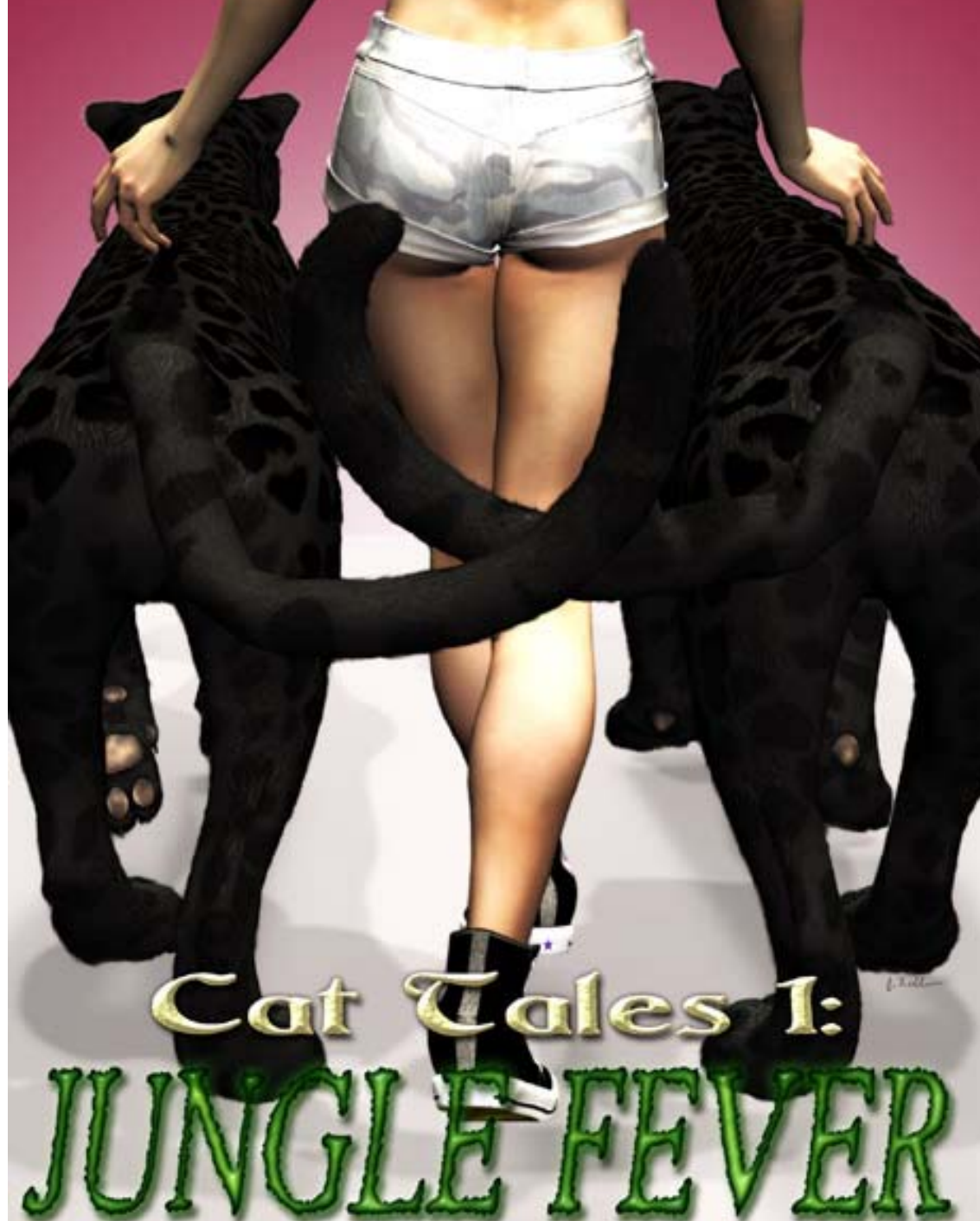


Changeling Press

STORMY SOMMERS



Cat Tales 1: Jungle Fever

Stormy Sommers

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Cat Tales 1: Jungle Fever

Stormy Sommers

Sent to help explore a newly discovered planet, Dr. Zheri Ross is amazed to discover a pair of black panthers wrestling in the tropical jungle. When they shift into two gorgeous, naked men and make love before her very eyes, Zheri finds herself trapped by a passion more overwhelming than anything she's ever experienced.

Tal An'Rath el Tar and his bond-brother, Cen, have been searching for years for the female who completes their *trianna*, the life-bond of the An'Rath clan. They are as shocked as Zheri by their desire for this alien female -- but the mating instinct is irresistible. They *must* have her.

