



# SEX ME IN II

Triad Series  
Book 4

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SEX ME IN  
TRIAD SERIES – BOOK 4  
BY  
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Sex Me In - Triad Series – Book 4

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Series: ISBN: 1-55410-770-9

Cover art and design by Martine Jardin

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Published by eXtasy Books

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## SEX ME IN

Rachana Salura watched from the safety of her cloaked ship as she waited for help to arrive. How long would those animals stay? She hoped they stayed long enough for a rescue party to arrive and wipe them from the face of this planet—from the entire galaxy. A week had passed since she'd made the call, begging for assistance. Sometimes she wondered if help would ever arrive.

She did another surface scan. The men were attacking the defenseless women again. They were disgusting and repugnant. Their very existence caused entire worlds to shudder. Thankfully, she'd never been captured and used by the *Hienials*, but she'd known too many who had. The *Banarts* were cruel, worthless enemies. Many times they had infiltrated planets, killing and maiming as they went. Still, they weren't as bad as this. At least they put their victims out of their misery when they finished with them. These monsters forced their victims to live.

The *Hienials* were no better than animals. They used the poor, unwilling women of the planets they conquered as human incubators for their bastard children. She shuddered at the thought. They were beasts, plain and simple.

She jumped when her reminder alarm went off. Settling back down in her seat, she made a face at the note on the screen in front of her. Tonight was the night. It was time to fulfill her coven vow to allow harm to none—it was time to at least attempt to draw a mate into her life. How one ambitious archaeologist having a mate could make a difference in the war against tyranny, she would never understand. Besides, it wasn't acquiring a mate that she wanted to avoid. One mate she could deal with. It was the warning from her coven sisters that she may have a second mate waiting for her that rankled. One man she could control. Two men would control her. It was unacceptable.

First things first though, she must break orbit before someone detected her. She would be an easy target on this research vessel alone. Ana tapped her chin, wondering if she should break orbit and call for help again. She bit her lip. But was anyone even close? She'd called for help several times and no one answered her pleas.

She brought her craft around and hid behind one of the moons. The last thing she wanted was

for someone to sneak up on her while she was distracted and performing her ritual.

"This is Rachana Salura, the Captain of the *Carrillian* research ship *Adventurer* requesting assistance—I repeat, I require assistance. The *Hienials* have invaded *G'recio*. They are attacking the *G'recians*. It is an unprotected populace, mainly women and the elderly with no weapons or warriors to protect them. Please," she begged. "We need assistance!"

Ana glanced around the inside of her small shuttle and knew that if no one answered her call, they would all perish. She'd stayed in orbit around this planet too long to travel to another occupied system and her resources were running low. Soon, she would have no food or water. More importantly, in three days she would run out of oxygen.

At that time she would either have to land on the surface, making herself vulnerable to attack or she would perish here in this small craft. She chuckled mirthlessly. The *Adventurer* was no more a research vessel than her small niece's *walk-around* buggy. The craft was nothing more than a small shuttle she'd appropriated during an attempt to escape the academic thievery of her peers. She'd escaped them all right.

"Well, nothing to be done about it now," she said to herself as she scanned through the pages of

the spell book. Having decided not to use any of the spells and making up her mind to try the visualization techniques provided in the large, digital book of shadows, she skipped to the directions and read them one more time before she started her mental ritual.

A small smile curved her lips. She would fulfill her vow to attempt to help the galaxy by performing the rite, but no one ever said she had to mean it. Perhaps if there wasn't immense power behind it, she would only draw one male to her. One male she could handle—perhaps even dominate. If she couldn't dominate she would, at least, demand equality.

Equality was a laughable concept among most males she'd ever had the pleasure of meeting. They demanded fidelity while not giving any of their own. They demanded her submission when she needed some semblance of control to reach her pleasure. They demanded her love while remaining aloof. She would never succumb to the advances of a *Carrillian* male ever again.

Closing her eyes, Ana pictured her ideal male. When the faces of two men filled her mind, she stopped, cursing. She refused to have two males. Determined to choose between them, she closed her eyes fully intending to banish one from her thoughts. Yet she couldn't. How could she choose between two such gorgeous men? Instead, she

concentrated on thinking of their characters. Her male must be brave, yet kind. He must be handsome, yet not narcissistic. A good sense of humor was also good. He must allow her to stand by his side, instead of shoving her behind him. And, most importantly, he must love her above all others.

Ana pictured her two males and included her stipulations for her mate's character. No two males would meet her criteria. If—by some small miracle of fate—they did, she must accept them both. She would never have the heart to choose between two such ideal specimens. Several moments passed as she visualized her perfect men. Strong, handsome men—at least one of which who would love her, cherish her, forever.

Suddenly, her proximity alarms began to shriek. "Warning, warning, collision imminent!" the computer generated voice blared over the speakers.

Rachana rushed back to the pilot's seat, frantically pressing buttons. Bringing up the viewscreen, she cloaked the ship just before two large warships blinked into view. Their sudden arrival could only mean one thing—her much anticipated help had arrived.

She frowned down at her scanner console. Why were they arming their weapons against each other? Her fingers flew over the console as she

searched radio frequencies, hoping to hear something, anything, from these people before they blew each other to hell. She needed them. The *G'recians* need them.

"Stand down, unknown vessel. We demand the return of our leader!"

"We do not deal with kidnappers and terrorists. We demand the return of our captain!"

The two disembodied voices demanded the same thing.

"Men!" she spat, disgusted. She dismissed the coincidence though the hairs on the back of her neck stood on end. "Why must they always insist on getting their way without giving in return? They each would go to war before admitting that the other has taken another prisoner." She almost scoffed at the two ships, willing to destroy each other rather than admit their transgressions. "They would rather go to war than release the two men. Utter stupidity." She shook her head. "But what did I expect? They *are* males."

Again, the hairs on the back of her neck prickled and a shiver of unease shimmied down her spine.

"You don't seem to have much regard for males, woman. Perhaps you haven't met one to your liking? Yet."

Turning, she shrieked and jumped from her seat. "How—how did you get here?" she asked

the strange man standing before her. Yet she knew. This man had visited her dreams. She watched him warily as he stepped closer. The same orange-gold hair with black tips graced his head. The same muscular body stood before her. The muscles of his large arms flexed as he moved. She loved the way they bunched and released as he moved to sit at the console she had just vacated. His green gaze bored into her, pinning her feet to the deck. Her mouth had gone dry with the effort to speak as her mouth opened and closed several times in an effort to communicate. She closed her eyes and opened them slowly, berating herself for her apparent loss of wits.

"I must tell my ship where I am before they fire on an innocent vessel," he said, his fingers flying over the flat panel. "*Tigerian* vessel *Bengalli*, stand down. This is Kel Galbar, Commander of the *Tigerian* security forces. I repeat—stand down. I am not being held on the unidentified ship." He looked around the cramped bridge of her stolen craft. "I appear to be aboard a small shuttle." He turned to look at her. "Where the hell am I and how did I get here?"

Ana licked her lips. Her heart stuttered in her chest as she stared at her dream man. He was broad of shoulder and handsome as a *Truan* actor. Who could ever resist a man like him? What woman in her right mind would want to? His

strange golden hair, with its black tips, hung around his shoulders in silky waves. It appeared soft. She fisted her hands. Her fingers itched to feather through it to see if it was truly as soft as it looked. His broad shoulders tapered down to a hard stomach she could see even through the thick material of his *shert*. Thick muscles rippled beneath the rough fabric. A movement in his lower regions set her to blush as she realized her scrutiny gave the poor man a hard cock he couldn't hide, though he tried as he turned sideways to talk into the radio once more.

"Advise the unidentified ship that we believe their leader is aboard this vessel as well. I will investigate the matter and contact you as soon as possible." He turned and pierced Ana with a fierce gaze. "Where am I?" He stood. "Answer me." His lips tipped up at the corners. "Or would you prefer I convince you to answer?" A perfect golden brow arched in question. "I can be quite persuasive."

Ana swallowed thickly. *What to do, what to do...* Her gaze darted around the small room and she gauged the distance to the door. Maybe she could make it off the bridge and lock herself in her small sleeping quarters. He could just radio his ship and have them transport him off her shuttle. Taking a deep breath, she lunged for the door. She took several steps more than she figured she'd be able

to when she turned back to see if the man followed her, just before she ran into a wall.

A very hard wall of delectable male flesh. "Oh, my!" Her heart stuttered at the sight of the man before her. He had to be over two meters tall. His short black hair curled around his collar and his broad chest tapered down to a narrow waist and hips. He was the epitome of tall, dark and handsome with dark eyes that reminded her of the cocoa bean that her uncle brought back from a distant planet.

Her breath came in short pants as she tried to bring her breathing under control. Her hand fluttered to her chest and she stood staring between the two men who now occupied her small craft, making it smaller by the minute.

"Who are you, woman, and why am I here?" the new man asked, his thinned lips told her he would demand true answers.

Her face blazed as she stood gawking between them. She knew she must explain her actions, but she also knew he would most likely not believe her. Besides, why would one so handsome care to mate with one such as her? She was certainly nothing special and, well, this man was nothing short of a god! They both were.

"I—I"

The first man, the red head, stepped forward. "I think I can explain."

"And who are you? Her accomplice in this?" His stance became more aggressive. "Know this *Tigerian*, I am the leader of my people. They will not stand for my abduction."

The *Tigerian* stepped forward. "I have nothing to do with your presence, *my lord*," he said, scathingly. "I merely appeared here myself. Yet I know, from my own leader, that women such as she can call forth the men meant to be their bound mates." He smiled, the gesture never reaching his eyes. "Believe me, if you wish to forego your rights as her triad mate, I would be more than happy to remain with her as a pair."

The man turned to stare at Ana and she squirmed under his scrutiny. "I am Wray Navedis, alpha of my people. They will not stand silent over my disappearance long. We have come in answer to a distress call, knowing full well that it could be a trap, yet unwilling to gamble the innocent lives of rare females."

"Women are few among your people as well?" the one called Kel asked. "It seems that women are scarce everywhere in the universe with the exception of two planets." He flicked a glance to the view screen as if he could see the planet on the other side of the moon. "This planet and *Carrillia*."

Wray shook his head. "No, there is another. We were on our way there for a mate hunt. We have been told it is a planet rich with life where the

women outnumber the men three to one."

Kel shook his head. "The lucky bastards. I hope you will share the whereabouts of this world with my people. We need women as well."

"That remains to be seen." He moved over to the console and slid his hand along the smooth surface. "Wray Navedis to the *Lupin* starship *Nomad*. Cease your aggression." He turned to face Ana once again, pinning her with a stare. "How and why did you bring us here, woman?"

\* \* \* \*

Wray stared at the miracle before him, clenching and unclenching his hands at his sides. The female was beauty personified. If he had the privilege of choosing a woman for his mate, he would choose her. But his people did not have that luxury. Fate chose their women for them. His people had learned hard lessons throughout the millennia that fate was not a force to trifle with.

He closed his eyes and breathed in her delicate scent—the scent of her soap, her perfume and the musky scent of her arousal. His body hardened with her close proximity. Would she accept him as was required? He must find his mate and bear heirs or his would be a short occupation of the throne, like his alpha before him. The last thing their people needed was another campaign. They

needed a leader and they needed him now. Still, no female had ever garnered such a reaction from him. Snapping his eyes open, he fought the urge to lean close and immerse himself in her tantalizing scent. Perhaps he could pull it in through his pores. She stirred a response in him that was unfamiliar. He hoped she was his mate, his salvation. Could he be that lucky?

Wray couldn't help but stare at the woman standing so regally before him. She was a goddess, plain and simple. Her dark hair hung about her shoulders in long waves. The color reminded him of the mahogany chest his father brought back from that distant planet so rich with females. Her amber eyes nearly glowed with the intensity of her resolve.

She stubbornly raised her chin and, despite her obvious fear, looked him square in the eyes. "I have made a vow, sir. To fulfill it, I was required to recite a spell. One that would bring my—" She cut herself off and nervously licked her lips.

His cock jerked in response, what he wouldn't give to feel those full lips wrapped around his shaft. He wanted nothing more than to bury his fingers deep in her hair as he thrust his cock deep into her perfect mouth. He felt her fear and excitement, the rush of adrenaline and sexual energy rolled off her, bombarding him with a depth of feeling he never knew was possible.

