger her clit. Shelby bucked against the pressure, gasping as he slipped a finger into her waiting cunt and began to pump at the same time. She moaned and begged for her release.

“Rip these panties off me before I explode!”

“This I gotta see.” Laughing, Quentin did exactly as he was told, flinging the shredded undergarment across the room. It soared in a straight line and landed atop the photo of her and Graham on their wedding day that sat on the corner of her dresser.

Take that, cheating ex-husband!

Free at last from the sorrow of betrayal, Shelby screamed as the explosive climax rocked her body in an endless ripple of tremors. Her arms flailing, her legs thrashing about the sheets, her performance should have scared off the average, virginal, sci-fi con geek. But Quentin seemed to eat it up.

He rolled to his side and grinned. “Time surfers call that traveling without a time board. Was it a good trip?”

Shelby pressed her hands against her red-hot cheeks. “Uh-huh. I can’t recall ever having an out of body experience like that before.”

He kissed her tenderly on the forehead. “You must have married a regular cretin in the bedroom department. No wonder I heard your sighs in the corridors of time so well. Of course, I’m now permanently deaf from your shrieking.”

“Sorry. I didn’t mean to...”

“Yes, you did.” He put a finger to her mouth to hush her. “I was only kidding. Don’t ever apologize for enjoying yourself. I have a feeling you’ve been holding back expressing yourself sexually for some time now. It didn’t fit in too well with the

successful businesswoman stereotype you were attempting to live up to. Well, it's time you unleashed the wild spirit within and have a good time."

Shelby blinked back a tear. How could he have known? How did he figure out what she herself had only recently come to realize? That she and Graham had never experienced the warmth and intimacy they each craved because they had been preoccupied with advancing their careers.

Like Quentin said, it was time to let the wild spirit out of her cage!

Smiling, she took the finger pressed against her lips and began to suck on it deeply, pulling it toward back of her throat. His big brown eyes widened. She felt his hard on rubbing against her thigh. So... sci-fi geeks enjoyed a little fellatio? She eased his boxers down and was rewarded by the most handsome saluting cock she had ever witnessed in her life. It stood tall and brave, proudly saluting her with a full red tip glistening with a drop of pre-cum.

"You ever do this kind of thing before?" She tweaked his nipple as she repositioned them both in order to take him into her mouth.

"Have sex?" He moaned. "Hmm, a few times—and I am vaccinated for every STD known to human kind and then some. I've had my anti-fertility shot so I'm safe—both ways."

"Guys can get pregnant in the forty-second century?" Shelby didn't know what to make of it. The sci-fi geek act had gone on a bit longer than necessary. "It's okay if you're not all that experienced, Quentin. I'm not really that experienced, either. And I do have some condoms. I made Graham start using them after he didn't answer my questions about some of his out-of-town activities."

"Very wise on your part. The HIV virus wasn't fully eradicated until 2145. There was a worldwide celebration that lasted weeks after the news broke." He laughed. "V.A. or 'Victory over AIDS Day' I think it was called. What a good time everyone had!"

Shelby stared hard at the naked sex god before her. He said those odd things like he really believed them and had witnessed them first hand. It was insane. But even more insane would be for her to not insist on his using a condom.

"I understand why you don't believe a word I say, Shelby. We can take the necessary twenty-first century precautions. I want you to relax and enjoy the moment—over and over again."

Her juices dripped like there was no tomorrow. Could she act impulsive just this once and plunge his perfect erection into her pussy without benefit of a condom and twist and turn on it until she milked him dry? She wrapped a hand around his cock and slowly began to pump. He moaned and tossed his head back against the pillow. Whatever differences forty-second century males possessed in the reproductive department, they obviously still enjoyed a good hand job.

She bent to tongue the underside of his shaft and around the mushroom top and was rewarded with another lusty moan. His musky scent and salty-sweetness taste of him drove her to the brink of wantonness. She had never felt so slutty and so in charge of a sexual situation in her life. Emboldened, she plunged madly onward, taking him into her mouth and suckling him until she heard him whimper. She pulled back.

"I'm not hurting you, am I?"

"No, not at all. It's just that I've never experienced anything so wonderful before. The Diberian temple prostitutes of Regula Five are so brisk and business-like when they

perform such a service for a penitent. I never knew just how beautiful it could be.” He sat up and caressed her cheek. “I guess it all depends on how beautiful the person who is doing the loving. You are so very beautiful and very desirable, Shelby Schwartz. I want to make love to you for all eternity.”

He pulled her lips to his and passionately kissed her. She sighed. No man had ever said anything so stirring, so intensely emotional to her before. Could it be she was Quentin’s ‘chosen one’? Sci-fi nut with an odd habit of breaking into homes or not, could this geek be the guy for her?

Her body answered her heart’s plea. She straddled his pelvis and lowered her pussy onto his hard cock.

“You can trust me, Shelby. I won’t allow anything bad to happen to you—ever.”

“I...I believe you, Quentin.”

She spread her nether lips wide with her fingers and slowly eased his length into her slick passage. His fullness stretched her cunt to its limits, momentarily surprising her with a stab of pain, but then the pleasure began to build as the tempo of his thrusts quickened, meeting the rhythm of her rocking hips. Pure bliss! She had never known such indescribable pleasure was possible.

She slowly began to grind her hips in a circular motion. He grimaced at the intensity of the sensation, responding with ever-quickenings strokes. Breathless, Shelby felt certain she’d pass out before she climaxed again.

“You okay?” he asked, massaging her buttocks with each deep thrust. “I’ll slow it down if you like.”

“Oh, no, I’m fine... perfect.” She took a deep, ragged breath and tightened her cunt muscles about his thick shaft. “I feel like I’m flying.”

His throaty chuckle triggered the familiar tension low in her belly. “Wanna be the first woman on the moon without benefit of a rocket?”

“Hmm, yes, please.”

Quentin grasped her hips tight in one hand and vigorously rubbed her clit with the other, all the while jackhammering his cock into her harder and faster and deeper. Suddenly the sky exploded in Technicolor swirls of light and color and rang with the heavenly music of angelic choirs. Shelby threw back her head and howled like a wolf serenading the moon as wave after wave of climaxes washed over her.

Spent, she passed out onto his chest and sighed. “That was... incredible.”

“Glad you liked it. Now, it’s my turn.”

Gently he rolled Shelby to her back and positioned her at the edge of the bed. Shelby cooperated as best she could through the dizzying haze that clouded her senses, arching her back as he placed a pillow beneath her hips and lifted her legs high until her feet touched his shoulders. He gently stroked her clit and spread her labia open for penetration.

“I want to ram my cock into your sweet pussy as deep as possible. Tell me to stop if it hurts, okay?”

“No promises.” She giggled then smiled at his concerned look. “Don’t worry. I’m not sure I’ve ever really had the pleasure, but I’m sure I’ll love it. Fuck me as hard as you can, oh mysterious sci-fi geek from the forty-second century. Show me how talented real men from the future are, and I’ll never want to return to this time period again.”

Grinning, Quentin eased his length into her until Shelby thought she’d split in two.

He gripped her butt cheeks and massaged them, plunging his shaft deeper still. Then began the real thrill. He corkscrewed his hips while simultaneously pumping hard into her, his balls rhythmically smacking against her.

Shelby shrieked and arched her back in response. The sheer ecstasy of her lover filling her completely and without restraint went beyond anything she'd ever imagined. To think she'd been missing all this while married to an idiot who freaked every time someone left the cap off the toothpaste tube—let alone when sex got messy!

"It's not too much, is it?" he asked between pants.

"You're entirely 'too much' but I love it!" She squealed and he pounded her even harder. "Keep it up and I'll... I'll... Oh, dear Lord!"

The spasm of her cunt muscles clenching tightly around his cock surprised her with its force. Her body became a shivering mass of Jell-O as her orgasm peaked—then peaked again and again. Her thighs locked about his hips as the blood rushed to her head and her stiff nipples, now rosy and flush with lust. Her piercing cries were only drowned out by Quentin's shouting of her name over and over as his quivering cock jettisoned his seed deep within her.

The next thing Shelby knew it was five hours later. Groggily she sat up and gazed upon her sleeping lover. Whatever else this virile, sexy man was he definitely was a time traveler. Anyone who could blank her mind for hours on end with fantastic sex had to possess some kind of superhuman powers.

Quentin rolled to his side and peeked open an eye. "Is it morning?"

She shook her head. "No, it's just after midnight. My cousin Mel and her boyfriend are probably crawling out of bed now—or back into bed. They're a couple of horny night owls."

"Really?" He yawned and grinned. "You rested enough? Wanna go another round?"

Shelby tickled his taut stomach. "Just what kind of girl do you think I am?"

He laughed. "A good one. A very good girl indeed."

Pulling her back into his arms, he kissed her passionately. She felt the growing evidence of his desire hardening against her stomach and sighed. She'd never get enough of Quentin the geek with the wonderful bedroom technique.

"Do you have to be anywhere tomorrow at a particular time?" she asked as they came up for air.

"Time? No problem. I don't sweat keeping a calendar. If I'm late for an appointment I just..."

"Travel backwards in time and arrive when you were supposed to originally," she said, finishing his thought.

"Exactly." He chuckled, stroking her nipples until she began to wiggle in his clutches. "You don't have to do anything important tomorrow, do you?"

"I should go into the office for a little while and let Sara know I'm going out of town for a while." Shelby reached for his erection, cradling it in her palms while she worked her own kind of magic.

"You're going out of town?"

"Yes, I'm taking a long, overdue vacation. Want to travel with me? I'll pay for everything. It's no problem. I've got plenty of money."

Quentin pulled himself up on his elbow and gazed intently into her face. "You're willing to travel with me—a complete stranger who claims he's from the future and who

could very well be a raving lunatic?”

Shelby nodded. “Sure, I’ll travel with you. I think you’d agree we’re not complete strangers anymore after tonight.” She squirmed with delight as he wriggled a finger against her aching clit. “Oh! Stop that! You’ll make a fascinating travel companion I can tell, both in and out of the bedroom.”

He flashed a lust-filled leer and winked. “I guarantee it.”

“Why should I deprive myself of companionship?” It all made sense to Shelby now. “My soon-to-be ex never deprived himself of companionship while he was traveling for business. And this trip will be purely for pleasure—mine as well as yours.”

“Hmm, fantastic.”

She began to lick and nibble his nipples. Soon they stood as hard and firm as his cock did in her hands. “What do you say? You want to go on a trip with me?”

He nodded. “Definitely. Allow me to write the itinerary. I know of a few exotic locales you’ve never even heard of.” He slid a finger into her cunt and stroked her g-spot until she practically toppled over in ecstasy. “I assure you that you’ll find them quite *educational*.”

Shelby gasped, fighting hard to keep her mind focused on the conversation. “Educational? Sounds good to me.”

Moments later she learned yet another lesson in how Quentin could pleasure her as yet another series of climaxes overwhelmed her. She collapsed into his embrace, luxuriating in his warmth and nearness.

“Ready for traveling?” he teased.

Cradled in his arms, she sighed. “Give me a couple of days to say good-bye to my cousin and my employees, then I’ll be ready to go on our little trip. Is that okay?”

He kissed her tenderly on the forehead. “That will be fine.”

“By the way, what kind of clothes will I need to pack?”

“Clothes? *Clothes*?” Quentin arched an ebony eyebrow. He spread her legs wide with his hand to receive his massive erection once again. “Who said anything about needing clothes where we’re going?”

Chapter Three

“Couldn’t stay away, eh?” The bass chuckle reverberated throughout the seemingly empty spacecraft behind the hulking form blocking the hatchway. “I knew you’d be back, but so soon? The party doesn’t begin until tonight. Come on in anyway.”

The towering behemoth’s gold-flecked eyes seem to blaze with an inner hell to match his outer one. With chocolate toned skin, powerful build and a strong, jutting jaw, he was always a favorite with the ladies. Why his fellow rogue agent couldn’t bother to dress most of the time was a mystery to Quentin. Clothing wasn’t a necessary evil in a carefully temperature controlled spaceship of the forty-second century, but it did indicate that a host—especially a seven foot tall host—cared enough not to continually wave his wedding tackle in front of his guests’ faces.

“It’s not quite what you think.” Quentin pocketed his time device and crossed over the threshold. “I just needed a safe spot to surf to before I headed back out along the same time stream. It pays to keep the Time Cops guessing by doubling back on your time line, as I’m sure you well know.”

“Intimately. I’ve been playing their dirty little games for eons now. Would you like a drink?” The giant strolled across the wide-open chamber to a well-stocked bar in the back and grabbed himself a mug from a rack overhead. “I got the best Rigellian ale on tap.”

Quentin shook his head, scanning the satin-lined walls and plush sofas and chaise lounges for hints of the last debauchery. Nothing. Excellent cleaning crew his host employed. “No thanks. I’m only going to be a minute and then I think I’ll head back to where I was, only a day or two later. That’s usually the safest bet not to run into yourself.”

The giant poured himself a gold-green ale and took a long sip before replying. “Yes, do play it safe, please. I hate the thought of all this hard work I’ve put into stealing and dealing in time-pirated artifacts to go to waste. You wouldn’t believe the price I had to pay for some of the components of this expanded time dampening field. Highway robbery!”

Quentin smirked. “You’ve picked up a few anachronistic expressions in your travels as well I see.”

“Unfortunately I have.” His host downed his ale and leveled an earth-shattering burp that rattled the bottles and glasses on the shelves behind him. “Good stuff. I always knew this ship would come in handy for others as well as myself some day. I’m thinking of charging for the service—or would that keep people from showing up at my parties?”

Quentin laughed. “Highly doubtful. When people hear about the sheer numbers and the variety of... guests... they’ll pay a mint to get in. The added bonus of the TRA not knowing where your Sin City rests is just icing on the cake.”

“A mint? Sin City? Icing on the cake?”

“More anachronistic clichés I picked up somewhere about the twentieth century. I specialized in that era at the academy you may recall.”

“And my specialty was classical civilizations. How could I forget?” The giant laid his mug on the counter and placed an arm around Quentin’s shoulders. “But let’s not bring up our past mistakes, Quentin, my boy. Tell me what all you’ve been up to besides

running from the law.”

* * * *

“You’re going where? With who?”

Shelby sighed and crossed her arms. She knew her cousin would protest her traveling with a stranger, but damn it! She was an adult. She could do as she liked and travel anywhere and with anyone she wanted.

“Quentin. His name is Quentin. I met him at... a sci-fi convention a few years ago before I met Graham.” The lie slipped easily from her lips. There certainly was no need to worry Mel by saying the guy had suddenly materialized inside her locked home and claimed to come from the future. “Quentin and I hooked up the other day, and it was just like old-times.”

“And you always made me think I was the odd duck of the family.” Melynda tossed her paintbrush aside and tugging off her splattered paint shirt. “I forgot you had this thing for *Doctor Who*. Sylvester McCoy, no less! Most people are hot for David Tennant’s Doctor these days, you know.”

“Yes, I know. I like Sly because he’s not a giant—he’s more like me. His outfit with the question mark sweater and raincoat are cool, too.”

Melynda shook her head and crossed over to her painting studio’s refrigerator. Stashed between the rolls of film she stored for her photographer boyfriend Val Drakul, Shelby knew Mel kept her supply of junk food—Pepsi and Twinkies.

“Wanna snack?”

“No thanks.” Shelby inched toward the studio door and escape. Down the four flights of stairs from the attic room in the Falstaff Lofts and she’d be on her way to paradise with her hunky new beau.

“Tell me more about this Quentin person,” Mel mumbled between bites of snack cake and swigs of soda. “Tell me he’s not an ax murderer, or I’ll go tell your mom.”

Shelby frowned. “You wouldn’t.”

“Yes, I would. Someone’s gotta look out for you. You did the same for me last year after my divorce. Consider it a return favor.”

Her cousin was right. She shouldn’t just up and leave town without one of her family members knowing her plans. “Okay, I’ll tell you. He’s a world traveler and knows a lot of interesting spots that aren’t on the map.”

“A globe-trekker, huh? Sounds fascinating. But why should you trust him? Maybe he’s after your money. You can’t be so gullible to think that some guys won’t go after you because of your wealth, Shel.”

Grrr! Why did Melynda have to act so damn rational today? Usually Melynda was the sexy, green Orion slave woman to Shelby’s logical Mr. Spock.

“Why shouldn’t I go jet-setting with him around the globe?” Shelby countered. “I’ve got the money and the time to do it. Remember, you said I needed to take a vacation and unwind. After chatting with Quentin I’m definitely feeling... unwound.”

Mel arched a black eyebrow and licked the crumbs off her fingers. “Yeah, I noticed you seemed to be wound a little less *tight* when you came in the room. Something’s different about your walk today, too. He’s a real good old *friend*, I take it?”

Shelby felt her cheeks reddening. She turned away to look at her cousin’s paintings that leaned against the wall, most of which were nudes. “Well, yes, we are ‘good friends’

you could say. He's a fun-loving guy and has a quirky sense of humor."

"I bet he does. Anyone who can get you to wear a pair of faded jeans and a T-shirt on a weekday is my type of guy." Melynda picked up her paintbrush. "So, what's this Quentin person's last name?"

Shelby froze. Hell! She'd gone to bed with him but she never even asked him his full name!

"His name? Why, it's..."

Think! What could Quentin's last name be? He appeared to be part Asian and part European in ancestry, but which part got which name? She had to come up with something quickly because Mel would continue to stare with those big green eyes of hers until she broke down and confessed the whole story of how they met. And then she'd be locked up in a psycho ward and she'd never see the light of day ever again—nor her mysterious lover.

"Wells," she blurted at last. "His name is Quentin Wells."

"Hmm, that's an interesting name for a sci-fi lover. You've got Orson Welles and H.G. Wells who are both famous for their versions of *War of the Worlds*."

"Yes, isn't that a cool coincidence," Shelby replied, a satisfied grin on her lips. Actually she had been thinking of H.G. Wells and his classic novel *The Time Machine*. The name seemed fitting somehow.

"And where exactly are you two jet-setting to?"

"I don't know yet. It's a surprise destination. But Quentin told me to pack light and casual. I think it's somewhere in the tropics."

Melynda laughed and slapped her paint-covered hands against her ragged jeans. "Tropics? Pack light? I bet he's taking you to a nudist colony or a swingers' club or something." She put down her brush and held her sides as she shook with mirth. "Woo-wee! I can't wait to see my straight-laced cousin with a sunburn across her butt cheeks!"

Shelby opened her mouth to repudiate the insidious comment leveled at her character, but thought better of it. Let Mel think what she wanted. For all anyone knew, it could very well be the truth. It certainly sounded appealing. Hanging out at a nudist colony with Quentin on some sandy beach, splashing in the surf, rolling across a beach blanket, making love under a clear blue sky... It didn't seem too farfetched of an idea at all.

"Yeah, we're going surfing. I'm hangin' with a surfer who loves to use his boogie board. Are you jealous Elvira, mistress of the night?"

Melynda bit the end of her paintbrush and grinned. "No, I'm not jealous at all. I've got my unusual guy and you've got yours. I just want you to have a good time and be careful. Don't forget to drop us a post card from time to time if you can't call to tell us how you're doing."

"Will do. I better go now and talk to Sara at the office. I'll come by your place later with my key, okay?"

Shelby kissed her cousin good-bye on the cheek and dashed out of the studio. If there was anything she'd learned from telling Melynda first was that she'd better have something more definite to tell her business partner about her trip.

* * * *

"You're practically giving me the business, Shelby. Are you sure you want to do

this? What will people think?"

Sara Shaw stood tall behind the desk in her typical gray business ensemble and spoke in her typical, blunt manner. *No surprises here*. Shelby sighed. Just a few weeks ago she herself had acted pretty much the same—rigid, business-like and ruthlessly competitive. She had to close the deal; she had to impress the hell out of the client; she had to make them sign on the dotted line and leave her with a whopping commission. There were no other options in life. But ever since Graham had walked out, leveling her with the comment, "You were never there for me emotionally," her Donald Trump complex had evaporated.

"Yes, I'm sure. You've got a terrific head for the business, Sara. I have no doubt that you'll take Schwartz Properties to the top of the field. I'm at a point in my life where I can sit back and play the silent partner. At least for a while. I need a break from the rat race. Hell, I've *earned* it."

Sara shrugged and sat back down, steeping her café-au-lait colored fingers tipped with stiletto red nails thoughtfully. Shelby could read the look in her eyes. It said, "I seriously think you've gone off the deep end." But the younger woman with steely nerves only smiled and nodded her consent.

"Very well. Brian will draw up the proper documents for you to sign before you leave town. It's best if we're both on the same page... in case you have a change of heart later."

"I don't think I will, but I know you're not a fan of the 'handshake contract'. I'll give him a buzz here from my office in a moment." Shelby headed for the door then paused.

"There's one other thing, Sara."

The tall beauty raised a perfectly plucked eyebrow. "Yes?"

"Don't allow work to take over your life. All the money in the world isn't worth the heartache you'll experience further down the road."

"Work *is* my life, Shelby. The money is immaterial to me, really. I just can't stand to be bored, and the world of business definitely keeps me entertained. I doubt I'll ever find a certain someone who will bring me half as much joy." Sara's polished smile faded for a fraction of an instant then quickly reconstituted itself. "Have a great time on the round-the-world cruise. It sounds... fascinating."

Shelby entered her office, suddenly heartsick. This could be the last time for a very long while that she'd see it. She'd practically lived in it for the last couple of years. It was home—even though it wasn't *home*—like her renovated brownstone was home. She sat down at the computer and dashed off several emails to various clients informing them of her imminent vacation and uncertain return schedule.

After a quick call to Brian, their attorney, Shelby began clearing off her desk and filing away important documents where Sara would be able to easily locate them. A sense of melancholy overcame her. Was she really crazy enough to give all this up, even for a little while, to go gallivanting about the planet with a complete stranger?

"Nice office. You tell all your workers you're heading off on an exciting adventure holiday?"

Shelby gasped and dropped the file she was holding, spilling its contents about the room. "Quentin! Sheesh, you about gave me a heart attack sneaking up on me like that."

He frowned. "Are you prone to heart trouble? I thought coronary disease was under control by this century."

“What?” She knelt to gather the papers and stack them into a neat pile once more. “Oh, sure, ‘this century’. Quentin, I hate to tell you this, but you’re going to have to can the sci-fi geek act once we get on the road. It unnerves people—myself included.”

“Sci-fi geek. I looked that expression up in my electronic guide to the twenty-first century. A ‘sci-fi con’ was a gathering of enthusiasts of speculative fiction novels, television programs and films. A ‘geek’ was a term that labeled an individual who possessed intelligence in the field of computers and technology but generally was thought as being socially inept.”

He came up behind her, wrapping his arms about her as Shelby stood, placed the file into the drawer, and closed it. “Am I socially inept?” he asked.

Shelby sighed, arching her back toward him and reaching with her hands to stroke his face. “No, not entirely. But the stuff about being from the future... Well, that makes people think you’re either mentally challenged or insane. Speaking of which,” she quickly scanned his outfit of floral board shorts and bright orange T-shirt and flip-flops, “however, did you get into this building dressed like that?”

“Dressed like what?” He playfully nibbled on her earlobes.

“Dressed like a surfer from Malibu or something. There’s a dress code in this office—suit and ties for males and dresses and hose for women. Our clients tend to dress even more formally. I’m surprised the security guard downstairs let you into the building.” She glanced toward the door and breathed a sigh of relief when she noticed he had locked it after he’d entered the room. “Did anyone happen to see you out front?”

“You’re not wearing a dress.” He slipped a hand under her top and began to caress her nipples through her bra until they stood proudly at attention. “You are wearing casual clothes, aren’t you?”

“You’re right. Today I am. But I own this business and the security guard knows me. In fact, he’s never seen me in anything less than proper business attire, but he still recognized me and didn’t make mention of it. Weird.”

“Yeah, weird.” Quentin slipped a hand down the front of her pants and began rubbing her pussy. “You wanna know the real reason they let me in the building?”

Shelby arched toward her lover. Luckily she had thought to ask for privacy while she was making her phone calls earlier. She moaned as he increased the pressure on her clit.

“Yeah, tell me why they let you in.” The security guard downstairs may not have seen him, but how did he sneak into her office without her hearing him? Quentin was as stealthy as a cat burglar. Those skills might land him into trouble some day.

“I’ll tell you the reason—they don’t know I’m here.”

“Hmm... You didn’t go through the front door? Did you break in through a back entrance?”

“Back entrance?” A deep, low chuckle escaped from throat. That gave her the cue he was up to something not quite business related. “What a good idea.”

Gently, he bent Shelby over and indicated for her to place her hands on the edge of her desk. Shelby complied without complaint, mesmerized by his expert attention on her clit and the thrill of doing something wild and uninhibited in her uptight office. Why hadn’t she and Graham ever thought of doing the nasty on her desk?

Quentin tugged down her pants and help her to step out of them, then quickly removed his own. He rubbed his erection against her buttocks, slipping a finger into her. She gasped and tightened her muscles about it. “You’re really turned on by doing it in

your office, aren't you, Ms. Schwartz?"

"Uh-huh." She slowly ground her hips against his finger and tossed her head back to receive his kiss. "This boring place needs a little life in it."

"I'm all for livening it up. Allow me to demonstrate."

He pushed his cock into her in one single thrust. Shelby gasped leaning lower across her now practically empty desk to allow him deeper access. The pleasure-pain of his hard strokes drove her fast toward the precipice... She felt cries of delight building in the back of her throat, but she dare not even whisper his name in fear she'd shriek it, bringing the entire office rushing in to see what was the matter.

"It's all right, Shelby. Scream all you want, as loud as you want. No one can hear you. I promise you."

"S-say w-what?" she stammered, panting under the exertion of holding back her impending climax. Her lover couldn't be that cold-blooded, could he? "D-did you bump everyone off?"

He momentarily slowed his intimate assault. "Not really. Let's just say they're all out to a mental lunch. They can't hear a thing. It's how I got into the building. I temporarily froze them in time."

"Froze them in time?" The languid corkscrew motion of his hips was driving her completely mad. "They're not dead?"

"No, they're fine. It's like sleeping, only better. They don't age."

"Oh." None of it made sense to her. But then again, nothing could make sense to her this close to what promised to be a mind-numbing orgasm. "Fuck me a little harder and keep doing your hips all wiggly like... Ah, ah—yes!"

The first wave shook her lithe frame until she swore the whole earth was trembling. She raked her fingernails across the smooth surface of the desk looking for purchase, sending a paperweight, an in-basket and her huge pencil mug crashing to the floor in the process. The screams tore forth from her lips and filled the air, bouncing hard off the walls of her small room, multiplying their intensity and causing her pussy muscles to contract even tighter as she climaxed over and over again.

With her shouts fading in her ears, she wondered. Why wasn't anyone banging on the door of her office to see what all the commotion was about? Seriously weird.

"I can tell you liked that," Quentin purred. "Come here."

He slowly pulled out and scooped the quivering mass of Jell-O that was her body from the surface of the desk. "I've always wanted to do it in the boss's chair." He sat down and tugged her into his lap. With hands firmly planted on her hips, he motioned for her to stand up and straddle his cock, facing him. He speared her again with one swift stroke. Gasping, she knelt in the chair that had always been too big for her and bounced joyfully up and down on his firm erection.

"This thing has got to come off." She quickly removed her plum colored, scooped neck T-shirt and tossed it aside. She thrust her breasts forward, nipples straining against the thin fabric of her bra. "Get me out of this contraption."

He winked. "Yes, ma'am. Far be it from me to disobey an order from the boss." Releasing the catch, he took each rosy point into his mouth and suckled until Shelby felt her toes curl.

"Yee-haw! Ride'em cowgirl!"

Quentin laughed, obliging her with several hard thrusts. Shelby had ridden a

mechanical bull once in a nightclub while in college, but nothing could prepare her for riding a well-endowed man with a playful streak a mile wide. She grasped the arms of the chair tightly, threw back her head and shrieked her pleasure.

Fireworks exploded before her eyes as the familiar tremors beginning low in her belly engulfed her form. Her cunt squeezed her lover's shaft until it was all he could do but scream along with her as his cock shuddered, erupting deep within her. He slumped in the chair and gathered her against his chest.

"That was phenomenal." She sighed and laid her head on his shoulder. "I wonder why nobody came pounding on the door to see what I was up to in here. As far as they know, I'm alone. Right?"

"Yeah, I froze them in time. I froze them before I entered the building and came upstairs. They have no clue what we've been up to—unless you give them a play-by-play description." He chuckled and squeezed her buttocks. "You want me to unfreeze them and then fuck you again on the desk? Fuck you hard, then slow and wiggly-like until you sing like an opera singer?"

Shelby giggled. It sounded like a good plan, but they couldn't spend the entire day making love in her office. They had to get ready to go on the road. "Maybe later. Actually, I want to see how being 'frozen in time' looks like. Let's get dressed and quietly sneak out and..."

"Why bother to dress? They can't see us or know we're even in the same room with them when they're frozen. Speaking of which," Quentin looked at his wristwatch and smiled, "we've got about a half hour before they'll snap out of it, unless you want me to release them early. I'll do that, but we'd better be dressed by then if they're not used to seeing you parade about the office in your birthday suit."

"You're such a joker." Shelby stood and gathered up her clothes, quickly slipping into her bra and panties. "There's no way I'm walking about outside the door here with nothing on. I don't want them to think I've gone completely bonkers."

He sprang to his feet and crossed to the door. "Aren't you?"

"Quentin! Get your hand off the doorknob this instant. I'm not dressed yet. No—don't!"

Too late. He pushed the door open wide and blithely strolled out in the buff into the front office area. Stunned, Shelby dropped the remainder of her clothes on the floor and rushed out to corral her exhibitionist lover. Not a sound, not a movement came from anywhere. Quentin sat cross-legged on the edge of the receptionist's desk and grinned.

"LaDonna, don't mind him he's a harmless nutcase, he's a... LaDonna?"

Headset on her ears, mouth parted as if in mid-sentence, the young receptionist's hands hung in space over the keyboard. Not even the cursor moved on the screen where LaDonna appeared to have been inputting a new seller's information into their standardized application form.

"She's not breathing!" Shelby dropped to her knees and began to shake the girl by the shoulders. "Wake up! Snap out of it, LaDonna. Please?"

"She's fine. Don't worry." Quentin took Shelby by the hand and gazed deeply into her eyes. He spoke slowly and calmly, as if explaining why the sun doesn't shine at night to a toddler. "The reason your receptionist isn't breathing is because she isn't living. Well, not in the sense she's living in time. When you're out of the timeline, you simply don't age or exist, so you don't breathe or have a pulse."

Shelby slowly stood and scanned the room. Sara Shaw stood like a carved piece of brown-gold marble in the corner beside Gordon, one of their newest agents and a first rate klutz. A folder in Gordon's outstretched hand looked as if it would fall to the floor any second. Somehow it remained as it was, suspended in mid-air, dangling from the tips of his fingers. What the hell was happening?

She backed away from Quentin. "They're frozen. They really are frozen—in time?" He nodded. "We can't leave them like this much longer. Won't people wonder what's happening here when they try to contact the office?"

"Yes and no. Someone phoning the office will get a busy signal, and if I hadn't locked the suite door and someone did walk in here, things would look a bit odd to them like it does to you. Usually I can only freeze a room full of people at a time, but I had a friend tinker with my time device so it has a bit more range."

He chuckled. "Too bad I can't time freeze the entire planet. Then no one would be the wiser to what we got up to on your desk!"

The enormity of Quentin's power shot icy shivers up her spine. He really did tell her the truth when he said he came from the future. He came from a future where time travel and even time manipulation was possible. What evil could be wrought from having such God-like powers?

"Y-you w-want to f-freeze everyone on the p-planet?" she stuttered

He nodded. "It would be fun to try. In theory, if I had a big enough time dampening field I could freeze the entire planet and some of the nearby inhabited planets that are closely listening in to Earth's chatter in this decade as well just in case they wondered what was happening."

Shelby shook her head in disbelief. Crazy. Insane. It seemed unbelievable and yet... The evidence stared her in the face as she gazed into the motionless expressions of her colleagues.

"Don't worry, Shelby. The rest of the universe is progressing normally along the timeline. No harm done."

"Progressing normally? No harm done?" She felt like fainting, but her business-side kicked in automatically. Hands on hips, she stared daggers at her lover. "Put your clothes on pronto and then un-freeze everyone. We're going back to my place. We've got some serious issues to discuss."

Chapter Four

“Quentin, I... I don’t know where to begin.”

Shelby seldom felt speechless. She had always prided herself on acting calm and collected in any tough business situation. It’s what Graham had said was her most attractive feature. Even if she was scared shitless or totally confused, she always managed to project a professional exterior to the world. But discovering that her lover possessed the ability to zap people in and out of time upset her. A lot. Quentin had pushed one of her hot buttons.

“Who says you have to begin anywhere?” He pulled her into his arms, but she remained rigid, unyielding. He dropped his hands and paced away from her. “All right. What do you want to know? Where I come from and what I’m doing here in this backwater place in time and history?”

“That’s a good place to start.” She sat down on the sofa and coolly crossed her legs. “Are you a part of an alien invasion?”