But humanity will perish if they can't find a new planet to colonize. Can Zheri protect the An'Rath from the invasion which will destroy their world -- and do her loyalties lie with the millions of humans who'll die if they can't get off Earth, or with the lovers who have become more important to her than her own life?

Chapter One

The whine of the great engines spiraled up to an almost earsplitting shriek as the retros fired, easing the ship down onto the broad savanna. Even through the thick hull, Zheri could hear the hiss of the chemical foam through its nozzles, quickly extinguishing the grass ignited by the retros. Outside the heavy plasglas viewport, smoke billowed skyward. She watched it sourly, her lips pursed in distaste.

"Congratulations, Captain. Our first scar on the planet."

Captain Andrew Hunt threw her a disgusted glance and called back to Jory Steiner, the nav tech. "All good?"

"Right on target. Latitude three-point-five-one-two, longitude twenty-point-twenty-oh-one. Welcome to Terrana III, Captain."

"Haven't even stepped foot on it, and we've already claimed it," Zheri added caustically. "Regardless of whatever else might live here."

Zheri reached for the hatch release, but Captain Hunt stepped in front of her, folding his arms across his massive chest. Behind her, the rest of the Recon crew tensed. This showdown had been coming for months, and they all knew it.

"Let's get this straight right now, Dr. Ross. I understand your concerns. Hell, I even share them to some extent. But there are forty-eight billion people back on Earth who are *dying*, Doctor. Can you understand *that*?"

Oh, she understood it, all right. It was the same old argument, repeated over and over since the days of Darwin. They were the dominant species, so whatever they did was right. Hah!

Of course, we wouldn't even be in this position if we hadn't made such a goddamned mess of our own planet, Zheri thought spitefully, but didn't bother saying. What would be the point? The massive, square-jawed man before her was the epitome of everything she

hated about the military -- inflexible, single-minded, and in her opinion utterly lacking in anything like imagination.

"It's all well and good to speculate about alien intelligences, Dr. Ross, but there is *nothing* to indicate the existence of a highly developed species on Terrana III. No cities, no buildings, no crop cultivation. Nothing."

"And if there were?"

The captain's cool gray eyes met hers unflinchingly. It was reply enough.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Earth's population had doubled, then trebled, then exploded in the twenty-first to a staggering fifty billion. At the same time the mindless, unchecked pollution of petroleum-fueled vehicles, pesticides and manufacturing wastes had rendered more and more of the planet's surface incapable of supporting life, forcing humanity into massive, semi-subterranean supercities.

Whether she liked it or not, Zheri had to admit the captain was right. There was nothing theoretical about the billions of people slowly suffocating in the noxious, poisoned fumes of humankind's native planet. And what alternatives were there, really? The Proteus colony, restricted as it was under its biodome, couldn't accommodate even a fraction of the people still trapped on Earth, and after the destruction of the Barton settlement...

Sighing, she let her shoulders sag in defeat. "You're not going to answer my question, are you?"

"Do you really think an answer is necessary?"

"I hope not," Zheri muttered.

Captain Hunt regarded her a moment, his cool gray eyes betraying an odd thoughtfulness she couldn't quite fathom. "So do I."

Then he flashed her a quick, mocking grin -- a grin that still, after three months together in the cramped scout ship, took her by surprise. It might even have persuaded her into his bed a time or two, if he'd had any interest in having her there. "Come on, Doctor. Let's go take a look at this planet we're about to ravage."

His broad shoulders rippled as he pulled open the hatch release and Zheri, watching him, wondered idly if the captain had any idea that only a century ago he would have been ostracized and reviled for his preference in bedmates.

She herself didn't have any problem with homosexuality -- in fact, since reproduction was now so strictly controlled, it was more the norm than otherwise back on Earth. It was just ironic that it always seemed to be the ruggedly masculine ones, the very type that attracted her, who were gay.

All of which meant she'd managed to reach her twenty-sixth year with very little personal experience in sexuality. Oh, she'd played around, of course -- but no man who'd found her interesting had ever interested *her* enough to tempt her into full-fledged intercourse.

And she sure as hell wasn't likely to find the partner of her dreams on Terrana III, Zheri thought. It was enough to make a girl downright grumpy.

But she forgot her annoyance as she followed the rest of the Recon crew out of the hatch. Stopping short at the edge of the airlock, she gasped aloud in wonder. Tawny grasslands rolled away in every direction, undulating slightly, disappearing northward into the hazy distance. To the east, she could see the dark smudge of trees, the beginnings of a jungle that stretched for hundreds of miles over the continent's interior. Rising majestically at the very edge of the horizon was a towering range of mountains, purple-blue in the morning light and capped with snow.