"I—I'm a witch. I made vow with my coven mates to do everything in my power to keep harm from all who have no evil in their hearts."

She swallowed and licked her lips again. Goddess, he didn't know whether he could control himself if she didn't stop doing that. His whole body ached with the need to bury his thick length inside her over and over until she screamed her climax to the heavens. He blinked slowly, trying to keep himself from jumping on the poor woman. Every hair on his body stood on end, reaching for the amazing creature before him. His skin tingled, and even though he knew it was impossible, his skin prickled anew each time she exhaled. It was as if he could feel her breath caressing his skin, increasing his incredible desire to have the woman beneath him on the deck, both of them as naked as the day they were born.

"And?" He prompted, needing to keep her talking before he pounced on her and made her his. "That doesn't explain how I merely blinked and found myself in your sleeping chamber." Her face blazed at that and he almost felt sorry for her. Almost.

"We must bring our mates into our lives to fulfill our vow."

*This keeps getting better and better. Very interesting that she called forth her mate and he had been the one to arrive. It was quite propitious. "Your mates," he*

asked, giving her a level look. "Plural. As in you want more than one?"

Frowning, she stomped her foot like a petulant child. "Of course I don't want more than one." She closed her eyes and appeared to count to herself before she continued. "According to the High Priestess, we must all call our mates into our lives using a spell we take from this spell book." She pulled out a communications device, opened the saved spell book and thrust it at him. "We are to call our mates to us using one of those spells or make one of our own. The three then form a powerful triad that is necessary to fight the evil *Banarts* before they enslave the entire galaxy."

"Necessary how?" he asked, merely to keep her talking. He loved the sound of her voice. It was so sexy. Low and sultry, it sent tendrils of desire shooting through his blood, making it burn with the need to have her, to possess her. His cock jerked with the anticipation of sinking into her moist heat. "How could three people possibly make any difference?"

"How am I supposed to know?" she asked with an elegant shrug. "I merely followed the instructions sent to me by my priestess and here you are." She cast a glance back to the *Tigerian*. "Here you both are." She flung herself down into the nearest seat, pushing the console out of her way. Turning, she stared dejectedly through the

*illumi-glass* into the cold darkness of space. "If I'd have known this was expected of me before the vows, I never would have spoken them. Any of them."

Wray felt a strange wrenching in his chest. Putting his hand over his heart, he knelt beside her. "Why would you have refrained, little one?" he asked, surprised that he felt the need to know – surprised that he even gave a damn. "Why do you resist taking a mate?" He gave her a crooked grin, glanced at the other man then added, "Or two for that matter. I'm not such a bad sort and I hear the *Tigerians* are honorable men of their word."

"Because I—I..."

Her face reddened and he knew it was something to do with the mating itself. He suppressed a grin and placed a gentle hand over hers. "Because you what, little one?"

"Rachana, call me Rachana or Ana. Little one makes me seem like some small child." She swiped at a tear, not realizing how much like a child she looked with the tears streaming down her face, coupled with her small stature.

Wray reached up and thumbed a tear from her cheek. "Rachana is a beautiful name." Resting back on his heels, he pressed her further. "Why do you fear the mating, Ana?"

"Because," she said, twisting the material of her

jumper with trembling fingers. "I need..." She shook her head. "I can't. I can't tell you. It's too personal."

"Ana," he said, placing his fingers beneath her chin to tip her head back. "By your own admission, we are your mates. If you cannot share something so personal with us, who can you share it with?"

\* \* \* \*

Kel stepped forward, unwilling to remain silent any longer. As they both had said, they were all mates. He would have his say in this as well. "I find I must agree with him, Ana. It would seem that we are all in this together. If you cannot share your secret with us, then you must bear it alone."

He found himself staring at her. He couldn't help it. She sat with her large amber eyes glowing up at him. Delicate hands she held in her lap, fumbled with the material of her jumpsuit. The tiger in him snarled, needed to rip her clothes from her trim body and make her his in every sense of the deed. He wanted this woman with an intensity he didn't know was possible. His body itched with the need to change. His bones ached from holding it at bay. Yet he held it back, using every power, every force he held within him. Frightening her was the last thing he wanted to

do.

He glanced over at the stranger, wondering how the man had heard of the *Tigerians* but they had heard nothing of Wray Navedis and his people. "How do you know of us, sir?" he asked, needing to know how many other races knew of his people when they tried so hard to keep themselves secret. Apparently, there were no secrets in the galaxy, except perhaps, that of Wray Navedis and his people. "Where do you come from, Navedis? Why have I not heard of you before?"

"I have just taken on the mantle of leadership for my people. Perhaps the name Oreside Lupin would mean a bit more."

Kel stepped back. It felt like someone had just punched him in the gut. "Yes," he said, after swallowing thickly. "That name does ring a bell. I take it that he has expired?"

Wray gave a short nod. "Yes. He was murdered in his sleep. Since he had no mate, the bitch he tried to breed with had him murdered when he couldn't get her with child."

"Some women are strange creatures when it comes to wanting a cub in their arms," Kel said with a nod.

"It wasn't the lack of cubs that made her do so. It was greed, plain and simple. She wanted to mate with the alpha and a leader with no heirs is

always challenged. She merely chose her champion poorly. Our people will not follow an alpha with no honor. They arrested him and campaigned for a new alpha." He smiled, baring lethal-looking canines. "Care to guess who won?"

Kel snorted. "I don't need to guess. Anyone willing to look can see that you're an alpha."

"Then most of my people were blind. None of them could see that," Wray said with a shrug. "Until I made them."

"That can be so with any government. The people refuse to see what is right before their eyes. Refuse to see that sometimes, things must come to pass no matter how much they abhor the idea," Kel agreed. Still he knew being beta to this man would be preferable than having no mate at all. He'd already resigned himself to remaining an unmated male. As the last of his line, with females growing so scarce, he'd never expected to bond with anyone. He didn't want to take a precious female from a male of a strong house. He didn't feel he had the right.

Turning back to the woman he wondered what secret she held that kept her silent on her own ship. Loath to press her to answer when she clearly wasn't comfortable with them, he continued to steer the conversation away from the matter.

"We should help those in need before the

*Hienials* kill them all."

Ana moved to her console, her fingers flying over the glassy smooth surface, "They will not kill them outright, though most of them may wish they were dead. The *Hienials* use them to breed. They have no females of their own and the women never bear a female child."

"What is it with the lack of females?" Wray asked, shaking his head. "You would think it would be an isolated problem. Not one so widespread throughout the galaxy."

"It must be something that happened several generations ago. We started noticing a decline in female births five generations ago. It's only been recently that the decline has become sharp enough to alarm anyone." Kel watched the woman to see how she would react to his next declaration. "Our scientists believe it could have been a virus, one that has spread among those of us who have the power to shift."

Wray snorted. "A disease specifically designed to eradicate shifters? Not likely."

"Why not?" Kel continued quickly before Wray could interrupt him. "It appears as though the only races affected are those of us who have the ability to shift. It would make sense that there is something in our genetic make-up that could give us a disease or virus that would affect only us." He glanced at Ana. "Perhaps the humans are

immune.”

Wray looked at him with a new understanding dawning on his face. “You’re right. It does make sense. It also makes sense that the *Hienials* are attacking these women. They have been unable to breed for generations. If they can get children on these women, they have a whole new way to perpetuate a species that never should have been.” He glanced through the *illumi-glass*, a thoughtful expression on his face. “I’ve heard of an ancient civilization who attempted to rid the galaxy of a parasitical race who thrived on attacking and killing those whom they deemed weaker, regardless of their ability to fight.” He turned and strode back to a console and sat, his fingers flying over the keyboard. “The ancient race attempted genocide on a brutal dog-like species with an engineered virus. I’d never agreed with the practice before. But now...” He glanced up at them. “I think the *Hienials* are the people they attempted to eradicate—and they have infected us all. Our only hope is to mate with the human women who seem to be immune to it.”

Kel felt his eyes widen. “Then we must do our best to kill them all. I have heard of the ancient plan myself. It’s taught to us during our primary school years. According to the ancient texts, they are a vile, disgusting people who not only torture their enemies, but eat them alive when they are

through." He turned to see Ana pale at his declaration and wished he'd kept that last to himself. Striding over to her, he stood close enough to catch her, lest she should faint. "We must notify our ships immediately. Those animals must be stopped as soon as possible."

\* \* \* \*

Ana stared at the two beautiful men before her then gave a curt nod. They were right. They needed to save the people on the planet they orbited. Her secrets could wait for another time. Standing she looked from one to the other. "Whose ship will I be on?" She turned her attention back to the console, brought up her life-support screen and indicated it with a negligent sweep of her hand. "You two have nearly depleted what little oxygen there was left on my craft. I need to dock." She looked between them. "Which one of you will invite me to your vessel?"

"I will."

"Come to my ship."

They both spoke at once.

Wray held up his hand. "She will come to my ship. As leader of my people I can guarantee her safety." He looked over at Kel. "Can you say the same?"

Kel nodded. "I can. It would not mean so much as your declaration. But, know this Navedis. If she goes with you, so do I."

The other man nodded. "A fair proposal, *Tigerian*."

She gave her console attention again as the proximity alarms began to blare again. "Three more ships have arrived. According to the sensors, one *Tigerian* and one *Savari* vessel and another ship that looks just like yours, Wray Navedis."

"All the more reason for her to go to my ship," Wray said with a growl.

Kel nodded. "I have no argument, wolf."

\* \* \* \*

Seated around the conference table in Strategic Command aboard the *Lupin* Starship, *Nomad*, were all four of the newly formed Triads. They were introduced to her as soon as she entered the conference room and she'd found each of them interesting in their own right.

Everyone—men and women alike—sat in stony silence as Rachana reported *G'Recio's* current situation. Only Minna's unflinching courage gave Ana the courage to speak of the atrocities she witnessed on the planet below.

"Minna, is there anything you can add?"

Anything you can think of that might help us defeat them? Perhaps, you know of a weakness we can exploit?" Ana hated having to put the woman through this after what she'd already suffered, but for now, she was the best source of intel they had.

Minna, the only female of the third Triad, grimaced then straightened her spine. Though her eyes were open, Ana knew the only thing Minna could see was the past. Her mates must have sensed the same thing because Rage reached for her hand and gave it a quick squeeze, while Dax spoke to her in a soothing tone. "We're here baby, remember that. You'll never be alone again, my love. That's a vow Rage and I will never break."

She placed a slow tender kiss first on Rage's lips then Dax's before she began her tale. "Looking back, we have only ourselves to blame." When everyone at the table started to rise to refute her statement, she shook her head. "No, it's the truth. You need to hear it—all of it."

After everyone settled back into his or her chairs, she continued. "About eighteen moon cycles ago, we received an urgent message from the *Carrillian* government, requesting—no, begging—to send in military reinforcements. The message claimed the *Banart* army invaded their home world while their own military forces were off planet fighting their own battles with the *Banart* in the far reaches of the galaxy.

Ana could visualize the *G'recians* scrambling to get to *Carrillia* in time, desperate to protect those that couldn't protect themselves. The *G'recians* were known throughout the known universe as a protectorate race. They didn't start wars, but they would not sit idly by while another world suffered under the cruel hands of marauding armies either. The *Banart* used the perfect ploy to force the *G'recian* warriors to leave their own world virtually undefended.

"The Warriors left within two days. Once they left our air space, they should have reached *Carrillia* three days later. We never heard another word from them. Within days of their departure, the *Banart* and *Hienials* descended on *G'Recio*. We've been under their control ever since.

"They take the woman and young girls into breeding camps where they rape them until they're with child. Those that don't breed within six lunar cycles disappear. I can only imagine what happens to them when they leave the planet.

"They killed all of the men and elderly outright as soon as they arrived and the young males became slave labor. When they grow big enough to fight back, they are terminated in the public square."

Ana's heart went out to Minna and her people. The *G'recians* were such a devoted and faithful people who loved everyone, despite the

differences between the galaxy's various species. Only the *Banarts* and the *Hienials* are their enemies, and only because the *G'recians* had watched what those creatures had done to the people they'd attacked.