He laughed and stopped his pacing. “You’ve watched way too many B-movies. It doesn’t work that way. Aliens don’t ever invade Earth—it’s the other way around.”

“We invade other planets?”

“To put it bluntly, yes, we do.” He sat down in the chair opposite her. “Some might call it ‘colonizing’ but other species don’t take too kindly for two legged, one-nosed, sweaty human beings stinking up their worlds. There’s no pleasing everyone in every time I guess.”

“And this ability to time travel—it’s a human invention?”

Quentin appeared about to speak, but then looked as if he thought better of it. “You could say it’s an invention humans make use of extensively. Yes, you could say that much about it.”

“You’re being very vague.”

He grinned. “I have to be. By law I shouldn’t even be talking to you. By law I shouldn’t even attempt to time freeze anyone unless my very existence is in peril. By law I’m supposed to remain in my own timeline and stay entirely out of yours. But how’s a guy supposed to find that special someone in all the universe if he can’t surf the time waves from time to time?”

Shelby’s heartbeat quickened. Was she Quentin’s “special someone”? Was there truly only one special someone for each individual in all of time and space? Was their love affair similar to the one depicted in her all-time favorite romantic time travel movie? Then a disconcerting thought occurred to her—he kept mentioning the law.

“Quentin, are you an outlaw in your own time?”

His smirk grew into an unabashed grin, dazzling in its brightness. “You’re a quick study, Shelby Schwartz. That’s probably why I was led here to meet you. You’ve got what it takes to be a superb time agent.”

“You were led here? By whom? And what the hell is a ‘time agent’? Someone after your naughty hide?”

The smile disappeared. “Yes, they’re after me. You see I used to be one of them—a card-carrying officer of the Time Regulation Agency. We were hired and trained to surf

the time waves to protect people throughout history like you. I don't know how he does it, but sometimes the Big-Guy-Upstairs leads us to where we need to go and to the people we need to meet. I never thought I'd ever come across someone like you, but it's happened."

"Someone like me?"

"Yes. You're just like me. It's amazing, but true." He leaned forward in his chair and softened his tone. "It's unbelievable, but it appears Chosen Ones existed before the fortieth century. I wasn't taught that. Our history books have lied to us."

"Don't they always?" Soft-focused pictures of Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour walking hand-in-hand dressed in Edwardian era garb from *Somewhere in Time* danced about in Shelby's head. She sighed. The romantic imagery was irresistible except for one small problem: Quentin didn't behave like the charming, sweet-natured Christopher Reeve. He acted more like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*.

"Wait a moment," she said, trying to talk out the confusion in her mind. "What in the world have you and I got in common? I know I'm human, but I'm not entirely sure about you. You appear to be human in all the right places, but well..." She blushed. "You could be wearing a very convincing disguise of some kind."

He waggled his eyebrows suggestively. "Very convincing, I'd say." He reached for her hand. She pulled back.

"Hold on, I'm still thinking this through. We're from entirely different time periods. You're an outlaw, and I'm a dull, boring law-abiding citizen. I never break the law—ever."

"You mean there's no law against having loud, rowdy sex in a place of business?" He shook his head and chuckled. "Our history texts paint a very different picture of this period. Your lot threatened the use of nuclear devices in the name of keeping the peace. A handful of countries selfishly devoured most of the food and energy resources as the others struggled to survive. Shall I go on?"

Shelby shook her head sadly.

"All right then. I wouldn't be labeling me an outlaw so quickly. Sure, I'm no longer in the employ of the TRA, but it doesn't mean I don't follow a code of ethics when it comes to intersecting timelines. I made sure the timelines were stable before crossing over. That's not the case for many rogue time agents."

"Then why did you quit the agency?"

"Quit? Who said anything about quitting? They fired me and they're trying to eliminate me entirely from history all for saving one child's life. I ask you this—what's so wrong with trying to save an innocent's life?"

"They're trying to kill you? Oh, Quentin..."

Shelby jumped up from her chair and sat in his lap, holding him close. "Why would your employer want to punish anyone so severely for saving a life? And you think we're a bunch of barbarians in this century? We don't go around executing people for doing good."

"That hasn't always been the case in human history. Sometimes one innocent must be sacrificed for the good of the whole."

"True. Still, it doesn't make it right in your case. What explanation did they give?"

"None. They refused to explain, and I have no right to challenge their decision. I must not have picked the right child to save from imminent disaster, but I was certain I

had followed my instructions to the letter. It's as if someone higher up wanted me to screw up so they could fabricate a reason to erase me."

"Erase you from time?" She held him closer, cradling his head against her breasts. "I'm so glad you got away from them. I can't imagine you not being here with me. Are you safe here in the past?"

He stroked her back and held onto her tightly. "Not as safe as I could be. The far, far distant past would be safer. Most time agents don't like to travel too far away from the forty-second century. Primitive living isn't much of an attraction to them." He gave Shelby's buttocks a squeeze then caressed her face. "They're very addicted to their sex machines."

"Sex machines? Don't tell me... They don't enjoy sex the good old-fashioned way in the forty-second century. Babies are created in test tubes."

"Nah, most still make babies the way God and nature intended—with prior genetic screening procedures firmly in place, mind you—but they've augmented the process of sexual relations a bit" He smiled and squeezed her ass once more, his other hand stroking at the nipple straining through the thin fabric of her shirt. "It's difficult to describe. I'd have to show you. Would you like me to show you?"

"Hmm, I'd love for you to show me, but isn't it dangerous for you to return to your time?"

"Yes, it is. In fact, the longer you hang with me, the more dangerous it is for you, too. They might think you're in on my plan to escape justice. They'll want to erase your timeline from history as well." He gently pulled away from her. "I'm sorry but for your own safety it's probably best that I leave and never return to this time."

Anguish stabbed her heart. He couldn't leave! She wouldn't let him leave her.

"I... I love you, Quentin. I want you to stay here with me. Or I'll go with you. Either way, don't leave me."

His dark eyes glowed with inner fire and longing. "I want to stay with you, too, Shelby. I don't want to go, but I should... I must."

Their lips met and fear vanished as they each drank in the goodness of the other. She pressed her curves against him, relishing his growing desire pressing hard against her belly. The man was an insatiable sex machine himself!

No matter what, she would stay by Quentin and protect him from the former employers who had wrongly accused him. What could be worse? Dying never knowing a love like theirs or dying to protect the man she really loved?

Love? Isn't it more like lust? Shelby sighed against his lips. It didn't matter. They slid together from the chair and lay across the plush, white carpet. Quickly they removed the clothing barriers until he slid his cock inside and completed her. As he began a steady stroke, she arched her hips and welcomed him deeper still. Faster and harder he drove into her, the familiar tension mounting quickly between them. She wanted nothing more than to lie in this man's arms forever. This time she vowed not to remain emotionally or physically distant from her lover, thinking money was the answer to all life's problems. She'd protect him with her heart, her life.

Her cunt tightened about his cock, sending rapturous shudders radiating throughout her body. His ecstatic cries mingled with hers as his orgasm took him by storm. Sated and safe, they collapsed into each other's arms.

* * * *

What am I going to do now? Quentin cuddled Shelby's luscious curves against his skin as she lightly dozed in his arms. The longer he stayed here, the longer the two of them stayed together, the more likely the bastards would link them and erase their mutual timelines. And he had promised to take her on a vacation.

He really meant it when he told Shelby he'd take her on a holiday. His first idea was to take her somewhere that a person of the twenty-first century would enjoy—a trip to a remote tropical island where no one from either of their times would think to look for them. At least, not at first. Eventually, time agents would track him down via the universal locator on his time board. Staying put in one place for too long made it easy for them. He had to keep moving, weaving in and out of time until his trail grew cold and distant even to the most dogged of time hounds.

Could he subject Shelby to an eternal chase like that? He wanted to be with her, but if he continued to visit the same place in the twenty-first century time after time, they'd discover his connection to her. The only sure way for them to remain together was for her to surf the waves of time beside him... To be on the run from the law forever and to possibly never see her friends and family again.

He couldn't do that to her. He missed his own friends and family so much at times that he felt like dying. No, the best thing to do was to leave now without explanation. She'd hate him for a while but eventually her heartache would heal. She'd remain alive and despising him in the past, but he could go on knowing that he'd done what was best for her.

"I love you, Shelby Schwartz," Quentin whispered, tenderly kissing her forehead. "Good-bye." Carefully he extricated himself from the tangle of her arms, placing a small throw pillow under her head. He donned his clothes and reached for his summoning device in his shorts pocket.

Shit. Gone.

"Damn," he cursed under his breath. Where the hell could it be? In their haste to get undressed, it must have fallen out and rolled under the furniture. He fell to his hands and knees to search for it.

"Quentin? What are you doing?"

He grinned to cover his guilty feelings and sat back on his heels. "Nothing in particular. I thought I'd get our vacation plans together and surprise you when you awoke. That's all."

She rose up on an elbow and regarded him through half-closed eyes. "You lose something valuable?"

"No, not all."

"Then why did you pick up the edge of the chair just now? Tell me what it is and I'll help you find it."

Ugh. What could be more heartless than asking the woman he loved to look for a device that would enable him to simply vanish from her life altogether? But he had to do it—he *must* do it.

"It's a small electronic device about the size and shape of a business card. I keep my keys attached to it on a jump ring."

She stood, yawned and stretched, displaying her petite yet curvy form to its best advantage. Her rosy nipples peaked deliciously pert above the smooth plains of her stomach and the golden tuft of hair at the junction of her milky white thighs. The scent of

her sex and her floral cologne intoxicated him and made his erection hardened. Damn the time cops! How he ached to fuck her again and again and again...

"Keys?" She began to search around the couch pillows. "Don't worry it's around here somewhere. I didn't think people from the forty-second century still used keys. What are they keys to? A sports car? A yacht?"

Hmm, her buttocks jiggling in front of him as she searched the cracks between the cushions tempted him like two scoops of peach ice cream. He bit his lip to keep from eating her for a dessert. "What makes you say I own a yacht?"

"I don't know... your surfer dude outfit and the fact that you seem to be a wanderer of sorts makes me think of you living on the open seas like a pirate." She turned and wrinkled her nose at him. "A very sexy pirate."

Even if he hadn't confirmed it before, her insight authenticated her status as a Chosen One. Perhaps it would be for the best to take Shelby along with him—for her own protection, of course.

"Yes, I am a wanderer. Even before I became a fugitive, I enjoyed my job traveling through the strands of time. There's always something new and exciting happening someplace in time."

"I believe you." She stood with her hands behind her back. "And you need this 'key chain' device in order to operate your time machine?"

"Correct." He pulled her into his arms. "Come with me, Shelby. Be my companion as we travel through time. I promise you'll never need a vacation again."

He kissed her, plunging his tongue between the soft lips, delving her mouth's sweet depths, tasting her passion rising. "One thing about time traveling," he whispered into her hair as they came up for air. "There's never a dull moment,"

"Will I... will I ever be able to return home again?"

Quentin shook his head. "There's no guarantee. Time travel isn't quite as precise as the science fiction writers of this era envision it. Time waves and crests, flows and eddies, and it's not always possible to return exactly to the same spot in the same time period you left. And with the time cops on my tail, coming back to St. Louis in this century might prove dangerous. I'd place our chance of returning successfully at fifty-fifty."

She pulled back from him, her eyes as wide and as blue as a summer sky. He sensed she trusted him—absolutely—and wasn't afraid of the odds. "Fair enough. Let's go."

No regrets, no second-guessing, no luggage? The woman was amazing!

"You're willing to leave everything you know to come with me?" He smiled and squeezed her tight. "Are you crazy?"

She laughed. "Of course."

Standing on tiptoe, she wound her arms about his neck and kissed him. "Can I take a quick shower and say good-bye to my cousin before we go?"

"Sure, but we can't go without the device. I haven't found it yet."

"Don't sweat it." She bent to pick up their strewn clothing. "You'll like Mel and Val. They're a fun couple. He's an odd duck like you are. Let's see... what time is it?"

Quentin checked his timepiece that fortunately never left his wrist. "In this century and time zone?" He pressed a couple of side buttons for the read out. "Five thirty-eight point two-zero-zero-three seconds and counting."

"Odd geek meet odd duck." She laughed. "Good, the Goth duo should be awake

soon after the sun sets. Promise me one thing, though, Quentin.”

“What’s that?”

Slowly she removed the summoning device from her jeans pocket. “Don’t tell them what a good pickpocket I am.” She grinned, holding it from his reach. “You really should be more careful with the tools of your trade.”

He grabbed her about the waist before she could react and pulled her laughing, into his arms, pressing his hard on firmly against her belly. “Hmm, You got a safe spot to store this ‘tool’ perhaps?”

Chapter Five

“So this must be Quentin, the man who swooped down out of nowhere and stole my little cousin’s heart.”

Melynda Kerpanik unwrapped her arms from about her ample chest and stepped out of the doorway. Dressed in her signature bright red tank top, black choker and ripped and faded jeans, with her jet-black hair and red lips Melynda epitomized Goth chic.

“Come on in and sit a spell. Don’t mind the mess—Val is working on a retrospective of his best Arch photographs. Since we’re both artists and hang out in our art studios most of the time we forget about cleaning up this place.”

“You sure do.” Shelby kicked a pair of black, lacy thong underwear under the sofa and removed a stack of glossy magazines and several discarded corn chip bags to the side table before she and Quentin could sit down. Why didn’t her cousin invest in a good maid service? “Val up yet?”

“Just about. He’s not a total night owl anymore, but when he’s out shooting pictures all night...” She shrugged her broad shoulders. “Well, let’s say he needs his shut-eye.”

“We were out last night, but we weren’t exactly shooting pictures. Were we, Melynda?”

The deep, sexy voice came from the area behind the sofa, startling Shelby out of her mental inventory of Mel’s dismal domestic talents. Melynda put down her ever-present Pepsi can and ran into her darkly handsome man’s arms, kissing him passionately.

“Gee, you two—get a room.” Shelby giggled and squeezed Quentin’s hand as the couple cuddled. “Better yet, why don’t you guys get a marriage certificate? I know for a fact Aunt Kate would love to see you get hitched again, Mel.”

“I’m sure she would, but it’s our decision.” Melynda escorted the tall blue jean and white T-shirt clad Valentine Drakul into the living area. “Val, this is Quentin. Quentin *Wells*, is it?”

Quentin frowned at the misinformation but quickly caught on. “Yeah, Wells. It’s my mother’s maiden name and much easier to spell. My actual last name is Takahashi.”

Shelby playfully rolled her eyes around and stuck out her tongue. “Now he tells me.”

“Quent here is Shelby’s new ‘traveling companion’,” Melynda continued, with a wink to her lover. “They’re going on a long, tropical vacation I’m told. Isn’t that right, Quent?”

“You could say that.” Quentin rose and shook Val’s hand then paused. He searched Val’s face for a moment as if he couldn’t believe his good fortune. “Kindred?”

Val’s dark eyes widened ever so slightly in surprise. “Yes. Are you a Chosen One by chance?”

The men sat in opposite chairs and observed each other thoughtfully. “Yes, I am a Chosen One,” Quentin began slowly, “and so is Shelby.”

“How does he know about the Kindred?” Melynda whispered in her lover’s ear. Val put a finger to her lips and silenced her.

“What does he know about the ‘Chosen Ones’?” Shelby said under her breath. “I don’t even know what you mean by that yet. How did I get to be one? And who or what are the ‘Kindred’?”

“I shouldn’t say.” Quentin nodded to his hosts. “It isn’t polite to ‘out’ someone unless they’re ready to reveal themselves. I’d dare say your cousin knows all about the Kindred.”

Melynda sat up straight on the arm of the overstuffed chair. “Damn straight I do.”

“What are you all talking about?” Shelby demanded. It always infuriated her when people chatted like she wasn’t in the room, or worse yet, like she was a child and couldn’t be trusted. “How does Val know about Quentin’s ability to time travel?”

“Time travel?” Val arched a black eyebrow. He turned and gazed deeply into Shelby’s eyes. Suddenly the whole room stilled around her.

“Val?” Melynda asked. Val turned to his lover and did likewise.

Shelby tried to speak but found she couldn’t move. Both she and Melynda seemed frozen in place, although she could feel herself breathing and could hear the men’s conversation as if from a distance. This paralysis wasn’t Quentin’s doing—this must be some kind of hypnosis.

“I’ve heard many legends about the Chosen Ones over the centuries, but I had no idea they were so gifted,” Val said. “Both Shelby’s and Melynda’s minds are very flexible and open to suggestion we discovered not long ago. Is that a sign of Chosen status?”

“Yes, psychic powers are common, but not absolutely necessary,” Quentin replied. “The hourglass mark located behind the left earlobe is usually conclusive of being a Chosen One. Does your woman possess such a mark?”

Val gently turned Melynda’s head and looked behind her earlobe. “Nothing. It doesn’t necessarily run in families I take it?”

“No, the mark is a random mutation of some sort. The few of us who display it seem to be rare exceptions. Your people have met us on several occasions both here and on your home world. We like to keep our time travel abilities a secret as you like to keep your eternal youth to yourselves.”

“Home world?” Val stood and grasped Quentin’s hand. “Then our legends are true—the vampire antibody in our blood did not originate on this planet?”

“No, it didn’t.”

“Can you bring one of the Kindred here... to help us to find a cure?”

Quentin shook his head. “I’m afraid not. I’m already playing hard and fast with the timelines by taking Shelby along with me. But I will tell you this: The Kindred will reunite with their long lost brothers and find a cure for your condition eventually.”

Val settled back into his chair. “That’s comforting to know. Anything else you can tell me?”

“Don’t tell anyone or else the timeline will become totally polluted.” Quentin lowered his voice even further. “The two branches of the Kindred—the human and other—will meet beneath a silver arc after a long journey.”

A broad smile almost split Val’s face in two. “A silver arc? Like this one?” He picked up a photo lying on the coffee table and pushed it toward Quentin. “It’s called the Gateway Arch. It’s made of stainless steel, and it’s supposed to last forever or near about.”

Quentin picked up the photo and laughed. “Yes! Now I remembered where I recalled St. Louis from in my history lessons. The Gateway of Yesterday and Tomorrow. It already exists in this time period?”

Val nodded. "Yes, it's only a little over forty years old now. They built it to be a symbol of the past, a symbol of settlers heading west for a better life. Funny to think it also represents something from the future as well."

What are they yakking about? Shelby thought, desperate to move once more. It sounded like Val had some really serious disease. Must be that allergy to sunlight Melynda was telling her about. She sure hoped it wasn't communicable for her cousin's sake. With Mel's dark hair and red lips, pale skin would only make her look more unearthly.

And the Gateway Arch was a meeting place for aliens? Okay, now that she really wanted to see for herself. Perhaps Quentin could take her there. She slowly began to rock back and forth in her seat.

"I think Shelby is attempting to break the trance." Quentin placed an arm around her shoulders and quieted her motion. "You want to bring them out of it now?"

"All right. I can tell Mel has been fighting it the whole time as well. Women!" Val stood between the two frozen females and raised his hand. "When I click my fingers you both will awaken feeling refreshed and not remember a word of the conversation Quentin and I shared while you were in the trance. One..."

I'm not going to forget what I heard...

"Two..."

I'm not going to forget what I heard, I'm not going to forget what I heard...

"Three!" *Click.*

"You did it to me again, didn't ya?" Melynda's annoyance was palpable. "But I got you this time. I hummed in my mind the whole time and blocked out your suggestion to forget your guys' conversation." She blew a long raspberry. "So there!"

"Me too." Shelby grinned. "I gave myself a mental suggestion to not forget what I just heard. Don't ask me how I knew how to do it, but somehow I think I've been tricked like this before—and I didn't like it one bit."

Melynda flew to her cousin's side and embraced her. "Oh, my poor cuz! That awful Leo Van Helsing hypnotized you. I hope you don't recall what he did to you, Shel. I don't want you to have the nightmares I had when that bastard roamed the earth."

"Roamed? Past tense?" Shelby nodded slowly. "So, the police were right when they said they thought he'd been abducted, killed and his body dumped in the river."

"Let's don't talk about such things," Val interrupted. "The past is past—unless you're a time traveler, of course."

Quentin laughed. "We can relive it, but it should always remain what it is—the past. We're not allowed to mess with it. To do so would violate the timeline and possibly rend the fabric of time itself... Not a very good thing to do."

"I guess not." Melynda straightened up and sighed. "I don't know about you all, but after I've been hypnotized I'm hungry. Anyone for dinner? We got Twinkies and Pepsi for dessert."

"What's a 'Twinkie'?" Quentin asked.

"The world's best snack food ever." Melynda winked. "Let's adjourn to the dining area, shall we? You two got time to share a meal before you go on your journey?"

"Time? They've got all the time in the world at their command." Val patted his lover's backside as she led their guests to the table. "They've got time to indulge in a classic Roman banquet and an orgy if they like."

“Orgy?” Quentin turned to Shelby and lifted an eyebrow ever so slightly. “Do such things happen in this time period?”

She winked. “You’d be surprised. Mel and I both attended a large state university. Anything goes.”

Melynda flung open the refrigerator and took out a beef roast. “Hmm, this meat looks good. Let me cook it, though. A few of us don’t eat it straight up like Val does.”

She pulled a large roasting pan out of the cupboard, chatting animatedly as she prepared their dinner. “You gotta be kidding about the orgies, Quent. A sadistic, kinky bastard not so long ago tied me to a bed on a riverboat bordello. Non-stop orgies night and day go on at that place still from what I’ve heard. The Romans got nothing on modern day folk. We’re just as twisted sexually as ever.”

Grinning, Quentin pulled Shelby into his arms. “I’ve been totally misinformed about the people of this time period. It’s nice to know how wrong I was.”

Eyes bulging, Melynda dropped the meat fork she was holding at the sight of her cousin boldly making out with her new lover. “Uh, yeah. I guess some of us were misinformed about certain other people, too.”

Val rose from his seat and approached Melynda, grinning. “I think Quentin has loosened up your straight-laced little cousin a bit, don’t you?”

“Yes, he has. Amazing.”

“Does it give you any ideas?” Val’s honey baritone sent a shiver of longing down Melynda’s spine. He came up behind her and wrapped his hands about her full, round breasts, tweaking her nipples to attention. “Want a little ‘snack’ before dinner?”

“Hmm...” Melynda moaned, arching her back against him for greater access. “Let me set the oven timer. I have plenty of ideas of how to heat you up. Perhaps Quent and Shel can give us a few pointers as well?”

* * * *

“We’d better get going. Thanks for the lovely... um, going away dinner.”

Shelby felt her cheeks warm as she hugged her cousin good-bye one last time. She couldn’t believe what had just happened. She couldn’t believe that she’d ever participate in anything so... wild. Quentin brought out a whole other side of her personality she didn’t know existed. She felt completely free and uninhibited for the first time in her life.

And she loved it.

Watching Val slowly undress Mel in front of her had freaked her out at first. She wanted to run from the room—from the building—but Quentin held her fast. He continued to kiss and caress her until she had turned into a wiggly mass of relaxation in his very capable hands. By that time, Val had divested his clothing, standing tall and proud in front of his lover who now lay on the couch.

No wonder Mel was so taken with him. The guy looked like a god with his flowing dark hair, olive-tinted skin, dark eyes, perfectly formed abs and pecs and thighs and... what an erection!

Shelby had to force her gaze away from the delicious sight before her. Warmth flooded her face. Her panties had turned completely damp with sexual excitement. She felt utterly and totally ashamed of herself. After all, Val was Mel’s boyfriend, not hers. She shouldn’t lust after another’s beloved, especially in front of her own lover. She didn’t want Quentin to catch the look of desire in her eyes as she watched Mel take Val’s

protruding, purple-veined member into her mouth and suck until he began to moan and wind his fingers through Mel's thick black mane of hair.

"Looks good, doesn't it?" Quentin slipped a hand into her pants and discovered just how good it did look. "Don't be afraid, Shelby. Watch all you like. Taste it if you want and Val's willing. I don't mind."

She gasped. "You don't?"

"No, I don't. You forget I'm from the future. These sorts of dinner parties are commonplace in my time period. A little mutual stimulation before the meal is considered a polite formality. In fact, it should be you taking care of Val's needs while I pleasure our gracious hostess and cook."

Shelby felt her jaw dropped to her chest. Her eyes bulged in awe. "I—I can't believe you said that."

"Why? Do only the Kindred and their mates satisfy each other orally in this time period?"

"No, of course not."

Quentin gave a long sigh and shrugged. She followed his wistful gaze. Melynda eased Val's cock deep into her throat, tenderly stroking his balls with her hands. Of all the nerve! Her boyfriend was lusting after her cousin and her fellatio technique. Well, she showed him a thing or two!

"Hey—I can suck cock with the best of them!" Shelby cried. Melynda and Val momentarily stopped their activities. All eyes in the room turned to her in eager anticipation.

Melynda laughed and clapped her hands. "Bravo, Shel!"

"Really?" Val winked. "Why not demonstrate your skill then?"

"All right." Shelby felt her heart racing with excitement. She loved a challenge... almost more than she worried what people thought of her. "I'll show you all how well I can pleasure a man with my tongue." She stood and pulled Quentin to his feet. "Strip."

"Yes ma'am! But you've got to undress, too."

She smirked at her lover, but quickly did as she was told. Clothes flew across the room leaving them both naked in nanoseconds. She dropped to her knees and immediately popped the length of his cock into her mouth. Hmmm... Salty-sweet and all male, the musky scent of him and the taste of his flesh made her pussy muscles clench in pleasurable expectation.

"Ah!" Quentin grasped the dining room chair beside him for balance. "Where on Earth did you learn how to do that?"

Shelby didn't answer. She spiraled her tongue around and around the fleshy top of her lover's cock until his knees buckled. He held on, white-knuckled, to both the chair and the table in order to stand up straight. She plied her hands up and down his shaft and squeezed his balls in rhythm with her sucking.

"I... I've got to sit down," Quentin mumbled, panting heavily. Shelby graciously allowed him to lean against a large overstuffed leather chair opposite the sofa where Mel worked her magic on Val.

"You're not giving up, are you?" Val teased her. From the sound of his moans and the glazed over look in his eyes, Shelby could tell Melynda had him just where she wanted him.

"Never!" Shelby repositioned Quentin for maximum stimulation. She'd show them.

She'd show them she wasn't just a pretty face with a great business mind. She'd show them that she knew what it took to pleasure a man. It was time for her secret weapon. It always worked like a charm on Graham and her previous boyfriends. She wiggled a finger up Quentin's ass and relaxed her jaws to take his length even deeper into her throat.

"Great timepiece of Colgan Seven! Ah!"

Quentin clung to her head tighter than a drowning man hugged a life preserver. Shelby smiled inwardly. Victory was hers! By the sound of things across the room, the sight of her giving Quentin the best fellatio he'd ever experienced in the known universe was all it took to drive Val over the cliff of ecstasy with a rush. Their darkly handsome host threw back his head, shouting praise as his cum gushed down the back of his lover's throat.

"Better than time traveling, huh?" Quentin laughed then moaned. "Your lady swallows it all, too?"

"Certainly." Melynda wiped her lips before bestowing a kiss upon Val's lips. "I'm building up my antibodies so someday perhaps I'll be a part of the Kindred race as well."

"You... you may have stumbled upon the cure there. Ah!"

Shelby wriggled her finger further up Quentin's hole and corkscrewed her tongue up and down his shaft. That'll teach him to carry on a conversation while she was giving him head. All too soon she tasted the salty liquid bursting from its chamber, filling her mouth as he twisted and groaned, cried and shuddered uncontrollably with his climax.

She stood up and slowly licked her lips. "Yummy."

Val and Melynda cheered and applauded. Quentin tumbled into the chair faster than a house perched on drenched mountainside slide during a mudslide. A soft groan broke forth from his lips as she bestowed a tender kiss. He appeared comatose.

"I didn't kill him, did I?" she wondered aloud.

"Nah, he's just got to sleep it off some." Melynda patted the spot on the sofa beside them. "Why don't you come over here and we can compare notes."

Shelby sprang across the room and landed on the couch on the opposite side of Val. He smiled broadly and welcomed both cousins into his arms.

"Shelby..." Val began slowly. "If I'd known what a fun-loving girl you were when I first signed my apartment lease with you, I'd have invited you over for a dinner party earlier."

She blushed, covering her warm cheeks with her hands. "Uh, yeah. Thanks for the compliment. I can't believe what I just did—and who I did it in front of, either."

Melynda laughed. "It's okay. I won't tell your mother if you don't tell mine."

"Deal." She sighed and relaxed into the soft, leather cushions. "Please, you two, don't tell anyone. I have a reputation in this community, and I'd hate for Graham to find out. The divorce is costing me enough even though it was he who cheated on me and walked out of the relationship."

"No worries. Our lips are sealed." Val turned and planted a passionate kiss full on her lips. Shelby closed her eyes and squealed with surprise, but didn't move from his arms. Suddenly, she felt his strong hand resting upon her aching-with-desire pussy.

"Hmm, Val, should you be doing that?" Shelby whispered. She didn't push the hand away as he began to stroke her sensitive nub in leisurely circles, however. It felt too good. "Your girlfriend's sitting right beside us."

“No problem,” Melynda said with a sigh. “I’m not starved for attention.”

Shelby peeked out of the corner of her eye and saw that Val was taking care of both their needs. An ambidextrous lover certainly came in... handy. The scent of her sex and the harmony of Mel’s moans further relaxed her. She stretched further against the sofa and allowed Val to massage and probe her slick nether lips and clit until she practically melted against the couch.

A tongue circled her areola and then a finger flickered against her opposite nipple. A mouth took her small breast into it and suckled it until it stood proud and firm, inches taller. Opening her eyes, she smiled. Quentin had joined in the game.

“I thought you were dead,” she said, chuckling.

“I did die. And went to heaven. But now I’m back.” His kisses glided across her pebbled peaks and drifted southward. He paused.

“Do you mind if I sample my lady as an appetizer?”

“Please do.” Val removed his hand and Shelby sighed with regret, until Quentin began to devour her with his teeth and tongue. He maneuvered her until she lay flat against the couch. She rocked her pelvis upward, rubbing her sensitive nub against the exquisite stimulation, cradling his head as she held on for dear life.

“Oh, yes, yes! Fuck me with your tongue. Harder—harder!” Melynda’s voice reverberated in her ears close by. She lay across the extra long sofa head-to-head with her cousin, their lovers each tasting their juices with obvious gusto. Grinning, Shelby tilted her head backward to catch a peek of the other couple’s activities. Val knew how to use her mouth every bit as well as Melynda.

Quentin took his cue from the others. He squeezed Shelby’s buttocks tight and plunged his tongue into her cunt. She squealed and bucked against him. Her pussy muscles trembled as waves of orgasms crashed over her. Soon the two cousins shrieked a duet of delight, delicious sensations overwhelming their scrambled brains with dizzying arrays of colors and explosions. As the echoes of their cries faded away, they sighed and fell into a light doze.

“I don’t know about you, but all that screaming sounded like a blatant invitation to fuck them senseless,” Quentin said matter-of-factly.

“I agree,” Val replied, a hint of mischief tinting his response. “Shall we switch things up to add to their fun?”

Shelby felt a shiver of bliss tingle up her spine as Quentin gave a low, throaty chuckle. “Why not? I’d love to fuck your gorgeous woman if she’s agreeable. I know mine wants a go at that ten-inch long cock of yours. She practically drooled to death when you slipped out of your jeans. I’d hate to disappoint her.”

Before Shelby could open her eyes or voice a protest, she felt her labia stretching to accommodate Val’s massive hard on. “Oh, my... heavens, yes!”

The pleasure-pain made her juices flow. She tilted her hips to allow him deeper penetration. At this moment, she didn’t care that Val belonged to her dear cousin—she only wanted his huge cock filling her cunt. She wanted him to ram himself repeatedly until she became hoarse from shouting.

She flung her arms over her head, grasping her cousin’s arms at the elbow as the thrusts came hard and fast. From the vibrations and groaning she knew Mel was experiencing one of the best fucks of her life, too.

“Harder, fuck me harder!” Mel moaned. “Show me how time travelers make a girl

feel like she's flying."

"Women from this century know how to express their desires succinctly," Quentin said between obliging thrusts.

"Please don't stop, Val." Shelby whimpered as he momentarily slowed his pace. "Good grief! What's with your teeth?"

Val bared what appeared to be fangs as he corkscrewed his hips, slowly winding himself tighter into her pussy. She gasped and blinked her eyes several times. She had to be imagining this, right?

"Do you mind if I enjoy a short drink of you before dinner, my dear?" he asked.

A hickey? Shelby felt game at this point, knowing she'd come the second he bit her. "As long as Quentin and Mel say it's okay, I'm cool."

Melynda's moans indicated her orgasm wasn't far off, either. "Oh, yes, yes! Pound it harder. Faster, Quent, faster."

"That's a yes for both of us," Quentin replied, quickening his strokes.

"Val, please?" Shelby pleaded. His slow screwing kept her dangling on the brink of completion. "Bite me now."

The sharp pain of his teeth's penetration on her neck dulled into a glorious warming as Shelby felt strong orgasmic tremors begin not from her cunt alone, but from every fiber of her being. She screamed, delirious with ecstasy, fire scorching through her veins, his taking from her and filling her with his seed simultaneously bringing her to the brink and over again.