"Just like Kilimanjaro," she murmured.

Captain Hunt glanced up at her. "What?"

"Nothing." Tightening the straps of her pack, she jumped down from the ship and turned in a slow circle, staring avidly. To think that Earth had ever looked like this! But it had; she'd seen old vidtapes. Once it had been just as green and vital, just as completely breathtaking...

And they were going to ruin it. Just as they had Earth.

Suddenly, Zheri wanted nothing more than to get away from the Recon crew. The thunk of metal as the crew members unloaded equipment and the acrid tang of the

extinguisher foam drove her away from the scorched landing field until the grasses rustled around her, brushing against her thighs.

It was a strange sensation, not being completely enclosed by walls. Tilting her head back, Zheri looked up at the gloriously blue sky -- a blue deeper than Earth's sky had ever been, tinged at the edges of the horizon with purple. In it, Terrana III's blinding white primary flared like a beacon. All around her was a silence so deep it rang in her ears like a bell.

"Careful," the captain said, coming up behind her. "It's a lot brighter than Earth's sun."

"I know." Zheri couldn't help shooting him an annoyed glance. He really *was* a handsome man, she admitted to herself, looking at his strong, heavy features. She couldn't quite repress a sigh as Captain Hunt reached with platonic disinterestedness for her belt and flipped on her tracker.

"I've already activated the homing signal. Anywhere you go you'll be able to find your way back. Although I'm not seeing much for an astrozoologist to study," he added, glancing around at the deserted savanna.

Zheri snorted. "After that landing? Anything with legs is miles away by now." She waved at the rolling grasslands. "First rule of ecology, Captain. Wherever there's an abundance of anything, there's something there to eat it."

"Good." Captain Hunt grinned. "I could go for a thick, juicy steak." Zheri rolled her eyes in utter disgust. "So where are you going to start then, if we've scared off all the natives?"

Unhesitatingly, she swung to the east, pointing toward the dark smudge of the jungle. "There."

* * *

Zheri stopped to push her hair back from her sweaty face and squinted through the dense foliage ahead. The heat under the forest's canopy was stifling, despite the fact that only a fraction of the sunlight pouring down on the landing plain, now miles behind her, managed to trickle down between the interwoven branches.

It was damp, too. There was a thick, sultry heaviness to the air that made breathing difficult. Straightening, Zheri forced herself to breathe deeply, to feel the moisture she inhaled filling her throat, entering her lungs. It was a complete contrast to the parched, recycled air that was all she'd ever known.

There was something intoxicating about this green, shadowed world, absolutely teeming with life. Jewel-toned beetles crawled amid the foliage like so many glittering gems. Animals she could only think of as "birds" -- reptilian-looking creatures with skin-flaps rather than feathers -- flitted among the branches overhead. Other, more conventional looking species covered in brown or black or tawny-yellow fur appeared occasionally, darting from hiding practically under her feet to scurry into the undergrowth before she could even get a shot of them.

She could, she thought, happily spend the rest of her life studying and cataloging the fauna of just this one jungle.

Of course, that was impossible. Her job was to make a preliminary survey, doing a rough ident and classification of the major species planetwide, with special attention to those which might be profitably cultivated. Holos from the unmanned flyovers had already spotted what appeared to be a number of large herbivore species on the three northern continents, species that might well provide a suitable protein source and thus eliminate the need to import costly stock.

So *something* was out there to eat the grass. The only question was what? And what ate *it*?

Besides the Recon team, that is. Zheri grimaced, remembering Captain Hunt's teasing words. Glancing down at her belt tracker, she started off again, pushing noisily through the dense undergrowth, wanting to put as many miles as possible between herself and the ship before darkness forced her to make camp.

She was pleasantly aware of the flex of her calves, the strong, sturdy motion of her thighs as she hiked. Her baggy shorts dragged against her skin in the heat, and perspiration glued her tank top to her front, outlining her breasts. Glancing down, Zheri could see the darkness of her nipples through the thin fabric.

The very air around her seemed to breathe sensuality. Sweet, heady fragrances drifted from banks of flowering bushes, their creamy petals almost luminous in the low, indirect light. The damp air caressed her, making her doubly aware of her moisture-laden skin -- it had never felt this soft in the acrid air of Earth.

Her footsteps slowed as she sank deep into herself, feeling the blood coursing through her veins, the strong, easy motion of her muscles, the way her shorts tugged lightly back and forth across her clit...

Then a slow, throaty growl rose from the bushes ahead, jerking her abruptly back into the present.