In a sudden move, Dare Raden, the *Savari* leader, shoved his chair back from the table and began to pace from one end of the cabin to the other. His quick movements, though fluid, were definitely agitated, not that Ana could blame the powerful blood-drinker.

Dax and Rage, *Tigerian* twins, looked like they wanted to kill someone with their bare hands. Fane, the *Tigerian* Leader and his Triad mate Sayre, both wore pained expressions, something between despair and rage. Lucan, a *Pantari* and Dare's Triad mate, Wray and Kel also appeared lost in murderous thoughts of their own if the clenched jaws, furrowed brows and white-knuckled fists were any indication. She wasn't about to dip into their emotions to confirm her suspicions, though. There were enough rampant emotions to deal with. She needn't ask for trouble.

Jaynee and Laynee, identical High Priestess twins, had tears of compassion running down their cheeks. No one in the room was unaffected by the tale Minna wove.

Minna herself looked as though a small island breeze could blow her away, but she held firm,

strong no matter the pain that obviously battered her. Ana's heart clenched as the woman's pain and torment seeped into her, flooding her with anguish.

She needed to help Minna, help her deal with all the poor woman had been through, all the memories that continually ripped at her soul. There was only one way to do that effectively, though. She'd have to draw the pain of the memories out of Minna and into herself in an empathic healing.

No one knew of her gift but her mother and she had long since passed away. If she did this, she would expose her greatest secret to virtual strangers, but she couldn't allow Minna to suffer anymore than she already had. Enough was enough. Her conscience would not allow her to sit idly by when she could do something to help. Her heart was too close to breaking to allow the woman her continued suffering.

With a soft sigh, Ana stood and made her way around the table to where Minna sat straight in her chair, her back stiff. The other woman looked up at her as she approached. Ana tried to give her a reassuring smile, but she wasn't sure how successful she'd been when she felt a wave of panic roll through Minna's mind.

Dropping to her knees beside the surprised woman, Rachana reached for Minna's hand. "Let

me help you, Minna. Let me ease your pain."

Minna's eyes widened. The pulse beating at her throat sped up. Minna licked her lips nervously. "Wh—what do you mean?"

Ana swallowed passed the lump that seemed to lodge in her throat. It was now or never. "I can draw the pain away from you... If you allow it, that is."

Behind Minna, Dax and Rage each placed their hands on their mate's shoulders, in support or in defense, Rachana didn't know. "Whatever you think of me, I would never use my gift to hurt your mate. Or anyone else for that matter," she whispered to the two men ready and able to defend the shaken woman.

Behind her, she felt her own mates approach, both the powerful *Tigerian*, Kel and the ruthless leader of the *Lupin*, Wray. This was too much. She could feel the testosterone build as the angry and defensive vibes poured off all four men. She couldn't take all these feelings bombarding her or the unvoiced threat building between them on top of the desperate pain Minna's memories invoked. It was too much. It was why she'd chosen the lonely profession of archeology. She loved the solitary work. The haven of ancient cultures and the puzzles of the past were her family and her friends. People felt too much, happiness and misery, pain and joy, need and desire. Rachana

sighed. She was better off alone, away from all this, but she knew she wouldn't go anywhere, couldn't.

As though they may have sensed her need, or maybe it was all in her mind, the turmoil from her mates that had pounded at her mind, lessened, becoming more of a gentle breeze that brushed against her rather than a roiling wave battering her barriers.

Soon, Kel and Wray too had their hands upon her, caressing her arms, her hair, in a show of what, she wondered. Sympathy? Support? Understanding? She didn't really know. Only the feel of their hands, the brush of their clothing against her back centered her in the storm of feelings lashing her mind. She knew right then, she'd never be able to hold herself back from giving completely to them, body, heart and soul. They were her mates. Who was she to question the will of the Lady Goddess?

Drawing a deep breath, Ana closed her eyes in preparation. Only when her own heartbeat returned to its normal steady rhythm did she open her mind for the empathic healing. The healing itself was easy. Opening herself to the pain of others, to their personal horrors and fears, and allowing them to flood her consciousness was much more difficult.

It didn't take long for her subconscious to find

Minna's pain. It was a writhing mass of turmoil and despair, byproducts of her haunting memories. Rachana couldn't do anything about Minna's past, about what happened to her, but by taking some of her pain into herself, perhaps she could give her the final push she needed to become whole in spirit, as she was meant to be.

After drawing one last deep breath, Ana let her power unfurl. With Minna's hands clasped in hers, she drew the pain from the other woman, absorbed it through her mind, her heart and her soul, letting it flood her in ever-increasing waves.

Pain gripped her. Her body trembled. Her stomach cramped and she gagged, almost vomiting up her last meal. A layer of sweat coated her skin. When she thought she could bear no more pain, no more torment, she found she *could* take more. She allowed her own soul, her own feelings of self-worth to flood through her hands into Minna, gifting her with happiness and joy.

The more pain and torment Rachana drew from Minna, the more she showered her with feelings of contentment, pleasure, fulfillment and confidence. Ana refused to allow herself to dwell on her own pain, concentrating only on the healing she could feel in Minna, the changes she could already sense in Minna's mind.

Minutes passed or maybe hours. Rachana had no way of knowing how much time passed as she

continued to heal the woman seated before her. All her thoughts, her energy, went to giving the gift of happiness to Minna. Only once she was certain that the shadows of torment had left Minna's soul, did Rachana begin to break the connection between them.

The more she lessened the strength of the bond between them, the more she felt the pain of Minna's memories ravaging her own body. She needed to get away, to purge the fear, the horror from her own body before it began to take a toll on her own well-being.

Shuddering, Ana eased away from Minna and opened her eyes. She could see the tension around Minna's eyes had lessened; her body no longer remained rigid and tense. No matter how much the healing hurt, she couldn't regret that she'd lightened the other woman's burdens. No one should know such suffering as Minna and all the other victims of *Banart* and *Hienial* cruelty had. No one.

Knowing she'd done all she could, Rachana moved to stand. Her legs quaked, her entire body swayed with fatigue. Only the strong arms of her mates made it possible to keep standing.

Beside her, Wray tightened his hold on her arms, searched her gaze with his. "Come, Ana. You must rest."

Before she could move away, she felt Kel stiffen

behind her. A surge of awareness blasted between them. She jerked her gaze up, searched the room for whatever threat Kel had felt, trying to sense the danger that she knew they both were aware of.

Turning her head, her wary gaze met Kel's. "What is it, Kel? What do you feel?"

He looked deep into her eyes, seemed to search her very soul before he answered. "I'm not sure. Something is about to happen. I feel it. My Tiger feels it."

She nodded, accepting his feelings as truth. Some may have written his thoughts off as nonsense, but Ana knew that the Lady Goddess had bestowed heightened senses upon many, allowing them to know when danger approached.

Glancing around the room, she noticed that Kel was not the only one who obviously sensed the impending danger. "Come, my mate," Wray urged. "I must warn my crew. If you both feel that danger approaches, then we must prepare." Nodding, Ana allowed her mates to pull her toward the seat she'd vacated before the healing. Seconds after she'd settled against the soft fur covering of the chair, warning alarms sounded throughout the room.

"Dammit! Those are proximity alarms." Wray grimaced, stroked his hand through her long tresses. "I will be back. Stay here with Kel and the others until I can determine just what is going on."

Before she could object, Wray turned on his heel and raced out of the room.

\* \* \* \*

Running a hand through his hair, Wray quickly made his way toward the command deck. No matter how much he wanted to remain by his mate's side, this was his ship. As alpha, it was his duty to prepare for whatever danger might be out there. He must meet this situation head on. He would face any newcomers, whether they were friend or foe.

As soon as he reached the command center, another proximity alarm began to clamor. "What do you see, Officer Boneget?" Wray asked his second in command. Though Kaylen Boneget was his closest friend and ally, on board ship, he couldn't let his personal ties influence the command protocols established for all those serving aboard the *Lupin* fleet.

"I detect five *Banart* Attack Vessels and four *Hienial* transport ships approaching our location, Alpha. What are our orders?" Officer Boneget announced.

*Damn*, he thought. *How can we defeat nine ships?* Wray had to think fast. He needed to protect his ship and all the people on it, but he couldn't just leave the people below susceptible to their vile

attackers either. "Are there any ally ships nearby other than the ones already here?"

"Let me run some long range scans, Alpha." Seconds passed that felt like hours, and with each second they waited, the enemies ships grew closer.

"It looks like a *Lioni* Warship and an Attack Vessel of the Great Bear Clan are within communication range, Sir."

"Hail them, Boneget. And pray to the Goddess that they are both close enough and willing to offer assistance."

"Yes, Alpha."

"I need to inform our visitors of our enemies' arrival. Contact me in the Strategic Command Center."

"Yes, Alpha."

Without further delay, Wray headed back toward his Triad mates and the other three Triads. Hopefully, the coming battle would be in their favor. If not, they would go down fighting. When he finally reached the others, he could feel the tension thickening the air.

"What have you learned?" Dare, the *Savari* leader asked.

Ana must have sensed his fear, his worry because she quickly made her way to his side. "Is all well, Wray?"

He shook his head. "I'm afraid the situation has gone from mildly dangerous to downright hostile."

Nine enemy vessels are approaching—five *Banart* warships and four armed *Hienial* Slave Transports.”

All the men stiffened where they stood. “Well,” Fane grunted, “let us contact our ships and prepare for battle.”

Wray nodded. “I’ve had my crew contact two of our Allies that are within communication range—the *Lioni* and the Great Bear Clan. Hopefully, they too will be able to assist us in this upcoming battle.”

Ana reached out to him, placed her hand upon his chest. Kel stepped forward as well, clasped his forearm in a warrior’s acknowledgement, a silent vow to stand by his side. “What can the rest of us do?”

“Pray to the Lady Goddess. Until we know more, that is all we can do.”

As the others left the Strategic command center to contact their ships, Wray followed his own advice and offered up a silent prayer to the Lady that today’s battle would end with their victory.

\* \* \* \*

Aboard the command deck of the *Lioni* Attack Vessel, *Revenge*, Drace Vanier paced, his movements agitated, his mind a jumble of chaotic impressions. Why was he out here, hiding behind

a planet that had no strategic worth? What had driven him to ignore his councilors and make his way out here, so far from his own home world? Why did he feel — no — know that this is where he needed to be at this time?

Drace sighed, stopped in front of the viewscreen. “Commander Vanier,” his communications officer announced. “We have received an urgent communiqué from the *Lupin* ship, *Nomad*. They request our help in fending off an impending attack.”

*Well, I guess that answers that. Now I know why I'm here.* “Tell Navedis we will be there as soon as possible. What are they facing?”

“According to their missive, nine enemy vessels are approaching and will be upon them in less than a quarter of a dial.”

Drace clasped his hands behind his back, let out a deep breath, then turned toward his crew, eying each of the men he'd hand chosen to join him on this trip. “Prepare battle stations. Proceed with caution, with our ship fully cloaked, but inform Navedis where we are at all times.”

“Done, Sir.”

With a nod of his head, Drace quickly moved toward the weapons console and took a seat. He may be the commander, but he loved a good battle.

\* \* \* \*

Out of the corner of his eye, Kel watched Ana pace. Wray's cabin had seemed large when they'd first entered it, but with her agitation growing, the chamber seemed to be shrinking with every minute that passed. Back and forth, from one side of the room to the other, she walked, her arms wrapped around her waist. What was upsetting her so? The danger they were about to face or something else?

"Please tell me what is bothering you so, my mate?" he asked, unable to keep silent any longer. Something was upsetting her and he'd do whatever he could to set her mind at ease.

Ana bit her bottom lip then raised her worried gaze to his before turning her head away. "I feel — I — someone out there, someone is in terrible trouble. Their fear is choking me. I don't know how much more I can take, Kel." Rubbing her arms, Ana went back to pacing. The minutes slowly passed and the shadows beneath Ana's eyes continued to darken.

"Are you okay, Rachana?"

Ana shook her head, made her way over to the bed and slumped down. Her head rested against her chest. She looked defeated.

"What is it, my mate?"

She raised her head, holding his gaze directly

for the first time since they'd entered the chamber. So much hurt and fear had pooled in her eyes. He couldn't stay away from her. Settling next to her on the bed, he pulled her into his arms and pressed her head against his chest. With as much tenderness as he possessed, he ran his hand over her hair, petting her, soothing her to the best of his ability.