Damn! Melynda was one lucky woman!

Squirming, writhing, thrashing about, Shelby held onto her cousin's arms as she likewise danced about the sofa. Crimson colors flashed before her eyes. She grew more and more lightheaded as blissful tingles filled every portion of her body and lifted her soul above the very plane of existence itself... A symphony of shouts, cries and groans harmonized as one voice as all met their mutual satisfaction.

What seemed like hours later Shelby came crashing back to earth and realized where she was. She lay cradled in Val's arms with Quentin's hand reaching out to rest lightly on her breast, her hands stretched above her head caressing her cousin's flushed cheeks. A high-pitched whine broke through the fuzz that clouded her senses.

"I think that's the oven buzzer," Melynda mumbled. "Time to eat. Dinner, that is."

Chapter Six

“Where did you park your time machine?”

Quentin turned and looked at her as if she had asked him the most stupid question in the universe. “Excuse me?”

Standing in the small backyard of her brownstone, Shelby placed her hands on her hips and rolled her eyes at his know-it-all smirk. “Come off it. There’s gotta be some big, honkin’ spaceship parked around here. How could you have traveled through time without one?”

“Time isn’t exactly the same as space. It’s a dimension all its own. There’s no need for a spaceship or self-contained vessel of any kind.”

“Then why are we standing in my backyard looking up at the sky?”

He smiled. “Because it’s a beautiful night and you look lovely in the moonlight?”

“Oh you!”

She felt like belting him one for getting her hopes up. After making their “long farewell” to Mel and Val, turning over her important papers to her able employees, calling her parents to tell them she was going away for a long rest, Quentin couldn’t even materialize a phone booth or a time tunnel or something equally flashy. Men! All talk, no action sometimes.

“The Doctor has the TARDIS in *Doctor Who*. Bill and Ted had a phone booth and George Carlin as their guide in *Bill and Ted’s Excellent Adventure*. And Mr. Spock from *Star Trek* had to calculate the coordinates to fling the Enterprise around the sun so they could travel in time. Are you telling me time travel is not all that complicated?”

“No, it isn’t. But it’s easier to unravel a time thread away from brick walls and tall buildings; hence we’re standing in your backyard. It’s a fairly quiet neighborhood I take it?”

She nodded. “You’re saying this isn’t a quiet procedure?”

“It is, but the after effects sometimes make dogs bark for hours.”

“After effects?”

Before Shelby could finish her sentence, Quentin had reached into his pocket and pulled out the key chain he’d misplaced earlier. The moon’s silvery light skipped across its smooth, platinum surface. How could a device the size of a standard business card do anything? Lifting it above his head he clicked on a small recessed button. Nothing happened.

“You check your batteries lately?” She threw her hands up in frustration. “What a pile of bull! That’s nothing but a garage door opener, is it?”

“It’s a door opener of sorts. Yes, that’s a fairly accurate description.”

“Give it up, Quentin. I’m dumb enough to fall for the time travel bit, and this is my reward—standing outside in the dark with a sexy lunatic holding a garage door opener.”

He frowned. “Give it a few minutes. You’ll see.”

Shelby squinted up into the night sky. Nothing. Everything seemed in its proper place. The stars, the pinkish glow on the horizon, the plaid cloud forming above their heads...

“Oh... That’s the fabric of time, isn’t it?”

“Very good.” He kissed her cheek. “I keep forgetting that you are a Chosen One. All this will be as effortless as skydiving off Mt. Everest for you.”

The rainbow of stripes and lines and patterns broadened slowly like a quilt unrolling across the firmament. “Skydiving off of Everest? Quentin, what you described isn’t exactly child’s play.”

“Isn’t it?” He detached one of the odd shaped “keys” from the ring and tossed it into the grass at their feet then pressed yet another button on the key chain. “It’s time to climb on board.” The oval shaped object began to expand. Two inches long, a foot long, three feet long, six feet long...

“There.” Quentin stepped on the board and motioned for her to do the same. It stabilized at approximately ten feet long and two feet in diameter and looked completely unremarkable in every way, in spite of its glossy, electric yellow-green surface.

“A surfboard?” Shelby couldn’t hide the incredulity in her voice.

“More or less.” He grinned at her, then took her hands and wrapped them about his waist. “Come up behind me and hold tight like you’re riding a... motorcycle, is it? I don’t want you to topple over when we hit the big time waves.”

“You really are a surfer dude.” She laughed. “I guess your clothing choice makes sense now.”

“I admit it—I’m into retro fashion.” He checked his wristwatch gadget and looked ahead at the growing patch of brilliant lights and swirling, twining colors. “Get ready. We’re about to launch.”

“Launch? Where to? You never told me where—or when—we were going.”

He chuckled. “I want to surprise you. Remember this is your vacation. You need a little relaxation. Our first stop will be very relaxing. I promise.”

“I certainly hope so.” She sighed and hugged him tight. “The suspense is killing me.”

Quentin re-checked his timepiece and bent his knees ever so slightly. “Five, four, three, two, one—we’re history!”

Suddenly Shelby understood exactly what it must feel like to be a cockroach caught up in a vacuum cleaner. The dazzle of stars in the black night sky far from the city, the roar of a storm-tossed ocean, the scents of a thousand roses, the taste of a rich caramel-hot-fudge turtle cheesecake, the warm caress of a million mink gloves—nothing came close to the sensory overload that encompassed her puny brain as Quentin guided the board along an open current of time.

What’s happening? She thought she had said the words out loud, yet she only heard them in her mind. The flashing mixtures of lights and colors bathed them in an eerie, unearthly glow. It was a funhouse gone completely insane.

And then it hit her: Neither one of them was breathing!

Hang onto me, Shelby. It gets bumpier in a moment.

We’re going to suffocate! There’s no air here. How can we breathe? Panic threatened to overwhelm her.

Don’t worry, we can. Trust me. And we don’t have to breathe because we don’t exist in time or space when we’re traveling inter-dimensionally. I’ll explain it to you later when you’re calmer.

The anxiety attack subsided. Shelby unsuccessfully tried to make a huffing sound. Some things didn’t travel telepathically she guessed. *Yeah, well, okay then, as long as you explain it fully to me—and I do mean in excruciating detail.*

She thought she heard him chuckle, but then the clanging throb of a Big Ben sized clock started to reverberate through her head.

Oh, the noise! What the hell is it?

Time to wash ashore. The time thread has played out and the current can only take us so far. This is the bumpy part.

She tightened her grip until she felt like she would cut Quentin in half by squeezing him. He turned and smiled at her.

Good girl. Don't worry. You can't knock the breath out of me here. Here it goes...

Shelby could have sworn the earthquake began somewhere inside her left temple. The vibrations, although not entirely unpleasant, began to build and strengthen until her whole frame felt like one quivering stack of Jell-O cubes. She closed her eyes tightly, but nothing could stop the ringing in her ears or the numbness she felt in her extremities.

One more current to cross and we'll be through the barrier.

Quentin crouched on the board and she did likewise, wrapping her arms ever tighter around his waist. It felt like they were coming down the top of a very long, very high rollercoaster hill. She wondered what would meet them on the other side.

Are we going to crash?

Why? You want to? I thought I'd go easier on you, since this was your first time.

Lights flashing, colors swirling, the vacuum-like effect sucked them out of the time vortex and deposited them safely onto what appeared to be a beach.

"We made it," Quentin announced. "You can let go of me now. I do have to breathe once we're back in the time line."

Shelby slowly stood and released her aching arms. "Sorry." She scanned the horizon. An emerald green sea gently splashed against a white sand beach rimmed with what appeared to be towering ferns. "We're still on earth?"

"Yes, we're a few years in the past—and a few more time threads away from the former employers bent on lopping off my head."

He hopped off the board and motioned for her to do likewise. He pressed the button on the key chain and it began to shrink until it was key-sized again. He retrieved the miniaturized board and slipped it back on the ring.

Shelby stretched her arms over her head. "Magical surfboard, huh?"

"Actually it's not. The 'magic' is all in the key fob device. I just enjoy standing on something while maneuvering through the time eddies and waves. Fun wasn't it?"

"In a motion sickness sort of way, yeah." Shelby reached down to work the kink from her back and decided to remove her running shoes and footies. The sand felt warm and silky running through her toes. "Hmm, that feels better. "Where are we exactly and when?"

"We're not too far off the beaten track here." Quentin checked his wristwatch device and tapped on a few buttons, frowning. "What? That's close enough I guess. According to this, we're in western Mexico."

"You mean that's the Pacific? Is this Acapulco? Where are all the tourists?"

He laughed and took her by the hand. "Tourists?" He kicked off his sandals and they began to amble across the velvety smooth sand. "There aren't any tourists, and there won't be any for millions of years."

Shelby halted in her tracks. "You mean we're the only humans on the planet?" He nodded. "Is there anything living here besides us?"

“The early ancestors of the dinosaurs and some types of fish, those sorts of things.”

Her heart began to race. “What happens if a T. Rex decides to eat us for lunch?”

“Don’t be ridiculous! T. Rex would never eat us for lunch.”

“Yeah, right. He’d have us for a quick snack between meals.”

“No he wouldn’t. Don’t let your imagination get the better of you, Shelby.”

“So how can you be so sure a T. Rex won’t eat us?”

Quentin shrugged and grinned at her like she was a raving lunatic. “The Tyrannosaurus Rex lived in the Cretaceous period. This is the Permian. No dinosaurs. Wrong geological period.”

“Oh.” They began walking again. “So, you’re saying this is a completely safe place?”

He nodded. “It’s fairly safe. It’s a deserted stretch of beach as far as I can tell. It’s in the middle of the worldwide ocean, near the equator of the super continent. I doubt there’s anything larger than a hermit crab living around here. That’s why I picked it.”

She felt irritated by his air of apparent self-assuredness. Didn’t time travelers ever make mistakes?

“How did you pick it? How did you know this place even existed?”

He stopped and looked around them. “I didn’t know it existed. I simply program the time device to put us on a time current heading toward the past and toward a remote locale. It made a suggestion, and I agreed with it and it did the rest.”

“Are you saying your magical surfboard key chain device has a built in computer?”

“Computer?” He laughed. “Nothing that primitive. It’s got a synthetic brain.”

Shelby worried about the sanity of her companion. He clearly wasn’t the Doctor or Mr. Spock. His key chain and surfboard didn’t look like it was big enough to possess any sophisticated technology. But, in all honesty, whose judgment should she question? Here she was in the middle of nowhere in both time and space depending on his knowledge and skill to keep them both alive.

“A brain? Quentin, are you saying your time travel device is a living creature?”

“Not in the usual sense, but, yes, it possesses sentience.”

“I’m not even going to go there.” She threw up her hands, sighing. “As long as you think we’re safe on this tropical paradise, I’m not second guessing you anymore.”

She plopped down in the sand and began to scoop it up in her hands. “So beautiful and clean. Amazing how quickly people can litter up a perfectly good planet.”

Quentin knelt beside her and began sifting the grains through his fingers as well. “That’s why I enjoy the past. Pristine beaches and no tourist traps.”

“No noise pollution, no pollution of any kind.” Shelby smiled thoughtfully. “No Joneses to keep up with, no competitors to out compete, no ex-husbands to bring you down, no one around to tell you that you can’t go skinny dipping in the ocean...” She wiggled out of her jeans then stood. “Last one in has to make dinner tonight!”

She flipped her top off over her head, unhooked her bra and tossed them beside her jeans then ran down the hill toward the surf.

“Wait a minute, Shelby!” he cried. “You don’t want to go too far out into the water.”

“Why not? I thought you said there were no dinosaurs in this time period.”

As she neared the rushing tide she paused. The blue-green water looked inviting and perfectly safe to her. She dove into the warm waters and swam a few body lengths before switching over to float on her back. She shut her eyes to the brilliant primordial sun.

Ah, paradise! Clear water and soft sandy beaches and no tourists.

A few minutes later a cloud appeared in the otherwise wide-open blue sky. The darkness seemed to grow larger and larger. A sudden chill overwhelmed her. Brr! Weird! Not wanting to open her eyes as she lay on her back and squint in the sun's brilliant reflection on the ocean surface, she flipped over and headed back toward the beach. As she drew nearer she looked up and saw Quentin rushing to the shore to meet her.

"Don't stop, Shelby," he called out to her, "Just keep swimming toward me. That a good girl."

That's what I'm doing. She felt slightly miffed by her lover's lack of camaraderie and sense of adventure. Why didn't he grab his board and surf the waves at least? Some surfer dude Quentin Takahashi turned out to be!

At last she reached the shallows and began trudging up the slope of the beach.

"Don't turn around," he ordered as she hit the dry sand. Odd, he looked pale as he stood pointing his key chain toward the ocean. "I'm not sure how much power I've got before our unwelcome guest unfreezes, and I don't want you to..."

Whoosh!

"What was that noise? Whatever are you babbling about? Aaaaagggghhh!" Shelby's hands fell to her heart as she turned and caught a glimpse of the monstrous silhouette of the aquatic creature as it swam back out to sea. "Aaaagggghhh!"

Quentin wrapped his strong arms about her and turned her face away from the horizon before she almost fainted. He held her about the waist and helped her walk up the slope. "Shh... You're okay. No problem. He didn't get his snack, and you're still all in one piece. You *are* still in one piece, right?"

Shelby nodded mutely. "Um-hm."

"Good." He kissed her tenderly on the forehead. "Let's just sit down for a moment and enjoy the ocean view, shall we?"

A beach blanket and a large parasol greeted them on the top of the rise. He gently helped her to the ground and sat down beside her. He grabbed a thick towel and began to dry her off. Slowly, the warmth returned to her trembling limbs.

"Where the heck did all these things come from?" She frowned. "A prehistoric Wal-Mart?"

"Cute." He chuckled, rubbing her wet head vigorously. "It's good you can keep your sense of humor in the face of danger. You're a natural time traveler, Shelby. Was there any doubt about it?"

She grabbed his hand and made him look her in the face. "Stop humoring me, Quentin. You told me there weren't any dinosaurs around here."

"There aren't, but that doesn't mean there aren't animals living in the ocean... very hungry animals."

Her eyebrows rose a foot. "Are you saying that *thing* was a shark?"

He nodded. "Yeah, that's probably what it was—a shark or one of his distant cousins. Sharks have been around for some time at this point. And they wouldn't mind snacking on a juicy swimmer in this time period any less than they do in the modern world."

Shelby crossed her arms about her naked chest and shivered. "Ooo! I hate sharks. I *despise* sharks! Mel and I stayed up late one night watching old movies, and we saw the original *Jaws*. That's enough for me to stay on dry land for a very long time. I would

have never dived into the water if I'd known there were sharks around here."

She shakily stood and walked over to her pile of clothes and began looking for her underwear. "Where did the beach party supplies come from?"

"I brought them in another capsule on my key chain. The time device shrinks them down so they can travel compactly. And there's no need to put those binding things back on. I brought some sun block." Quentin reached into his pocket and tossed her a small tube. "Just a couple of dabs of this concentrated stuff will keep that freckle-fair skin of yours safe in this blistering sunshine."

She quickly rubbed the slippery oil over her face, shoulders, arms and legs. She giggled as his eyes began to glaze over while she slowly caressed her stomach and breasts. "You go nude sunbathing a lot?" she teased.

"Occasionally." He grinned. "I love skinny dipping, but I hate a sunburned ass."

She laughed. "You'd better help me put some lotion on mine then."

She turned around and bent over. Taking the hint he was immediately at her side. His lips brushed up against her shoulder blades as she heard him drop his pants.

"Wanna give these prehistoric creatures some lessons in sexual reproduction?" he murmured

"Don't crabs and sharks know how to do it already?"

He chuckled. "Not quite as well as you do." The tip of his cock rubbed some of its own slippery liquid against her cunt opening. "Give me the tube and I'll put some oil on your backside."

She passed it to him and sighed. "Funny, it sure feels like you've got your own lotion going back there."

"I do, I do. But I want to make sure you don't get too tanned by the sun while I tan your cute butt cheeks with my hands."

She started to turn around. "You're going to what?"

"Resume the position and kneel," he ordered. He knelt as well and forced her to remain facing away from him, her milky white buttocks thrust upward. "I promise you'll enjoy it. But first a little sun block."

He slicked up his palms and began to knead her back and shoulders until Shelby felt like butter melting into the warm sand. Then he rubbed a little of the oil on himself, thoroughly wiping his hands dry on his legs.

Whack! The stinging swat to her ass made her jump. "Why you..."

Quentin teased her opening with his cock some more. She moaned.

"You like that?" He reached up and fingered her clit. Shelby let loose a squeal and burrowed her knees into the sand deeper. "Yes, that's good. Prepare yourself for my next move."

Whack! Whack! The contact stung her buttocks, but Quentin generously rewarded her with another clit massage.

"Just fuck me and skip the spanking nonsense," Shelby demanded.

Whack! "That's not how you ask for it. I'm not sure you want my cock in your pussy."

"I do—I do! Can't you tell that I want you to fuck me?"

He inserted a finger into her and began stimulating her g-spot. "I'm not entirely convinced yet." She groaned and her juices began to flow even faster.

"Come on, Quentin. Don't leave me hanging like this." *Whack! Whack!* "Ow! That

burns.”

“Does it?” He rubbed his tip across her red buttocks. “Cool it down any?”

Goodness! She felt really turned on by the spanking, but she couldn’t let him know that. “Stop being such a tease and fuck me!”

“I’m a tease? You prance about an empty beach waving those cute ass cheeks about shamelessly and you call me a tease?” *Whack!* “That’s what naughty girls get for being so forward.”

“Forward? Who broke into my home?”

Whack! “Who brazenly invited a complete stranger from the future into her bed?”

“Me. And who fucked my cousin?”

Whack! “And who fucked her cousin’s boyfriend and has an interesting hickey on her neck to prove it?”

“You got me there.” *Whack!* The burning sensation on her buttocks was driving her close to the edge.

“Had enough?” He chuckled. *Whack! Whack!*

“Hmm, not really.” Shelby groaned and arched her back, raising her buttocks closer to him. “I don’t know what’s become of my inhibitions these past few days. I actually like having my ass spanked on a deserted island in the land time forgot.”

“You do?” *Whack!* As the tingle of his handprint faded, he slipped his cock into her slick passage and moaned. “Yes, I can tell that you do.”

Quentin pounded relentlessly into her, his balls bouncing hard against her pussy until it pulsed and clenched about his cock. She tossed her head back, whimpering as the spiraling sensations of her climax wrapped around her again and again.

Whack!

“What was that for?” she muttered, collapsing into the soft sand.

“For good measure—and for coming so quickly.”

Laughing, he rolled her to her back and lifted her legs up high. Digging himself deeper into the beach with his hands and knees, he gradually lowered her legs until her knees hung loosely over his shoulders, gripping her buttocks tightly with one hand as the other massaged her clit. With one swift thrust he impaled her onto his erection, each stroke deeper than the last.

“Wow, that’s intense!” Arching her back higher, Shelby matched his rhythm with her hip tilts. The dizzying assault would take her to bliss-filled heights she was only dimly aware of. Her hands fell to her breasts, circling the rosy areolas lazily until their tips stood tall and proud in the ancient sunlight. She bit her lip hard as the orgasmic shudders began to mount.

“Don’t hold back,” he said, panting heavily. “There’s not another human on the planet to hear us.”

“W-what about land sharks? I don’t want to get eaten by drawing undue attention to us.”

“There’s no land animal that big or dangerous here. Scream all you want.”

“Okay.” She took a deep breath and shouted, “Fuck me, Quentin. Fuck me hard and fast! Harder—now faster! Yes!”

Howling like a wolf that wouldn’t be seen in these parts for millions of years, Shelby cried louder and longer than she’d ever thought possible. Her sound effects alone caused her to climax and threatened to deafen them both. Each ripple of clenching and

unclenching pussy muscles crashing over her promised yet another round. Supernovae exploded in broad daylight before her closed eyes, blinding her with desire that went beyond lust. She knew what she wanted to try next.

The golden sunlight glistened brightly, outlining Quentin's sweaty, muscular form, the smell of sex strong in the tropical breeze. Shelby licked her dry lips and motioned for him to halt. She lowered her legs and rolled over to her front, raising her red butt cheeks to him.

"Spank me then fuck my ass, Quentin. I know you want to; all guys enjoy it."

Moaning, he rubbed the head of his moist penis against her crevice. "I won't lie to you. Of course I'd enjoy it. But the more important question is will you?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. I've never tried it. But I feel like experimenting today. I've been spanked, fucked, swallowed a load of cum and was fucked by my cousin's boyfriend in front of my current boyfriend while he fucked my cousin. What else is there to try?"

Grinning, he slowly eased his length into her. Relaxed by her repeated climaxing, the penetration didn't hurt as much as she thought it would. Burying her elbows into the warm sand, she rested her head to the side and watched as her smiling lover slowly and gently pumped into her ass.

"Ah! Tight. Perfect."

"Glad you think so," she purred. "I'm such a naughty girl. Aren't you going to spank me?"

The excitement building up from their previous joining came readily apparent in the pulse of his cock. With a quick swat to her backside and a cry of surrender, his seed erupted deep within her. Linked together they collapsed to their sides. Soon they were rolling and splashing about in the quickly rising tide.

Shelby rolled to her side and spit out a mouthful of seawater. "Nothing like a saltwater bath after some fun in the sun."

Quentin scooped a handful of ocean and splattered it against her sweat-covered skin. "I've always wondered what you'd look like in a wet T-shirt."

"Wet T-shirt?" She turned around and gasped at the incoming waves inching closer to their clothing. "Ohmigosh! We'd better save your shorts before your time board key chain gets washed out to sea!"

They scrambled up the beach and rescued their garments before all was lost.

"I guess we can lay out until we dry off." She plopped down on the blanket and grabbed the towel to pat her tingling backside dry.

"I don't think we're going to have the time to take a sunbath." He pointed to the rough surf. "Notice how quickly the waves are crashing into shore. This beach may be completely submerged before we know it. Time to get on the road for our next port of call."

Shelby tossed the towel to Quentin and quickly donned her clothing. "Where are we time traveling to next?"

He chuckled. "That's for me to know and for you to figure out. I promise you'll love it or double your money back."

* * * *

"Did they say how much exactly they'd give us for Takahashi's hide?"

The green-scaled humanoid shrugged his answer at his seven-foot tall, black leather harness-wearing boss then turned to exit the chamber. “You know how those bureaucrats at the Time Agency act—always looking to save a credit or two even if the whole of existence hangs in the balance. But it was a sizable amount.”

Chuckling, the giant threw himself onto a red leather chaise lounge and tossed his small whip aside. This news excited him more than his sadistic sex games. “I know exactly how cheap they are. They’re so cheap they can’t even bring themselves to hire a decent assassin to take me out.”

The reptilian crewmember paused at the door. “Shall I tell them we’ll deliver him then?”

A soft moan escaped from a blue-skinned humanoid female tied spread eagle across a medieval-looking torture device. The giant rose and crossed to a rack containing a variety of his favorite tools before approaching the semi-conscious form. “Yeah, go ahead and close the deal. And be sure to turn the sound-dampening field all the way up in here after you leave. This one caterwauls like there’s no tomorrow when we... play.”

The giant arched a thin black eyebrow and grinned. “Perhaps she’s right about tomorrow, eh?”

Both men laughed.

Chapter Seven

Shelby felt in awe of the fabric of time opening and unraveling before her eyes, its majestic intricacy in equal parts both frightening and welcoming. However did mankind discover its mysteries and learn to access it to travel between points in the timeline? And why hadn't time travelers appeared in history before the twenty-first century? Or had they?

So many questions she had for her enigmatic lover... But before she knew it, they were sucked into the weave of bright lights and textures, surrounded by the claustrophobic, yet simultaneously freeing sensation of surfing the currents of time.

You're getting better at this, Quentin thought into her mind. *That's it. Relax your knees and allow them to work as shock absorbers.*

I don't know how you can get use to something this... freaky. How do you steer this crazy thing?

I don't. I program the device where I want it to take me and trust that it follows my instructions. Aside from an occasional hiccup in the time current, I've managed to get where I wanted to go ninety percent of the time.

What happens the other ten percent?

No answer.

Quentin?

You don't want to know. Besides, I can override the programming and surf on manual when necessary. I did it when I first found you. You were calling to me somehow. Your call drew me into your place and time.

Are you saying—er, thinking—that we were meant to be together?

He smiled and pulled her arms tighter about his waist. *Hold on, here we go. I thought I'd take you someplace a bit closer to home. Let's see if you recognize it.*

The time corridor closed after them, its sparkling, twirling patterns of color blending into a sunlit plain. Shelby blinked several times to adjust her vision. A pinkish glow from a rising sun bounced off the steeply pitched, straw-covered roofs atop. The straw roofs were mounted on short shacks surrounding what she now realized was a tremendous flat plain.

It had to be some kind of plaza, a central meeting place of sorts, but who lived here? Shelby turned about and caught sight of a massive wood and straw-thatched building standing on top of a square, four-tiered dirt pyramid, one hundred feet or more in height with steps running up its sides. A pair of slightly smaller twin mounds stood opposite this great mound. The silver glint of a wide, winding river glistened beyond the mound city as the eastern light reflected off its slow moving surface.

"This place does seem familiar." She absentmindedly tapped her index finger against her lips. "What time is it?"

"About sunrise. The city is just waking up. Today should be an exciting day."

"Exciting? What's so exciting about today?" She rubbed her shoulders. "Brr, it's a bit brisk, but I feel some hot, humid air, too. And what I meant by 'what time is it?' was what year is it?"

Quentin glanced at his wristwatch chronometer. "About 1100 A.D. give or take a

decade.”

“We’re in medieval times?” Shelby frowned. “Where’s the moat and castle? This village is surrounded by a high wooden stockade like an early pioneer fort. I figured we landed in the Old West.”

He sighed and shook his head. “It’s true then. How sad.”

She didn’t care one bit for his patronizing tone. Slowly she crossed her arms and stuck out her chin. “What’s true?”

“They told us in time agent training classes about the inferior education twenty-first century Americans received, but I never believed it. How sad it is to think that my instructors actually knew what they were talking about for once.”

“Hey! We weren’t all that poorly educated.” She scrunched up her nose in thought. “Were we?”

“No comment!” Quentin chuckled. “Just try to be more open-minded. It’s not ‘medieval times’ everywhere on planet Earth in 1100 A.D. There are many civilizations flourishing, some are even at their peak like this one. Think about it. There’s a big muddy, meandering river nearby. Note the damp. You’re very close to home.”

Shelby turned around and took in the scene once more. Ah-ha! She realized where they had landed now. She grinned and threw her arms about his neck.

“Okay, so I was a bit disoriented after our last little stop. I know where we’re standing now. I know the name of that hill. It’s Monks Mound, the largest earthen construction in the New World. I visited here with my high school history class. We’re across the river in Illinois. This is the abandoned city of Cahokia, right?”

He pulled her into his arms and kissed her lips passionately before letting her go to wander about the empty plaza. “You’ve restored my faith in your century’s educational system. Yes, people in your time called this city ‘Cahokia’. Actually its real name translates roughly to ‘the City of the Sun’ in the Mississippian tongue. I believe the correct pronunciation is…”

“Kween-tan!”

A party of bow and arrow-brandishing natives abruptly interrupted their conversation. Shelby tried hard not to stare, but it was difficult. They dressed in brightly patterned loincloths, sporting half-dollar-sized, ear spool earrings and deeply tanned, black line tattooed faces. She bit her lip and tried not to stare. *These guys might feel at home in a Goth bar back home in the twenty-first century.*

“Greetings Worshipers of the Sun!”

A handsome man with a swirl tattoo on his cheek that resembled the burning orb replied to Quentin in a language Shelby had never heard before. “Sorry,” her lover whispered to her, frowning. “I think my translating device is experiencing technical difficulties. Must have gotten some sand in it. I’ll do the talking.”

“All right. They certainly know how to sneak up on people. Um, hello there.” Shelby smiled and waved lamely as the crowd continued to press forward. “We come in peace.”

What could she do to make them understand that she didn’t mean them any harm? She didn’t speak their language, and they certainly didn’t speak English or Spanish, which she knew a little from her semester abroad in Costa Rica. In fact, it would be four hundred years or more until Columbus and his ilk would encounter the Cahokians’ descendents. The arrow tips inched closer. She jumped into Quentin’s arms and laid her head on his shoulder.

“Don’t worry.” He stroked her hair. “We’re safe. They’re friendly. We’ve met before.”

“Good. You’re part of the family then?”

“Sort of. They assumed the first time I was here that with my black hair and dark eyes that I was an envoy from a distant tribe. But I think they’re surprised by your fair skin and blue eyes.” A lone warrior took a step closer to them. “I think they find your blonde hair a bit of a distraction, too.”

She took a long breath and timidly raised her head. “Distraction? Like in they think I’m a golden sun goddess and they want to worship me? Or do they want to take out my beating heart as a virgin sacrifice?”

“Don’t act so uncivilized, Shelby. The Mississippians don’t remove hearts from virgins. You’re thinking of the Aztecs.”

“Oh. Sorry.”

“And the Mississippians culture is very conservative in its sexual mores in spite of the skimpy clothing. Plus, you don’t qualify as a virgin, remember?”

She chuckled nervously. “Right. I guess you can put me down then. Can we take a tour of the village? Is that allowed?”

Quentin patted her backside as she regained her feet. The warriors quickly straightened up and allowed a fiercely proud individual with a high forehead and large hook-shaped nose to gain entrance into the circle. A multitude of glossy pink, coral and white shell beaded necklaces draped the man’s neck and shoulders. Shelby admired his crown-like headdress and matching cape made entirely of falcon feathers. No doubt, this person held power.

“Chief, it’s great to see you again.” Quentin grasped the older man’s forearms and nodded his greeting. “Happy Spring Equinox. Is it time to check the calendar?”

The regal man nodded and guided Quentin away from the circle of his bodyguards. Shelby attempted to keep up with her lover, but a spear-carrying warrior indicated she was to wait. She silently followed the pack, keeping several respective paces behind the royal entourage. What else could she do? Apparently rigid social hierarchies and male chauvinism existed everywhere and in all times.

A crowd formed about the chief. Or was he more of a priest? It appeared to be the latter considering the reverent awe and respect his noble subjects paid him as he passed by. Dressed in equally intricate beaded neck ornaments and patterned feather headdresses, they joyfully followed their leader through an opening in the wooden stockade, marching toward a circle of towering red cedar poles located to the west of Monks Mound.

Leaving the inner walled city, thousands of what Shelby assumed to be the common folk, the farmers and hunters with their wives and children, converged at the large circle. The commoners’ dresses and loincloths seemed rather plain by comparison, devoid of decoration. Very few were decorated with the rare shells, beads and feathers that the nobility flaunted.

“So the French didn’t invent *haute couture* after all.” She smiled at her entourage. “Where are we going?” No one said a word, but continued silently toward the circle of cedars. Suddenly the name *Woodhenge* popped into her mind.

Yes! Everyone was heading to Woodhenge, a sun calendar archeologists had uncovered at Cahokia similar to the ancient stone varieties found in England. From the

damp chill in the air and Quentin's greeting, she concluded they were to witness the first dawn of spring, a most sacred time for a culture whose very existence depended on the cycles of rain and sunlight to bring in their immense harvests of corn.

She laughed and clapped her hands. "Oh wow! I'm actually in Cahokia, a place people have been puzzling over forever. I bet any anthropologist would pay a million bucks to stand where I'm standing and discover how this city and culture worked."

The crowd stilled. The priest halted upon reaching the center of the sacred circle and raised his arms toward the heavens. Shelby did her best to reach to Quentin, but the strongmen surrounding their beloved leader did not allow it.

Damn it! Too short. She jumped, trying to catch a peek of the ceremony over their heads to view what was to happen next.

As the golden globe of the sun peeked over the horizon's edge its weak light lined up perfectly with the pole the priest stood facing. Shelby turned around with the crowd and gasped in delight. The sun's rays lined up perfectly with the entrance of the straw-roofed palace atop of Monks Mound.

What a feat of engineering! It was all the more remarkable because she realized the Cahokians didn't possess a backhoe—or even a written language. If the priest lived at the top of the great dirt pyramid, was it any wonder the commoners thought he had mastered control of the sun's rising itself?

"Another good year for the commodities market," Shelby said to a stone-faced bodyguard standing next to her. "I mean think of all that excess corn you guys grow. I remember my history teacher telling us how the Cahokians probably bartered their surplus with tribes from the Mississippi headwaters down to the Gulf of Mexico and far parts east and west of the river. Cahokia was the Wall Street of the New World... I mean you didn't find all those pretty ocean shells on your necklaces and earbobs in these parts. You guys are great traders. I'd love to learn some of your business secrets."

The warrior continued to stare silently at her. Suddenly the wind began to howl. All eyes turned to the solar calendar. The sky had turned an ugly shade of gray-green. An onrush of clouds instantly obliterated the warmth of the rising sun. The women and children began to wail in terror. The warriors turned to face their priest, hopeless, stricken expressions etched on their tattooed faces.

Green skies weren't a good sign. Shelby gulped. What kind of shelter did they have to use in case of tornados or hailstorms? They had to have something, right? They were sitting ducks standing along the Mississippi bottomland. Maybe the mounds had storm cellars?