Zheri froze, fear trickling through her belly. Two amber-yellow eyes gleamed at her from between the glossy leaves -- eyes that were almost level with her chest. An atavistic terror raced along her nerves. She could see nothing, not even the hint of an outline, but her mind immediately conjured images -- flowing muscles, fangs, claws...

The eyes stared into hers, their expression flat and alien. Hardly daring to breathe, she backed away slowly, fumbling at the holster of her tranq gun. She couldn't get the safety snap open. Frantically, she tugged at it, and the growl changed from a low, rumbling warning to hissing menace.

At that, Zheri spun and ran.

Mistake. She knew it immediately. She had no hope whatever of outrunning the creature -- but now she had no choice. Bushes crashed behind her as the beast leapt in pursuit. Desperately she tore through thick, grasping undergrowth which seemed to have suddenly sprouted thorns to snag her, spindly arms that ripped the pack from her back... She ignored its loss, scrabbled at the holster, hearing her heartbeat thunder in her ears, drowning out her footfalls, drowning out everything but the angry snarl that sent a chill of terror through her veins even as she sweated and ran.

Finally yanking the tranq gun free, she spun toward her pursuer, bringing the gun up...

Something huge and black slammed into her like a freight train, knocking her headlong. The tranq gun flew from her grasp as she sprawled belly down, her lungs

freezing in shock as all the breath was forced from them. Any second now she would feel the searing agony of claws tearing her to shreds, the ripping pain of fangs plunging into her exposed flesh.

Desperately, she scrambled forward, crawling on hands and knees, and was immediately knocked flat again. The beast pinned her to the ground, one massive paw pressing firmly in the center of her back.

Zheri quivered, waiting for claws to dig into her flesh, for massive jaws to snap her spine like kindling...

Nothing happened. She lay, gasping air in great, gulping whoops, trying numbly to grasp the fact that she was still alive.

Then the beast above her shifted, rolling her over onto her back, and she found herself staring up into the deep amber eyes of a panther.

No, not a panther. It can't be a panther, they're all dead...

They were. The big game cats of Earth were long extinct. But the sleek black body above her was patently feline. She could feel the heat pouring off it, the warm gusts of its breath as it towered over her, growling deep in its broad, powerful chest.

It was enormous. Its paw on her midriff felt like it weighed fifty pounds. It crouched above her, its long tail lashing, the jet-black pupils of its eyes narrowing to slits as it studied her, its gaze so intent she almost imagined she heard it thinking, *Who are you? What are you?*

And what are you doing in my jungle? Zheri added silently, a manic amusement seeping through her terrified thoughts.

Abruptly, the massive cat recoiled, as if startled. Backing away from her, it flicked its tail once and disappeared like mist into the jungle.

She lay still, too shocked and shaken to rise. *Well, she thought, staring blankly at the interwoven branches above her, now I know what eats whatever eats the grass.*

Chapter Two

What had just happened? Tal An'Rath el Tar slipped through the trees, so disturbed by the encounter he barely noticed what was around him. His mind whirled with impossibilities -- and his loins ached with fire.

Her scent had been distinctly female, overpoweringly so, in fact. It had drawn him to her as he'd crouched, watching her approach, confused by the strange, baggy hide that covered her torso.

But for those odd swaths of skin, he'd have taken her for an An'Rath female. Indeed, for a moment he'd hoped that was exactly what she was.

It wasn't natural. He was nine seasons past *Hrandai*, the age of sexual maturity. And yet no An'Rath female had ever brought out the mating frenzy in him, had ever roused in him the least desire to claim her. Only his bond-brother, Cen, had ever stirred him to mating readiness.

Until now.

What *was* she? Her scent had been disconcertingly alien -- peculiar, but nevertheless incredibly attractive. In fact, he'd almost have sworn she was in heat. What disturbed him most though was the way his body had immediately responded, his shaft lengthening, springing erect, his sac growing heavy with seed... It had been all he could do not to take her right then, even when he'd read the unmistakable terror in her eyes.

No An'Rath had ever taken a female by force. Indeed, the idea had never even occurred to him -- the females of his clan were just as strong as the males, their limbs as swift, their claws as sharp. Such a thing would be impossible.

But as the unknown female had turned and run from him, Tal had first sensed how truly alien she was. She hadn't dropped into 'Rath form as any An'Rath would have done, but had dashed through the bushes on two legs. Then, as she'd lain below

him, her body tense with fear, he'd realized with a shock that she *couldn't* change shape -- that whatever she was, she wasn't even remotely An'Rath, An'Shar, or any other clan he'd ever heard of. She was completely and utterly *other*.