"Tell me, Ana. What do you need from me? What do you feel?"

"Someone on the surface is in dire need. I feel her terror, never have I felt such raw fear and determination. Somehow, I must save her, Kel. I must. I feel it all the way to my soul that if we are ever to defeat the *Banart*, then we must rescue this woman."

He didn't like her gift. It hurt her. Too much pain made it past her natural barriers and into her heart and mind. One day it would be unbearable and she would have a breakdown. Kel fisted his hands at his side and simmered with impotent rage at his unseen enemy.

Walking to a nearby console, he contacted Wray. "Ana is beside herself with pain and worry over an unseen woman on the surface of this planet. She's convinced the woman is of great need to us in our battle against our enemies."

"How?" Wray asked, obviously attempting to divide his attention between his two loyalties, his

mate and his people.

"She's not sure. She knows only that the woman is instrumental in the battle with the *Banart* and their eventual destruction." Kel paced in front of the viewscreen, his gaze constantly returning to Ana. She lay curled in a tight ball, her body wracked with tension as she attempted to draw the negative energy from the unknown woman. "Give me a few men, Wray. Let me take her down to the surface and get this woman."

Wray shook his head. "Absolutely not. I'll not have you endanger our mate's life so carelessly."

"Look Wray," Kel said, grasping either side of the vid screen. "We endanger her either way. Her tie to this woman is so strong, I fear for Ana if the other dies."

Wray's eyes suddenly changed to that of his wolf. Kel had just told him of a threat to his mate. If he'd thought him all business before, the man he saw now was like a robot.

"Kaylen!" He turned to face the people behind them.

An exceptionally tall man broke apart from the others to move to Wray. He gave a short bow. "Yes, Alpha?"

"Don't 'yes Alpha' me now. Get your ass over here and take command. Something threatens my mate and I intend to eradicate it." Wray led the other man over to a console in the corner. "I'm

going to take a contingent of men down to the surface and remove the threat from my mate. You will stay here as my emissary and carry out my orders. Defeat the *Banarts* at all costs."

"You should not be the one to go, sir." The other man said. "Allow me to —"

"She is my mate! It is my right. Do as I say." Wray looked around the bridge. "Take care of my people and if I don't return," he grabbed Kaylen by the arms. "Do not let it be said that I shirked my duty to name a beta. Kaylen is named my successor."

Kel watched Wray through the video link and admired the man even more for knowing how to lead like the king he so obviously was. Still he wasn't sure it was necessary for them both to accompany Ana. Given the choice though, he knew he would never allow her to go down there without him. How could he expect Wray to do any less? Switching off the video link, he turned to comfort his mate while he waited for Wray to join them. She still lay curled in a ball on the bed, tears running down her face.

Fisting his hands at his sides, he strode to the bed to stare down at her. He must try to control his feelings. The rage he felt swirling inside him would only further upset his sensitive mate. He concentrated on her scent and her goodness as he lowered himself to the bed to take her in his arms.

Here they would await Wray and the small army he knew would accompany them to the surface. Neither of them would take any chances with her well being.

\* \* \* \*

Wray barked his orders and left the bridge in a killing rage. What could affect his mate so strongly? He stopped short when he entered their room. Ana and Kel lay on the bed. She was curled in a trembling ball with Kel wrapped tightly around her. It was almost as though he attempted to block the psychic onslaught with the protection of his body. If only it were that easy. He stood and stared at his two mates, amazed at the depth of feeling he already felt for both of them.

He hated to wake them but the men accompanying them were ready to go and he couldn't bear to see her suffer any longer. If the look on her face was any indication, the pain and fear even assaulted her in her sleep. He drew his hands over his face and sighed. It was time. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he pushed the hair back from Ana's face and pressed his lips to her forehead.

Her eyes fluttered open and she looked around the room, her expression confused. "What?" She looked behind her to Kel, still wrapped around

her. "Where am I?"

"We're in my room, love." He cupped her cheeks, his thumbs feathering across the dark circles under her eyes. "I know you don't feel well but—"

She pulled from Kel's embrace and sat up, keeping her arms wrapped around her middle. Kel woke and rolled off the other side. Like any good warrior, he was instantly awake and warily looking around the room for an enemy.

"Is it time?"

Wray nodded at Kel's question. "The landing party awaits us in the disembarking chamber. A shuttle awaits us there as Ana will be needed to point the way to the woman in need."

Ana relaxed her hold around her waist. A look of relief crossed her face before she nibbled on her bottom lip in worry. His cock jumped at the sight and he had to force his libido in check. There would be time to mate with her later, after he rescued the woman from the surface and defeated the enemy quickly approaching their location. "Thank you, Wray. I know this isn't the best time, but I feel..."

"What do you feel, sweetness?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "She's important and we—no—I have to be there if she is to be found."

Wray nodded. "Then so be it. I have put

together a landing party. We shall do all in our power to find this woman, and lead her to safety."

\* \* \* \*

From the Command Deck of his ship, Drace watched the small shuttlecraft leave the *Nomad* and head toward the surface of the planet below. *Now what is up with that?* Knowing that his ship would be safe with his brother Vane at the helm should battle erupt, Drace made an instinctive decision. Whatever the crew of the shuttle was up to, he needed to be a part of it.

Turning toward the communication terminal, Drace connected to his brother's cabin, audio only, unwilling to spy on his brother and whatever playmate he'd taken to bed this eve. "Vane you have the helm. If it looks like our allies are in need, step in. Keep the ship cloaked but move as close to the action as you can. I'm heading down to the surface."

Before his brother could argue with him, Drace cut the transmission and headed to his shuttle bay. He had someplace he needed to be and wasting time arguing with his brother about his safety wouldn't change his mind, only slow him down. And somehow, he thought—no, knew—that time was something he didn't have.

\* \* \* \*

As the shuttle scanned the surface looking for life signs, Ana looked into herself, trying to hone in on the woman she came down here to search for. "South. We need to head south."

The shuttle pilot shook his head. "I'm not detecting anything in the southern hemisphere."

"It doesn't matter. That's where she is." She turned her head, searched out both Wray and Kel. "I know that's where she is."

Wray nodded then turned back to the pilot. "Head south. If that's where my mate said we need to go, then that's where we go."

The pilot nodded hesitantly, but did indeed turn south. Relief washed through her, an almost giddy sense of happiness that her mates appeared to trust her instincts over their own technology. She wanted to thank her mates, show them how much their support meant to her, and she knew just how to do it. Even though she'd known since their meeting on her ship that they were her mates she'd done nothing to show that she'd accepted it, and in fact had taken their kindness, their caring and their warmth and hadn't reciprocated. Well, that would stop now.

Knowing they were her mates, she knew she'd have a telepathic bond with them, but she'd chosen not to use it, to ignore that mental bond,

just as she'd tried to pretend they weren't her mates. Well, no more. It was time to show them that she accepted them as they had shown her that they accepted her. Her relationship with these two wonderful men was a gift she would not squander.

*Thank you both for standing by me, for trusting me when I've given you no reason to do so.*

Kel quirked his lips and gave her a slight nod in acknowledgement. Wray's eyes widened then seemed to flood with joy.

*Think nothing of it, my love.* Wray's husky voice whispering in her mind sent goose bumps pebbling across her arms.

*I will always stand by you, mate.* Kel's voice, equally sexy, sent a pulse of warmth through her woman's core. She squeezed her thighs in reaction. This wouldn't do. She must concentrate on the woman who needed her, not on her body's reaction to her mates.

As though just the thought of the unknown woman strengthened their connection, Ana felt the woman's nearness through their bond. Lower. I need you to get lower. They were just above a jungle, or at least that's what it appeared to be through their viewscreen. She knew to the depths of her soul, what they were seeing was only what they were meant to, not what was actually there.

*"Stop. You must land here."*

The pilot shook his head. "There is nowhere within a day's walk to land."

She fisted her hands by her sides. "Please, trust in me. What you see is what you are meant to. Have faith in the Goddess, for she is the one who has bestowed my talents upon me. We are where we need to be."

The pilot looked to Wray for an answer. "I trust in my mate. If she says this is where we need to be then I believe her."

"Yes, Alpha." Even though the pilot shook his head in disbelief and began to mutter to himself, he slowly lowered the ship. Closer and closer to the forest canopy they moved and Ana didn't flinch. She knew in this she wasn't wrong. The forest was just an illusion.

Both Wray and Kel moved up beside her. Even though they said they trusted her, deep down she hadn't believed them. But, when she searched their feelings, only trust and a sense of purpose flooded her. Happiness flooded her heart. Yes, her mates truly did believe in her.

*Of course, we do,* they both said simultaneously.

"Goddess she was right," the pilot exclaimed as they continued toward the ground. As soon as they bypassed where the treetops should be, the illusion disappeared.

Ana gasped. "It's real. The Lost Temple of the Lady Goddess really does exist." Tears flooded

her eyes and her mates each wrapped an arm around her waist in support. In front of her, a tall pyramid of white marble stood. *G'Recio's* trio of suns bathed it in glorious white. She could see standing stones in the distance, and between them and the temple, a glen with the greenest grass she'd ever seen. Her heart stuttered then sped up. Her hands shook and her tummy cramped.

"All my life, I dreamed of the day I'd find it. Ever since I was naught but a child, I've felt it was my duty to find this place. I dedicated my entire life, my career, everything I am to fulfill the vow I'd made myself. It is said in myth, that only the purest of souls can set foot in the temple itself. Evil may surround it, but if a pure soul shelters inside, no one with ill intent shall be able to step a foot through the door. No wonder she chose to seek refuge here," she whispered, awe and satisfaction filling her.

Each of her mates stroked her hair, and then over her head Wray addressed them all. "Beware. The woman inside is frightened, scared. She has taken refuge in the temple for a reason. I imagine the enemy above is also down here. My mate and the woman within these walls must be protected above all else."

"Yes, Alpha. No one shall be allowed to harm them. You have our vow."

Wray nodded then clasped Kel's shoulder as he

pulled Ana beneath the shelter of his arm. "It is time."

Kel fisted his hands at his sides. "Yes," he agreed. "It is time."

\* \* \* \*

Behind the marble walls of the temple, Kiri Leran clasped the hand of the small boy she considered her own. Born of a *Hienial* father and a *G'recian* woman, it had been Kiri who'd cut the premature child from his dying mother. Too small at birth to be separated from her, she'd raised the child as her own. But, when the time came for them to take Ryo from her, to infect him with their evil, she'd attacked the guards with a weapon she'd fashioned from the undercarriage of her metal bed, stolen a transport ship, and after crashing three days walk from here, finally managed to get them to safety.

She had hoped they'd be able to remain hidden longer, that the *Hienials* would have given up looking for her. It was a false hope. They guarded their captives with zeal. She should have known they'd never let her or Ryo go. Well, they'd make their last stand here. She'd fight to her last breath to ensure that Ryo remained free of the *Hienial* plague, do whatever she had to in order to ensure he wasn't exposed to their evil.

The thundering at the temple doors grew louder as more *Hienials* attempted to break through the barrier to the temple proper. Beside her, Ryo quaked in fear. She lifted the toddler in her arms, cuddled him against her chest. "Fear not, little one. We are in the Lady Goddess' Temple. No one who has evil in their soul can enter here."

His little voice shook with fear. "But I am evil. I am *Hienial*, just like them."

Her heart clenched. "Oh, my son. You are not evil. You are all that is good or the Goddess would not have let you shelter here. You have a pure soul, unmarred by their ugliness."

As she found a seat against one of the marble pillars, she pulled Ryo onto her lap and began to gently rock him back and forth. As always when she sat here, her gaze strayed toward the altar where seventeen amulets lay upon a silken pillow. As she so often wondered since arriving here, she couldn't help but ask herself why the odd number. What was significant about there only being seventeen amulets? On the other hand, was the number important at all?

*It is important, my child. When the others come and defeat those awaiting you outside, let them in and tell them my words. Four Triads have formed and two more are due. Before you sit seventeen amulets, to enhance the energy your triads have sown. One will come from a*

*far distant place, wearing an amulet of her own. When eighteen wear an amulet of power, the time to fight has reached its final hour.*

When no more words were spoken, she asked the question uppermost in her mind. *Who are you?*

*You know who I am. Tell all who enter the temple tonight to be at the standing stones tomorrow just as the new day dawns. All four Triads must be present at that time, as well. Take care of your cub, young lioness.*

As quickly as she appeared in her mind, the Lady Goddess was gone and all that was left were the shouts outside the temple and the soft snores of her son laying nestled against her breast.