"Bad weather on the first day of spring. Who would have thought?" She forced a chuckle and smiled up at the warrior closest to her. They had coped with violent weather changes before, hadn't they? "Don't worry, the skies will clear up later today and the big celebration can continue then. Bad weather happens a lot during Mardi Gras, and everyone thinks the parades will be canceled, but people still manage to have a good time. You'll see"

"Time to go now, Shelby!" Quentin yelled above the agitated crowd. He struggled to break through the circle of bodyguards but found his forward movement thwarted.

"So soon?" she shouted back. The strongmen huddled about their priest-leader and cast angry glances at her. She felt desperate to get to Quentin. After all, he held their ticket out of here.

“Yes, we need to leave. I miscalculated a bit on the date. The climate is changing.”

Shelby smiled weakly at the archers. The common folk and minor noblemen had scrambled away from the rapidly approaching storm. “No kidding. I think we’re under a severe thunderstorm warning at the very least.”

“I’m not talking about the weather. I’m talking about the society here. They’re not happy campers.” He hurled himself against one of the guards, but muscle and spear prevented him from breaking through. Slowly the warriors marched the chief and his two captives back toward the stockade.

“I thought you said earlier we’d be safe here, that the Cahokians didn’t practice human sacrifice.” Shelby hoped against hope that she hadn’t misunderstood him.

“They don’t—most of the time. But the Mississippians do take their sun ceremonies very seriously... and you’re an outsider.”

“We both are, Quentin. Oh... You mean because of my hair color?”

“Yes. They think you’ve stolen the brilliance of the sun and have brought a curse on them. You’ll ruin their crops for the coming year if they don’t get rid of you.”

“Uh-oh.” She gulped hard. “Hit your magic button on your key chain and freeze these dudes and then let’s get the hell out of here.”

“I can’t.” He patted his short’s pocket, an expression of shock and bewilderment growing on his face. “I really can’t.”

Shelby felt her heart in her throat, the blood pounding in her ears. The bodyguards were dragging them along at a more rapid pace now, dragging them to their deaths. “Why can’t you?”

He gulped. “I dropped my time device somewhere along the trail to the sun circle.”

* * * *

Shelby had always wondered what it must have felt like to be bound hand and foot and tied to a large earthen mound altar with a high priest intoning an hour-long blessing over a ceremonial flint knife—and now she knew firsthand.

“Thanks a lot, Quentin. I want my money back on this trip. Pre-dinosaur times were infinitely safer by comparison.”

“Leave it to human beings to make things really dangerous.” Quentin forced a laugh in a vain attempt to hide his apprehension. They had bound him as well and tossed him to the ground next to the platform, next on the sacrifice schedule. “I suppose we should feel honored in a way. They usually reserved cutting off the hands and heads of only feared enemies of the people. Common people are ordinarily strangled and thrown into a pit.”

“Lovely.” She closed her eyes and tried to will the frightening scene away. “Still, I should take some solace in the fact that I was the first person of European descent to ever visit this city. You’d think some archeologist in the twentieth or twenty-first century would have found my bones under a burial mound somewhere in the area and remarked on how unusual a specimen I was. I mean I’m fairly short, but I stand a good half-foot taller than most of the women here. And I suppose the facial characteristics of my skull would look different compared to Native Americans. They have such lovely cheekbones and those distinctive hook-shaped noses.”

“That they do...” Quentin’s words trailed off. “I know where it is!”

The priest’s chanting continued. Even a Latin mass didn’t take as long. Shelby sighed. “Where what is, Quentin darling, love of my life and cause of my imminent

death?”

“The key chain with my surfboard. It’s hanging off the necklace of that bodyguard standing to your left. See it?”

Shelby lifted her head from the platform and gazed over at the warrior Quentin had indicated. Sure enough, the key chain dangled from the well-built bodyguard’s neck.

“Wonderful,” she said, sighing. “At least we know now that it isn’t lost. You think maybe the Cahokians learned how to use it to time travel and that’s what became of their civilization? That explanation certainly would clear up a few mysteries for the historians of my age.”

“Anything is possible, but then the Time Cops would have tracked them down by now and they wouldn’t be here. Their entire time line would have been erased as punishment.” Quentin rolled over closer to the warrior holding the key chain only to be kicked in the side. “Umph! I don’t think I’ll be able to wrestle it from him. Sorry.”

“It’s okay. I’m a bit tied up at present myself.”

The only thing worse than the sun priest’s incessant chanting was the howl of the storm outside of his straw-thatched palace. Rain came sideways in the violent winds. The ominous portent of gray-green skies dominated the shelter’s opening. Perhaps her remains weren’t found at the site because they had been blown miles away by a twister?

“Heavens above!” Shelby cried. “I know what became of Cahokia now. A tornado must have driven them away. Only the mounds and the foundations of their buildings remained. It would explain the sudden evacuation of so many people in a short period of time.”

Quentin smiled. “Good deduction. You truly are a Chosen One, Shelby. It’s been an honor to time travel with you.”

The priest stopped his chant and nodded. The warrior on her left cut the leather thong on her wrists in order to stretch out her arms for the sacrifice of her hands. “It’s not over yet, Mr. Doom-and-Gloom.”

The second Shelby felt the ropes loosen she quickly sat up and grabbed a hold of the key chain with her mouth, yanking it from the warrior’s neck. He leapt back as if he had been burned. Her tongue must have hit the start button. The surfboard began to expand, too, frightening the high priest and his helpers into the corner.

“Woo-hoo!” she cheered. “Hold onto your hats, sun worshipers! You ain’t seen nothing yet.”

The time corridor exploded open in a wild flash of light and a kaleidoscope of colors—green, gold, purple, fuchsia and blue, millions of times brighter than any spring sun. Screaming in mortal dread, the assembled Cahokians fled the palace, slipping and tumbling down the muddy slopes of Monks Mound.

“Amazing. You’re simply amazing,” Quentin murmured.

Shelby grabbed the knife dropped by the high priest and cut her ankles free then hopped down to undo Quentin’s bindings. “Aren’t I so? Come on. Let’s get out of here before they steel up enough courage and manpower to come back and finish what they started.”

Chapter Eight

“Where the hell are we now?”

Quentin flinched. In the aftermath of their first time “hops” together he didn’t blame Shelby for sounding cynical and wary. He hated telling her he didn’t know where the hell they were now since they’d evacuated Cahokia on an emergency time corridor and not a standard one he’d pre-programmed. Most likely they had probably traveled to a nearby physical location, but they were a few centuries down the road from 1100 AD. He took a deep breath and blew it out slowly. Wherever they were, it couldn’t be any more dangerous than their last two vacation spots.

“I’ll be damned...” He blinked as the glow of the time fabric condensed into a small singularity and gradually faded away revealing their present circumstances. Rows of red brick buildings lining one side of a cobblestone street stood silent in the bright moonlight. The sound of barge horns on the dark river nearby and horses clopping along mostly deserted streets echoed in the narrow lane. The acrid smell of smoke—wood and coal and charred metal—scented the river-dampened breeze. “I think we’re back where we started from. We’re back in St. Louis.”

“I’m home?” Shelby stepped away from the rapidly shrinking surfboard and looked about the sleeping neighborhood. “I think you’re right. We’re in St. Louis. But where are we exactly? Why is it so dark? What’s wrong with the street lamps? And why don’t I see any cars?”

“Because they haven’t been invented yet?”

He quickly glanced at his chronometer. He tapped it once, twice. Strange. It blinked straight zeroes then bounced back with a reading. An eerie sense of déjà vu passed over him. Quentin hadn’t experienced a jump in the time line like that since the day he was caught and prosecuted for his supposed crime. Someone or something was on to him possibly. But there was no sense getting Shelby upset about an unknown threat when his chronometer might very well just be acting up because of a stray particle of sand wedged in the display.

Quentin flashed a reassuring smile at his lover. “Maybe we’ll meet the city’s founding father, Pierre Laclede?”

Shelby strolled down the street, carefully stepping around a puddle of equine excrement. “I don’t think so. This architecture is from the mid-nineteenth century.” She laughed and clapped her hands together. “Cool—I can see my own house when it was brand spanking new!”

“Not in those clothes you won’t.” He sidled up next to her and slipped an arm about her waist. “While I think you look incredibly sexy in butt-hugging jeans and a clingy T-shirt, I don’t think a proper Victorian lady would dress so provocatively.”

She blushed. “You’re right. I can’t go about dressed like this and neither can you. You wouldn’t happen to know of an all night tailor shop in this century, would you? Or do you have a whole wardrobe of clothes squished in that capsule that contains your beach items?”

“I’m afraid not.” He kissed her quickly and squeezed her ass cheeks for good measure. “Sorry, I travel light. I usually don’t stay long enough to have to dress to fit in

with the culture. And in the twenty-first century... Well, you seemed to like the idea I removed my pants at the drop of a hat.”

“Ain’t that the truth?” She giggled. “I suppose it’s been like what, eight hours our time since we last got it on? Maybe we could check into a hotel for the night and do some clothes shopping in the morning?”

“You two,” a gruff voice barked, cutting into the darkness behind them, “stay where you are and put your hands up.”

Quentin gulped and slowly turned his head. *Oh, shit...*

“Who are they? Why are we in trouble?” Shelby whispered, slowly raising her hands.

“Don’t turn around yet. We’re surrounded by men dressed in what appear to be blue wool uniforms with big brass buttons that say ‘U.S.’ The guy talking sports a big hat and is sitting on a horse, a nice bay-colored stallion. There are approximately a dozen enlisted men in blue wearing caps and carrying rifles that are pointed right at us.”

“They’re wearing union uniforms?” She sounded optimistic. “That’s okay then. In the mid-nineteenth century Union troops held the city under marshal law to keep the Confederates out. So whatever year it is exactly, all we have to do is tell them we support the Union and we’re safe.”

“Escort the prisoners to a holding cell,” the officer barked at his troops.

“Yes, Captain.”

Shelby gasped as rough hands grabbed her by the shoulders and tore her away from Quentin’s side. He spun around to rescue her but was immediately restrained by a beefy, bearded backwoodsman-type. The soldiers filed around their prisoners and marched them behind the captain on horseback.

The sky brightened considerably as they turned the corner. An intense fire blazed along the riverfront less than a hundred yards away, stinging their faces with its hellish warmth and choking them with its thick, acrid smoke. The frenzied shouts of men hollering for more water buckets, punctuated by frequent small explosions, reverberated along the docks. The captain reigned in his mount and momentarily halted the procession.

“Jenkins, Mueller—keep a close eye on those two,” the officer ordered. “The rest of you follow me. Our assistance is greatly needed on the docks.”

Quentin sighed as the bulk of the soldiers followed the captain. “Man, that’s one huge firestorm. Why are they wasting time and manpower in taking us to jail? Why aren’t all these soldiers helping to put the fire out?”

“Yeah, you’d think so.” Shelby sounded puzzled. An explosion rocked the ground, spewing another fireball shooting up into the air. Hot cinders rained down on them. “Ow! It hurts.”

Quentin attempted to extricate himself from the guard’s iron grasp but to no avail. He blew the hot ash from Shelby’s scalded cheeks. “Sorry, that’s all I can do for now. My charming escort here won’t let me use my hands.”

“Neither will mine.” She forced a laugh. “You know what they say—out of the frying pan and into the fire.”

Ooo! That smarts. Twisting a knife in his gut couldn’t make Quentin feel worse. First he’d almost gotten her eaten by a killer fish, next he’d almost gotten her sacrificed on an altar and now this capture by soldiers. He’d promised to take her on a nice vacation. Some date he turned out to be!

Another loud explosion and the blazing boat on the river started to list toward its side. With the ineffective, primitive means of fire suppression available in this era it was fated to sink to the bottom of the Mississippi within minutes.

"I think I know why we're in trouble now." Shelby's lips formed a thin, flat grimace. "They think we're saboteurs."

"What? We just got here. What on earth could we have done?"

"Boat-burners." Her voice drifted away in shock. She shook her head and began again. "That's what they called them, Quentin. Boat-burners. They suspect we bombed that steamboat carrying supplies to the Union forces. For all they know, we could be Confederate spies—and they'll hang us for it."

* * * *

Shelby collapsed onto the crude bunk the instant the barred door slammed behind them. The forced march from the riverside to the Gratiot Street Prison exhausted both of them, but Quentin was determined to keep up a cheerful façade. There was no use in feeling hopeless in the situation. One quick press of a button on his time board and they'd be out of there in a flash.

There was only one problem with that means of escape... The guard had confiscated the contents of his pants pockets, of course.

"Ugh, this place stinks like a million outhouses." Shelby sat up again. "Don't they ever use Lysol or soap around here?"

"They would if they thought it necessary." Quentin sat down beside her. "Don't worry. This is probably only a holding cell. We won't be here for long. The moment they let us out I'm gunning for that gorilla of a sergeant who pocketed my key chain. He didn't even bother to tell his superiors he took it, so we don't have to worry about them asking what it is."

"Yeah, but we do have to worry about taking out the dickhead who took it, and he's one big, fat, mean-looking dude." Shelby sighed and laid her head on Quentin's shoulder. "I'm surprised they don't separate us since I'm a girl."

"Correction—you're all woman." He slid an arm about her svelte waist and lightly stroked her sides. "Man, are you ever."

Pulling her into his lap, he lowered his lips to her and pushed his tongue deep into the sweet recesses of her mouth. Shelby stiffened at first, as if to protest their surroundings, but then relaxed and molded her curves hard against his body.

"Hmm, I sure wish I could bounce up and down on that hot bulge in your pants I'm sitting atop." Shelby ran her tongue around his ear's sensitive edge and reached down to squeeze his butt cheeks, pushing her bottom against his growing erection. He groaned and ran his hands up under her shirt, unhooking her bra. "But I suppose we shouldn't."

Quentin arched an eyebrow. "Why not? It's quite dark in here with just lanterns and candles in the corridors. We won't disturb anybody unless you start screaming to wake the dead as you come."

She giggled. "I promise I'll be quiet as a mouse."

She lifted her shirt and exposed her pointed breasts. He immediately latched on to a nipple and began to suckle the rosy bud, slipping a hand down the front of her jeans to stimulate her already moist mound. The woman was insatiable! Had he created this sex-crazed, love goddess? He smiled and congratulated himself on a job well done.

“Ooo! Yes, that’s it,” she whispered. “Rub my clit faster. I don’t know what it is about danger, but it seems to make me come like a freight train.”

“You enjoy the thrill of getting caught?” Quentin chuckled and took a deep breath as she lowered his zipper and began stroking his engorged cock. “You want to be spanked again for being such a naughty girl?”

“Yes, please.” He slipped a finger and then another up her dripping passage and began to pump as he stimulated her clit with his thumb. “Oh! I’ve been very naughty today. I need a spanking. I need a... I’m...”

Shelby threw her head backward and let out a low moan as her pussy muscles clenched about his hand. She stiffened and rocked against the assault of his digits and sang out another soft cry as she collapsed against his shoulder with a sigh.

“Feel better?” He patted her back as she sighed and slumped further against him. “It’s time for a short nap it appears.”

“Give me a mo’ to recoup,” she muttered, wiping a hand across her perspiration-dotted face. “I need to give you an even better reason to spank me.”

“Really? And what reason is that?”

She slid from his lap and gently pushed him backward against the rough mattress. Tugging his zipper all the way down she released his cock from its prison. With a firm hand on the shaft and her tongue dancing across its sensitive head, Quentin soon found himself approaching the edge.

“Yes, that it. Squeeze my balls. Hmm, deeper. Oh yes! I love your tongue there.” Her finger slipped between his butt cheeks. He groaned and cradled her head with his hands. “Good heavens that’s perfect. You’d better be ready to swallow the evidence.”

And she was, taking his rod further back into her throat as her hand and digit worked wonders. Biting his tongue, he held back a scream as he shot his entire load into her in a spasm of ecstasy. Sated and spent, he fell backwards across the bunk, moaning lowly as she continued to tongue his still sensitive organ.

“Sergeant, get over here now and separate these two prisoners at once! One of them is a female.”

The gruff, commanding voice barking in the dark of the corridor sounded familiar. They immediately separated. Shelby quickly pulled her shirt down and zipped up her jeans. Quentin did the same. How long had their observer been standing there, watching them? Quentin gritted his teeth at their voyeuristic captor. The bastard hadn’t even bothered to let them in on the secret so he and Shelby could enjoy the thought of being watched.

“What do we do now?” Shelby whispered. She looked pale but bravely held her head high. A pang of guilt hit him hard in the gut. Why had he gotten the woman he loved into this mess?

“Just follow my lead. I’ll do the talking, okay?” he whispered. She nodded. “Good girl. You’ll get your spanking later. I promise.”

“That can’t be right,” the sergeant mumbled, trudging down the hallway, keys jangling from his belt loop. “Jenkins told me they’d brought in a young lad and slightly older gent.”

“All of you need spectacles. You’re as blind as deep cave catfish.”

The flustered soldier who had locked them up cleared his throat and saluted the officer as he approached their cell with the keys. “Sorry, Captain. I guess since it was

dark and they both were wearing britches the boys got confused. I noted the coolie wore short britches, but I figured that was their dress while working on the railroad lines.”

“I see.”

The captain turned and fixed a piercing stare on Shelby. A small tic moved the corner of his bushy black moustache. He licked his lips repeatedly as if he were salivating over a four course dinner.

How dare this blue-uniformed bastard lust after his woman! Quentin fought the urge to rush the door and punch the creep’s lights out. No, they’d better wait patiently. Their time to escape was coming soon.

The jailer slipped the skeleton key into the door lock and tugged once, twice, slowly swinging the squeaking cell door open. “I never knew Tucker’s gang of boat-burners included women in their ranks, sir.”

“Yes, the Rebs have gotten so low that they’re drafting the fairer sex into their dirty machinations to destroy the Union’s hold on the river. They think we won’t catch on to their evil methods... Or the evil harlots they employ to execute them.”

The burly jailer poked them both in the stomach with his rifle. “Out you two. We’ll get you into the light and straighten this out. Keep your hands up.”

“Anything you say, sergeant.” Quentin gave a nonchalant toss of his head. They slowly made their way out of the cramped cell and into the narrow corridor. “I’m just sorry the captain here won’t let you in on the good time he’s got planned for my sexy companion here.”

“Say wha...?” The pock-marked soldier froze in place. “You mean she’s one of those ladies who wear rouge and work in Harrolson Alley?”

“Sergeant!” The captain’s tone belayed his growing frustration, but he kept his face controlled except for the moustache tic. “You will march these prisoners out of the cell block and leave the female prisoner with me in the interrogation room for a half hour.”

“A whole half hour?” Quentin whistled. “I figured it would only take you five minutes tops to have your jollies.”

The captain spun about on his heels and snarled, “Enough! Gag the prisoners, sergeant.”

Shelby’s head perked up. She leveled a cold stare at their captor. “I can’t do what I did to my friend just now if I’m gagged. You want me to suck your dinky dick, don’t you?” She laughed. “Heavens, the captain’s wiener’s probably not even big enough to gag me! But I do like the looks of the sergeant’s... I can tell from the bulge in his britches he’s really got what it takes to make a gal happy.”

The plan was working. Quentin could tell by the angry look in the young jailer’s hungry eyes that he didn’t care much for the idea of a superior officer receiving all the benefits of his rank. The sergeant halted and aimed his rifle toward the captain. The officer slowly raised his hands.

“I’ll take the prisoner into the interrogation room first, sir. For at least a *full* hour.” He pointed to an empty cell with the rifle. “Now, if you wouldn’t mind, captain. You and this fellow can wait for us in there.”

Shelby sidled up to the sergeant and placed her arm about his waist. “Woo-hoo! I know I’ll be in for a treat.”

The captain stood his ground, gritted teeth and hissed, “This is insubordination, plain and simple. You’ll hang for this, sergeant.”

“But not until after he’s experienced the best blow job in the galaxy.” Shelby blew the captain a kiss with one hand and slid her other hand into the soldier’s coat pocket. “Isn’t that right, Quentin?”

“Damn right.” He winked at the sergeant. “She really gives the best blow jobs.”

The jailer flashed a puzzled look. “What’s a ‘blow job’?”

“Oh, yeah, this is Victorian times, isn’t it?” Quentin scratched his head. “Perhaps Shelby ought to demonstrate?”

“Sure thing.” Shelby quietly slipped her hand out of the jailer’s coat pocket and hit the button on the key chain to open the time corridor. “First you pucker up your lips and blow like this while a big hole in the fabric of time starts to unravel…”

The sergeant dropped his rifle. The captain dropped his jaw. Both men froze in place and stared in horror at the explosion of color and light and vibration emanating from what appeared to be the end of the corridor.

“Run for it!” Quentin torpedoed from under the captain’s arms and grabbed Shelby by the hand. “Run like you’ve never run before.”

“The time board—I didn’t hit the button for it yet!” she shouted, breathless.

“No time. We’ll have to body surf the time waves.”

He encircled his arms about her petite form as they dove into the swirling vortex of time.

Chapter Nine

Desperately they clung to each other as the crashing temporal waves overtook them.

Hang on tight! Quentin projected into Shelby's mind. *Don't let go.*

I'm about to crush you to death, Shelby thought back. What should have been a romantic cuddle instead felt like she was being compressed by a giant waffle iron. *I don't think I can hold on much longer.*

Yes, you can. You must. But whatever you do, don't lose hold of that key chain!

An eddy of temporal distortion roared over them, knocking them from their original vector. Quentin mentally groaned. This couldn't be a good thing.

Where will we land this time? she wondered, hoping for the best.

Who knows? Probably not St. Louis. At this point in our travels, that's a positive.

An epoch swell enveloped them in a cold and dazzling array of blue-green paisley-styled explosions followed by an irritating, high-pitched noise that would rival a billion nails being scraped across a chalkboard.

Shelby's teeth itched. *What on earth is that horrible racket?*

It's not on Earth, Quentin explained. *We've slipped the time stream of your world and veered into another planet's time stream. It's sort of like when a record needle skips a groove from one song to another.*

Record? Don't you mean DVD?

Huh? It's the same thing really. Actually, I think someone's trying to help us out, but I can't be sure.

Suddenly the time corridor collapsed, spitting them out onto a dark, mirror-like surface. They came apart and rolled like barrels for several dozen yards across the smooth plane dimly illuminated by the faint blue of moon glow. Correction—moons glowing. Shelby noted the two natural satellites as she opened her eyes wider and sat up. They were not on Earth or at least not the Earth she was familiar with. Not unless someone had purchased a twin to keep the old moon company.

"Somebody forgot to leave the lights turned on for us." Quentin slowly regained his feet then helped Shelby to hers. "Usually this place is flooded with lights."

"Where are we?" A cold breeze ruffled the hair on her arms, sending a shiver throughout her body. She stepped into Quentin's warm embrace and snuggled close. After a moment she lifted her head and scanned the horizon. She could make out nothing in the thick blackness surrounding them.

"Brr! Somebody forgot to turn on the heat, too."

"Strange. It's not like Barris to act so inhospitably." He rubbed her shoulders briskly to warm her then checked his wristwatch. He tapped the display and frowned. "I think this thing is still on the fritz. It was only yesterday according to my personal chronometer that I visited here."

"Yesterday you were with me rolling about in the surf on a prehistoric beach. Weren't you?"

"Yes and no. In my timeline yes, but in this place's timeline no." He smiled wanly at her confusion. "I guess the key chain's emergency protocols automatically took us back to the last place and time I visited before I headed toward your time."

“Was this place abandoned then?”

He shook his head. “No. There’s something not quite right here. I can’t put a finger on it, but something is definitely different.”

As if in response to his dire assessment, a low creaking sound reverberated across the metallic surface. A sliver of light grew larger and larger until Shelby could make out in the distance a tall, wide door lowering to permit them entrance.

“That’s more like it.” Quentin strode toward it like a knight eager to cross a drawbridge and enter a friendly castle. Shelby froze in place. He halted, turned and smiled at her.

“What’s wrong?” he asked. “There’s nothing to fear here. It’s okay. Barris simply turned off the outside lights. Saves on power.”

She took his outstretched hand and followed, reluctantly. Something sinister was happening here. She sensed it somehow. They shouldn’t be here. They shouldn’t be here *now*. But Quentin would think her a silly human female if she told him about her weird premonition. She took a deep breath instead.

“Who is this Barris? A fellow time traveler?”

“You could say that. We’re actually two of a kind. We’re both rogue agents.”

“Rogue agents? You mean he’s in trouble, too? What did he do wrong that got the time cops riding his ass?”

“Nothing much. He forgot to switch off a time recording device during a routine inspection of a timeline once. Its energy began to feedback on itself. The explosion wiped out an entire ancient human civilization.”

Shelby gulped. “An entire ancient civilization! Which one?”

“The Zantoli. You know the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Zantoli... Oh, yeah, right. You don’t know. Ever hear of Atlantis?”

Her eyes widened. She stopped and stared at him. “You’re saying this Barris guy destroyed Atlantis?”

Quentin shrugged. “Uh-huh. Barris did a pretty thorough job wiping every last trace of them from time and space. Only the legend of the lost continent of Atlantis remains.”

“Then the Time Cops should lock him up,” she muttered. “That’s criminal killing an innocent group of people so carelessly.”

He began walking again, and Shelby followed halfheartedly. “I don’t know about them being so innocent,” Quentin said. “The Zantolis were efficient killers, and they were set on world domination. Barris did Earth a favor to delete them from the timeline in my opinion. In fact, most time agents believe the time device explosion was rigged. Poor ol’ Barris got to be the scapegoat for something the Time Regulation Agency had planned on doing themselves all along...”

His voice trailed away as they grew closer to the opening. Piercing white light blinded them both. Shelby cringed and ducked behind Quentin’s broad shoulders. “Ouch! He must be afraid of the dark to have such bright lights in his home.”

Quentin shielded his eyes with a hand and proceeded slowly forward. “This isn’t his home. It’s his party ship. You’d love the interior of his homes. They’re beyond description. Rich, ornate, luxurious palaces beyond imagination.”

“Palaces? If this Barris dude is so filthy rich then why is he still being hunted? He could pay off the Time Cops and stop worrying.”

“Time Cops aren’t so easily bribed.”

There went that premonition again. Something didn't quite add up. Shelby bit her lip and took another deep breath. "So where did he get the money?"

"Barris prefers to be paid for his services in real estate and art work. You never know when the next galactic stock market crash will occur. Barris is a tough-minded businessman."

"Services?" Shelby frowned. "What kind of services does..."

"Quentin Takahashi? Is that you, you sly time dog?"

The deep voice reverberated off the dense walls of the spaceship. Shelby shivered and clutched her lover's hand tighter. Dealing with an unseen host who possessed a voice strong enough to knock over his guests was a bit disconcerting.

"Barris Falst, great to hear you again. Can you turn down the spotlights, buddy? I'm not wearing my shades."

The light slowly faded to a more comfortable level. They crossed over a hatch threshold and away from the sharp lighting. Shelby blinked and then did a double take. They weren't standing inside a huge metal flying saucer as she had assumed.

They were standing in the middle of an orgy pit!

The walls of the oval-shaped room were covered with a soft quilted material in pastel hues. A wide variety of individuals occupied large satin pillows and low couches, engaging in all manners of sexual activity. Some appeared human, but others were... Well, she'd hold off her judgment if some of Barris' guests were into bestiality or not until she knew them better.

"Sorry about the bright floodlights. It keeps the indigenous species of this planet away from our... proceedings." The lights dimmed and a large fleshy hand jutted out to shake Quentin's furiously. "And who might this lovely morsel at your side be?"

Shelby clung to Quentin's other arm tighter. The booming voice emanated from a giant human male wearing nothing but a black leather harness about his powerful chest. At least she assumed he was human since he appeared to have two arms, two legs, a head, neck, torso and... genitalia.

Her throat suddenly went dry. Their host possessed a cock large enough for ten men! Desperately she tried to pry her eyes from his lower extremities, but it was almost impossible. His cock appeared nearly as thick as a baseball bat.

"Barris, I'd like you to meet Shelby Schwartz," Quentin was saying as she slowly licked her lips. "I met Shelby in the twenty-first century. You know, people weren't as uptight then as we've been led to believe."

Barris smiled. His white teeth contrasted nicely with his cinnamon-brown skin and fleshy lips. "Really? Our ancestors knew how to have a good time? That's more than our history texts taught us, isn't it?" He slapped his bare leg and laughed, his polished, bald head glistening in the golden glow emanating from recessed lighting about the perimeter of the chamber. "Any 'activities' we should check out together sometime, Quent?"

"Possibly, if Shelby's cousin is willing."

"Stop it!" she cried, stepping away from Quentin's side. The ominous feeling continued to grow in the pit of her stomach in spite of the titillation. Something was wrong here, but how could she convince her lover otherwise? "Just leave my cousin out of this."

Barris threw back his head and laughed again. "Pardon my inconsiderateness. You two make yourself at home. Hang your clothes in the cloak room to the right of the bar."

He took a step toward Shelby and caressed her cheek. "I can tell you're a favorite among the Kindred already."

"I'm what?" Her hand flew to her neck and the small bandage that covered the interesting hickey Val had bestowed upon her at their departure dinner party. "Oh, not really."

"Once bitten, twice horny they tell me. I do believe Lars is part of the Kindred. He'd be more than happy to personally introduce you to the gang."

Barris turned and shouted toward a group of arms and legs piled on several dozen pillows. "Hey, Lars! Got room for one more?"

A head raised itself from the flesh pit, flashing a glimpse of fangs. "Always."

"There you go. You two will fit in nicely here." Barris scanned their appearance, frowning. "I'm surprised to see you still dressed, Quent. You normally jump into the fray without a moment's hesitation."

Quentin cleared his throat. "Ahem, Shelby's been taking care of me so well lately that I'm not quite as... anxious... as usual."

The giant raised an eyebrow and chortled. "She must be quite a lover to keep a randy little devil like you satisfied. Hmm..."

Shelby gasped. Their host's cock rose, swelling from baseball bat to bazooka size in length and thickness. *Whoa!* She felt faint and dizzy from the shock of being in the presence of perhaps the most well-endowed man in the universe. No wonder he ran an orgy ship.

Barris look directly into her eyes, searching their gray-blue depths for a hint of her quickly disguised lust. "I bet your Shelby could take care of me single handedly."

"No doubt she could."

"Quentin!" She spun around to slap him but thought better of it. She frowned instead and lowered her voice. "Don't say such things. You're giving our host the wrong impression."

Barris crossed his arms and thrust his pelvis forward. Shelby gulped again, willing her eyes to look away—only to find her gaze falling onto a particularly handsome humanoid couple getting it on across a large mushroom shaped stool.

"I thought you said twenty-first century humans weren't a bunch of prudes?"

Quentin shrugged and smiled. "They aren't as a rule, but time traveling and meeting other species is all rather new to Shelby. We can't expect her to immediately 'jump into the fray'. She needs a little time to get accustomed to our... culture."

"Ah, I see." Barris nodded—or rather he pointed—toward the bar with his enormous dick. "How about a drink or twelve to get loosened up?"

"Sounds good." Quentin took her by the arm. "We'll talk to you later after we've had some refreshment."

Shelby felt her heart race as they made their way through groups of naked, writhing bodies. It was all a bit much for her at this point. After all, deep down she was boring Shelby Schwartz, businesswoman and respected member of the community. She didn't participate in public orgies, no matter how far away from Earth they were located. She didn't have sex in strange, unusual places where others could watch...

Oh, right. I've done those things already.

Quentin Takahashi had introduced a whole brave new world to her. Perhaps the worrying premonitions she felt earlier had only been her "old self" trying to reassert itself

thus preventing her from having a good time?

“What’ll it be? A plum martini?” A green-scaled reptilian barkeeper asked as they approached and sat at the bars. Quentin nodded and the lizard man placed two rather large, long stemmed glasses of blue-purple liquid in front of them.

“Plum?” Shelby wrinkled up her nose. The sweet, fruity smell possessed an intoxicating quality. She couldn’t resist a sample. “Yum. Not bad, not bad at all.” She took another sip and drained the entire contents of the glass before she realized it. “This is a new drink for me.”

“Aren’t plums an aphrodisiac for your species?” the barkeeper asked. He planted what she assumed were his elbows on the bar top and flicked out a long, bright pink, forked tongue at her. “You’re not the kind who eats raw shellfish to get turned on, are you?”

“Oysters? No, they don’t do much for me personally. Hey! Wait a minute. How do you know anything about plums and oysters?” She turned to Quentin who was sipping his drink and smiling and waving as he scanned the crowd. “How does this guy know about Earth foods? In fact, how can I understand any of these aliens speaking to me at all?”

“You’re a Chosen One, Shelby. You are in tune with the universe. Plus you can receive input from the psychic translator located on the ceiling.” He pointed to a lantern-shaped device hanging like a disco glitter ball above the active orgy-goers. “Ain’t technology great? That thing can translate a million and one languages and transmit the words practically instantly to your cerebral cortex.”

“Wow, and I don’t feel a thing either!” She laughed and gulped more of her drink.

“I have a similar device on my key chain, but you have to be standing right next to me in order for it to work well. Unfortunately, it got some sand in it along with my chronometer. I really should get a technician to look them over for me.”