An hour passed or maybe more as she rocked her son, listening to the sounds of battle just outside the temple doors. As the day slowly turned to night, she continued to wait for those that would enter, thinking upon the Goddess' words. *Why would she speak to me?*

\* \* \* \*

Kel grimaced as another *Hienial* mercenary shot at him. Ducking behind the standing stone he'd chosen to shield Ana behind, he waited for the shooting to stop. As soon as the laser fire hit the marble protecting him, he whirled around it into the open and fired, hitting the *Hienial* square in the chest. *One more down, a dozen or so more to go.*

He ducked behind the stone again, glanced at his mate. "Are you okay?" he asked, though why he bothered when he could see what the evil surrounding them was doing to her. Lying near his feet, she had plastered herself around the stone, her body curved inward as she shuddered. As an empath, she was drawn to others emotions, and the evil living inside the *Hienials* seemed to be slowly poisoning her. They needed to defeat them soon, before Rachana succumbed to their hatred.

*Wray, we need to end this now. Ana can't take too much more.*

A pause, then Wray's voice grew strong in his mind. *It seems the Lioni Pride Leader, Drace Vanier, has arrived with a landing party of his own. I don't know why he's here, but I'm not going to question it right now. With two teams attacking the Hienials, it won't take long to destroy them.*

*You had better hope so. If we lose her, no one will be safe from my wrath.*

*Understood.*

Within minutes the tide had turned. Several of their crew sported injuries and they'd suffered two deaths, but all the attacking *Hienials* had died. They would honor their fallen, but first they had to retrieve the woman who even now was sheltered inside the temple. Only then, would they celebrate the lives of those who given their life to protect another.

Bending down, Kel lifted Ana and carried her

toward the Temple gates to meet up with Wray and the others. Ana barely responded as he carried her toward the others. Deep shadows marred her cheeks. Her skin has a sickly grey cast to it. Once they were assured the other woman was brought to safety, he planned to pamper his mate.

*So, you agree, Wray. Once we're back on your ship, and our enemy is defeated we devote our evening to our mate.*

*Definitely. I have felt her pain, her exhaustion through our bond. Once the enemy above is defeated, we'll bathe her, and put her to bed. She needs a healing sleep.*

*I agree.* Kel stepped up next to Wray and nodded toward the *Lioni* male. "Thank you for your timely assistance." He shifted Ana in his arms. "I don't know how much more she could have taken."

Drace nodded then his gaze darted once again toward the temple doors. His brows pinched down in thought. "What is it that you search for here?"

"A woman sought shelter here. We came to rescue her. Our mate tells us she is important if we are to defeat the *Banart* and the *Hienials*."

He raised his brows in surprise then tilted his head in acknowledgement. "Then let us go in and see that she is brought to safety."

Both Kel and Wray nodded. Drace pulled open the temple doors. The three men, and the two squads of soldiers that had followed them into battle, stepped through the entryway. Before they'd taken two steps into the temple, a woman approached them. In her arms, she held a small child of no more than three winters, who looked at them with adult eyes, eyes that had already seen too much.

Drace gasped. Both Kel and Wray whipped their heads around, looking for danger. Instead, the *Lioni* male growled low in his throat, as he spoke words that shocked them all. "She is mine to protect, as is her cub."

The tiny red haired woman quirked her eyebrows before turning her gaze toward Ana. "Will she be all right?" she asked, her voice soft and soothing.

"She will be after she rests. We are here to take you to safety. You and your son."

She nodded then turned her attention toward Wray. "I have a message for all of you from the Lady Goddess, even the *Lioni* male among you."

Kel watched as Drace leaned against the nearest marble column and slowly nodded.

"What is your message?" Wray asked.

The woman sighed then began to speak. "Four Triads have formed and two more are due. Before you sit seventeen amulets, to enhance the energy

your triads have sown. One will come from a far distance place, wearing an amulet of her own. When eighteen wear an amulet of power, the time to fight has reached the final hour."

At that, Drace straightened. "Was there anything else she said, little one?"

"Only that anyone who entered the temple tonight needed to return tomorrow at dawn, as well as her four Triads. You are to meet at the standing stones."

Wray nodded and Kel watched as he headed towards the altar where the amulets rested. Lifting the pillow they lay upon, he carefully carried them toward the temple doors, speaking over his shoulder as he went. "Then let us get back to the *Nomad*. I've already received word that the *Banarts* and *Hienials* above were destroyed in battle. It seems not only had the Great Bear Clan and the *Lioni* arrived in time, the *Savari* elders sent four cloaked ships of their own to protect their leader and his brother. With eleven to nine odds, and the superior weaponry of the *Tigerians* and the *Savari*, not to mention the invisibility of the *Lioni* during the fighting, the battle was over shortly after it began."

\* \* \* \*

Ana woke toasty warm and comfortably sandwiched between her two future mates. Even

with her eyes closed as they were, she could tell that her head rested against Kel and Wray had his chest pressed against her back. The heat and warmth filling her had more to do with the press of their bodies against hers rather than the coverlet currently wrapped tightly around her. She could get used to waking this way. Ana sighed then began to worry her bottom lip with her teeth.

How did she get into to bed with them anyway and were they still aboard ship? The last thing she remembered was the near exhaustion she'd suffered while trying to locate the woman and child hiding on the surface. She had hazy memories of returning to the ship and someone—or, two someone's—bathing her. Or, was that a dream?

She could feel the heat rising in her cheeks just thinking that her mates might have bathed her, seen her completely open and exposed. And, if it wasn't a dream, what must they think of her? Goose bumps pebbled across her skin just thinking about it.

Well, no matter how much she'd like to lie abed with her mates, she needed to get up and search for the woman they'd rescued from the surface, Kiri and her son, Ryo. There would be much healing she'd need to do today, if she wanted to make sure their trauma was but a distant memory rather than a constant source of torment and

misery.

Sighing, Ana tried to wiggle out from beneath the heavy weight of Kel and Wray's arms. As close as they were holding her, getting up without waking them might be near impossible. Within seconds, she realized that getting up without their knowledge was just not going to happen.

Behind her, Wray's arms tightened. He pressed his lips against the nape of her neck, nuzzled his way beneath her hair. His warm breath wafted across her cheek, sending another ripple of goose bumps to rise along her flesh. "Good morning, my mate."

Wray's voice was husky with sleep, and oh so sexy. By the Lady Goddess, how would she ever resist him—them—when the time came to mate? She snorted. Why would she want to?

In front of her, Kel shifted closer, pressing his front more tightly against her chest. She could feel every muscle in his torso, hear his heartbeat grow louder and faster. "I, too, wish you a good morning, Rachana. Did you sleep well?" he asked.

She knew they were both awaiting an answer but her body began to grow even warmer. Knowing her mates lie so close, their bodies pressed against her, skin to skin, made her stomach roil in nervous anticipation. Would they expect to mate with her now? Was she ready, if they did?

She licked her lips, let out the breath she hadn't realized she's been holding. "I'm well." She opened her eyes, took a quick peek up at Kel. She felt another wave of heat flow beneath her skin when she looked into his hungry eyes.

Turning her head, she met the equally heated gaze of Wray. She swallowed. Her arms, her legs began to tremble. Oh Goddess, it looked like they were indeed ready to make her theirs in every sense of the word.

"Thank you for taking care of me last night, when I was too weak to take care of myself. I used more energy than I'm used to, it seems."

Kel pressed his lips against her forehead, before trailing them down her cheek. Finally, they settled against her mouth, sipping at her in exquisite gentleness. Snuggled behind her, she could feel the firm press of Wray's shaft nudging her back, sending shards of heated awareness winging through her blood. Her breath hitched. Her heart stuttered.

How could she do it? How could she let these two virtual strangers mate with her so soon? Always she shied away from intimacy because of the emotions, the feelings that the males bombarded her with. The few times she had allowed herself to get close to a male, their disregard for naught but their own wants and desires blasted into her mind, making any desire

she may have felt wither and die. She'd never been able to allow someone this close before.

She'd never made love to one man, never mind two at one time. How could she even think of continuing with this? Could she really submit to these men? She didn't know them. If she submitted, afterwards they would be forever her mates, able to dictate her life, her choices? They were two against one. What if she learned she was naught to them but a vessel for their seed? What would she do then?

She felt intense pain emanating from them at her mental accusation. She closed her eyes with shame as their grief tore through her. They attempted to save her from their intense suffering as they hurried to block their feelings, but not before their pain fisted her heart and wounded her soul.

She bowed her head. Tears trailed down her cheeks, dripped onto the coverlet as she processed their pain, let it flow through her body and out her pores.

"Please forgive me," she begged, shifting her gaze to her feet. "I wanted to believe you would never hurt me, never force me to do something against my will." Her voice quavered and she buried her face in her hands. "I just didn't know for sure until I ... until your denial bombarded me." She sobbed into her hands, knowing she

would never, could never deserve them. Leaning forward, she buried her face in the crook of Kel's neck, scenting his male musk beneath the aroma of the soaps they'd bathed her with earlier.

They both caressed her hair, whispered sweet nothings into her ear as tears of frustration fell from her eyes. "Do not worry, mate," Wray whispered against her hair. "You are all that we want, all that we will ever need. If you need more time, we will give it to you. Your emotional needs are more important than the desires of our flesh."

"I do want you." She looked up; searching first Kel's eyes then Wray's. "Even though I've never been more than passably interested in a man before, I want you both." She shrugged. "Maybe I'm just scared."

Ana gathered her courage, reaching toward Kel with trembling hands. Whether they shook with nerves or desire, she didn't know. Her mouth grew dry at the sight of the honed muscles of his chest and abdomen. She dared not look lower. Just the thought of seeing his hard male member drove her knees to quake. How would she ever overcome her fears and allow them to do what she knew they wanted?

She steeled herself, bolstering her nerve. She knew that sooner or later she would have to see him ... there. Touch him there. She would have to touch them both. Her stomach did a little flop and,

gathering her courage, she lowered her gaze. Her eyes widened at her first glimpse of his hardened member. She'd been careful not to look at her mates too closely in the bath. Instead, she kept her eyes closed not wanting to incite their passion. Now she gaped, her eyes wide, amazed at the length and width of him. Pre-cum seeped from the meaty head, and she wanted to lick it away. What would it taste like?

She swallowed past the lump once again lodged in her throat. Was Wray just as large? She fought the urge to turn and look. Her body began to tremble and they wrapped their arms around her, soothing her with long soothing strokes of their hands upon her back, her arms.

Behind her, Wray tucked an errant lock of glossy ebony hair behind her ear. Both of her mates had a strange fascination with her long mane, not that she would ever think to complain. She found that she loved the feel of their hands caressing her.

Kel eased his body away from hers, giving her space to make her decision. "Have you changed your mind, love? We can wait. Your health, comfort and well being will always come before our desires. You merely need to say the word."

She looked from one to the other and wondered exactly what they thought. She could feel their emotions, even their wants and fears but what

they truly thought was a mystery to her. Could she go through with it or would she deny them. If she did, she would also be denying herself. Would they keep their word? Did they really wish to please her as they claimed?

Yes.

She believed they did. Besides, she couldn't deny them the one thing each of them longed for most of all. A mate. A woman to love and call their own.

She closed her eyes and nodded her acceptance. Behind her, Wray's shaft once again prodded her backside, pulsing with need. Dare she turn around? Did she even want to know the size of her other mate's erection?

Curiosity killed the *sauri*, or so they said. Still, she couldn't keep herself from turning to see the size of his erection. Her eyes widened to the point of pain. How would they ever all make love at once? She could never take them both at the same time. She just couldn't, at least not tonight. Not her first time. They would certainly tear her in two!

Kel pulled her tight against his body, his hands splaying over her back and buttocks. "Do not fear us, little one." He chuckled at her expression. "Forgive me. I forgot that you do not like that appellation." Tucking his fingers beneath her chin, he pressed a fleeting kiss to her lips. "I didn't wish

to upset you."

"Move from her presence you great hairy beast. Our princess deserves better than your bumbling attempts at romance." Wray said with a laugh. "She needs a male who will treat her as she deserves. She certainly doesn't need some large bumbling oaf who would frighten her with his ugliness at every turn." His grin and laughing eyes took the sting from his reprimand and Ana laughed as she finally managed to relax just a bit.

"Seriously though," Wray added. "You needn't fear us this night. If you wish to wait another night or another year for that matter, we shall oblige. As we said, your comfort and your needs will always come above our own."

Ana's heart filled with pleasure at their declaration. She could feel the honesty behind their words. They truly would wait for her. And, just like that, she decided she didn't want to wait any longer. She was ready to take them as her mates. Now.

Licking her lips, Ana allowed her gaze to meet first Kel's, then Wray's. "I would like to make love to you – both of you, but..."

"But what," Wray whispered, his voice now husky with desire.

"I've never been with a man. Can we take it slow? I—I mean, one at a time? I'm not sure I could take you both inside my body. Not yet,

anyway."

"Anything you want, my mate," Kel promised. "Anything."

Behind her, Wray eased away, leaving the bed to her and Kel. Ana lifted wary eyes to him, watching as he dressed. She worried that he'd be upset that she wasn't ready to take them both at the same time. He must have sensed her thoughts, because he gave her a wry smile and took another step back. "You need time to get to know us, time to learn each of us. I will check in with my second in command and return to you. Enjoy your time with Kel."

"Are you—are you sure? I don't want to make you feel second best, because you're not." She raced to add, reaching her hand out to him, needing him to take it, to reassure her that she was doing the right thing and hadn't hurt his feelings.

Wray took her hand, gave it a slight squeeze before placing a kiss on her open palm. "Don't worry, Ana. Enjoy your time with Kel. I'll be back shortly to make you mine. I want you to have as much pleasure today as you can take. We'll join as a triad during the final ceremony. Each of us are going to want to have one-on-one time with you, so Kel is just the lucky one to get you first."

Bending down, Wray tenderly kissed her trembling lips. After nodding at Kel, he walked to the door, giving her once last glance over his

shoulder before silently leaving the cabin and his triad mates behind.

“Are you ready, my mate?” Kel asked as he slowly settled himself between her thighs, opening her legs wider until he’d spread them as far apart as they could go. Her thighs trembled, and her stomach muscles tightened. Her fingers clutched the bedding beneath her, anxiety of the unknown making her more nervous than she expected she’d be.

Kel lowered his head and moaned against her woman’s mound. Ana arched her back, whether in desire to scoot away or lift herself closer to his mouth, she didn’t know. Silently, she waited for his first touch. It wasn’t long in coming.

\* \* \* \*

He softly blew a puff of warm air against her quivering mound before nuzzling his face against her creamy center. Gently, so as not to startle her, Kel ran his tongue up between her pretty, pink folds and stopped at her clit. He pressed the tip of his tongue against the nub and held it there.

She squirmed beneath him, trying to evade his seeking mouth. This was her first time with a man, the first time being devoured by a man’s mouth. Only when she reached her woman’s pleasure would he take her completely.

He swirled his tongue around and around, in and out of her tight sheath, lapping up her woman's cream, inhaling her scent deep into his lungs. He'd never get enough of her. Over and over, he ate at her, until she was writhing beneath him. She panted and moaned as his tongue danced around her pussy, propelling her higher and higher.

Kel separated her folds with his finger and circled her hole, spreading her moisture on his finger. Then he pressed into her tight core, catching her hips as they shot off the bed. She arched so high his finger nearly slipped out of her.

After he settled her body again, he went to work, alternately licking her in long and short strokes. He penetrated her sheath with first one then two fingers, stretching her so she'd be able to take him with the least amount of pain possible. She never once let go of the bedding beneath her.

"By the Lady Goddess, Kel, please! I need... I need more!" She screamed into her pillow, her body writhing in agonizing need.

Kel lifted his mouth from her, watching her passion with his hungry gaze. He was starving for her, desperate to feel her pussy sheathe his cock.

"By the Goddess, don't stop, don't..." Her head shot back and forth on the pillow as she pleaded with him to end her misery.

He laid into her once more with his mouth,

sucking her clit between his lips and biting gently. She screamed, her entire body shaking with her release. Her orgasm ripped through her body, squeezing his fingers still embedded deep within her woman's channel.

He climbed higher on the bed and knelt between her thighs, keeping one finger on her clit to keep the sensations rolling. Her eyes were squeezed shut and sweat beaded on her forehead. She never opened her eyes as he reached for another pillow and slid it beneath her still arching hips.

Still caressing her clit with the tip of his finger, he brought the meaty head of his shaft to her wet channel. Pushing gently against it, he watched it slowly sink inside her clasp sheath.

Kel pulled out, his cock bobbing up and down, slick with Ana's dew, and weeping with his own juices.

"Don't stop...you...can't," she cried.

"I promise, my love. I won't stop." He pressed forward again, lodging his cock's head more firmly inside her this time. He stayed that way, unmoving as he waited for some sign she was ready for more.

Ana bit down on her lip and shifted against his cock that now stretched her tight pussy. He pulled back a tiny bit, watching the relief cross her face before thrusting deeper still.

Her hips jerked, impaling herself on his cock, and she screamed with the pain as he breached her virgin's barrier. Kel again waited for her body to accept his, for her pain to turn to pleasure.

When she began to move beneath him, he lifted her knees into the crooks of his elbows, placed his palms on the bed beside her shoulders and slowly sank deeper into Ana's welcoming body.

Slowly he withdrew until only the head of his cock remained lodged inside her. Only when she began to squirm, arching up against him, did he drive himself into her softness. Over and over, he thrust, the pace picking up with his ever-increasing need to cum.

Ana screamed, her orgasm hitting her hard. Kel groaned and buried his cock as far as it would go, her climax triggering his own. His seed shot deep into her womb, bathing her with his life's essence.

Their sweaty bodies stuck together as they lay, their chests heaving, in a mass of quivering flesh on the bed. His shaft was still deep inside her. He would be content staying forevermore inside her clasp channel, but he knew that Wray waited patiently to take her as mate, as well. He couldn't award Wray's selflessness by ignoring the other man's needs.

Even though he'd rather stay embedded deep inside her, Kel slowly withdrew from his mate's body, careful not to hurt her. He felt deprived of

her body's heat almost immediately, but he knew he couldn't be selfish with his desire for her. Knowing that Wray waited elsewhere, he slowly ran his hand through her tangled mane, and then rolled to his side and off the bed. "Rest, Ana. Wray will be here shortly to love you as well. Just rest."

Anna nodded then closed her eyes, wearing a smile of sated contentment. Kel grinned at his accomplishment and with happiness flooding his heart, went in search of Wray, the third member of their Triad.

\* \* \* \*

Wray had tried his best not to think about what was happening between Kel and their mate. That way laid madness. He wanted to make love to her so badly he hadn't been able to concentrate on anything his Beta had said. If Kel didn't show up soon, he'd probably find himself standing outside his cabin, waiting in the corridor until they called for him. *By the Goddess, I hope she'll be ready for me soon.*

Wray sighed, ran his fingers through his hair as he stared out of the viewport and down on the planet below. The sound of approaching footsteps shook him out of his reverie, and he looked over his shoulder. Kel, wearing an intensely sated expression stood just a few feet away from him.

"Is Rachana all right?" he asked, needing to know that her first lovemaking experience had been pleasant for her, even if it hadn't been him loving her.

Kel quickly closed the distance between them and pulled him into a warrior's embrace. "She is resting now. I must thank you for gifting me with her innocence. It is a memory I shall always cherish."

"So long as the pleasure outweighed the pain, then it was worth it. I'd do anything—give her anything—to make her happy."

Kel nodded. "So would I. So, go to her. She's waiting for you. I shall find the others and make arrangements for our travel to *Tigeria*."

Wray watched as Kel quickly walked away. After dragging in a deep breath, he left the command deck and headed toward his cabin, toward his mate.

Once he entered their cabin, and undressed, Wray slowly approached the bed, his gaze hungrily feasting on his lovely mate. Her eyes fluttered open and his heart hitched when her lips turned up into a smile. She held out her hand to him. Sheer joy and love flooded his soul. Finally, he was where he was supposed to be. In her, he would finally be complete.

While Ana struggled to sit up beneath the coverlet, he eased himself onto the bed beside her,

bent down and took her mouth with all the love and tenderness he possessed.

Still kissing her, Wray lowered the blanket she'd been clutching against her breasts, leaving her completely exposed to his gaze. She ducked her head in shyness. Unwilling to let her hide from him, he lifted her chin. "You are beautiful, my love. There is no need to hide from me."

He slowly raised his hands, caressed her face, her shoulders, and then trailed his fingers down her chest until his palms covered her full breasts. He took both of her nipples in his fingers and began pulling and softly pinching them, showing her that even small pain can lead to the ultimate pleasure.

She pulled her mouth away and arched her back, thrusting her breasts more fully into his hands. He sucked in a deep breath then followed the line of her neck with his mouth, nipping and licking his way down to her chest. Once there, he stopped, lifted his gaze toward hers.

"Please Wray, I need you. I ache. Make it go away."

He nodded, swirling his tongue around her breasts, being careful to avoid the pebbled peaks. Ana fisted her hands in his hair and tried to force him to her nipples.

Wray didn't hesitate. He latched on to one of Ana's turgid nipples and suckled it, before lashing

it with his tongue and teeth. Ana cried out her pleasure and shoved more of her breast into his mouth. He went back and forth, from one breast to the other until they were both swollen and red.

Only then did Wray nudge her gently to her back. He knelt on the floor beside the bed and pulled her gently by the hips to the edge. Once there, he placed her knees over his shoulders. He bent forward and inhaled deeply of her intoxicating scent before swiping his tongue from her dripping channel to her swollen clit. Ana gave a keening cry when Wray began to suckle it gently.

Within seconds, she came, flooding his mouth with her woman's cream. She cried out his name and he thought his heart would stop, so much love filled him.

Before she could catch her breath, Wray began to ravage her with tongue and teeth. He licked and sucked at her pussy, lapping up all of the juice that was gushing from her.

Wray slid a finger into her swollen channel and slowly began working it in and out. Then he had two fingers in her, widening her, stretching her for his cock. Impatient to make love to his mate, he lifted her, placing her on her hands and knees before him. He stepped behind her and pushed against her upper back so that her head and shoulders rested upon the bed. As soon as he had

her positioned how he wanted her, he thrust home.

Ana cried out. Wray stopped, holding himself completely still, deep inside her.

"Are you okay? Did I hurt you?" He didn't know what he'd do if he hurt her. She was everything to him.

Ana thrust her hips back against him, forcing him deeper. Wray groaned. "Please, Wray. It's not enough. Never enough. I need more."

That was all it took to set Wray off again. He pulled back until only the swollen head of his cock remained inside her and then slammed deep again. Again and again, he thrust hard in her tight pussy, reveling in the tight, hot depths of her, the way her muscles clenched his shaft.

Reaching around her hips with his right hand, he found her clit and began pinching it between his fingers. Ana came with a guttural moan, squeezing his shaft in her clasp channel. That was all it took to send Wray over as well.

Together, they collapsed upon the bedding, panting, their bodies covered in a sheen of sweat. Their scents mingled, the heavy musk of his seed and her woman's cream combining into a perfect blend.

"Sleep now, Ana," Wray whispered. "Tomorrow we will be mated on the surface outside the Lady Goddess' Temple with the others before heading

to Tigeria."

\* \* \* \*

*The Next Day... Outside the Lady Goddess' Temple~  
Planet of G'recio*

They entered the circle. Large standing stones surrounded them. Ana watched the other couples as they gazed at each other lovingly with smiles on their comely faces. Glancing up at the huge stone pillars, she felt small, dwarfed by the enormous stones. How long had they stood here in this magical glen, she wondered.

Her fingers—her entire body—itched as the mystical power poured from the ancient ring. It enshrouded them in the warmth of its teeming energy. Worried, she feared she would never live up to the expectations of her mates. Would they ever show pride in her abilities, or would she forever be an embarrassment to them? Ana shook off her trepidation and placed her hands in those of her mates, allowing them to lead her further into the grass-covered ring.