“We can fix it on board, you know,” the barkeep said matter-of-factly. “Just leave it with me.”

“Possibly.” Quentin didn’t act too interested in handing over his time travel device Shelby noted.

“Fascinating,” she said, trying to direct the conversation back to happier topics. She took another long sip of the martini and smacked her lips. “So, I’m able to communicate with everybody I meet in the universe as long as your keychain is nearby?”

“Yeah, that’s it. That’s why I need to take better care not to lose this thing. It’s got some other rather expensive gadgets that many a pickpocket would love to get their hands on.” He casually tossed the key chain up in the air and caught it. “But as my mother always says, ‘Quentin, if you didn’t have your head stapled onto your shoulders, you’d lose it.’”

“You lost your head when you were a kid, too?” The reptilian laughed, a raucous, animal sound somewhere between a snake’s hiss and an elephant’s roar. He flicked his forked tongue suggestively at Shelby. “So did I. Did they staple it back on with those dissolving staples or the old-fashioned kind you had to take out with a butter knife after the flesh cement hardened?”

“The old fashioned kind. Here, you can see a few of the scars left from where I attempted to take them out early with my trusty Galactic Scout pocketknife. Mom was pissed like you wouldn’t believe.”

Shelby took another long sip of her drink. Whatever they were chatting about she

didn't have the foggiest notion about nor did she particularly care. The warmth of the concoction combined with the warmth of the room made her feel like ripping off her clothes. She felt relaxed and sexy but not sleepy like she normally did while imbibing. She turned and brushed the side of her nipple on the counter. Woo! Stars and tingles of pleasure raced from the spot and spread about her body. What was in this plum stuff? She shook her head and tried hard to focus on the conversation at hand.

"Ugh. Staples and flesh cement and heads falling off. Whatever you guys are talking about, it sure sounds gross."

Quentin shrugged. "Just a common childhood surgery in our time period. Didn't they re-attach heads to bodies back in the twenty-first century?"

"No, they didn't. Occasionally they'd re-attach some dude's pecker after his girlfriend got tired of his screwing around on her, and she took a meat cleaver to it. Whack!" She made a chopping motion with her hand against the counter. Both males cringed. "What? Don't they re-attach dicks in this century?"

"Not as often as heads and arms and legs." Quentin nodded soberly. "Remind me to keep you away from kitchen utensils."

Shelby laughed then downed the rest of her drink. "What do you call this music playing?"

"Arcturan Hip-Hop," the barkeeper replied with a flick of his tongue and his bar towel. "It's a bit dated for my tastes. I'm into Rigellian Reggae myself." He leaned across the counter and wiggled his tongue suggestively again at her. "What's your name, attractive human female?"

"Shelby." She grinned at the compliment and leaned toward him. "What's yours attractive green person?"

"My name is Reks. Wanna dance?"

"Hmm, maybe. It's got a good beat even if I don't understand what the heck they're rapping about."

Reks hopped over the counter and landed on two clawed feet. Shelby stood up, ready to take the reptilian humanoid by the arm when Quentin stepped between them.

"You realize there's no dance floor, don't you?"

She furrowed her brow. Her brain had turned into a giant cotton ball, her thinking fuzzy and her logic soft. "Now that you mention it... You're right. There's no dance floor. There's just lots of pillows—and bodies rolling about on the floor on top of other bodies. Is that what they consider 'dancing' in these parts?"

Quentin nodded and smiled. "Smart girl. Are you sure you're ready for a sexual encounter with a Saurian? They've been known to be quite rough on their sexual partners."

Reks flung a scaly arm about her shoulders and pulled her close. "Hey, buddy, she's an adult of her species, right? She can make up her own mind about inter-species sex. She seems very open-minded and not the least bit prejudiced against green people."

"I have nothing against green people," Shelby began slowly, "but I'm a bit new to this alien sex thing, Reks. Perhaps Quentin should accompany us."

Both male human and male Saurian eyes widened with surprise. "You don't say?" Reks scratched what she'd loosely term his "chin" with a long nail and flicked his tongue at her. "I've heard about Terran threesomes. I must say I'm flattered. As long as your friend is okay with it, I'm game."

“I’m okay with it,” Quentin said after a long pause. He whispered in her ear, “You sure you don’t want to experience your first threesome with another human?”

“Who says it’s my first?” She stood taller and lifted her chin in the air. “I’m not a total bumpkin. I attended a large state university, you know.”

Taking Reks by a claw and Quentin by the hand, Shelby led her slack-jawed partners toward an unoccupied corner of the party pit. Her bravado started to fade as she watched Reks remove his bartending apron exposing what she only could assume was his fully erect male reproductive organ. Here she had thought Barris was well endowed!

“Don’t worry, Shelby. I won’t use this on you until you’re more than ready.” He flicked his long tongue, lowering his gaze toward her crotch. “I can pleasure you quite sufficiently with other parts of my anatomy.”

“Go for it,” Quentin whispered from behind her. “Saurians have exquisite tongue control.”

She gulped but stood still, frozen. “All right then.”

“That’s an affirmative response?” Reks asked Quentin. Quentin nodded and reached around to unzip her jeans and pull them down. It was as if she was watching herself before a mirror as her lover silently and swiftly undressed her in front of the alien bartender.

Reks’ tongue flickering increased. With each piece of clothing removed his tongue darted faster and faster from between his scaly lips. It seemed his species appreciated the nude female body every bit as much as humans did. She stood naked before his yellow reptilian eyes, her juices flowing, scared to think of what it must feel like to have a Saurian cock rammed into her cunt but dying to know all the same.

Quentin, sensing her apprehension, gave her shoulders a squeeze. “Don’t worry. I’ll have your back.”

The double entendre made her laugh. “I bet you will.”

Already she could feel Quentin’s hard on rubbing against her butt cheeks as he easily slid out of his shorts. He sat down in a large bed of pillows and pulled her down with him. She sat on his lap, facing the third member of their group, her legs spread wide. Quentin tilted her head to the side and caught her lips in his own, kissing her deeply, plundering her mouth fearlessly with his tongue as Shelby felt the first tentative probing of Reks’ reptilian tongue on her clit.

She sighed, closed her eyes and relaxed. Held safe in Quentin’s arms, she freely gave herself over to the Saurian’s able technique. Oh! The drink had somehow made her even more sensitive to touch. She rocked her pelvis forward to present her responsive nub to the wonderful sensations his soft, leather-like tongue afforded.

“Hmm... Keep doing what you’re doing, Reks. You’re the answer to every human girl’s prayer, a man who knows what his tongue is for.”

He replied by wrapping his long, forked appendage about her clit like a hand. She dare not open her eyes to see exactly what the Saurian was doing. Some things in life were better felt, not seen.

She sighed and pressed her butt cheeks firmly against her lover. Quentin’s hands roved about her breasts, tweaking her nipples between his thumb and forefinger until they stood tall and aching from his touch. She moaned. He rubbed his sticky cock against her crevice and moaned right along with her.

“Okay, if I fuck her first?” he asked. “It’ll help her loosen up a bit so she’ll be able to

take you on later.”

The exquisite tongue dance ceased for a moment. Shelby thought she'd die from the loss of sensation. “Sure, go ahead.” Reks laughed. “But I doubt a little pecker like yours can compare with the likes of mine.”

Shelby opened her legs wider as Quentin repositioned himself. With one swift stroke he plunged his member into her from behind, striking a solid rhythm as Reks applied his talented tongue once again to her throbbing clit. Before she realized what was happening she felt her mind soaring, her body shuddering as repeated waves of ecstasy washed over her, leaving her utterly limp and panting heavily, cradled in her lover's arms.

“Was that a human female orgasm?” Reks asked. “Amazing—and quite stimulating.”

Quentin chuckled. “Yes, isn't it?”

Shelby popped open one eye. The Saurian knelt before her, holding his dark green serpentine cock in one claw-like hand, stroking it to an even harder thickness. A shiver of apprehension tingled up her spine, but she felt like a rag doll, too relaxed to get away even if she tried.

“Can I fuck her now?” The barkeep's reptilian voice held a needy tone. She shook her head and eased further back into Quentin's embrace. He'd plead her case.

“Give her a few moments to cool down. In the meantime, I bet she'd love to show you her own oral technique.”

“I'd what? Ooo!”

Before she could react Shelby felt herself being lifted off Quentin's erection and placed on the cushioned floor on her hands and knees, directly in front of Reks' massive hard on. Her lover re-inserted himself and rocked her forward, nudging her closer to their waiting partner.

“Don't be ridiculous! I can't possibly swallow that thing!”

“Don't human females possess long forked tongues?” Reks slid his rod beneath her chin, down the long column of her neck and stopped upon reaching the warm space between her dangling breasts. He reached beneath her and gently squeezed the creamy globes together about his length. Tremors of bliss zinged straight to her pussy at the touch of his cock and hands. She moaned as he began to move in rhythm with the two of them, trailing his musky juices across her extra sensitive skin.

“Ah! That's what those human female bumps are for. They work quite well.”

Shelby felt Quentin's amusement before she heard his chuckle echoing Reks' laughter. “Yes, those bumps are very versatile.”

How dare they laugh at her! She'd have them begging for mercy before long. She'd show them both just how versatile she could be.

With Reks cradling her breasts and supporting her at her waist, she was free to use her hands to grasp the long shaft of Reks' cock, vigorously working it back and forth. He grunted and urged her to increase the pressure. She turned her head to the side and nibbled and suckled her way across the cool smoothness of his member, circling the head with her tongue as he drew back and licking his root as he thrust forward.

The formerly calm bartender gasped and pitched himself forward. Shelby sucked and licked and massaged his cock with an intensity that would have long ago sent most human males over the edge, but perhaps he was nearly there already? Reks' peculiar growling grew louder at the same time she heard Quentin's own anxious groan increasing

in intensity. She could tell he had slowed his strokes in a vain attempt to fight off his own orgasm. It was time to finish them both off. She'd be the last one standing and chuckling over their predicament.

"Stop slacking off, Quentin. Fuck me hard and fast. You, too, Reks. Don't worry—I can handle anything you got."

"Can you?" The Saurian increased the pace of his strokes. "I am impressed. Human females are quite fearless."

Fearless? What on Earth did he mean? What did she have to be afraid of—a little bit of his come splashing over her breasts? Before Shelby could consider an alternate possibility, Reks let loose with a loud roar. His cock pulsed then shivered like a jackhammer in cement as an endless fountain of his salty juices gushed forth, bathing her from top to bottom.

She sputtered and rocketed backward from the force of the Saurian's ejaculate. "What the hell... Quentin? Quentin?"

With a groan, her lover grasped her hips and shot his deep seed into her, triggering yet another climax, rippling outward from her mound, bursting in repeated bliss-filled explosions deep within her pussy. She screamed and bucked, repeatedly riding the crest of the orgasmic waves. Slippery and spent, the three collapsed into the pillows, cheers and claps from about the chamber echoing in Shelby's ears.

"Bravo! One more time! Again! Again!"

Obviously their performance had been quite entertaining. Any sexual inhibitions Shelby had ever harbored had vanished. But what she really wanted from her fellow party members at this moment were directions to the closest bathroom to wash up.

Chapter Ten

Should he tell Shelby? Did he really want to make her feel apprehensive at this point? Her recent actions demonstrated that she had become quite relaxed in his world with its open sexual expression. Quentin laid his head back against a cushion lining the side of the giant hot tub and closed his eyes. The warmth and gentle pressure of the water jets instantly relaxed him. It could wait. Besides it was only a rumor—albeit a deadly rumor.

“That’s some shower your friend Barris has got there.” Shelby hopped over the side and landed beside him in the churning water. “I was hosed down in seconds flat by a thousand tiny shower heads. Then it covered me with fruity-floral scented soap bubbles, rinsed me off again and then applied a thin layer of some kind of spicy scented bath oil. No need to use a loofa or anything.” She slipped lower into the hot tub and sighed. “Wish I had one just like it in my townhouse.”

“Sounds delightful.” He kissed her. “Tastes delightful, too, like a spiked strawberry. But there’s one thing I’ve got to warn you about. Barris is *not* my friend.”

She sat up to accept another purple martini from a passing cocktail waitress—nude, of course—a citizen of some outlying human colony where shaving off all body hair was the norm. “Barris isn’t your friend? Then why does he let you attend his orgies?”

Quentin shrugged. “To keep tabs on me like I keep tabs on him. Remember, we’re both rogue time agents. At anytime he may get it into his head to turn me in and collect the bounty on my head and vice versa. We’re more like ‘acquaintances’ you could say.”

“Oh...kay. So if he asks me to join him and a few dozen others in some group activities, I should turn him down?”

“Yes, you should. I don’t trust him that much to let him get that close to you.”

She took a long sip of the inhibition-loosening, tactile sensitivity-heightening drink. “That’s good, because I told him no.”

Quentin lifted an eyebrow, trying not to act alarmed. “You did? When?”

“Just now actually, when I stepped out of the showers. He complimented me on my expert sexual technique and asked if the two of us wanted to join him and his playmates for a little excitement later on.”

“Really?”

What could he make of that? Barris had tolerated his presence on the party ship and begrudgingly had allowed him once to seduce one of his holo-whores, but never had the destroyer of Atlantis granted him such a rare privilege as joining his intimate inner circle. Something big was definitely up.

Shelby frowned, apparently feeling a bit miffed by his comment. “Yes, he really thought I showed potential. He praised me for being a fast learner.”

“A fast learner? You told them this was your first orgy?”

She nodded. “Of course. I don’t think I should lie to the man. In fact,” she leaned forward and giggled, “I think the idea that I’m relatively inexperienced in this area is a real turn on to him.”

Quentin molded his features into a calm exterior. He really didn’t like the idea of sharing Shelby at all. A little fun with the bartender was to be expected at these parties,

but to become a favorite of the host was an entirely different matter. Perhaps it had been wrong of him to bring Shelby to Barris's party ship. They could have re-opened the time vortex and traveled away before the door had opened. But he had to keep tabs on the man from time to time and now was as good a time as any. Allowing Shelby to be the bait to draw Barris out of his shell and expose what the rogue was really up to could only help him in the long run.

No! I can't—I won't—use Shelby that way. She means too much to me to risk losing her to a gangster like Barris.

"You're definitely a turn on where I'm concerned, Shelby Schwartz." Grinning, Quentin pulled her into his lap and kissed her soundly, tasting her sweetness as their tongues met and parried. The bubbles churned about her breasts, foaming against her glistening skin while her rosy peaks bobbed up and down in the suds. His cock hardened instantly as it rubbed against the soft flesh of her buttocks.

"Quentin! There you are. Did your lady tell you about my invitation?"

Damn! They separated.

"I did tell him, Barris." Shelby flashed a friendly smile. "Quentin's a jealous sort, you know. He wants me all to himself—right here in the hot tub."

Before Quentin could react Shelby had straddled his lap. She reached down and inserted his cock into her cunt without once breaking eye contact with their host. Quentin roared with pleasure as her tightness enveloped him and her pebbled nipples rubbed up and down against his chest. The woman could bring out the beast in him.

"Who wouldn't?" Barris observed them through narrowed eyes, stroking his ever-present erection. "When you're done with him in a few minutes, you know where to find me, Shelby." He turned and headed back toward the main area.

"As if!" She corkscrewed her hips in a deliciously languid motion, eliciting another moan. "You're all the man I need."

"And you're the only woman, although you seem to handle other guys like Reks quite well."

She grinned evilly and kissed him, her tongue delving deeply, drinking him in as she wound her fingers through his hair. "Uh-huh," she said breathlessly after several minutes, "Watching me with others gets you all hot and horny, right? I'm surprised you haven't suggested I get it on with a girl."

"Now that you mention it..." Quentin looked past Shelby's shoulder and made eye contact with a svelte feline humanoid entering the hot tub.

Shelby followed his gaze and lowered her voice. "She looks like a calico kitten I had as a child."

He chuckled. "So there's a built in attraction already!"

She playfully splashed his face then bucked her pelvis in a steady rhythm, gripping and massaging his cock with her cunt muscles until all he could do was throw his head back and moan as the familiar orgasmic spasms began. Her pussy clenched tighter still about his shaft. With a cry she came just as he spewed his seed within her.

"Purr-fect," their tub guest said, smiling broadly. She boldly stood and approached them in their post-coital embrace, sinking into the silky waters beside them. "You two are such a purr-fect couple. I'd love to lick you both."

"Lick us?" Quentin wiggled an eyebrow at both of them. "Hmm, that's a thought. Shelby here is quite tasty."

“Quentin!” Shelby hissed under her breath. “Don’t say such things. How do we know she doesn’t eat humans?”

“We don’t and that’s part of the fun.” He squeezed her buttocks. “What do you say? Cold-blooded species more your type?”

“Oh, never fear, I’m a vegetarian,” the cat woman said in a slow and measured manner, her golden eyes glowing with desire. “Not all of us Felinians are hunters. I love lapping up a nice big saucer of cream for dinner for example.” Her long black and orange spotted tail began flickering excitedly back forth. “Allow me to introduce myself. I’m Catriona.”

Quentin shook her offered tail. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Catriona. My name is Quentin and this is Shelby.”

“Nice to meet you.” Shelby caught on to protocol and shook Catriona’s tail as well. “You’re not afraid of water?”

She laughed. “No, not at all. We have many scenic beaches on Felinia and it would be a pity if we were.” She licked a paw and passed it over her triangular ears, preening a bit. “Quentin and Shelby. You are both very lovely for naked humans.”

“And you are a beautiful Felinian with such a soft and shiny spotted coat.” He patted her on the head as if she were a pet and not a sentient being. “I was serious when I said Shelby tasted good. She’s not very experienced in inter-species sexual practices. Maybe you could give her a few pointers?”

A long pink tongue darted out from between her catlike lips. “That would be purrrrrrfect.”

Before Shelby could react, Catriona’s soft furry mouth descended upon her breast and began to suckle. Shelby squirmed but didn’t fight against the intrusion. Within seconds she had closed her eyes and sighed, leaning heavily against Quentin’s arms for support.

“Imagine what that tongue would feel like on your clit,” he whispered. “Imagine what it would be like to pet a pussy that meowed back?”

“I’m going to start purring in a second.” Shelby disengaged her feet from the seat where she had anchored them and drifted from his hold. “I think we’d better get on dry land before I drown.”

Catriona offered a claw-sheathed paw to Shelby and helped her out of the hot tub. She led Shelby toward an extra-wide, white cushioned chaise lounge in the corner of the bath area. Gently she helped her human partner to recline before pouncing upon Shelby, tail flicking back and forth energetically as her tongue darted between her lips. She eagerly pressed her velvet lips upon Shelby’s flesh and began to thoroughly lick her from the tips of her breasts to the tips of her toes.

“Ooo, that’s exquisite!” Shelby’s toes curled as her back arched of its own accord. “Quentin, are you watching? I thought guys enjoyed watching two girls get it on.”

“Yes, I’m watching.” He sat down in a nearby lounge chair and patted himself dry with a thick, white towel, his cock growing noticeably harder by the second. Catriona’s pink tongue waltzed its way across Shelby’s smooth belly heading lower, lower...

“Purr-fect,” purred the Felinian. “Your center of pleasurable sensations hides among your fur. How catlike!” Catriona pounced on her target just then, sending Shelby into a paroxysm of squealing.

Quentin found his eyes glued to the scene in front of him—as did a dozen or so

others who had wandered into the bath area. The jaded passengers of Barris' party ship seldom witnessed such cries of unadulterated bliss he realized. They had become too crass and unfeeling to remember the joy of experiencing a sensual activity for the first time. Shelby was a rare sparkling gem among the gray gravel of the universe.

Shelby continued to arch, buck and rock against the exquisite friction of the Felinian's tongue on her clit while her tail daintily tickled the tips of Shelby's pink nipples. All too soon, his lover's panting became labored and her moans deepened. Yes, just a few moments more and she'd, he'd... Quentin removed his hand from his saluting staff, casually laying his towel over his erection.

"Ahh! Yes! Yes!"

Catriona brought release to Shelby all too soon. Her arms flailed wildly above her twisting head, her mouth opening to a perfect "O". The crowd's deafening applause gave him an idea. He stood and wrapped the towel about his hips. Shelby enjoyed putting on a good performance. Perhaps she'd do a repeat performance of what she did in the Civil War-era jail cell? He approached and knelt at her head.

"Good trip, huh?"

She giggled. "Better than time traveling. Almost."

Catriona lay at Shelby's side and continued to caress and lick her newfound companion. "Wanna demonstrate your own oral technique?" he asked.

Shelby frowned. "I...I don't know. I'm not really a lesbian, you know."

He laughed. "That's not what I meant, but you may be able to help Catriona out with a friendly pat or two."

"Oh, yeah, I get ya." She sleepily turned to her partner. "Where do you like to be 'petted', Cat?"

The tail whipped out and wrapped itself about one of Shelby's hands, guiding it to the Felinian pleasure center. "Right... there. Me-ow! That feels just purrr-fect."

Shelby stroked her Felinian lover at a brisk pace until yowls of ecstasy echoed off the tile walls and picture window. The ever-growing crowd of voyeurs clapped enthusiastically.

"Thank you, Shelby," Catriona said with a sigh-purr. She curled up like the kitten she was at her human lover's side.

"Now it's your turn." Shelby raised her upper body on an elbow and laughed. "You aren't fooling anyone hiding behind that towel unless you're doubling as a towel rack, mister!"

Taking his cue, he knelt on the edge of the chaise lounge and offered his cock to her waiting lips. She danced her tongue around and around the head, driving him to distraction before plunging the shaft deep into her mouth. The assembly surged forward to observe her wonderful technique of bringing him to orgasm with her flickering tongue while she cast a spell on his balls with her nimble hands.

"So close already," he said with a groan. "Watching Catriona and you ... excited me."

As if in response to his admission of impending explosion, she wriggled a finger up his ass. The sudden and unexpected stimulation sent him over the edge with a vengeance. She stroked and sucked him hard until the tremors overtook him. With a cry he felt his juices erupting from his cock, knocking him from his precarious position. His hot cum arced before the eager onlookers, splashing across Shelby's face and breasts.

Claps, cheers and yells of “Encore! Encore!” reverberated in their ears.

Quentin released a long sigh and looked down with admiration at his lover. She grinned. “I guess you were feeling a bit tense, huh?” She rubbed his sticky fluid across her skin. “Sheesh, after today I know I was in the wrong business. I should star in a porn flick.”

“Never. You’re too good for that, Shelby.” He lay down beside her on the chaise lounge and kissed her passionately. Catriona uncurled herself and began to lick Shelby clean. “See? Even Catriona thinks so.”

“Hmm.” She smacked her feline lips loudly. “Human males are so...tasty.”

“You’d better stop licking me.” Shelby giggled. “It’s getting me all tense again.”

Quentin raised an eyebrow. “Really?”

Catriona tilted her head in a catlike manner, purring and smiling. “Next time, I catch all the cream.”

* * * *

How long had she been sleeping? Shelby groggily stretched and yawned. A cold draft blew against her skin, sending a tremor down her spine. Where had Catriona scampered off? Without even so much as a towel to cover her nakedness, even the warmth of the party ship’s bath area with its sauna and hot tub couldn’t keep her from shivering. She turned to Quentin and shook his shoulders.

“Quentin, wake up. I think we may have outstayed our welcome.”

He snored and rolled to his side. “Later, mom.”

Shelby sat up and opened her eyes fully. She squinted trying to make out objects in the dimmed lighting. No wonder she felt a chill. The bath area had turned into a ghost town, every appliance switched off, and an unusual vibration emanated from the floor. A high-pitched whine assaulted her ears. Something was definitely wrong here.

“Quentin, I think the party ship has taken off.”

“Wha...?” He rubbed his temples. “Ooo, my head. What else beside aphrodisiacs were dumped in those martinis I wonder?”

“You think we were drugged?” Her heart raced at the idea. “Is drugging guests and kidnapping them common practice at one of these shindigs?”

“Anything is possible with Barris in charge.” He moaned and rolled to his side. “I’m stupid for trusting his hospitality.”

“Don’t jump to conclusions too fast.” Shelby tried to keep her voice from slipping into a higher octave but it did anyway. “It could be we were forgotten about in all the clean up after the orgy ended. Let’s find our clothes and track down our host.” Slowly they stood and entered the locker room to search for their personal belongings.

“I thought Reks said he stored our things in locker number sixty-nine, but it’s empty.” Shelby sighed. “Barris has some great housekeepers. I can’t even find a wet towel on the floor.”

“Here, I discovered these robes secreted behind a mop in the broom closet.” Quentin tossed a black silk robe at least two sizes too small to her then donned another black robe that barely covered his privates as he tied the sash at the waist. “They’re not much, but they’re all we’ve got.”

“If it wasn’t so chilly in here I’d rather go about nude.” She tied the sash close under her breasts, accentuating her cleavage and stretching the material tightly across her

pointed nipples.

He chuckled. “It *is* rather cold, isn’t it?”

“I wouldn’t talk Mr. Towel Rack,” she murmured, playfully squeezing his buns as she ambled past him. “You’re not exactly covering your excitement, either.”

They headed out of the bath area and into the party pit. The pillows appeared cleaned and fluffed, the carpet vacuumed, and every drink glass removed, washed and set back on the shelves behind the bar. All traces that there had been a hundred or more party guests had been complete obliterated.

“We must have been sleeping pretty hard not to hear people clean up the mess in here.” Shelby flipped a pillow over with her foot. “Nothing. Not a crumb or a stain or a stray piece of clothing. It would have taken forever to clean this room without a good vacuum cleaner. We would have heard the racket from the bath area.”

Quentin frowned. “Time, Shelby. We weren’t necessarily sleeping any heavier than usual, but we could have been asleep for a long time. A very long time. This ship could have made a time jump and is heading for my century.”

Shelby plopped onto a sunken sofa, hiding her worried expression behind a throw pillow as she hugged it tightly. “Your friend is a time traveler, right? Could he have kidnapped us and taken us far into the future or past without us knowing it?”

“Yes, he could have—and no, he’s not my friend, remember? Barris and I have been on good terms for some time now, but things may have changed back home... and possibly he’s working for somebody else other than himself now.”

“Clever. Very clever, Takahashi.”

The booming bass voice stepped from the shadows and approached. Barris wore a black leather chest harness and cock ring, sporting both an evil grin and a hard on. He approached Shelby and leaned down to gently caress her cheek, turning her head to the side. “Ah, so there it is. The mark of a born time traveler. Congratulations.”

“You understand what it means,” Quentin said. It was a statement not a question.

“Yes, I do unfortunately.” Barris refocused his attention on her once more. “You’re absolutely right about being kidnapped, my dear. I can’t afford to let you go—either of you. This party ship takes quite a bit of money to keep going, and I’ve been strapped for cash lately. I can’t refuse the Time Cops’ generous offer.”

“Time Cops?” Shelby’s eyes widened. “I thought you were a rogue agent like Quentin?”

“I am. I despise the Time Regulatory Agency and all it stands for, but a deal’s a deal.”

“You’d turn in one of your own? You traitor!” She jumped up and spat at him. He lifted his hand to strike her then backed away.

“No, I dare not mar a Chosen One. I’ll let the hoodlums back at the agency deal with you, dearest.” He reached out to stroke her cheek once more.

Quentin stepped between them. “Over my dead body. Oh, yeah. That’s sort of the point of this whole exercise. Turn me in, collect the bounty and then use Shelby as leverage to get away before they clamp the handcuffs on you.” He whistled long and loud before raising his hands in a gesture of defeat and shuffling away. “Wow. It’s a fairly ingenious plan, Barris. I’m impressed. You’ve still got it.”

“Thank you. That means a lot coming from a savvy rogue agent like yourself.”

Shelby frowned. Were these two going to flatter each other all night long? Why

wasn't her lover taking a more aggressive approach like threatening to blow up the ship or something? Oh... they'd all be dead then, wouldn't they? Where there was life there was hope she supposed. She had to relax, not act afraid, and allow Quentin to do whatever it took to get them out of this situation.

"I'm glad I haven't completely lost my touch at screwing others over." The giant's lascivious leer widened. He took a step closer to her and stared deeply into her eyes. "And I haven't had the pleasure of screwing you yet. It'll be a while before we hook up with the Time Cops. Perhaps you can demonstrate some of your fellatio technique on me? Reks couldn't stop talking about it as we prepared for lift off."

"Reks works for you?" Shelby gulped. Of course the Saurian did. He was the bartender after all. "Reks slipped us a strong knockout potion in our drink, huh?"

Barris took another step closer, the tip of his raised dick skirting across the thin material drawn across her body. "No, I don't believe he did. He added just the usual orgy dis-inhibitors and aphrodisiacs. You two just conked out after that wonderful action with that sexy Felinian girl. It was incredibly easy to clean up and take off while you two slumbered off the effects of your orgasms. What I wouldn't give to feel that sandpaper-like tongue on my rod while I licked your sweet, juicy cunt. Mmm, mmm, delicious."

Catriona. Did she work for Barris, too? If not, was she still on board? Could they use her host's fascination with the cat woman to their advantage? She had to find out where Cat, as she called her, had gone.

Shelby thrust her tits forward and smiled back. "I really enjoyed having sex with a Felinian. It's quite an experience. Is she still around by chance?"

The giant's brown eyes lit up instantly. "Possibly. We had a few hangers on who wouldn't leave. Reks said he deposited them in the... playroom." His hand reached out and massaged her left breast. "That gives me a great idea. Some of the playroom equipment could come in handy."

"Playroom?" Shelby tried to keep the nervous vibrato out of her voice, but it was difficult. She could only imagine what kind of things the bastard kept in his dungeon. "Sounds fascinating."

"It is." His raucous laughter rocketed dread throughout her form. "Oh, it most certainly is."

"Can Quentin come along and 'play' with us?"

Barris rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "I suppose so. I need to keep an eye on him. We're understaffed here. Quentin?"

The giant turned about several times, scanning the deserted party room. "Takahashi? Where have you wandered off? There's no use trying to hide—I have your woman, and this is my ship. We'll be rendezvousing with the Time Cops shortly. Other than walking out an airlock, there isn't anything you can do to save yourself. You might as well have a good time with us in the playroom in the meantime."

No answer. Shelby didn't know whether to laugh or cry at her lover's disappearance, but she had to carry on and use her wits to get herself out of this mess. She licked her lips slowly. Flashing him a saucy wink, she took Barris by the hand.

"Never mind Quentin. After five or six orgasms he calls it a night, but I suspect you've got a lot more staying power in the sack. Am I right?"

Barris's throaty chuckle and dripping dick were answer enough. "This way, my dearest. I'll gladly demonstrate how long I can last."

Chapter Eleven

And here she had assumed all her life that her cousin Melynda had the better imagination... Shelby's ideas concerning Barris' playroom arrangements were practically on the money. The endless dildo shelf and the well-stocked whip rack were pretty much givens. The number and variety of restraining devices certainly were inventive to say the least. The group sex in the passion pit a few levels up was little old lady tame compared to some of the kinky things Barris and his guests enjoyed in his playroom.

Oh, dear. She kept forgetting that she wasn't so much his guest as his captive now. She sighed and mentally repeated her favorite quote: *That which doesn't kill us only makes us stronger.*

"Like what you see so far?" Barris grabbed his dick with a free hand and pumped it several strokes. "Ooo... I get so excited whenever I cross the threshold that I can't help myself. Here, your turn." He yanked her robe off and tossed it aside before seating her onto a tall stool. He placed her hand on his cock, indicating she should give it a yank. "Harder. Harder! I can barely feel a thing. I forget you little girls sometimes aren't quite as capable of satisfying my *needs* as well as the bigger ones."

"You'd like my cousin Mel then. She's about five foot ten, and got melons twice the size of my little mangos."

"Hmm, mangoes." He turned into her and slipped his length between the deep vee between her breasts pushing them together to grip him. "Less talk, more action."

"Oh, right." Shelby plastered a frozen smile on her face and continued to pump the giant's cock. She quickly scanned the playroom but saw no other occupants. "I thought you said there were some 'hangers on' still on board."

"Hmm... Yes, they're kept in the cages behind that door over there. I'll look for your cat friend in a moment. Just a bit harder—use both hands now. There! Ah..."

Shelby felt like she was massaging a boa constrictor—or a fire hose—as the cum unexpectedly erupted from his engorged member, splattering liberally across her breasts and chin. What was it about her and men dousing her in their juices on this ship? Maybe if she asked nicely her kinky host would let her rinse off in his terrific shower again. Then she could easily escape his clutches.

"Um, good." He didn't even act winded, recovering quite quickly from his orgasm. His monster penis had shrunk to the size of a banana, however. "Let's find this Felinian so I can watch you two get it on."

Barris dragged her across the room to the cage area then paused. "No, on second thought, you stay here." Reaching up he pulled two chains with handcuffs from the ceiling and promptly clicked them over her wrists. He pulled a cord beside the chains and hoisted her off the floor until she stood on tiptoe, twisting her nipples for good measure. Shelby moaned.

"You liked that, eh?" Shelby nodded. "I'll be back soon, my little mango."

As he left the room she quickly scanned the area for other exits. No other doors beside the entrance they used and the door to the dungeon existed. Even if there was another way out, how would she be able to fend him off with her hands in cuffs? The multitude of leather weapons in the room was useless if she couldn't get to them.

“We’re in luck. I found your furry friend. She’s in heat for sure.”

Collared and lead like a mute beast to the slaughter, Catriona silently followed Barris who kept his distance. Red welts on his back indicated he’d gotten too close to her as he pulled her out of the cage. He yanked the chain hard until his captive came to a halt. She clawed at the studded leather circle about her throat, hissing and spitting at him.

“A curse on you, rogue agent! May you crumble like the dust of the ages when the Time Cops eliminate your timeline.”

Barris laughed and yanked the chain again. “Witty, Miss Kitty is. Let’s see... I’d enjoy observing a little girl-on-girl action here that’s different from your average alien-human interaction. Although you’ve got to admit she’s got some claws there.”

He leaned toward Shelby and muttered, “What do you think, my little mango? How would you enjoy a whipping from the snarling kitty here? Those paws of hers can pack quite a punch.” He rubbed his shoulders and groaned. “Or should I find Friskies a nice whip to use on your curvy backside instead?”

Shelby gulped. Thinking fast on her feet had always been her strength, until lately, that is. “No, let her use those paws of hers on me. Remember I’m a Chosen One. You don’t want to damage the goods too much when you sell me to the Time Police.”

“Good idea, Little Mango.” Their tormentor yanked the chain on Catriona’s collar again. “You’d better sheath your claws so her ass doesn’t wind up looking like hamburger. I hate fucking a horribly bloody booty, at least the first time. Okay?”

Catriona quickly hid her smile and nodded her consent. Shelby felt the warm moisture between her legs growing. Good grief! Here she was chained up in a sexual torture chamber with a mad man and a horny feline, and she couldn’t wait to be spanked. Quentin had definitely taught her a few new bedroom tricks.

Barris plopped down on a nearby chaise lounge and appeared to nod off slightly. Catriona’s chain slackened a bit. The Felinian slinked toward Shelby and playfully patted her butt cheeks. *Whack! Whack!* Shelby moaned and arched her back, thrusting her budding nipples out. The excitement started building in her cunt... Maybe Barris would allow Catriona to use her tongue as well?

“That didn’t sound like it hurt at all. Maybe you should use this.” Barris tossed a short, black leather, multi-tentacled whip to Catriona. “A cat-o-nine-tails for a cat. Makes sense.”

“What about the Time Cops?” Catriona purred. “Remember them? They won’t be too happy if you’ve damaged a Chosen One. Who knows... she could be *the* Chosen One.”

Barris paled slightly. Even a rogue agent seemed to respect the Temporal Authorities on some issues. “All right. Use a bit more of your claws on her ass then.”

Catriona turned her back on their captor and winked at Shelby. *Whack! Whack!*

The slight sting sent a pleasurable warm feeling radiating from her glowing butt cheeks. She groaned louder and did her best to sound like she was really hurting. Who was she fooling? Her dripping cunt and peaked nipples gave little indication that this was the case.

“You enjoy this stimulation, don’t you?” Catriona whispered in her ear in passing. “Don’t worry; I’ll only give you pleasure. Then the two of us will give Barris the pain he deserves.”

Whack! Whack! “H-how will we do that?” Shelby was panting hard now, her juices

trickling down the inside of her legs. “He’s got the keys to these darn handcuffs and your collar.”

Whack! Whack! Catriona leaned forward and licked Shelby’s nipples to full attention. “Hmm... Leave the details to me. I’ve been in worse situations, and I’ve handled worse creeps before.”

Whack! Was her feline friend a Time Cop? *Whack!* Shelby’s hopes rose. Maybe Cat was a secret agent whose mission was to infiltrate Barris’s network and bring it down from within? *Whack!* She was glad to know her feline friend would protect her from harm. But if Cat was a Time Cop then Quentin was still very much in danger—wherever he’d wandered off to. *Whack!* After they met up with the Temporal Agents Barris had made his deal with, Catriona could turn in Quentin as a rogue agent as well.

Whack! Whack! “Enough, enough!” Shelby moaned. Her eyes closed as she luxuriated in the hot wetness and delicious tension building between her thighs. The smell of her sex hung heavy in the air. Catriona sensing her imminent climax turned her back on Barris and knelt to lick her captive’s clit.

“That’s not what you’re suppose to be doing.” Barris pulled the chain hard then stomped over to the Felinian’s side and violently pushed her away. Catriona rolled gracefully, landing on her feet several feet away next to a rack of whips and crops but lay still. “Bitch! I wanted you to give her a right good spanking.”

“She is, she is,” Shelby pleaded. “But please, let her help me. I hate dangling here. I feel so... tense.”

Barris leered at her, madly pumping his thickening dick with both hands. He dropped Catriona’s leash in his excitement. “I’ll help relieve you of that complaint as long as you help me relieve mine.”

Grabbing her by the hips, he turned her around drawing her closer to his hard on. “I’ve got a feeling you don’t mind a good ass fucking. Am I right?”

Shelby cringed. Out of the corner of her eye she spied Catriona, claws unsheathed and cat-o-nine-tails in her mouth, silently circling around their tormentor, approaching him from his blind side. She had to keep him distracted just a few more seconds until her friend could pounce.

“Mind it? Hell, I love it.”

“Good.” He grunted. Even though she couldn’t see him, she knew he was manually working his cock into an aroused state. She arched her back, attempting to swing her backside further away from him.

“Yeah, I like it the harder the better. Just ask Quentin about our little romp at the beach back in prehistoric times and how he fu...”

“Quentin!” The hatred in Barris’s voice could barely be contained. “That little shit is going to put me back into the good graces of the Time Cops.”

Barris stomped away just as Catriona coiled to leap on her prey. Their host didn’t notice her landing in his blind fury. He spun around and growled, his dark eyes glowing with the Devil’s own fire.

“Don’t go anywhere, Little Mango. I’ll be back soon with your boyfriend. Then we’ll see which one of you enjoys an ass fucking the most!”

The door hissed closed. The sound of a sizeable deadbolt clicking into place echoed through out the playroom.

“Cat—are you all right?”

“Yes, I’m fine. I only pretended to be hurt so he’d ignore me.” She approached Shelby and smiled. “You called me Cat like my mother used to call me. It’s so cute. Thank you.”

“You’re welcome. Do you think you can get me out of this contraption before Barris comes back? We’ll have to find a way out of this place. Did you see any other exits back in the holding cell area?”

Catriona flicked her pink tongue across her lips. “No, I didn’t see any in there. But why the rush? Barris is probably going to be distracted for a few moments searching for your lover.” She tenderly caressed Shelby’s face with the back of her fur-covered hand, slowly trailing it down Shelby’s neck, ending between her breasts. “Want me to finish what I started?”

Shelby’s low moan betrayed her desire. “Yes, please. But be quick. We don’t want to get caught.”

Catriona laughed. “We won’t. You won’t last that long.”

The Felinian crouched in front of her and sighed, worshipping her femininity. She extended her long, sandpaper-like tongue and began lap, lap, lapping against Shelby’s aching clit.

“Ah, that’s it! You can’t believe how wonderful that feels.”

A fiery rush of sensations soon engulfed Shelby’s sensitive nub driving her over the edge. The blood pooled in her derriere rocketed up her body, reddening her face every bit as much as her butt cheeks. Her cries of ecstasy reverberated throughout the chamber.

“There, that’s better, isn’t it?” Loudly purring, Catriona tenderly stroked Shelby’s inner thighs with her tongue. “All the pink on your face makes such a pretty picture.”

“Does it?” Shelby sighed. She wanted to sleep for a lifetime she felt so relaxed.

“It does. Let me look for the key to these handcuffs. After the warmth fades you’re going to want to lie down.”

“No, I can’t lie down. We’ve got to get out of here. We’ve got to find Quentin and warn him about Barris and...”

“Sh!” Catriona placed a paw on Shelby’s lips. “Don’t get excited. We can’t go looking for Quentin—we’d lead Barris to him possibly. Quentin’s a well-trained Time Agent. Undoubtedly he can look after himself. What we need to do first is to get to the control room and turn this crazy ship around.”

“Around? Don’t you want to meet up with the Time Cops?”

“Not particularly.” The cat woman shrugged. “I’m in pretty much the same situation as Quentin and Barris. Only I don’t have a death sentence on my head. Still, I don’t relish being imprisoned for life.” She crossed to a rack filled with metal scourging instruments and scavenged around for something useful. “If I can’t find a key, perhaps one of these nasty things will help us break open the lock.”

Shelby frowned. Catriona wasn’t a Time Cop? Could she be a former Time Cop? Weren’t there any current members in this organization? It seemed there were just too many disgruntled ex-employees for her tastes. It sounded like the Time Regulation Agency needed someone with her business and organizational skills on board to whip them back into shape.

Whip. The image of the cat-o-nine-tails lying on the floor beneath her dangling feet froze in front of her eyes. She’d never think about whipping anyone into shape in quite the same way ever again.

“Here, this will have to do.” Catriona held up a long, thin, sharply pointed device. “I think I can pick the lock with this. It shouldn’t be too hard.”

“Will you be able to reach the locks?”

Catriona leapt to the top of the wooden rack contraption and pulled the chains over to her. “No problem. You’ll be out of these in a few moments.”

Shelby felt the first cuff loosen. The second cuff loosened. Her hands slid out and she trickled to the floor like water gently tumbling over a waterfall. Catriona jumped down to cradle Shelby’s limp body in her arms.

“How did you ever learn how to pick a lock like that?” Shelby said breathlessly.

“How did I learn to pick a lock? Are you kidding? I’m a *cat* burglar. It’s part of the job.”

“A cat burglar?” Shelby smiled at the pun. “I thought you said the Time Cops were after you.”

Catriona rubbed the circulation back into Shelby’s limbs. “They are, but not because I screwed up time or anything. Oh, no. I’m not a trained time surfer. I’m just a greedy burglar who stole a time device and began stealing treasures throughout time to sell further down the timeline to museums and collectors for a shit load of money. It’s much easier than grave robbing, and it preserves historical artifacts as well.”

“Yes, I can see that. Very inventive, Cat.”

She purred. “Thanks. You think you can stand now?”

Shelby wobbled to her feet. “Uh, yeah. I’m okay. Where’s my robe?”

They looked around the playroom and discovered it crumpled in a corner. Shelby slipped it on and sashed it then headed toward the cage room door. “This way?”

Catriona frowned and shook her head. “I don’t think you want to go in there. We’re better off looking for an air duct and crawling out of here that way.”

“Why do people always have to escape via air ducts? *Doctor Who*, *Star Trek* they all had their air duct escape episodes. Why can’t we just search for a normal exit?”

Shelby froze the second her foot crossed the cage room threshold. The putrid stench of rotting flesh assailed her nostrils.

“Oh, my God... Is that what I think it is? Did he... Are they?”

Catriona wrapped an arm about her shoulders and turned her away. “Yes, it’s rotting corpses. I was the only living thing in there. Barris keeps one or two party guests per orgy and locks them up in one of his cages and uses the poor person until he or she expires, trapped forever in his playroom of horrors.”

“So, there’s nothing else in there but cages and...” She gulped hard. “And bodies?”

Her companion nodded solemnly.

“You’re sure there’s not another door? How did you get in there after the party?”

“I don’t recall exactly. I was knocked out by something... something sweet smelling. The next thing I know, I’m in a cage and being rolled into here.”

“Rolled?” Shelby bit her lips in thought. “Could the cage fit through the front door?”

Catriona shook her head. “No, it’s wider than the passageway door now that I think about it. There must be another entrance like a service entrance.”

“Then we’re going to have to go through the cage area. That’s only place it could be.” Shelby pinched her nostrils shut with her thumb and index fingers. “After you.”

“No, after you.” Bold and fearless minutes previously, the Felinian’s eyes mirrored her anxiety. “Okay, we’ll enter together at the same time.”

Linking arms they took a step into the dimly lit chamber. Foul stench rose from their right and left. Shelby led them bravely onward.

"The door has got to be in here somewhere. How long does this horror chamber go on?" Shelby asked.

"Who knows? When I jiggled my cage bars, the sound echoed."

The fetid odors of death started to wane as they progressed through the long hallway lined with cages. Soon they hit a blank wall.

Shelby shook her head and stomped her feet. "Oh, great. A dead end. Now what?"

Catriona tapped the wall. "Listen. It's hollow. There's space behind it. This has got to be where my cage was rolled into the room. There doesn't seem to be another option."

"Look for a switch or a button or a doorknob. Do they still have doorknobs in the forty-second century?"

"Forty-second? I thought this was only the thirty-fourth century. And what's a 'doorknob'?"

"Never mind. Let's push and see what happens." Leaning hard against the wall, Shelby hoped beyond hope that it would yield to their weight. Nothing. She slumped to the floor. "Crud. What's our next option?"

"We could try to find an air duct? Go out through the front entrance?"

"Possibly. But I thought I heard Barris lock it."

Catriona smiled. "There's not a lock I can't pick."

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" Shelby sighed. "I didn't ask, did I? And I bossed you around. Sorry. Force of habit I guess. You sort of remind me of one of my former employees."

"I enjoy taking orders from you, Shelby." Catriona purred and wiggled her snub nose at her. "Can we get out of here now?"

"With pleasure."

Two steps later and the floor suddenly gaped open before them.

"Ahhhh!" Before Shelby knew what was happening they were falling, falling... slipping and sliding down a long metal tube toward who-knew-where.

Chapter Twelve

“First rule of running a party ship. Be sure to stock enough booze in your wine cellar.”

Quentin shoved the dusty bottle of Rigellian ale back into the rack and wandered down the aisles toward an opening in the dimly lit area. Deep in the bowels of Barris’ space vessel, he felt relatively safe for the time being. But where in the hell was the “playroom” Barris had said he was taking Shelby to? Knowing what he did about Barris and the deviant’s true nature, he’d assumed the bastard stowed his torture chamber in the lower levels near the storage compartments so he’d have plenty of room—and sound proofing—to torture his victims in style.

“Think, Takahashi. Wine cellar is below the main orgy pit and the laundry room is below the showers.” He circled a large pit full of soiled linen and pillows piled at the end of a long chute. “Perhaps if I head along this dark, sloping passage upward...”

“Ahhh! Look out below!”

“Shelby?” He stared above his head from where her voice was coming from. “Shelby, is that you? Umph!”

Before she could answer Quentin found himself flattened into the dirty clothes with Shelby’s crotch straddling his face.

“Yee-ow!” Catriona landed, feet first beside the happy couple then rolled to the floor.

“Quentin I’m sorry. Are you okay?” Shelby attempted to remove her weight from his face, but he’d have none of it.

“I’m more than okay,” he mumbled, holding onto her hips. “Talk about wonderful things falling from heaven. Tasty, wonderful things...”

Shelby moaned as his tongue flickered across her clit. The fates seemed to have it in for the two of them. They seem destined to fall into bed with each other at a moment’s notice during dangerous times. “Hmm, yes that’s wonderful, but we can’t stop for a little playtime now. We’ve got to turn this spaceship around.”

“She’s right,” Catriona whispered, pacing around the laundry pile. “Barris is searching for you even now. We’ve got to get to the control room somehow without being re-captured.”

Quentin reluctantly helped Shelby extricate her pussy from his tongue and sat up. “What, he’s got a crew of, let’s say, a dozen or more? There’s only the three of us. We’re not going to be able to overtake them by force. We need to find my key chain and time surf out of here as soon as this crate lands.”

“Dammit, Quentin! You’re always losing your key chain. Why don’t you stow it up your cute ass or something?” Shelby stomped her foot in exasperation and stubbed her toe on something hard tangled within the dirty linens. “Ow! What the hell? I just stepped on something hard.”

“My key chain!” Quentin dove head first into the pile and popped up with his time travel mechanism in hand. “Talk about convenient timing. What were the odds we’d all wind up in the laundry room where our clothing had been tossed?”

“I’d say the odds were in your favor all along.” A deep, friendly disembodied voice

from somewhere under the heap spoke to them in a calm tone. "After all, it was I who retrieved it a few moments after you shed your outerwear, and it was I who followed it down here hoping to meet up with its owner."

"Who are you—*where* are you?" Shelby began to dig down through the sheets and towels but came up empty handed. "Are you a ventriloquist?"

"No, he's invisible." Catriona crawled about on all fours and sniffed a large indentation in the laundry pile they hadn't noticed before now. "You're an invisible man from Exilla Seven, aren't you?"

"Correct. And you're a Felinian? Beautiful coat I may say." Catriona purred loudly and smiled. "Ivak Manstun at your service," said the invisible man. "I take it you all are on the outs with Barris, too."

"Nice to meet you, Ivak. I'm Quentin Takahashi." Quentin slipped the time device into his robe pocket and stuck out a hand for their invisible companion to shake. "The 'outs' doesn't quite sum up the problem Barris and I have. He wants to turn me in to the Time Cops and collect the reward on my hide."

"That doesn't make any sense." Ivak sounded puzzled to Shelby, but who could really tell a person's emotions for sure without a face? "He'll have to turn himself in at the same time. I hear he has a death sentence waiting if the Time Regulators ever get a hold of him."

"That's where I come into play. I'm Shelby Schwartz." Shelby stuck out her hand but, instead of shaking it, Ivak kissed it. She giggled. His feather-light kiss sent shivers of delight dancing along her nerve endings. "How gallant you are, Mr. Manstun."

"It's Ivak. We Exillans are all very informal people. It's probably due to the fact that we run around naked all the time."

Shelby gulped. Whoa! She could have reached out and inadvertently shook just about any part of his anatomy by mistake. Catriona got on all fours and sniffed the air again.

"Yes, he smells musky and sweaty and male like a naked Exillan in the prime of life. Being invisible does have its advantages. The whole galaxy is your nude beach."

Ivak laughed. "Yes, it is. So, Quentin, how is Barris going to use this lovely human female here to keep his timeline from becoming obliterated?"

"She's a Chosen One. Has the mark to prove it. He plans on using her as a bargaining chip to be left alone once he's turned me over."

"It'll never work." Ivak's voice sounded as if he were walking away from the laundry area. They rose and followed the sound of it toward the wine cellar racks. A bottle of champagne seemingly removed itself from a slot and popped open, slightly dribbling its contents onto the deck. The bottle rose to about mouth height and an ounce of the contents disappeared into thin air. "Want some?"

"Thanks." Quentin accepted the bottle and took a swig. "Catriona?"

"No thank you. I need to keep my senses sharp," Catriona replied. She sniffed around the wine racks as if making mental notes of the lay out.

"Shelby? Want a sip?"

"Nah, I need to keep sharp, too. I don't want to fall asleep and find myself tied up in Barris's playroom again."

"Wise woman—and very talented too, from what all I observed from the locker room." Ivak took the bottle back from Quentin and enjoyed another gulp. "You're very

lucky she's your lifemate."

"Lifemate?" Shelby's heart skipped a beat. Quentin suddenly looked very uncomfortable. She sighed. It was up to her to correct their fellow stowaway before things got out of hand. "Oh, no we're not married. We're just traveling together."

"Pity." The half-empty champagne bottle lowered to the floor. "You two make a handsome couple with or without clothing. Anyway, the Time Cops Barris made a deal with won't care about obliterating a human Chosen One. Barris' plan is faulty."

Quentin's eyes narrowed. He crossed his arms and frowned. "And how would an invisible man know they won't bargain to save the life of a human Chosen One?"

"Because I work for the Time Regulation Agency, and the people he's dealing with don't. They're actually small-time scam artists using psychic papers to convince people they're the real deal. I've been tracking them for some time as well, but my first mission is to bring in Barris, and they've so kindly cooperated without realizing it."

"What?" Quentin took a step back. "You work for the TRA? Hey, I didn't mean anything earlier by..."

"Don't sweat it," Ivak cut in. "I forgot to give you my title, didn't I? We Exillans are entirely too informal at times." He cleared his throat. "Ahem, I'm Ivak Manstun, Chief Investigator for Covert Time Operations. And after I've apprehended Barris Falst I'll have to bring you in for questioning as well, Quentin Takahashi—you and your accomplices."

"Shit." Quentin slumped to the floor. His head dropped into his hands. "I knew coming here wasn't going to make my day." He raised his wrists, ready for handcuffing. "I might as well turn myself in now. Get it over with, Ivak."

"I don't mean to interrupt your self-indulgent moaning, but we have company," Catriona hissed. "Barris has sent some of his heavies down here to look for us."

Shelby's eyes grew wide in the semi-darkness. "How can you tell? I don't see or hear anyone."

"I can smell them and hear the high-pitched whine of the turbo lift. You forget my senses were developed for hunting—and for being hunted. Come on, we've got to find a place to hide."

"Let's just hit the button and time surf on out of here," Shelby suggested. Quentin and Catriona stared at her. "What? Did I grow a wart on the end of my nose or something?"

"We can't use a time device to open a hole in the time fabric without opening a hole in the side of the ship," Ivak calmly explained.

"That's okay. We won't be here and Barris and company will get sucked out into space. Baddies dead. Case closed."

"You are one tough human female," Catriona said in awe. "But we'll get sucked out into space as the time passage grows in size large enough for us to enter it. That's why you can only directly time travel through the time streams via planets and not spacecrafts."

"Well said." Ivak sounded impressed.

Quentin uneasily shifted his weight from foot to foot. "I hate to break up this mutual admiration society, but we need to get off this level, right?"

"Yes, that makes sense," Ivak agreed.

Shelby headed toward the laundry chute and the others followed. "We can go up the

way we came down.”

Catriona’s fur bristled. “Crawl inside that awful tube? Back to that room of death?”

Shelby nodded. “They’d never to think to look for us there. Any of us.”

“But its sides are steep and smooth. My claws will never grip a hold of its surface. My fur will make me slip and slide.”

“I’ll go first.” Quentin jumped on top of the laundry pile. “Human feet are fairly sticky and we can use our fingers and toes to grip onto any small ledges inside. There are some distinct advantages to being related to primates.”

The sound of a turbo lift door opening and deep voices commanding others to search in certain directions echoed off the metal bulkheads.

“After you, ladies,” Ivak said. “I’ll take the rear position. That way you won’t have to worry where you’re placing your hands on me in case I slip.”

Quentin scrambled up the tube about twelve feet and wedged himself against a slight ledge. “Hurry and crawl up to me here,” he whispered. “We can’t move around too much while they’re nearby.”

“This couldn’t be easier.” Reks’ deep, hissing voice drifted across deck. “It’s like catching a mouse in a maze. We might as well relax a few moments and enjoy ourselves.”

A couple of goons with him laughed boisterously. The sound of bottles being uncorked echoed up the laundry chute.

“Yes!” Shelby whispered as she positioned herself at Quentin’s side in the chute and helped Cat to do the same. “They’ll get too sloshed to even think of crawling up this tube.”

“Shh!” Ivak scolded under his breath. “Don’t bet on it. Barris hires some of the meanest thugs in the galaxy. Drunk or not they’ll get what they’re gunning for.”

Suddenly, the invisible man sneezed a long, earsplitting sneeze.

“What the fuck?” Reks cried out. “That sound... It came from over near the laundry.”

“Shit!” Quentin’s eyes widened with fear. “Don’t tell me you’re allergic to cat fur, invisible man.”

“I am,” came the sorrow-filled reply. “Forgive me.” He sneezed again.

Catriona groaned. “Wonderful. The man you can’t see is going to give us away with his incessant noisemaking.”

“We’d better get moving,” Shelby said. “Perhaps Reks and his mates are too large to fit in the narrower sections of this service tube.”

Quentin began climbing. “It gets narrower than this?”

“In places. However Cat and I made it through with no problems.”

Ivak sneezed again. “I’m sorry, but can you please move your tail, Miss—?”

“Catriona. And it’s not ‘Miss’ by a long shot. I’ve been married nine times—one for each life.”

“Theirs or yours?” He sneezed again. “Never mind, just move quickly and I’ll stop breathing through my nose.”

“I don’t see anything but the dirty wash pile,” came one of the goon’s voices from underneath the tube’s opening after they’d climbed another dozen feet. “Want me to zap the sheets?”

“Might as well. Barris said he’s thinking of re-doing the party room over in a

different color scheme. Disintegrating it now saves him the bother of disposing of the mess later along with the corpses on the bottom.”

Catriona hissed. Quentin stopped climbing and motioned for them all to stay very still. They heard three blasts from a zap gun and then the pop and crackle of objects burning to a complete crisp. The stink and smoke of smoldering cloth and cooking flesh floated up the tube opening enveloping the fugitives in choking smog.

“All done, boss,” the goons called out.

“Good work, Boz. You find out what made that wheezing noise?” Reks asked.

“I think it was one of the stiffs that was tossed down from the playroom. Probably it wasn’t quite dead yet and had some air left in its lungs.”

“Possibly. Barris said he left the human female alive and handcuffed, however. She couldn’t have escaped down the chute. Let’s check the playroom to make certain.”

Shelby scrunched up her eyes and bit her lip to keep from coughing. Ivak must be holding his breath by now, she thought, to keep from sneezing with both smoke and cat fur attacking his sinuses.

“We can’t go up,” she whispered as the sound of Reks and Boz’s footsteps became softer in the distance. “We’ve got to hide somewhere else.”

“No, we’ve got to get to the engine control room and take over this ship,” Ivak corrected her. He sneezed and sputtered then cleared his throat. “It’s our duty as Time Agents to arrest Barris and to keep him from causing anymore damage to the time line.”

“Barris didn’t damage the time line anymore than the Time Regulators did when they set him up to destroy Atlantis.” Quentin sounded angry yet in control. “Why should I help you do anything to turn him in, invisible man?”

“Because he was going to turn you in first? And, most of all, because I suspect you know deep down that Barris wasn’t set up... that he intentionally destroyed the Zantoli civilization for his own profit. Isn’t that right, Ms. Catriona?”

“I... I don’t know what you’re talking about. I’ve never bought any stolen artifacts from Barris. In fact, it’s the other way around. He’s bought plenty of things from me over the years.”

“Really?”

Shelby could have sworn she heard Ivak’s eyebrows rise with curiosity. She coughed. “This is all fascinating, but it doesn’t solve our current problem—like where the hell we should hide out until we’re able to take control of this ship.” She coughed again. “And the fact that we’re practically suffocating in here. Move along, Quentin. Now!”

“Yes, ma’am!” The smile was evident in his voice. “Shelby’s the boss of big real estate brokerage back on twenty-first century Earth. Can you tell, Ivak?”

“She does know how to take command of a situation,” Ivak replied. “Plus the view under her robe... Hmm! You’re one lucky sentient being, Takahashi.”

“Thanks. I think so, too.”

“Quit the bullshit you two and climb!” Shelby growled.

They climbed the tube several levels higher until they spied an air duct opening in an intersecting tunnel.

“This looks promising.” Quentin attempted to pry open the screen. “Damn! Sealed tight. What now?”

“Can you kick it out?” Shelby asked her lover. “It can’t be that difficult to break through.”

“You’d be surprised. Barris bought a quality space vessel so no papier-mâché screens for him. I’ll have to turn around to get my legs in the right position to kick it. Can everyone slowly scoot back a few feet without sliding all the way back to the basement?”

The trio did as they were told, holding their breath as Quentin repositioned his legs and wedged his body tightly against the sides of the chute. “All right, one, two, three...” *Boom!* The screen held fast.

Ivak sneezed and groaned. “I can’t see past Puss-in-Boots’s tail here. Did he open it?”

“No, he didn’t. It’s going to take two of us to kick it out.” Shelby crawled closer to Quentin, rotating her body around to lie parallel to his. “Shall we do it again?”

He chuckled. “I love it when you say sexy things like that.”

She grinned. “All right now... I know it’s been several hours since we last got it on, but it’ll have to wait. One, two, three—agh!”

Shelby’s feet, then her entire body, went flying through the air duct opening. After a split-second of flight, she landed solidly in the middle of an obscenely large bed situated below the vent.

“Oomph!”

“You okay?” Quentin sounded worried. “Shelby?”

“What luck! The vent lead to someone’s private quarters, and they appear out at the moment.”

She stood up on the mattress and helped first Quentin and then Catriona and then what she assumed was Ivak as they slid through the new hole in the wall and landed safely on the bed beside her.

“Instant orgy!” Quentin chuckled. He turned and kissed Shelby and then turned to give Catriona a squeeze.

Shelby sighed. “I’ve never been so claustrophobic in my life. It’s great to be out of that chute. It’s great to be alive.”

“But we won’t be for long if we stay here.” Ivak’s voice came from near the slightly ajar cabin door. “We landed in Barris’s quarters, and he’s coming down the corridor as I speak. We’ve fallen right into our enemy’s hands.”

“Shit! Back in the duct work!” Quentin attempted to pull himself back into the tube but fell back onto the bed. “Ow! Rough edges.”

“It’s too late for that.” Shelby bit her lip. “Under the bed?”

Catriona pounced onto the floor and started sniffing around at a side door. “There are drawers under the mattress platform.” A second later her face brightened. “We can hide out in his bathroom. It’s enormous.”

Quentin stuck the air duct grill crookedly in a vain attempt to cover their means of entrance. “Bathroom it is then. Ivak, you shouldn’t have a problem slipping out and getting to the control room. Ivak?”

The Exillan had vanished from the scene several moments ago for all they knew. The three visible fugitives rushed into the bathroom and slid the panel door closed to a mere slit just as the cabin door burst open.

“No more excuses, Reks,” Barris growled. “Find Takahashi and bring him to me—alive. I don’t care so much about my playmates from the playroom flying the coop at this point. They’ll turn up eventually. You should have seen how the human female reacted to being handcuffed and spanked by a Felinian...” He chuckled. “It was hot. She’ll be

begging for me to take my whip and stick to her.”

His evil laughter chilled Shelby to the bone. She leaned back into Quentin’s comforting embrace.

“Okay, Boss. Stay on course as planned?”

“Yes. We can transmit images from the party to prove Quentin is on board if the Time Cops get too pushy for the handover at the rendezvous. Now leave me alone to rest before the big encounter.”

“He’s lying down in the middle of the bed. His eyes are closed,” Shelby whispered after slowly shutting the door completely. “Do we just stay put until he wakes up or try to slip out of his cabin when he starts snoring?”

Quentin turned and began checking out drawers and closets. “No, we’ve got to get out of here before he realizes that his air duct screen is hanging by a thread.”

A moment later a metallic *clunk* and then a pain-filled roar alerted them to their host’s displeasure at being whacked in the face by a falling grill. “Oops.”

“Reks!” The intercom must have been switched on as the name echoed throughout the ship’s public address speakers. “They’re in here!”

Catriona jumped with cat-like elegance to a top shelf full of scented candles and bath oil. “Where can we hide?”

“Not up there obviously. I’m afraid it’s going to have to be in here.” Quentin opened a short cupboard door and pointed inside. “Ladies first.”

“No, you can’t mean—aaaggghhh!” Shelby slid head first down a very narrow auxiliary chute with Catriona and Quentin close on her heels.

This is it, Shelby Schwartz. Her brief and unsatisfying life up until the night she met Quentin flashed before her eyes in a nanosecond. If she had never met this crazy time traveler from the forty-second century she wouldn’t be in this sort of danger. She wouldn’t be experiencing the worse panic attack of her life right now. But, then again, she would have never known such tingling thrills and exotic-erotic pleasures either.

What was better—a humdrum, average life of making money and doing the same old things or a life of adventure, sex and excitement?

Humdrum won by a small margin.

Dread rose within her as she realized that if this tube ended up in the laundry there was no longer a pile of dirty towels there to cushion their fall. A few twists and turns later, Shelby realized a hard landing would be the least of their worries.

“Quentin Takahashi—I hate you!”

The darkness opened to reveal their ultimate destination, not the laundry room but what appeared to be the ship’s trash incinerator.

Chapter Thirteen

The sound of Shelby's shrill scream startled Ivak from his tinkering with the ship's navigational computer relay next to the engine console.

"So, that's where they got up to," he muttered. Silently he slipped passed a crewman asleep in his chair at his warp core panel and threw a couple of switches to divert the solid waste tube from feeding the engines.

Shelby, kicking and screaming, landed hard in his invisible arms, her loosely tied robe hiked up above her hips. Catriona landed a split second later on her four paws, as a feline should, beside them. Quentin crashed head first into the sleeping crewman, knocking the sluggard further into unconsciousness.

"Ivak?" Shelby's eyes widened. "I sure hope that's you. What's that tickling my backside?" Her face blushed a bright pink. Uh... you can put me down now."

"He's happy to see you. I can smell it." Catriona purred. She rose on her hind feet and began to lick her fur straight. "I think I'm actually getting the hang of this sliding business."

Ivak lowered Shelby's feet to the floor. "Thanks for rescuing us from the flames." She smoothed down her robe over her round ass and gave him a kiss where she thought his cheek would be. Instead their lips connected for several gloriously warm moments.

Quentin stiffly stood and limped over to them. "Ahem, Mr. Covert Operations, that's my girl you're kissing."

"Sorry. This Chosen One is quite... an intoxicating Earth woman. I forgot myself."

"What's your problem? Other men can fuck me, but they can't kiss me?" Shelby stomped away and folded her arms across her chest. Ivak noted that she didn't appear altogether pleased with her life mate at this moment.

"No, they can kiss you, but they can't *kiss* kiss you, you know?"

"Men! That makes no sense whatsoever. Let's find your key chain and get the hell out of here, shall we?"