No sooner had the four triads reached the center, than the wind gathered strength around the outer ring. Eddies of leaves danced around the edge, small whirlwinds of swirling sand drove the

onlookers away from the powerful glen. A vortex of swirling stars and darkness appeared in front of them before the wind suddenly died. The vortex disappeared and in its place was a woman with beauty and strength beyond measure.

Drawing herself to her impressive height, the woman stepped forward, a smile on her glorious face. She looked between the four triads and nodded.

"All is as it should be." She gazed through the standing stones and lifted her hand. She motioned for Jaynee, Dare and Luc to join them. "My first triads of power," she said raising her arms to encompass them all. "You have listened and heeded my will well—though some of you wished not to." She turned her gaze to Ana and lifted her brow.

Ana's face blazed with mortification. She wanted nothing more than to crawl beneath one of the large stones and hide.

The woman smiled kindly. "Still, I would reward such obedience, not punish it." She threw her head back and allowed the wind to whip her hair about her. "All ye gathered here, bear witness—these men and women are joined together by my hand." She approached each triad and placed their hands together, each three forming a pyramid. "They are now, and forever will be, under my protection. Together they are

everyone's salvation." She turned as if to leave and stopped. "There will be more. Let us all rejoice in the knowledge of the inevitable defeat of the cruel *Banart* army."

The woman raised her voice louder, so those gathered round the circle could hear and celebrate. "Take each other's hands," she instructed each triad in turn. "Feel the power flowing through you." She moved to clasp Sayre and Fane's hands together. She paused before Luc before giving him a beauteous smile. "You look much better thus." She feathered her fingers through his dark hair. "I—" She turned to glance back at the others before returning her wondrous silver-eyed gaze back to Luc. "Like the others—wish there was no need for the subterfuge—for your need to become something you are not. I—as does your beautiful mate—prefer your ebony color to that of the blonde you must so often conceal yourself with."

The Goddess, for Ana realized it could be no other, returned her attention to the others once more. She checked to see that their hands were clasped, each triad a pyramid raising a cone of power of their own. A fissure of light shot from one group to the other, linking first three, then all four triads together by one thin band, one thin ribbon of pure silvery white light. Their eyes widened as they all gazed at the thin band of power, charged by their clasped hands and

unified front.

"So you see the power granted you by the Universe—the power that awaits those who would be strong enough to join our cause. You finally see the means by which you shall defeat the enemy. "I wish—" She stopped, silvery tears glimmering in her eyes. "I wish I could do more, but even *I* am bound by nature's laws. I am forbidden to use my powers against those who would harm you." She smiled mischievously. "Yet I am not forbidden to bring those together who would have the power to rival even that of a god." She looked at them all in turn, her gaze boring into their very souls. "Use this power wisely, lest we all perish."

The strange echoing voice ceased and a bright light momentarily filled the circle, spilling out into the surrounding fields and forest. Blinded, Ana put her hands to her face to block the intense light. When the light disappeared, so had their powerful visitor.

Ana's hands—no—her entire body tingled with the residual power as the males turned to their mates and spoke as one.

"I claim you both as my triad mate. Forever are we bound. You are forever in my keeping."

The women threw their heads back, drew down the power of the universe, and gazed at their men, their eyes nearly glowing as they spoke their own

binding vows.

"I accept your claim as I stake a claim of my own. I claim you males as my true triad mates. Your hearts are forever bound, forever in my keeping."

The bolt of energy returned, joining each triad together, snaking to the next, until the light bound all four triads. The bolt of pure, blue-white energy shot from the bound triads, seeking out those who would harm them. Several screams rent the air as explosions sounded near and far.

"*Banarts*," someone exclaimed. "There were *Banarts* among us!"

Ana ran toward the muffled cries. Wray grabbed her and swung her behind him. "You are no warrior, my sweet. Do not rush headlong into danger. That is my job."

Communiqués came from all over the planet. "Several *Banarts* have been found dead. They have all been burned alive by the same energy bolt that killed those near the circle." Drace said, holding his large hand to his ear, his free arm looped around Kiri's shoulder, in an effort to keep her safe as she clutched at the tiny hand of her son beside her.

The four triads traded looks with the grim realization that together they possessed a mighty weapon.

"We could free every one of the *Banart*

controlled planets," Laynee whispered, as she held her trembling fingers over her lips.

"Perhaps," Sayre agreed, stepping up to encircle her in the protection of his arms. "But once we are gone, we leave them to face our enemy's wrath."

"Maybe the more of us there are, the farther reaching our powers will be," Jaynee added. "Just as the cone of power grows as our coven grows, perhaps this new power—this weapon—shall also grow as more triads are formed."

"We can only hope. The enemy is widespread and far-reaching. Any planet we free would only be enslaved once more as we moved on to free others. We must find a way to rid the universe of them." Wray pulled her closer and Ana fought to keep herself from closing her eyes. Every breath he took, every word he spoke drove her nearer to a desire she couldn't name, couldn't fathom.

*You await the real claiming, Ana. Kel whispered into her mind. Your body yearns for mine. It yearns for Wray's. Together the three of us will quench your desire – your undeniable thirst for our bodies.*

She shivered in response, waiting, needing them to do the things they promised to do. How could it be that only a few short days ago she feared this mating, this meeting of the flesh? Now she craved it with everything within her. Her body trembled at the thought of their inevitable

possession and she hungered for it. She couldn't wait to be alone with them—couldn't wait to feel them pressing their hard hot bodies against her as she cried out her pleasure between them. Where before she feared it, she now feared she would never have it—have them.

Wray pressed his groin against her buttocks. "You shall have us as you desire, Ana," he breathed in her ear. "Soon we shall be alone in my quarters aboard the *Nomad* and we will give you what your body craves."

\* \* \* \*

*Two hours later... Lupin Starship Nomad*

Kel breathed her scent deep. He needed her as badly as she obviously needed him. Needed them. Her body gave her desire away. Her nipples pebbled, tenting the thin scrap of material that covered her breasts. The sheer material wrapped around her hips, hung to her ankles in strips, barely covering her shapely legs.

He closed his eyes in an attempt to bring his raging hormones under control. What would he do if he suddenly shifted to his tiger and scared her? He would never forgive himself. Fisting his hands at his sides, he contented himself to just stand beside her and breathe in her intoxicating

scent.

Wray moved to embrace her, burying his face in the crook of her neck. What Kel wouldn't do to have the control over his body that he needed to do just that.

Gently, Ana pulled away from Wray. Smiling, obviously to not cause him pain or distress, she licked her full lips and turned to Kel, her gaze searching his. "You cannot make me believe you would hurt me, even in your other form." She reached out her free hand, keeping one clasped within Wray's firm grip.

Her free hand grasped the waistband of his slacks and she tugged him to her. "I do not fear you," she said cupping his cheek. "Please do not pull away. You cannot isolate yourself from us like this. I—I," she paused, licking her lips. "I love you. I need you." She glanced back at Wray. "I need you both."

Kel couldn't believe his ears. He never expected her to accept him—all of him. She even accepted that part of him that wasn't human. He could see it on her face, in her beautiful amber eyes. He couldn't keep himself from her any longer. Moving forward, he crushed her to him, reveling in her soft acceptance.

Wray moved behind her, wrapping his arms around her to fondle her breasts, as she leaned forward to press her mouth against Kel's.

Kel groaned when she parted her lips and moaned into his mouth. His heart raced, pounding against his ribs as her silky hands pushed up his *shert*. Petal smooth thumbs brushed over his flat nipples and his knees turned to mush. He backed toward the bed, pulling her with him, lest he fall at the floor at her feet in supplication.

"But that is what I want, Kel," she breathed against his mouth. Pressing her lips to his cheek, she moved boldly to his ear. "I need you to worship me on occasion, just as Wray also needs our worship. I've come to care for you, Kel, but I do have needs..." She left off on a blush, lowering her head until her chin dropped to her chest. "Occasionally I must have control. At least in this room."

She ripped his *shert* open, pressed her face to his chest and laved his nipple. "I must have a bit of control. At least once in a while." She rubbed herself against him as Wray fondled her from behind. "But tonight I sense your need and I bow to you. Make me yours." Straightening, she turned to Wray. "Mate with me. Both of you."

Kel needed no other invitation. His hands moved to her hair, pulling her to him for another soul-deep kiss. He needed this—needed her—in every way that she would have him. Releasing her hair, his hands trailed down her body, feeling her soft curves. He pushed the thin scrap of material

from her breasts and feasted his eyes on her luscious curves. Bending down, he lowered his head to her breasts, suckling the tight rosy peaks.

He watched as Wray moved his hand lower, burying his fingers in her juicy cunt, wondering if he would ever have the patience to wait his turn at her tight vaginal hole.

"I don't want you to wait," Ana said, her breath coming in little pants. "I want you both at the same time." She blushed prettily and it was almost his undoing. "The others have told me of a way for us all to reach our pleasure. I wish to have you both this way. Please," she begged as her legs gave out and they carried her to the huge bed in the center of the large cabin.

After gently undressing her, they lay her on the bed to remove her thin sandals. They both massaged her calves and feet as they unlaced the long ties that bound them to her feet. His heart slammed erratically in his chest as she watched them undress with wide eyes.

Kel wanted to prolong it. He needed to stretch this agony out as long as possible. A part of him urged him to hurry but another part insisted he allow her to see every muscle of his body—every inch of his straining erection. His cock sprang free of the constraining cloth as he unbuttoned his *trews*.

Reaching up, she took hold of their bobbing

shafts as they knelt beside her on the soft bed. Kel watched as her beautiful rosy-tipped breasts moved in time with her measured strokes through his half-closed eyes. It wasn't long before they both reached down to still her hands on their raging cocks.

She smiled coyly, gazing up at them with a lust-filled gaze.

"Suck it," he rasped, his voice barely more than a memory. His mind, like his voice, was gone. Taking with it any ability he'd ever had to make an intelligent decision. Every cell of his being was centered on this one woman as she slowly leaned forward to wrap her lips around his straining erection.

"As you wish, my lord," she whispered, just before her full, pink lips closed over the head of his eager cock.

Kel inhaled deeply, sucking enough air into his lungs to live for a week. He loved the scent of his mate's arousal. It was like an aphrodisiac, the strongest of drugs made to drive him wild with need.

She licked the length of his shaft. The stroke of her tongue sent pinpricks of ecstasy through his blood and he threw his head back. The sensation of her tongue sliding over the smooth flesh of his hardened organ nearly drove him over the edge. Gentle fingers cupped his balls and squeezed

lightly, her nails softly scoring the underside of his sac. Lost in a forest of need, he buried his fingers in her hair and held her head as he pistoned his cock into her talented mouth.

The scent of her desire assaulted his senses and nearly drove him mad. The heady perfume of her body's musk had him licking his lips with the need to have her, to taste her. Finally gathering his wits, he looked down when he heard her long, guttural moan and grinned. It seemed his triad mate had the same idea. Kel watched with ever-growing need as Wray slid his tongue through her glistening folds, drawing mewls of ecstasy from their once reluctant lover.

Each moan, each cry of pleasure that Wray wrung from her luscious lips reverberated over his cock as she continued to take him deep into her throat. Still, he kept his hand fisted around the base of his cock, lest the great length choke her.

\* \* \* \*

Wray had watched as long as he could before finally giving in to the need to taste his mate. Her flesh was sweet. Her body's fragrant perfume taunted him, begged him to lean down and stroke his tongue through her glistening folds. Her lover's cream seeped from her beautiful pussy as she continued to suck Kel's cock. The sight of her

full lips wrapped around Kel's organ had nearly been his undoing. It was all he could do to sit and watch for a time without jerking off and embarrassing himself on the sheets.

He settled himself low on the bed, maneuvering between her silky thighs. He almost came when she moaned deep in her throat as he tongued her erect clit. He grinned, knowing by Kel's guttural groan that her reaction had nearly sent him over the edge.

Wray watched as Kel, obviously too close to his climax to continue, pulled his cock from her mouth. If he hadn't been preoccupied with dining on Ana's precious cunt, he may have gone for a bit of that himself. Instead, he continued to eat away at her gushing pussy as Kel suckled her pert breasts while she came into his mouth.

Sitting up, he gave them both a practiced grin. "Top or bottom?" He asked, raising his brow. "This is your night, your choice, Kel. It is our gift to you."