Shelby whirled about and smiled at where she assumed he was standing. Ivak smiled back, but of course none of the visible creatures could make out his expression.

"Ivak, you're a Time Cop, correct?"

"In a manner of speaking, I'm a high ranking 'Time Cop' as you put it."

"Then you must have some kind of top level time travel device on you, too. Can't you get us all out of here or at least bring in reinforcements?"

"He's invisible," Catriona piped up. "Where would he hide his time gadget?"

"She's right," Ivak said. "I didn't come aboard this vessel with a temporal traveling device. The ship's time distortion sensors would have detected it and given me away."

"But you've got one stashed somewhere around here don't you?" Shelby's tone took on an anxious edge.

"In a manner of speaking, no, I don't."

Quentin whistled. "You mean you jumped straight through a time gate from Time Point Central to get here?"

"Yes I did."

"Amazing." The Time Surfer threw an arm around Ivak's invisible shoulders and

gave them a squeeze. “I seriously underestimated you, Ivak Manstun. You think Barris is worth risking your safety that much, huh?”

“He is. As I said before, I’ve been following him for some time. The Agency wants him badly. They’re not going to let him slip away—this time.”

“What’s a ‘time gate’? Can’t we exit this nightmare the same way?” Shelby paced the engine room nervously. “And why can’t we steer this thing to some place safe if we’re in the engine room?”

“That’s exactly what I was doing before you three dropped in. Now, if you’ll excuse me,” Ivak said coolly, returning to his work on the navigational computer relay.

“Well, he certainly acts moody,” Shelby muttered. *Time travelers must all be borderline psycho or something.*

“You’d act moody, too, if you risked being stuck in this one particular time forever.” Quentin began dragging the unconscious crewmen toward the door. He deposited the limp hulk in the corridor then made sure the engine room’s door was locked and sealed. “We’re safe for now. Barris won’t mess with trying to get into here since he knows we can blow the whole ship to smithereens easily enough by imploding the engines. Happy?”

Shelby nodded. “Yeah. What do you mean Ivak is stuck here forever? You never explained what a time gate was, either.”

Catriona approached and began to massage Shelby’s shoulders. “Relax, our little Chosen One. A time gate is a natural hole in the fabric of time that you can step through to arrive at a particular point, but you can’t always get back home that way. In fact, you usually can’t find it again once you’ve used it. I’ve traveled through time gates to collect artifacts for sale on occasion.”

“You weren’t worried about getting stuck in a particular time?”

“Not really. I could always sell the artifacts I collected to someone in any time—or better yet trade for something even better. Besides, natural time gates are plentiful if not erratic. It’s how Barris gets around in this big spaceship. He stopped surfing time waves the traditional way many years ago I heard. He was afraid the Time Cops were using his time device to track his movements.”

“They probably were.” Quentin flashed a knowing look toward Ivak’s position. “He told me he wanted to stay put for a while. He’s tired of constantly hopping about the time currents always one stop ahead of the Cops.”

Shelby frowned. “If the sadistic bastard is so tired of being a fugitive he should give up and turn himself in.”

Quentin slipped an arm about her waist and pulled her close. “You don’t understand. Ivak is a sweetheart compared to a lot of Time Agents in the field. Ivak is interested in serving justice, but that’s not always the case.”

“If it’s so damn risky why do you continue to time surf with your regulation time device?” she asked.

“Because I’m afraid of becoming stuck in one time?” He shrugged. “And because I love to surf the time currents, knowing exactly what time I’m going to before I get there.”

Shelby crossed her arms and rolled her eyes at him. “Ha-ha. Very funny. Like you knew where the hell we were going the last two time hops?”

Quentin pouted. “Those were exceptions.”

“I’ve taken control of ship’s navigation,” Ivak announced. “There’s a time gate nearby that Barris probably doesn’t know about. I’m plotting a course to head straight to

it. It should take us straight back to Time Regulation Agency headquarters at Time Point Central in the forty-second century.”

“How do you know for certain where this time gate is?” Quentin approached the navigational relay and leaned against it, casting a suspicious eye on the floating sonic screwdriver. “The only sure way to know out in the field where a time gate is located is to use a spatial-temporal chronometer to compute its location and time residue.” He peered suspiciously inside the open panel. “Shit! My key chain!”

“Your time travel device is in here?” Catriona leapt over to the console.

Shelby rushed over to stand beside them. “Ivak, how did you get it? I thought Quentin had it.”

“I’m an invisible man. If Quentin is careless enough to dangle it from his robe pocket then I’m smart enough to borrow it from him.”

Quentin slapped his forehead. “Damn. I really have got to learn to be more careful with the thing.”

“You’ve had it all this time?” Shelby scratched her head. “Where did you keep it so no one could see it?”

Catriona scrunched up her nose in disgust. “Ooo... I don’t want to know.”

Ivak laughed and rested his sonic screwdriver on the console. “It’s not that bad. I actually have a small invisible backpack I can stash things in like my identity card.”

From thin air a small square of paper appeared with no photo but the words, “Ivak Manstun, TRA” printed in gold lettering over a silver holographic seal.

“Very impressive.” Suddenly the enormity of the Time Agent’s actions hit Shelby hard. “Hey... there wasn’t any need to steal Quentin’s time traveling device, now was there?”

“What do you mean?” Ivak sounded on the defensive. “My mission is to return Barris to the temporal authorities.”

Shelby’s voice rose. She placed her hands on her hips and stared accusingly at the spot she knew the invisible man occupied. “But you didn’t need to return his ship as well, did you?”

“Not exactly, but his crew is equally suspect.”

“But we could have forced Barris to land this ship on a planet somewhere and disabled it until the cops arrived. Quentin and Cat could have slipped away using his time device before the S.W.A.T. team—or whatever you guys use to bring down the bad guys—showed up.”

“Yes, that would have been purrfect.” Catriona hissed. “You want to make big points with the top dogs of the TRA by capturing Quentin and myself as well, don’t you?”

Ivak didn’t respond right away. “That’s not true,” he said slowly. “You three are not worth the reward. All I care about is bringing in Barris and his crew.”

“But you’ve jury-rigged my key chain into the navigational systems,” Quentin crossed his arms and scowled, “effectively making it impossible for anyone to use in the manner it was intended, haven’t you?”

“Yes, I have. Sorry.” The invisible man seemed contrite.

Shelby didn’t buy into it. She stomped her foot and screamed, “Ivak! How could you? We’ll all be turned over to the Time Regulation authorities now.”

“It’s my job. It’s what I’m supposed to do.”

“We trusted you, Ivak,” Catriona said. “What kind of mad man are you?”

“He’s a Time Agent. Madness is part of the job description.” Quentin sighed. “‘The mission is always more important than any individual’s safety.’ The fucked up motto of the TRA.”

“Exactly.” Ivak sighed. “I apologize to the ladies for risking their time lines. As a former Time Agent, Quentin realizes how important it is to fulfill our appointed tasks. The whole of time and reality as we know it may very well depend on it.”

Quentin nodded. “Yeah, yeah. I took the oath, too. I understand where you’re coming from, Ivak. Just promise me one thing.”

“What’s that?”

“That once this thing is all over and you’ve turned me over to your colleagues that you’ll return Shelby and Catriona to their respective time lines?”

Shelby gasped. It sounded so final. It sounded as if he didn’t expect to survive his ordeal with the time cops.

“You realize I’ll be obligated to wipe their minds of all their recent experiences.” Ivak’s voice was dead calm. “They won’t be able to recall any of their time traveling escapades in this time stream.”

“Fine. It’s better they’re safe and slightly confused as to what happened to them than to suffer the consequences.”

Consequences? What kind of consequences? Shelby wondered but didn’t express her fears aloud. Suddenly she felt ashamed for saying she hated Quentin. He’d been trying to protect her from the moment he met her. She had been acting like a selfish, mean-spirited bitch.

“Quentin, I… I want to apologize,” she began then burst into tears. He pulled her into his arms and hushed her with kisses.

“It’s okay. I know you don’t hate me—well, not entirely. You wouldn’t make it with aliens in front of me if you hated me that much.”

Catriona purred and flashed a toothy grin. Even Ivak guffawed. Shelby kicked her lover in the shins and turned away.

“Ow!” He hopped in place. “That hurt.”

“It was supposed to. You ruined a perfectly good romantic moment.”

“Blame it on nerves. I’ll admit I deserve a kicking, but I have a huge bruise on my leg from landing on that dude.”

“Speaking of which,” Ivak’s voice trailed over to a communications screen, “let’s see if he or anyone else is awake on this party ship and notices that they’ve changed course.”

The screen lit up at the invisible man’s command, its text read-out showing everything on board proceeding normally. No alerts to a course change, not even a mention of them running loose on the ship.

“Odd.” Ivak sounded puzzled. “Everything is business as usual. Something isn’t quite right here.”

“They could have taken their warning systems off line. Switch on a bridge camera,” Quentin suggested.

“All right, switching now.” They all hovered around the comm screen being careful not to bump into Ivak. The bridge appeared empty.

“This can’t be right. Let me check to see if they’re blocking the actual signal just to lead us to jump to conclusions.” Buttons clicked and depressed under Ivak’s invisible

fingers, but still the image remained the same.

"Maybe the ship is running on automatic pilot?" Shelby suggested. "They do have the technology to fly a spaceship without a crew in this century, right?"

Catriona's fur stood on end. "Yes, but there is always somebody located on the bridge at all times in case the auto-pilot system fails unless..."

"Don't say it," Quentin warned.

Shelby frowned. This wasn't something she wanted to hear, but she knew she needed to know. "Say what? Tell me, Cat"

"Unless the crew has abandoned ship."

Ivak cleared his throat. "We have no evidence of that. The life pods would have all been jettisoned. There would have been an alarm sounded."

"How do we know there wasn't an alarm sounded after we locked ourselves into the engine control room?" Quentin pushed the invisible agent aside from the console to access the emergency alarm system log. "As I thought—a silent alarm was given about three minutes ago for all hands to abandon ship. All the life pods have been launched, too. Damn cowards."

Shelby smiled. "That's good, isn't it? No more big baddy Barris onboard to torture us and none of his evil henchmen to do his bidding. All we have to do now is land this thing, retrieve your time device from the computer where Ivak's hooked it up, and we can get the heck out of here."

"It's not that simple," Ivak said with resignation. "I didn't have a huge toolkit with me, and I was sort of making this up as we go along."

"What's that suppose to mean?" Catriona asked.

"He's saying that after he cannibalized my key chain to locate the time gate he locked the coordinates permanently into the navigational system. There's no way to change course either, is there?"

Ivak grunted no. Quentin sighed.

"And it's going to take some highly skilled time cop techies to retrieve my time device and put it back together again, right?"

"Sorry about that." Ivak sounded depressed. "Besides, all the Time Agency really wants is to have a word or two with you Quentin anyway. It's not a big deal as far as I know."

"But we can't go back to Quentin's time." Scalding tears trickled down Shelby's cheeks. "He told me he has a death sentence on his head for something he didn't do."

"You actually got the death sentence for a class B misdemeanor?" Ivak whistled. "Wow. You must have really ticked off the old man upstairs. He rarely hands out death sentences for trivial time meddling."

"What can I say? I'm special." Quentin grinned and threw his right arm around Shelby and his left around Catriona. "Well, since we're flying on automatic pilot and we've got the course plotted for the time gate, we might as well enjoy ourselves for the next few hours until we reach our destination. Anyone up for a little bit of fun on the orgy deck with me?"

"How can you say such a thing?" Shelby sobbed. "This ship is taking you to your execution."

Tears glistened on Catriona's furry cheeks. "Yes, this is a ship full of death. I doubt I'll think about it the same way ever again."

“All right.” He squeezed both females tightly and then let them go. “How about you, Invisible Man? You up for some fun in the hot tub with the condemned? We could give each other backrubs and then some blow...”

“No thanks,” Ivak interrupted him. “My tastes run toward the ladies like Shelby here. And if we make a stop in the sick bay, a shot of antihistamine for cat fur will help me get to know Catriona better.”

“What if I don’t want to get to know *you* better, Invisible Traitor?” Catriona held her nose high in the air.

“You might. I think I know of a way to get Quentin off the hook with the big boss back at headquarters.”

“Why, Ivak, I could kiss you!” Quentin threw up his hands, attempting to snare the invisible agent in a bear hug, but the wily time cop effectively evaded his grasp. “You turned out to be a nice guy after all, Agent Manstun. What’s this plan of yours?”

“Please Ivak, tell us how we can help Quentin,” Shelby pleaded.

“I’ll tell you all after we get in the hot tub. I think much better when I’m relaxed.” The control room door *whooshed* open. “After you ladies.”

Quentin waggled an eyebrow as he followed the girls out the door. “That good of a plan, eh, Mr. Time Agent?”

“Yes, it is.” Ivak chuckled softly. “It may very well change the girls’ minds about what all they want to do in the hot tub, too.”

Chapter Fourteen

The forest of towering marble columns gracing the stately main conference hall of the Time Regulation Agency stood as cold and silent as the occupants who inhabited them. A text message from Time Agent Ivak Manstun three hours ago, real time, stated that the traitor Barris and his spaceship were heading toward the time gate and would reach headquarters within ten minutes. The executive Time Regulators and their numerous assistants gathered around the kilometer long conference table eager to view the first evidence that the destroyer of Atlantis—among other civilizations—had been trapped and brought home at last. At last the fiend would receive his deserved punishment. At last temporal justice would be served.

So it came as no surprise that the bureaucrats' frozen jaws gaped open and their gray, lifeless eyes bulged as they took in the arresting image upon their ten-story high visual display screen mounted at the end of the great hall. Two very wet, very naked humans, an unclothed Felinian and what could only be assumed was Agent Manstun were entwined in a sexual pose that defied both gravity and logic. The assembly of distinguished public servants buzzed with shock, awe, and more than just a smattering of pea-green envy.

"Ahem, Agent Manstun?" Chryton, second-in-command and the current Chief Time Regulator for Near Ancient History from the Enlightenment up to Man's Landing on Mars, stood up and politely addressed the cavorting mass of limbs and torsos. "Are you located somewhere in that pile up of flesh and... bodily secretions?"

"Hmm? Yes, I'm here. Just a moment please, Regulator."

"Are we on camera?" Shelby said breathlessly as Ivak rammed his rod into her ass and Quentin filled her cunt with his cock from underneath while he balanced Catriona's clit on his face.

"However did we get on camera?" Catriona panted. Her twitching tail alternatively tickled Shelby's pointy nipples and what appeared to be Ivak's cheeks.

"I forgot. I have a homing device in my invisible backpack. The Agency started tracking my signals the moment we crossed the time gate and accessed the ship's internal communications system. Sorry."

"No need to apologize." Shelby grinned. "Just fuck me harder you two, then you can take care of your other business."

"Yes ma'am!"

"Agent Manstun," Chryton interrupted, "can you please disengage yourself from that woman and give us your report?"

Catriona began to purr loudly as her orgasm overwhelmed her. Her calico tail thrashed wildly about as she tossed her head back and howled a piercing, bliss-filled scream. The surprised Time Regulators threw their hands over their ears or other aural appendages but never once took their eyes away from the screen.

"Oh, Quentin! Your tongue is every bit as talented as a cat's. That was purrr-fect!" She slid from his face and into the hot tub beside them.

"Thanks for the compliment, Cat." Quentin shifted his hips to deepen his cock thrusts. "And thanks for shaving first."

"Harder, harder." Shelby bounced her hips against the strokes. "Are there many

people watching us, Ivak?”

“Only about a thousand or so.”

“A thousand? Oh, merciful heavens!”

“Yes. I apologize. Do want me to stop?”

“Are you kidding?” Quentin gave a throaty chuckle. “Shelby’s discovered that she really enjoys playing to an audience.”

Chryton cleared his throat, his translucent gray cheeks burning red with indignation and embarrassment over not being able to control his officer. “Agent Manstun, cease and desist that activity forthwith and come closer to the monitor to discuss this...”

“Come? Oh, yes, yes! A thousand pairs of eyes all looking at me while I come and... I... Ooo-ahh!”

Shelby’s earsplitting squeal sent tantalizing shivers down the spine, or spinal-type organ, of every sentient being in the great conference hall. Somehow the Regulator in charge of communications had gained remote access to the zoom feature of the ship’s camera in the hot tub area and zeroed the image in on her flushed cheeks and pouting red lips as orgasm after orgasm washed over her.

“Manstun!”

“Coming, sir!”

And he did. An arc of semen instantly materialized from his invisible cock and splashed against Shelby’s bouncing ass cheeks. Quentin followed suit with a lusty cry and several hard thrusts. Several moments of heartfelt moans and sighs followed—not all of which came from the vicinity of the display screen speakers.

“All right the entertainment for the meeting is over. Everyone take your seats. Agents Halley and Kohoutek—put your clothes back on this instance!” Chryton barked.

“Chief Regulator, Ivak Manstun reporting for duty,” came a husky, relaxed baritone from the speaker. The image on the screen was still one of Quentin and Shelby cuddling on the deck of the hot tub with Catriona lolling nearby.

Chryton shook his head and groaned. “Can we somehow change the focus of the shot on the screen?” The shot zoomed out and came to focus a little to the left of the party in the hot tub, showing silk robes piled on the edge of a chaise lounge. “Very good. Now then, Agent Manstun, what have you to report in regards to the status of temporal enemy number one?”

“Whoa. You mean Barris is number one now?” Quentin groggily pulled himself up to his elbows. “What in the universe did he do to garner such a high ranking on the naughty renegade time surfers list?”

“Since we discovered that it was he who single-handedly is to blame for the death of disco, the loss of Atlantis, and the entire collapse of the Grangorian Empire’s time stream. Grangoria is no more.”

Quentin sat up taller. “What the hell is ‘Grangoria’? Never heard of it.”

“Is it any wonder? Barris eliminated them without hesitation for his own selfish, personal gain and furthermore he...” Chryton paused and frowned. “Why am I telling you something like this? Who are you?”

“He’s one of your former Time Agents, Chief,” Ivak replied matter-of-factly, “Quentin Takahashi. You remember him, don’t you? Chronos sentenced him to death.”

“To death? For doing what exactly? Is he a part of Barris’s gang?”

A small gray-haired, gray-eyed, gray-dressed man approached Chryton and handed

him a small e-pad with information concerning Quentin's fall out with the Agency. "Oh, yes. I see here Mr. Takahashi appropriated his Agency supplied time device. Then he went walkabouts after he and the agency had a little disagreement over whether he should have intervened in saving a young male infant in Judea several millennia ago. But that was a misdemeanor offense. His pay was docked for a month, and he was demoted a rank. There's no death sentence mentioned here."

"Hurray!" Shelby cried. Sitting up she self-consciously made a grab for her robe and quickly wrapped it around her shoulders, much to the chagrin of the assembled time bureaucrats. "Quentin, you're not a wanted man after all."

"I... I don't believe it. Are you sure that's all it says, Chief Chryton?"

The regulator pushed the page up button on the e-pad and bit his lip. "Hmm, says here that's it. But wait an infinitesimally small time period here... There is an addition at the bottom of the file." He cleared his throat and read, "'Chronos, Chief Administrator of the Time Regulation Agency, sentences Quentin Takahashi to death for parking in his space not once, but on three consecutive occasions.'"

He frowned and scratched his head. "That explains it then. Takahashi, when the ship lands you are to report for execution in the time line disintegration chamber at 0700 hours."

"No!" All color drained from Shelby's face. "This can't be happening."

"What?" Catriona pounced out of the tub onto the deck and placed a furry arm around her pale and shaking friend. "You can't sentence a man to death for a stupid parking violation. It's insane."

"You can if you're Chronos." Quentin shook his head and slowly slipped into his robe. "It doesn't make any sense. I swear I thought he'd sentenced me to death for saving that little boy from almost certain death at the hands of that maniacal, bloodthirsty King Herod. You mean that wasn't such a serious offense after all?"

"Apparently not." Ivak's puzzled tone reverberated throughout the bath area as if he were pacing methodically. "But pissing off the big, big boss on a personal matter is. Let me check something here." He paused and cleared his throat. "Chief Chryton, what sort of vehicle did Quentin supposedly park in Chronos's parking space?"

Chryton thumbed the next button several times then backed up to the beginning of the document. "Ah, here it is. It was a black heli-chopper with a silver side car and twin surface-to-air missiles."

"Quentin, do you happen to own such a kick-ass vehicle?" Ivak asked.

"On my salary as a lowly Time Agent Second Class? You've got to be kidding. It would take someone with ten times—no a hundred times my salary to afford that sort of personal vehicle."

"Someone who had a sideline in selling misappropriated artifacts like Barris Falst perhaps?"

"Ivak, my man! You are a genius!" Quentin laughed. "I'd give you a smack on the butt if I could find out where you're standing."

The invisible man chuckled. "That's why I keep moving."

"And I can testify to the fact that I've seen Barris flying a vehicle similar to what you've described," Catriona said. "Barris flew it last month to an orgy located on the other side of the planet from his party ship."

"Can you verify this statement?" Chryton queried.

“I was there. His photo was taken and appeared in a planet-wide swingers publication. That’s evidence enough, isn’t it?”

“Hmm, things are looking up for you, Takahashi. We’ll have to check out the Felinian’s statement, but that doesn’t mean there isn’t more than one of these vehicles in existence.”

“True, but you can’t execute me until all this new evidence has been considered, can you?” Quentin waggled an eyebrow.

Chryton shrugged. “I suppose not. A pity. Still, we’ve got Barris to execute, don’t we? Agent Manstun?”

“Sir... I encountered some difficulties while apprehending the suspect.”

The murmur around the kilometer long table rose to an almost unbearably loud hubbub. “Quiet, please!” Chryton cleared his throat, stroking his gray-stubbed chin thoughtfully. “Would you care to explain?”

“Not really but I will. The short explanation is that Barris and his crew escaped before we reached the time gate, and after I’d permanently rigged the navigational computer to take us here.”

A groan rose from the assembly followed by a thousand hands smacking against a thousand foreheads, or what passed for foreheads among the non-humanoid, of the august body of Time Regulators.

“And you thought you were royally screwed, Quentin,” Ivak muttered to his play pals sitting beside the hot tub. “Guess who’s got a date with the executioner tomorrow morning now.”

* * * *

Being able to see Ivak’s outline at last brought about mixed feelings in Shelby. It wasn’t that he wasn’t handsome. Far from it. The man was far from unattractive. The real problem was that in spite of the visibility grid posted over his cell opening he still preferred to run around naked. His taut pecs and strong shoulders tapered down to a svelte waist, a sturdy pair of strong legs and a long, thick cock that look as good as it felt pumping inside her only a few hours ago. And she found it difficult, if not impossible, to look him in the face while conversing with him.

“Ivak, I don’t see how you being thrown into jail is a part of your plan to get the charges dismissed against Quentin.” Shelby turned to blow a kiss to her lover in the holding area opposite. “Cat’s giving her testimony now, and a review of the ridiculousness of the charge will free him. But there’s nothing we can do to get you out of trouble unless we capture Barris and bring him to justice.”

“Exactly.”

“Pardon me? How can Catriona and I alone manage this impossible feat? We don’t have a time device, and we don’t know how to fly a spaceship. Besides, the Time Regulators want him in custody by tomorrow morning. It just doesn’t seem possible in such a short period of time.”

“Linear thinkers!” Ivak’s phantom outline threw up his hands and sighed. “I don’t know how you can stand to be around them for too long, Quentin. Their lack of imagination would drive me mad.”

“Yeah, at times they can be a bit infuriating.” Quentin chuckled. “But get a load of her cute ass wiggling when she stomps her feet.”

Shelby felt like stomping her feet in anger but stopped. There was no sense giving them more ammo to taunt her with so she pressed her nails into her palms instead. “Will you two quit teasing me? I’m being serious. I’m trying to think of a plan.”

“Watch how her tits sway back and forth as she deliberates, too. Makes you want to reach out and squeeze one, doesn’t it, Invisible Man?”

He chuckled. “It does—among other things. I know exactly where I’d like to squeeze this growing hard on of mine.”

Shelby immediately stopped pacing and shot them both a dirty look. “Keep your kinky thoughts to yourselves for now. Okay, I’ve got an idea.”

“A whole idea,” Ivak teased. “Does your pretty little head ache terribly?”

“Ha, ha. Now listen, you two... Quentin once told me that I was what you time cops termed a ‘Chosen One’. Doesn’t that title demand some respect from these stuffed shirts around here?”

“It does,” Ivak agreed.

“Good. I’ll demand that they restore Quentin’s time device and surf board to me forthwith and then I’ll use it to go back in time to gather up Barris and his gang and make sure they end up here when they’re supposed to tomorrow morning.” She smiled and crossed her arms across her robe. “How’s that for thinking non-linearly?”

“Not bad.” Ivak’s ghostly image grinned at her. “There are some real brains in that curvaceous body. I see what Quentin sees in you now beyond your obvious *talents*. But there’s something you need to be made aware of before attempting such a stunt.”

“And that is?”

“Temporal paradox. You can’t run into yourself in a previous time line or else—*kapow!*”

“Kapow?” Shelby frowned and scratched her head. “Can you explain that in layperson’s terms?”

“Kapow. It’s a very technical time traveling term. It essentially translates into ‘kablooey!’ Big time kablooey.” Quentin made an explosive sound and smacked his hands together. “If you meet up with yourself in another time line it could mean the very end of time, space, and existence itself.”

Shelby’s throat suddenly went dry. “You mean... I’d blow up?”

“Not just you, Shelby.” Ivak flashed her a kind smile. “The whole of creation would be zapped in that moment.”

“The whole of... creation?” She gulped hard.

“Yes, the whole shebang. A temporal paradox is a very dangerous phenomenon. That’s why time surfers like Quentin avoid visiting the same place in the same time twice in a row. If they miscalculate and show up at the exact same spot and run into themselves...”

“Kaboom?”

“You got it.”

“But wait a moment. Quentin was in the same room twice over once when we first met. How come the universe is still here now?”

“Are you sure it is?” Quentin smirked. “You could be dreaming this.”

She stomped her foot. “Stop it. This is not the time to be messing with my mind.”

“Why not?” Ivak asked. “We’re time travelers here. We’ve got all the time in eternity to mess with your mind. But to answer your question fully, Shelby, did Quentin

touch himself?"

"Huh?" Shelby rolled her eyes. "He hasn't had the need to since he met me."

Quentin collapsed onto his cell bunk in a fit of laughter. Shelby could hear Ivak's long and exasperated sigh.

"What I meant to say was did Quentin acknowledge his other self? Talk to his other self? Walk to the other 'him' and shake his hand for instance?"

"Well, no he didn't. It was all over in a couple of seconds and then everything went back to normal."

"There's your explanation. Because Quentin's two selves didn't acknowledge each other's presence or have physical contact with one another the universe still exists—barely. Both his selves understood the delicacy of the situation and acted, or didn't act, appropriately. But because it is so tricky to pull off, that's why it's not a recommended procedure except in extreme temporal emergencies."

Shelby felt faint. She could destroy the universe by making one little innocent mistake of running into herself? How could she run into Barris on his spaceship and not run into an earlier version of herself? They both frolicked in the orgy pit at the same time, hung out in the playroom together and then almost ran into each other in his quarters...

"That's it!" She stomped her foot and jiggled her breasts as she laughed for her enjoyment as much as theirs. "It's brilliant—just like I am, of course."

"What's brilliant?" Quentin smiled, his erection beginning to peek out from under his short robe.

"My plan to return the moment after we all jumped down the garbage chute in Barris' bathroom. That way my previous self will safely be down in the engine control room with Ivak and Cat and you while my current self waits for Barris in his bedroom. If I can keep the bastard there until the ship is safely through the time gate and prevent him from sending out a silent alarm for his crew to abandon ship then the Time Regulator Council will have their villain. Ivak will be set free."

Ivak laughed. "It *is* brilliant! I apologize for teasing you, Shelby. You truly are a Chosen One. It's the perfect use of time travel to generate a justifiable outcome for the good of sentient life everywhere in every time. I'm in awe of both your genius and beauty."

She blushed. "Why, thank you Ivak. Quentin? What do you think of my plan?"

Quentin frowned, furrowing his brow. He looked positively grim. "How will you keep Barris and his goons occupied for several hours? The time gate's location wasn't particularly close to where we encountered his ship. And your current self can't be aboard the ship when it lands here today or else you'd run the risk of running into yourself—*kablooey!*"

She sighed. Why did men always have to try to pick apart her best-laid plans?

"That's easy. I'll *entertain* Barris like he wanted to be entertained in his playroom. I could go to the playroom, couldn't I?" she asked Ivak.

"You can go anywhere on the ship at that point except the engine control room."

"And she'd have to avoid the hot tub and orgy pit areas, remember?" Quentin added.

"Not necessarily. Think about it. If Shelby keeps Barris and company occupied so they don't attempt to alter course or abandon ship, they'll all still be on board. Since the four of us are outnumbered we'd all stay put in the barricaded engine control room until we landed here at Time Point Central."

“Hey, who’s to say we don’t decide to take on Barris’ crew? It’s not like there was more than a dozen crewmen running his ship. We could take them on if we got to the ship’s arsenal and arm ourselves to the teeth.”

Shelby noted Quentin’s tone contained hints of hurt mixed in with the bravado. Was he jealous that she’d offer herself sexually to an enemy in order to distract him? She smiled kindly at her lover. “But you’re forgetting that Ivak is with us. There would be no raid on the arsenal because it wouldn’t be worth the risk for such short-term gain. Right, Ivak?”

“Once again you’re spot on, Shelby. There would be no need to risk the mission for such macho nonsense. We’d stay put in the barricaded engine room, safe and sound, as I planned.”

“As you planned—yeah right!” Quentin snorted. “How come you didn’t plan on Barris and crew abandoning ship in the life pods? Tell me that, Mr. Smarty No-Pants!”

The Invisible Man was at a loss for words. “Well, I... uh, the test simulations didn’t account for that feature. There isn’t much known about the life pod features of his particular make and model vessel and...”

“You screwed up because they weren’t taken into account.” Quentin flopped down on his cell bunk and crossed his arms beneath his head. “Case closed.”

“Hey, I didn’t have to tell Chryton to check out the details on your rap sheet. I knew it had to be a bureaucratic fuck up, but I could have kept quiet and turned you in, Takahashi.”

“Boy, boys!” Shelby sighed and raised her hands for silence. “You’re not helping matters here. My mind is made up. I understand the risks involved. Now, tell me, Ivak, who do I need to talk with to retrieve Quentin’s time device?”

“Don’t ask for my old beat-up junker, Shelby. Ask them for a new one to replace it. She’ll need a special model, won’t she, Ivak? Protocol Twenty-four and all...”

“Yes, exactly. Protocol Twenty-four has to be taken into account.”

“What the hell is this ‘Protocol Twenty-four’ you guys keep talking about?”

“Nothing important,” Quentin said. “But you’ll be opening up a time vortex in space aboard a moving spaceship. You’ll need a special time device to do it safely. Be sure to tell them to issue you a Protocol Twenty-four device.”

“All right. So how do I go about requesting one? I talk to the high council?”

“Yes, just go to Chryton and ask,” Ivak said. “Be sure to mention the protocol and it should be no problem.”

Quentin chuckled. “Yeah, just bat those gorgeous blue eyes of yours at him and ask nicely. If he doesn’t seem enthusiastic, offer him a blow job in trade.”

Her lover’s current sour attitude really ticked her off. “All right, damn it, I will, thank you very much. If I wiggle my ass and jiggle my tits at him, will that help, too?”

“Brilliant!” Ivak clapped his hands. “It certainly couldn’t hurt.”

Chapter Fifteen

“Are you certain you don’t want me to go back with you?” Catriona’s big, golden cat eyes glistened with unshed tears. Otherwise, the dim lighting of the visitors’ lounge at Time Point Central cast her furry features into shadow.

“I only want to risk one big *kaboom*, Cat. With two of us crossing the time line... Ivak made it fairly clear how dangerous that could be.”

“I don’t want you to face that horrid Barris creature alone. You haven’t forgotten what he wanted to do with you in the... playroom, have you?”

“No, I haven’t forgotten. Don’t worry. I’m not going to let my ‘entertainment’ progress to anything serious. I figure I only have to keep him busy for about three hours top. By then we’d have crossed the time gate and I can zap myself back to this time line.”

Shelby glanced over the lengthy written instructions that Chryton had insisted on giving her once more for safety’s sake. He had insisted she take a top of the line time device and board for her “personal business”. On the reverse side of the instructions he had scribbled, “February 14, 1906, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, room 812. Dress casual.” Suddenly the Time Regulator’s unexpected generosity became crystal clear. She laughed.

Catriona pouted, her tail flickering nervously. “What’s so funny?”

“Nothing really. It’s just that time bureaucrats have their own style of pick-up lines of sorts. At least, I think that’s what it is.”

Catriona slinked over to the leather couch and curled up beside her, stroking Shelby’s cheek tenderly with her tail. “Don’t tell me. He left you the address and a date for his favorite one-night-stand locale.”

“However did you guess?”

The cat woman stretched and sighed. “Simple. So many time agents have tried to pick me up that nothing about their behavior surprises me anymore. The best thing about time travel is that you really can enjoy a one-night-stand, over and over again.”

Shelby’s eyes widened. “Really? What about the temporal paradox?”

“Oh, you can’t make it at the same time each time you want to fuck each other’s brains out, but you can sneak off and spend a day with a handsome—or at least horny—time agent and then zoom back home the minute after you left. Your linear husband or boyfriend is none the wiser for it. You have to admit time travelers make ideal lovers in that regard.”

“No kidding.”

And they make ideal lovers in all other regards as well. Quentin was incredibly sexy and handsome and brave in his own way. Better yet, he certainly wasn’t the cloying, jealous type. He was the complete opposite of her ex-husband, what’s-his-name.

Wow... she’d forgotten his name! The time had flown by so fast since she’d begun traveling with Quentin. Time truly healed all wounds. She felt like a whole new woman, a completely different person. She felt assured of her sexuality and able to express her needs and desires openly. No longer did she feel the need to prove herself in the business world in order to get people to take her seriously as a blonde munchkin. And she had Quentin to thank for that.

Shelby stood and took a deep breath. “It’s time that I was off to yesterday or

whenever our little escapade occurred on Barris' ship."

Catriona sniffed and wrapped her tail around Shelby's waist, pulling her into her arms for a kiss good-bye. "Be careful."

"Don't worry. Ivak double-checked this time board and programmed the outgoing and return locales and dates. Wish me luck, Cat."

"Good luck, Shelby. May your time jump be purr-fect."

Squeezing her eyes shut, Shelby held out her arms and pointed the key chain toward an empty corner of the room. She engaged the time board and stepped upon its surface as it reached full size. The swirling plaid and paisley lights of the fabric of time began to fray at the edges. The opening grew wider and deeper until it sucked her in and jettisoned her to the near past location of Barris's quarters aboard his party ship.

* * * *

"I'm afraid it's going to have to be in here." Quentin opened a short cupboard door and pointed inside. "Ladies first."

"No, you can't mean—aaaggghhh!" Shelby found herself sliding head first down a very narrow auxiliary chute, Catriona and Quentin close on her heels.

A blink later, she found herself standing where she had stood just nanoseconds earlier in the captain's bathroom. The big difference this time? She was alone with an angry Barris shouting orders to his crew on the other side of the door.

She swallowed hard, plastered her best saleswoman's smile on her face, and swung open the door.

"There's no need to involve the crew with our private business is there?"

"Huh?" Barris blinked his beady dark eyes and stared at her. "Where are the others? Where's Takahashi?"

"There's no one here except me and you, Lover Boy." Shelby sashayed from the bathroom entrance over to the giant and threw an arm about him. "I got lonely waiting for you in the playroom, so I asked one of your crew for directions to your quarters. Didn't they tell you?" She coyly sat down on the edge of the bed and leaned back on her elbows, allowing the silk robe to droop off her left shoulder and to part open at her thighs. "Nice place you got here."

A summons at the cabin door did little to divert Barris' drooling attention from the pretty picture she made lying on his bed. *So far, so good.*

"Excuse me a moment, won't you?" His leer grew larger than his lust-filled eyes. "I'll be right back."

She batted her lashes. "Don't be too long."

"Is he in there, Boss?" Reks asked under his breath, tapping his reptilian claw impatiently against the metal, gravity-plated deck. "I can't believe we missed the bastard in the laundry room. He must have climbed up the disposal chute. Are the playmates in there as well?"

"No, I was mistaken about the noise," Barris lied. "We must have picked up some space rats at our last port of call. The noise... They're crawling about the ducts. Takahashi is probably somewhere on the lower decks. Continue to look for him there and leave me the hell alone for a few hours. Understood?"

Reks's eyes widened as he spied a flash of flesh lying against the black velvet comforter behind his captain.

“Yes, completely understood. Should we hold course as planned? Can we engage auto-piloting systems?”

“Yeah, sure. Knock yourselves out and have a party. Now get the hell out, Reks, and leave me to entertain my guest in peace.”

Shelby pumped a fist and whispered, “Yes!” behind his back. This alternative time line would blend with the main time stream and become reality... Exactly the way Ivak said it would work. Even Quentin had to admit that it could work when she told him her plan. Perhaps that’s what it meant to be a ‘Chosen One’. Perhaps all along she possessed this power to stand outside of time and see things in a rational, logical manner and to choose the correct course for time to take and—

“Now where were we?” Barris rubbed his hands gleefully together, interrupting her self-congratulations. “Shall we start here on this nice, comfy bed or shall we head back to finish up what we started in the playroom?”

Shelby swallowed hard and drove her nails into her palms to keep the panicked sound from squeaking into her voice. “Well, um... You told the crew to have a party, so I guess they’ll all be busy down in the orgy pit, right?”

The giant sat down on the bed, stroking her with a finger from her chin, down her neck to her cleavage, and back again. “That’s probably what they’ll do. Or else they’ll all jump in the hot tub. There are only a handful of them anyway. They fit nicely.”

“Sounds cozy. You want to join them?”

What was she thinking? Safety in numbers? Shelby immediately regretted making the suggestion. Who knows what would happen in a hot tub full of horny time bandits.

“Let them have their own fun. I’d much prefer to party alone with you.”

He stroked his giant finger from her cleavage down to the junction at the apex of her thighs. She shivered. “You like that?” She nodded, biting the inside of her lip to keep from screaming as he pushed the massive digit up her pussy. “Yeah, I can tell you like it rough. You’re certainly wet enough.”

He rammed another thick finger into her cunt and began to pump hard, rubbing her clit with his thumb. Shelby moaned and practically passed out from the intensity of his intimate probing. “That’s it... relax and allow me to stretch this out a bit so you can take all of my cock in your hot, tight hole later.”

After several seconds of squirming, Shelby found she was able to take a deep breath and relax and enjoy herself somewhat. So she had to sleep with the enemy in order to save Ivak and Quentin from execution. This wasn’t the first time in history a woman had done so in order to protect those she loved. In fact, it might be fun to think of herself as a modern-day Mata Hari.

Barris teased one nipple with his tongue, then the other poking out from her open robe. Then he latched onto a breast and began to suck like a vacuum cleaner. Ooo! Heavenly tingles danced and leapt across her body. She arched her back and welcomed his fingers deeper into her pussy. The pleasure-pain brought about a new awareness of her body that she didn’t think possible. Perhaps he’d give her a spanking if she asked?

Hmm... It really wasn’t such a bad way to kill the time. As long as Barris was behaving decently and pleasuring her, why not lay back and enjoy it? Why not take as long as she could to come, thus keeping the giant’s attention occupied until the very last moment?

Shelby smiled to herself. It was a brilliant plan except for one thing: The familiar

tension building low in her belly signaled that she was about to come, thrashing and screaming in ecstasy any moment.

“Ooo, Barris, dear.” She tried to wiggle out of his clutches but found it impossible. “Can you slow up a moment? I—I don’t think I can handle so much... stimulation all at once.”

He tossed his head back and laughed. “No problem.” The fervent pace of his pumping continued. “It’s all right if you come now. I love how your cunt is tightening around my fingers. Feel free to come over and over again.”

“But I... I’ve never... never...”

“You mean that pansy Quentin has never given you multiple orgasms? The swine! I should teach that little creep a lesson. I’ll give you so many orgasms in a row in so many ways you’ll break the universal record for orgasms.” He licked his lips slowly and wriggled a third finger inside her. She squealed and arched her back more. “How’s that? You want to break the record?”

She bit her lip, willing her body to relax to accept the added stimulation. “What’s the universal record?” She panted. “Seven or eight?”

“Hundred? Hardly. Thousands. We’re talking thousands. Some species have infinitely more stamina than humans you realize. I may have to strap you into one of my little contraptions in the playroom to help you take on that mean feat. You’ll likely be brain dead before it’s all over”

“Brain dead? Thousands? Oh, my...”

Shelby jerked and cried out, trembling fiercely as the first wave of bliss overtook her. Barris had no pity and continued to pump his fingers mercilessly into her until she screamed and screamed again. The closed cabin walls reverberated her shouts until she grew completely deaf to them. Her brain cells had been transformed into a melted pile of goo floating somewhere above her hopelessly quivering body.

She looked down at herself lying on the bed in the evil Barris’ clutches and crookedly smiled. *He may be a baddy and all but—what the hell! The guy really knows how to make a girl feel good.*

“I can’t hold back anymore after watching you scream like that for two straight hours,” Barris said breathlessly. He removed his fingers and began to stroke his cock. Seconds later a sticky stream of semen splashed across her face and chest. “Hmm.”

He collapsed onto the bed beside her.

“I’m so glad you enjoyed the show.” Shelby giggled uncontrollably in spite of the soreness she felt in her lower regions. “Uh, Barris?”

The giant’s snoring shook the bed. That was one way to keep him occupied. And did he say two hours had passed already? Amazing. It seemed like a matter of minutes. The old saying, “Time flies when you’re having fun,” was true after all.

Shelby mentally patted herself on the back for a job well done. Another hour to go and they’d be back at Time Point Central as planned, and all she had to sacrifice was a few of her brain cells. It was well worth it. Her eyes fluttered close. She promptly fell asleep.

* * * *

“Reks to Barris,” the comm speaker announced what seemed to be hours later. “The ship has deviated from plotted course. It appears the autopilot’s programming has been

tampered with and it's coming from..."

Barris snorted. He slowly woke from his heavy sleep. "Huh? Coming? What you say?"

Shit! Shelby sat up and lunged across the sleeping giant to punch the off button on the comm system beside the headboard before he could fully open his eyes.

"Yeah, that's me. I'm coming again." She grinned like a wild woman. "You're so hot that just looking at you while you sleep makes me tense all over."

"You haven't had enough yet?" He gave a throaty chuckle and reached over to tweak a nipple. "It's high time for us to pay a little visit to the playroom."

The playroom? Not a good idea on several levels. They'd have to travel several corridors as well. There were plenty of comm speakers between here and there. She had to keep Barris in his own bed and his attention focused away from the ship until they'd crossed the time gate.

What could she do? She wouldn't be able to handle that obscenely sized monster cock of his for more than a few moments in any orifice. What other ways did she have to distract him? She had to think quickly before she blew her cover.

Now is not the time to screw up, Shelby Schwartz. What a naughty little girl I've been on this trip so far...

That was it.

"Let's skip the playroom and enjoy a little spanking session here, shall we?"

Barris arched a black eyebrow. "Spanking? You'd like a good spanking?"

Shelby wriggled her nose and thrust her chest forward, stretching her form lazily. "Oh, yes, I've been a naughty, naughty girl today. I need a good swat across my firm, round bottom."

He started to drool. "Assume the position!"

She had him! Slowly she stood, casually patting her robe pocket for the time device key chain. A hard oblong shape greeted her touch. Good, it was still there. Her robe hung open from their earlier activities, but if she were to bend over Barris would expect her to remove it. She didn't want to risk losing her means of escape, but she didn't want to call undue attention to her robe by keeping it within a safe reaching distance. There had to be some kind of compromise.

"Hurry it along. My hand is itching to make contact with those little apple-sweet butt cheeks, my little mango."

She peeled the silk robe from her body, wadding it up into a ball of cloth then sashayed around to present her backside for his view. "I'll just hang on to my robe to help muffle my screams. My ears are still ringing from our earlier fun and games."

He grimaced as he stuck a finger into his ear canal. "Mine are ringing, too. That's why the playroom's walls are covered in acoustic tiles to absorb all the... sounds of pleasure. You sure you don't want to partake of some of its attractions? I've got some nice leather whips that would do wonders on your ass."

"I prefer skin-to-skin contact myself." Shelby braced herself for the first swat and was pleasantly surprised when she felt a tickling sensation against the small of her back instead. She turned her head and caught Barris holding a long feather that apparently came from a multi-colored peacock species.

"I forgot I had this little item under my pillow. You like?"

He twirled it against the sensitive skin along her sides, trailing it down the outside of

her legs and then dragging it tantalizingly slow across the tender flesh lining her thighs up to her cleft. Shelby sighed.

Whack!

“Hey, what the...” *Whack! Whack!*

“I thought you said like the feel of skin-to-skin contact?” He chuckled and whipped out the feather again, sliding it back and forth across the reddened skin of her butt cheeks. “What’s a little pain without a little pleasure mixed in for fun?”

Shelby turned her head to see what was coming next, only to catch the giant pouting. For being the destroyer of civilizations he certainly acted like an overgrown kid at times. “The surprise element is part of the fun, huh?”

“It is. You want a blindfold?”

She winked. “No, I promise to keep my eyes shut. But if you’d like me to return the favor with the feather later...” *Whack! Whack!*

The deliciously warm feeling began to spread all over her body.

“Now you’re catching on.” The feather danced across her ass cheeks and up and down the interior portion of her thighs once more. “You’d make an excellent addition to my crew, Shelby. Why folks would pay thousands of credits just to see you perform at my public orgies.”

“Why, thank you Barris.”

Whack! Whack! The feather revolved around her throbbing clit for a tortuous moment. She moaned. How did a nice girl raised by a nice family with a nice job ever wind up becoming a pervert who enjoyed a good spanking? The idea boggled the mind, but the tactile input overwhelming her senses instantly knocked any rational thought from her head.

“I have to say, Barris, there’s never a dull moment around here. How many orgies do you have per week?”

Whack! Whack! “Just the usual one per evening whenever we’re parked on a planet surface.” He dragged the feather slowly up and down her spine and along her ass crack. “It’s too difficult for people to ferry up to the ship when it’s in orbit, and the crew does enjoy participating in the activities.”

His throaty laughter sent a shiver throughout her body. “Reks will definitely be happy to have you as a permanent fixture on board. You two got along so well I observed.”

“Yeah, we did.”

Whack! Whack! Her juices were flowing freely now. She had to keep her wits about her. They’d be crossing the time gate soon enough. “I got along well with Catriona, too,” she managed. “Could she join up as well?”

The feather swirled and then another couple of swats. *Whack! Whack!* “Catriona?”

“The Felinian female.”

“Hmm...” The tickling and spanking cycles were coming a bit more slowly now. Barris was panting heavily—and not all from his exertions. “I remember her. She did a nice job on you in the playroom.” He groaned. “Would you like her to continue your punishment after I’m through with you?”

Suddenly Shelby felt hot, sticky pre-cum dripping across her burning butt cheeks. Her eyes popped open. “Uh, Barris, I thought you were going to give me a good spanking.”

“I am. I just decided to give you a right good rogering in the middle. You enjoy a long, hard fuck, don’t you? I promise I’ll start out easy. I won’t rip your cunt apart the first time.”

Good heavens no! Where was Quentin when she needed him to get her out of this fix? Oh, yeah... He and her earlier self were barricaded down in the engine control room. One contact with her earlier self and *kablooey!* End of existence. The whole of space and time was depending on her—and the only person she could depend upon in this situation was herself. She had to keep Barris in his cabin and his attention distracted from where the ship was heading just a little while longer.

“The things a woman has to do to save the universe,” she muttered. She swallowed hard and took a deep breath, readying herself for the giant’s monster cock to invade her intimate passage...

Voom! The spaceship suddenly lurched hard to the right, sending Shelby toppling over the edge of the bed and onto the floor.

“Ye-ow!” Barris screamed as he landed squarely on his erection on the cold deck. He painted the air blue with cries and curses as he rolled back and forth coddling his injured dick. A summons at the door brought the hobbled giant slowly to his feet.

Reks’ beady reptilian eyes widened with panic. “The ship’s off course for the rendezvous. We’re heading straight for another time gate.”

“Dammit, get back to the bridge and navigate us away from it!” The giant almost collapsed as he attempted to straighten up. “Do it, Reks!”

“Aye, aye.”

“Stay here,” Barris commanded as he limped from the cabin. As the door shut and locked behind him, Shelby jumped to her feet and slid into her silk robe.

“We should be through the time gate in just a few more minutes. Let’s see if it’s time for me to zap out of here yet.” She reached into the robe’s pocket for the time board key chain.

What was this? A pebble?

“What is it about these stupid time travel devices that they can’t stay put in anyone’s pocket for more than sixty seconds? Shit!” She stamped her foot in frustration and began searching for the pesky gadget through the black satin coverlet and sheets. No results. She crawled along the deck on her hands and knees hoping that it had fallen to the floor. It was nowhere to be found.

“I know I had the stupid thing when I first arrived here. Let me retrace my steps to see what could have happened.” She bit her lip. “Oh, yeah, I arrived here on the bed and Barris starting finger fucking me...” Shivers of pleasures danced along her spine at the memory. “I screamed and thrashed about for a couple of hours until we both sort of took a nap...”

That had to be it. He must have taken it while she thought they had both fallen asleep before their little spank and tickle number. Barris had discovered the key chain as she slept and had switched it for the pebble and hid it somewhere so she wouldn’t get away from him. The only good news was that it couldn’t be on his person currently, as he had hobbled from the cabin in his usual birthday suit attire.

“Crud! It’s in here somewhere. Where would I stash it quickly? Ah-ha! The night stand drawer, right?” She opened the drawers and sighed. “No, too obvious. Where would a conniving time traveler store a time board key chain?”

The clothes closet was relatively empty save for a snowsuit. Barris really didn't believe in clothing except in extreme climates it appeared. A search of the bathroom storage areas yielded nothing.

Damn! The key chain had to be in here. Where hadn't she checked? What else was she forgetting?

"The feather. Where did he get that feather?"

She had turned her back to him when he pulled out the feather to tickle her with, but where could he have stowed something light and flat like a feather? The ship lurched abruptly to the left and then to the right. Obviously both sides were desperately fighting for control of the ship. Shelby did her best to stay upright but the pile of huge head and neck pillows slid soundlessly to the floor revealing...

"The key chain!"

She pounced on it and checked the temporal read-out. Three minutes until she absolutely had to be off the ship as they crossed back over to today, that is this reality's tomorrow, where she was expected to be back at Time Point Central with Barris and the rest to help spring Quentin and Ivak from jail.

Wait a minute... If she time traveled back to tomorrow in a few moments, what would happen to her time line here aboard Barris's ship? And wouldn't opening a time vortex aboard a space vessel destroy it by ripping a hole in it thus allowing everything and everyone to be sucked out into the vacuum of space? No, she asked Chryton for a special time device, Protocol Twenty-two or something.

The key chain beeped a warning. No time to work it out now. She was a "Chosen One" after all, wasn't she? She had to trust her hunches. She punched the button to trigger the device and hopped aboard the surf board as the fabric of time began to unraveled about her...

* * * *

Yesterday

Shelby gasped.

"You realize I'll be obligated to wipe their minds of all their recent experiences," Ivak said calmly to Quentin as they stood in the engine control room of Barris's ship. "They won't be able to recall any of their time traveling escapades in this time stream."

"Fine. It's better they're safe and slightly confused as to what happened to them than to suffer the consequences."

Consequences? What sort of consequences? Shelby wondered. *And why is everything so blurry? I feel dizzy like I'm about to pass out...*

"Whoa! I got you." Quentin cradled her in his arms and gently lowered her to the deck. "Lie still. You looked like you were going to faint. You feel okay?"

"I... I'm fine." She blinked a dozen times then was startled. A strong sense of déjà vu washed over her. "Where am I?"

"She must have hit her head on something when she fell out of the trash chute." Catriona knelt and tenderly stroked Shelby's brow, casting a frown at Quentin. "Diving head first down a dark tunnel was a dumb thing to do. We could have all been killed."

He playfully stuck out his tongue. "Hey, it got us where we needed to be. In a few more hours we'll be through the time gate. Barris and his baddies will literally be

history.”

Shelby smiled dreamily. “And they’ll make you a hero.”

“Say what?”

She sat up. “They’ll make us all heroes. The Time Regulators will.”

“How do you know?” Catriona asked.

Shelby scratched her head and thought a moment. “I just *do* know. Call it a hunch.”

“She’s a Chosen One all right!” Ivak’s deep chuckle held a sexy, throaty quality to it.

“You know, I can’t wait to see the look on the chief regulator Chryton’s face when he meets you in person, Shelby. You’ve got to be the sexiest Chosen One to pass through Time Point Central in eons.”

“You mean the robe?” She looked down. Her sash had come undone and her wrap had fallen open. The cool air blowing across the ship’s engines had caused her nipples to peak in rosy points and sent a chill across her damp, exposed pussy. “Oops! Sorry guys. I don’t mean to flash you all.”

“Don’t cover up on our account.” Quentin pulled her into his embrace and planted a deep kiss on her lips. He slowly trailed his hands down and around her curves. Shelby sighed and arched her back as shivers of anticipation tingled along her spine. “We’ve got a few hours to kill before this junker crosses the time gate.” He wiggled his eyebrows.

“Why not celebrate by throwing our own mini-orgy?”

Chapter Sixteen

“Agent Manstun, stellar work on bringing Barris Falst to justice. Congratulations.”

Chryton, second-in-command and the current Chief Time Regulator for Near Ancient History from the Enlightenment up to Man’s Landing on Mars, bowed politely to the gold hexagonal medal hanging from a wide, navy blue, grossgrain ribbon suspended in mid-air. The medal dipped as if to bow reverently in return.

Shelby bit the inside of her cheek to prevent from breaking out into a fit of giggles. It was hard to keep a solemn face when she realized that the invisible alien stood slightly taller on the platform than the Time Regulator estimated. Ivak’s award hung from his proudly erect cock and not about his neck as Chryton supposed.

The solemn, dignified atmosphere in the crowded grand conference hall of Time Point Central indicated to Shelby that theirs had been no mean feat. Dressed in a stunning off the shoulder, turquoise silk evening gown, she felt like she was standing on the red carpet at the Academy Awards with her dashing leading man in black tux and tie beside her.

Too bad Quentin had chosen to wear his dress board shorts and a clean white T-shirt instead.

“Former Agent Takahashi...” The Time Regulator’s somber expression lifted briefly as he bowed toward Quentin and presented him with a medal. “As reward for your assistance in tracking and apprehending a known felon, your own sentence has been commuted. You can have your old parking space back at Time Point Central.”

Quentin smirked, nibbling on the edge of the medallion to test its composition. “Hmm, real twenty-four karat gold. And thanks for the thought, Chryton old buddy, but since I don’t have a working time board to stash anymore it’s not like I’ll be needing a parking space.”

“Your time board—a type forty-one I presume?” Chryton asked. Quentin nodded. “It will be restored and presented to you later.”

“Yes!” He winked at Shelby and pumped a fist in celebration. “Now, that’s what I call a good reward.”

Chryton turned to Catriona and carefully slid the ribbon about her freshly fluffed furry neck. “Catriona Feliki, for your able assistance and moral support, all charges of dealing in time-pirated antiquities have been dropped against you, provided you refrain from further criminal time infractions.”

“Oh, I will. I promise to be a good kitty from now on.” She purred, her broad smile dazzling in its intensity. “I’ve completely given up trading in stolen antiquities.”

“That’s good to know, Ms. Feli...”

“I’m going to open a sex toy shop on Earth.” She flickered her tongue at the stunned older man. “Humans are so tasty!”

“Ahem, yes.” Chryton swallowed hard and plastered a serious expression across his gray face before he bowed to Shelby and presented her medal. “Shelby Schwartz, in honor of your brilliant and daring, single-handed endeavor in delaying and apprehending Barris Falst, the Time Regulation Agency awards you with your very own time device and board. You have *carte blanche* to surf the time waves without hindrance from other

Chosen Ones as long as you pay heed to the rules and regulation of proper time travel.”

“No problem. Quentin said he’d teach me everything I needed to know.” She smiled and accepted her medal, bowing in return. Then it hit her. That odd dream she had last night after they landed... the dream about her and Barris getting it on in his cabin. Had that really happened?

“Excuse me, but what did you just say about me *single-handedly* delaying Barris?”

“Protocol Twenty-four. It was nothing.” Shelby could have sworn she spied an impish gleam twinkling in the Time Regulator’s gray-blue eyes as he turned away.

“Congratulations, Ms. Schwartz. I know you’ll make an excellent time surfer. Time will tell—time *will* tell.”

* * * *

“Now this beach is definitely worth unraveling the entire bolt of the fabric of time itself.”

Shelby sighed dreamily and smiled. She snuggled her toes deeper into the warm, purple-blue sands of Exilla, Ivak’s home world. A pleasant breeze wafting off the pinkish-green ocean kept the heat of the distant twin suns from baking them to a crisp. The sweet scent of brightly colored tropical flowers tickled her nostrils. There wasn’t a better choice for a vacation spot in the entire known universe according to their invisible comrade. She couldn’t help but agree.

Quentin leaned back on his elbows against their beach blanket, frowning. “Yes, it’s damn near perfect. There’s no dinosaurs or sea monsters. No angry natives wanting to sacrifice you on their altar. No paranoid soldiers wanting to execute you for spying.” He sat up and shook his head. “I don’t know, Shelby Schwartz. You could do much better with Ivak as your time mentor than you could with me.”

“Stop downing yourself. I think you’re absolutely fantastic.” She wrapped her arms around her lover and held him tightly. “I love you the way you are. I want you to teach me all about time travel like you’ve taught me about a few other things. Man oh man, have you ever taught me some new tricks!”

“It’s been my pleasure.” He chuckled. “All my pleasure.”

She kissed him playfully on the nose. “Yeah, I know.”

Suddenly his usual smirk turned serious. He looked deep into her eyes as if searching for an answer. “Do you love me, Shelby?” he said at last. “I know I can’t get enough of you. I need you like I need air to breath and time waves to surf. I want to be with you throughout all eternity. Is that love?”

Tears welled in the corner of her eyes. Graham had casually said “I love you” on occasion when she pressed him, but he’d never declared his emotions so honestly.

“If that’s not love, Quentin, then it should be.”

“I love you.” He caressed her cheek and brought her lips to his in a tender kiss. “So... you want me to promise to have and to hold only you from this day forward forever and ever, right? I don’t know if I can quite do it.”

Shelby sighed. If they did make that sort of promise to each other, it would cut in on their orgy attendance, wouldn’t it? She wasn’t too sure she wanted to give up something she had just become acquainted with—and enjoyed.

“I mean I promised you a vacation,” Quentin said, cutting into her thoughts, “and look what happened to us? How can you trust a screw up like me?”

"I can and I do. You promised me a very different sort of vacation, and you certainly delivered on that promise!"

Laughing, he pulled her into his embrace and pinned her to the blanket with his body. He slowly rubbed his growing erection against her belly. "Yeah, we did have some jolly good fun in spots."

"We did. Remember the first beach we visited? I was a very naughty girl and you had to spank me."

He rained kisses across her cheeks and neck, lightly nibbling her shoulders. "Hmm... how can I forget? And what about that out-of-this-world blow job you gave me in the jail?"

"Yummy." She giggled, arching her back, pressing her curves against his strong, taut muscles. "Don't forget my virtuoso performances at the orgy on the party ship. Not bad, huh?"

His fingers waltzed their way southward where they began to dance across her sensitive nub, plunging inside her pussy eager for his touch. "You've certainly gained a lot of valuable 'experiences' along the way in our travels, haven't you?"

"I have. Allow me to demonstrate..."

Shelby licked her lips and slid her legs apart, welcoming his cock deep within her. One thing she had discovered about Exilla in their first five minutes after landing was that everyone sunbathed in the nude, and no one batted an eyelash at couples making love on a public beach in the purple-blue sands beneath the twin suns. In fact, such behavior was expected and encouraged. Ivak and Catriona frolicked nearby on their beach blanket, and, if Shelby was any judge of Felinian meows and invisible men's grunts, her dear friends sounded like they were enjoying themselves immensely.

Quentin began making love to her slowly, building the intensity and pacing with each thrust until she whimpered with delight, begging him to finish her off.

"Ooo, you're so tight, Shelby." His labored breathing indicated he was fighting off his orgasm until the last possible second. "You're dying to squeeze every last drop of cum out of me. I never want to stop loving you. You make it hard for me not to... so very hard..."

"Yeah, that's it. Fuck me harder, Time Surfer. Fuck me so hard I scream your name loud enough that everyone on the planet and across time will hear it."

He moaned. "Hmm... You got some stiff competition from Catriona. Those cat cries of hers are quite deafening."

"*Stiff* competition?" She raised an eyebrow. "I've got the best stiff cock in the known universe screwing my brains out. Let's show them how it's done."

Quentin pulled out momentarily to raise her legs above his shoulders, burying his knees deeper into the fine sand. With one swift lunge he drilled into her then slowly rotated his cock, spiraling it deeper than Shelby thought possible. She rocked her hips forward and gasped at the fullness of penetration.

"Oh... my... stars... Quentin!"

The smack of his balls against her moist flesh pounded a primitive rhythm of both lust and need. The familiar trembling began low in her belly and torpedoed along every nerve fiber of her body. Orgasms struck like lightning, over and over again. Her cunt involuntarily clenched, milking her lover's cock for all it was worth. Her arms thrashed wildly above her head and her toes curled under in a permanent state of bliss. Sensual

explosions blinded her with brilliant crimsons; lights swirled madly about in her over-stimulated brain.

"I love you, Shelby," he whispered. "Yes! Yes!"

Just when she thought she'd grown permanently hoarse and deaf from her shouting, she felt the hot pulse of Quentin's seed exploding inside her. The intense vibrations and his ardent cries toppled her over the ecstasy's edge once more. Sighs erupted from her love-bruised lips. Sated and spent, Quentin collapsed to the blanket and cradled her head on his chest, tenderly kissing and stroking her as they drifted off into contented dreams.

* * * *

"Some show you two put on there an hour ago." Ivak's tone had a teasing quality to it. "I thought Catriona's screams could carry long distances. You ever study opera?"

Shelby slowly sat up and winked at the direction of his voice. "Sounds like you were plenty entertained from where we were sitting."

He laughed. "Definitely!"

"Thanks for telling us about this beach, Ivak." Quentin yawned and stretched. "It's quite relaxing."

"Yes, it is, and you're welcome. The suns are beginning to set now, so we'd better go inside. The temperature will plummet to well below freezing in a matter of minutes and even the oceans will become slush. I wouldn't want anything important to drop off, Quentin."

Quentin grinned. "Me neither. If it did, I wouldn't have any place to hang my medals from!"

They all laughed. As tiny droplets of cold, pink sleet began to fall they picked up their picnic items and rushed up the beach to their vacation cabin.

"Do you mind giving Catriona a lift back to the thirtieth century, Shelby?" Ivak asked several minutes later as he laid another log on the fire in the greenstone brick fireplace

Shelby cuddled closer to Quentin on the violet-red animal fur rug, stroking the top of Cat's sleepy head resting in her lap. The Felinian purred contentedly. "No, I don't mind at all. I don't think her sex shop on Earth would do very well in my own century, but Quentin assures me it'll do great in that time period."

"It'll do phenomenal in that era," he agreed. "No doubt about it. Catriona will become one very rich and very successful businesswoman."

"Good. Where are you two planning to go next?"

Shelby bit her lip and turned to gaze at her lover. "I'd like to go home and tell my cousin Melynda all about my fantastic vacation... within reason, of course. She'll never believe me really."

Ivak poked at the embers with a long metal tool. He sat down on the hearth as evidenced by his butt prints on the ash dusting the stone surface. "You're right. Your cousin will never believe you. Linear thinkers seldom do."

"True, but it's the thought that counts. I want her to know I'm okay and then I'll check up on my house and my business interests. I'm really curious to see how Sara is handling the company, that sort of thing. Then Quentin and I plan to go on an entirely relaxing vacation this next time out, right?"

"Sure thing." He winked. "We'll skip the prehistoric eras."

“Could I hitch a ride with you guys?” Ivak asked. “I’ve always wanted to visit twenty-first century Earth. I have quite a bit of vacation time accrued with the Agency. If I don’t take my personal hours now, I’ll lose them in the next calendar year.”

Shelby scrunched up her nose in thought. An Invisible Man in the twenty-first century? What could it hurt? No one would see him. No one would ever need know he was there if he kept quiet in public and didn’t disturb anyone. If he accidentally knocked over something while a stranger was in the room, she could claim he was a ghost. St. Louis was filled with ghosts. His activity would be considered just another haunting.

“Yeah, why not? I don’t see any harm in Ivak visiting St. Louis with us. Do you, Quentin?”

“Harm?” He thoughtfully stroked his chin.

Somehow Shelby felt that her lover wasn’t entirely convinced. “It really wouldn’t be any trouble. He can stay in my guest room.”

“Hmm, an invisible Time Agent in the twenty-first century,” Quentin said carefully. Then he grinned. “Sounds like a safe bet to me.”

The End

About the Author:

Celine Chatillon is the alter ego of multi-published contemporary romance novelist, Cynthianna Appel (<http://www.cynthianna.com>). Celine finds writing erotica a very pleasant departure from her day job as a small press manuscript reader.

Celine has released contemporary, paranormal, futuristic and sf/comedy erotic romance tales. Her first LSB title is *Help I'm Falling for the Vampire Next Door*. Many more stories of erotic fun and wonder are in the works or under contract at this time. Be patient, please.

Celine has a yahooogroup announcement newsletter (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/celinesdreams>), a MySpace.com site (<http://myspace.com/celinechatillon>) and a blog “Celine's Dreams” (<http://celinesdreams.blogspot.com>). She may have other blogs elsewhere online, but she's mislaid them along with the batteries for her vibrator.

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