"Bottom," Kel said, his voice no more than a guttural grunt. "I can't wait to feel her atop me, riding my cock, her breasts jutting toward me." He lay down on the bed and waited for her to lower herself over his large penis, his eyes glazed with need.

Wray couldn't blame him. He would love to feel her claspings vagina on his own cock. He

watched as she slowly impaled herself on Kel's massive organ and leaned forward, pressing her breasts against the other male's chest. Wray looked down to the once forbidden hole as the little puckered ring winked up at him. He licked his lips. He would have her there. It was what she wanted. She reached back and wet the tiny ring with her own juices, waiting. They were both waiting.

He fell on them with a groan. He needed to feel the flesh of her tight ass sucking the cum from his cock. He longed to feel the pulse of her orgasm as she came with them both inside her. Damn if he didn't want to know what it felt like to have another man's cock stroking his through the thin barrier between her two holes.

He placed the head of his cock to her wetness, gathering the slick evidence of her desire; he coated the head of his rod before moving to her smaller bottom hole. Gritting his teeth, he pressed the head of his cock into the tight ring. Everything within him told him to ram his cock home, instead of easing the massive organ into her back entrance.

Still, he went slowly, enjoying every moment of his slow possession. His eyes squeezed closed, he wondered how he would ever last long enough to bring Ana to her pleasure.

She moaned beneath him and he stopped. He

prayed to the Goddess that she wouldn't ask him to leave her. He wasn't sure he could.

"Should I stop?" he asked between clenched teeth.

"No. Goddess, Wray, don't stop now," she begged then wriggled backward seating his cock deep into her ass. "Yes," she keened into Kel's chest. She wriggled again, nearly unseating herself from Kel's eager shaft. Wray cupped her ass, holding her in place until his need to climax passed. Kel lay still beneath them, his eyes closed tight. If his shallow pants and clenched teeth were any indication, he was close to cumming, as well.

Wray gritted his teeth and tried to think on other things. He wanted—needed—to pleasure their lovely mate so she would allow this type of mating again. There was no doubt in his mind that triad mating could become addictive. Perhaps it was too late and he was already addicted.

"Stroke her clit, Kel. Make her scream for us."

No sooner had Kel reached between them, than she stiffened. Lifting herself away from him, she bared her breasts to his hungry mouth. A scream bubbled from her throat as Kel leaned up and latched on to the hardened nipple of her right breast.

Wray squeezed his eyes closed, his hands gripping her hips as he continued to drive his hard length into her forbidden channel.

\* \* \* \*

Ana's throat hurt from her continued screams as climax after climax overtook her. Kel's tongue circled her nipple, his teeth lightly abrading the turgid tip. Wray's hands caressed her back and bottom, squeezing and molding the soft white globes of her ass. The delicious fullness she'd felt at her first claiming was nothing compared to this. The pleasure returned tenfold with the two of them moving deep within her quivering body. Her heart slammed in her chest until she was certain she would die from the promise of such unbearable pleasure.

"Yes!" she screamed, fighting to make them move faster. Still, her two mates worked in a slow, agonizing rhythm that made her want to scream. They brought her to her pleasure again and again, yet she wanted more. She needed more. She needed them to lose themselves in her as much as they wanted her to do the same.

No sooner had the thought formed in her mind than Kel growled, his eyes changed, looking more like those of his animal side. His incisors lengthened and he spoke, his voice sounded strange. Deeper. Perhaps it was from his partial change.

"Will you bind with me?" He looked over her

shoulder to Wray and nodded.

"Will you bind with us?" Wray added from behind her as they both stilled. They waited for her answer, their cocks still buried deep inside her.

"Don't stop," she begged. "I'll do anything. Please!"

Kel leaned up, wrapped his fingers around the back of her neck and pulled her down to gently press his lips to hers. "Shh... Ana, my love." He pushed the sweat soaked hair from her brow and gazed deep into her eyes. "It is not our intention to torment you. We wish only a blood bond with you."

She pulled away – what little bit that she could. "A – A blood bond?"

He nodded. "It would tie us three together. More so than the *Tigerian* ceremony already has. It would make us all *Tigerian*, *Lupin*, and *Carrillian*. Our life-forces would be bound together, extending your life considerably."

"Blood bond?" She asked, her voice nothing more than a terrified squeak. "Extend my life?" She asked, latching on to one good thing that she could see come from such a bonding. "By how long?"

"We would all remain as we are for another eighty years or so." Wray answered from behind her.

Ana's eyes widened and she licked her lips. She wriggled her hips in an attempt to keep them interested lest they should lose their lovely erections. *Eighty more year of this? By the Goddess, only a madwoman would refuse such an offer!*

"Yes," she said with a nod. "Will it—will it hurt?"

Kel gave her a curt nod. "For a bit. Then you will feel the ultimate pleasure as our blood blends and binds us together. Only then can we lose ourselves in your softness. A human's body is too frail for us to truly lose control."

How could she say no? Why would she want to? She leaned forward to kiss Kel, her lips trailing over the muscles of his chest. She gasped when Wray slowly pulled his cock from her ass then slid it back in—a reminder to her they awaited an answer. She almost snorted. As if it were likely that she'd forget.

"Yes." She leaned back and turned to press a sweet kiss to Wray's lips, lest he feel left out. "I want it all."

Again, Kel's teeth lengthened and he leaned forward to sink razor sharp incisors deep into the flesh of her breast. At the same time, Wray pierced the skin of her shoulder and she screamed from the mixture of pain and pleasure. She climaxed again as they held her immobile and drove their cocks deep inside her.

A different kind of pain shot through her as her body suddenly reacted to their saliva in her blood. Her gums ached, her incisors grew and she knew an unnatural need for their blood. She clasped her hand to her mouth. The last thing she wanted to do was hurt either of them.

*It is not unnatural this time, little one, Wray whispered into her mind. This time it is as natural as childbirth or breathing.*

Kel pulled her down to him, his fingers feathering through her hair, soothing her, even as they continued to move inside her. They were driving her wild with need. Never had she wanted anyone as much as she did these two males. She couldn't get enough.

"You must do this thing to bond with us," Kel said, petting her head, his large hands soothing her jangled nerves.

Wray massaged her body, his hands moving in soothing circles over her flesh. "Kel is right, little one. You must do this to bind our life-forces."

They both wrapped their arms around her, holding her close until she was filled with the need to sink her teeth into Kel's flesh. "Do it," he urged. Unable to deny the need any longer, she sank her new teeth into the heavy muscles of his chest.

Kel threw his head back and groaned, his erection growing impossibly larger. Large hands

moved to her hips, alternately lifting and lowering her over him. He relentlessly pounded his hard cock into her as she raised her head and watched the marks slowly heal and fade from his flawless chest. She looked down at her breast with wonder. There were no marks marring the smooth, ivory flesh.

She took a moment to revel in the new sensations, the new emotions that accompanied her altered state as her two mates continued to thrust themselves deep inside her. Still, they didn't release the tight rein they held on their control.

Ana turned her head and looked at Wray through half closed eyes. She could barely keep them open, her pleasure was so great. He smiled and leaned closer as her teeth grew once again. Unable to reach his chest, she sank her teeth into his shoulder and his cock jerked inside her.

"Ana," he growled. "I hope you're ready. I can't—"

"We can no longer hold back," Kel completed Wray's sentence as they both began to drive into her with a force she never thought possible. The two males worked out a rhythm that nearly drove her insane. Each of them impaled her ruthlessly with their frenzied thrusts. Kel's hands tightened on her hips to the point of pain.

Wray's gentle kneading of her buttocks, as he

drove inside her, only added to the endless stream of sensation and she screamed out another seemingly endless climax as they took her ever higher.

Her two mates took each other's wrists and completed the blood triad before they both growled through their own release. Their cocks pulsed inside her, shooting hot jets of cum deep inside her body. The pulsing of their cocks drove her over the edge once more and her body shuddered through her final climax. Seconds later, she collapsed onto Kel's chest, spent.

\* \* \* \*

*Three weeks later... Tigeria*

Ana woke to the call of a strange animal. *What strange and loud thing is that?* She grimaced and reached to pull her pillow over her head and realized she was not alone. One at her front, the other pressed to her back, the heat from her mates' bodies kept her warm from the morning chill. Closing her eyes, she inhaled, loving the scent of their combined musk.

The strange animal crowed again and her eyes flew open. *Damn that noisy creature! Can't a body get some sleep?*

Gingerly sitting up, so as not to wake her

mates, she looked toward the window and made a face. Damn it was early. The gray light of the approaching dawn filtered through the sheer curtains. Climbing from between the two men, she got out of bed and padded to the window to greet the morning and curse that infernal beast whose noisy calls rattled her nerves.

Fire burned in the distance as the *Tigerian* sun moved higher, finally breeching the horizon as it filled the sky with a rosy glow. Gooseflesh rose on her arms as she watched the new day come to life.

She smiled as Wray's warm arms wrapped around her from behind and Kel stepped up beside her, his hands already straying to her hair. She leaned back and allowed her mates to comfort her.

"We leave for Wray's world today," Kel said, grasping her hand. "But we shall return here often."

Ana sighed. She certainly hoped so. Her newest and best friends could be found here as well as such glorious mornings. This is the kind of life she would wish for all her people and the *G'recians*, she thought. This was a peaceful world where they would lead peaceful lives filled with beauty, wonder and love. What more could they ask?

\* \* \* \*

Kiri woke up and glanced at her adopted son. Pushing back his sandy blonde hair, she pressed a loving kiss to his forehead. She knew she should have left him in his own bed, in his own room. He must learn to depend on her less as he grew older. Still, he needed her near him for a while yet. Even after these last few weeks, nightmares of the hideous *Hienials* still plagued him.

A strange light appeared in the far corner of the room and she quickly placed herself in front of him like a shield. Her mouth dropped open when a woman stepped from the center of the light. It was the Lady Goddess. Her body began to quake when she realized her visit could only mean one thing.

"You have been through a great ordeal, Kiri." She turned her gaze to Ryo and smiled. "It is good that you protect him, but there is no need. It shows much of your character that you can so dearly love the son of a beast."

Kiri fought the urge to cover the boy's body with her own. He wasn't a beast. Never that! Her heart stuttered in her breast. How could she protect him from a Goddess?

Ryo cowered behind her shaking. Sending waves of love and reassurance, she reached back to comfort him, her heart breaking. His fear and his trust in her nearly undid her. The poor boy knew so little of love—only what she herself had

shown him. So many people had already attempted to end his young life. It didn't matter that he was small. It was his heart she strove to protect. His heart was larger than the planet he'd been born upon. The boy had an endless capacity to love.

The Goddess smiled at him and her expression gentled. "Your time will come, young Ryo. Soon you lead your people against a great enemy. There is goodness inside you unrivaled by any other. And a time will come when that goodness is needed. Have faith in yourself, in your abilities and in the people you hold dear." She laid a gentle hand on his hair. "Many blessings upon you." Ryo stilled, finally comforted and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The Goddess turned her gaze back to Kiri and smiled. "I charge you with his safety. You guard him like a young lioness, as is fitting. Your mates will be pleased that you will guard your children with such zeal." She leaned forward and whispered. "And they are coming, young protector. You are the next."

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Tianna Xander is the author of several paranormal, time-travel and science fiction romance novels. She loves reading everything from romance novels, murder mysteries and encyclopedias, to handbooks on solar energy. Tianna is the first to admit she spends far too much time surfing the internet and chatting with her online friends and critique groups.

Having written many novels and working on at least one more at any given time, Tianna still finds time for her family, friends and her many pets. She currently lives in Michigan with her husband, two children, three cats, two big dogs and one occasionally terrorized Netherland Dwarf bunny. Her life is anything but boring.

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Hi there. My name is Bonnie Rose Leigh and I've been writing since I was just a tyke. I live in a small town in Upstate, New York and spend most of my time on the computer either writing, or visiting with my friends. If I'm not busy on the computer, I spend my free time reading. It doesn't matter what genre the book is either, though I am partial to romance novels. If I'm not in my office, I can be found sprawled in a chair with a book clutched in my hand and a cup of cocoa sitting nearby.

To learn about all of my upcoming releases, please visit my website at: <http://www.mybonnierose.net>