Deeply disturbed, Tal shifted into An' shape and sank to his buttocks on a moss-covered log. Moodily, he stared at the small flowers dotting the glade, the *trianna* which were the symbol of his clan.

Three graceful petals, each the rich amber of the eyes of his people, joined together at the sepal in the crimson of passion, the erotic fever of life-mates -- that was how it was with the An'Rath. That was how it was meant to be. Two bond-brothers, one female who claimed them both and was claimed by them in turn, together making the whole, the *trianna* of destined life-mates.

But no female had ever stirred him as this one had.

Despite her strangeness, Tal had found himself staring at the tough greenish skin that covered her hips as she lay, pinned below him. How did her kind mate? He hadn't been able to see her entrance, the slit of her sex... Indeed, she'd appeared not to have any. And yet he had smelled her readiness, the foreign but unmistakable scent of arousal underneath her fear.

What was he to make of the creature he'd seen, with her odd, mismatched hide and scent more seductive than any An'Rath female? Even her vulnerability had stirred him -- unlike the females of his people, he'd realized, he *could* force her. He could hold her down and do whatever he liked to her...

The thought had sent a spike of lust so powerful it was almost agony through his groin. Even now his balls throbbed at the memory, and Tal reached down to press them lightly, his rock-hard shaft jutting upward against his palm. Closing his eyes, he let his fingers curl around his cock, pushing his erection up into his grip as if shoving it into the female's oddly concealed entrance.

I hope that's for me, brother.

Tal turned, unexpectedly embarrassed as he saw the massive black panther gliding silently toward him. Dropping his hand quickly away from his cock, he smiled at his bond-brother. *Who else would it be for?*

Cen gazed at him steadily, his yellow eyes slitted. *Not me, at least. I'd have heard your desire.*

Tal laughed lightly, trying to hide his thoughts. *That's foolish. When have I ever desired anyone but you?*

Foolish is trying to lie to me. The great cat sank to his haunches, sitting upright and fixing Tal with his piercing gaze. *What's going on?*

I... Tal paused, not wanting to talk about it. *Nothing.*

That's an awful lot of nothing. Cen stared meaningfully at Tal's cock.

The deep amber heat in his eyes made the ache in Tal's balls increase. It had always been like this between them. The merest sign of arousal in him invariably stirred Cen, and Cen's gathering lust only increased his own, making him hunger for his bond-brother's touch. He could feel the warmth of Cen's breath along his thigh, and closed his eyes in anticipation as Cen moved closer, brushing against him, the silky black fur caressing his skin.

Need shivered through him, and Tal whispered, *Then take it, bond-brother.*

Will you tell me what's going on? Cen asked tartly.

Tal shook his head. *I don't... I don't want to think about it. Cen, help me not to think any more.*

The great golden eyes gleamed up at him with a familiar hunger. *If that is what you desire...*

I will always desire you, Cen. Just touch me. Touch me now, my brother.

Tal dropped his head back and groaned as Cen's warm, wet tongue trailed up his hard shaft. In 'Rath form, his tongue was large enough to completely encircle Tal's cock, its weight dragging intoxicatingly over the sensitive skin. Nudging Tal's thighs wide, Cen ducked his head lower to lick at Tal's balls, making him moan deep in his throat. Cen's caress was exquisite, both firm and yet delicate, his tongue rasping gently

over the pebbled skin of Tal's sac until his balls felt like iron, they were so full. Grasping the silken fur of Cen's neck, Tal urged his head upward again.

Stop, Cen. You'll make me come too fast.

Your cock, then?

Please. Tal watched avidly as Cen lapped his shaft, slowly working up its jutting length and then swirling his thick tongue around the swollen head. He gave a low, rumbling purr of satisfaction as he tasted the juices now trickling freely from Tal's slit, his tail lashing in pleasure. The sound and the vibrations made Tal's balls contract sharply, and he gasped as another spurt of fluid welled out to be caught by Cen's agile tongue.

But still the scent of that female lingered in his nostrils, and Tal remembered the heat that had slammed through his groin, the foreign sense of arousal he'd felt as he'd realized he could master her, mount her, fuck her whether she wanted him to or not...

He groaned, feeling that same urgency lash at him again at the very thought of her.

Cen, change. Change now. I need you.

Raising his head, the great cat seemed to smile -- and then it was Cen in An' form who knelt between his thighs, his full lips gliding teasingly over Tal's pulsing cockhead.

In either form, he was the most handsome An'Rath Tal had ever seen -- larger even than Tal himself was, his corded frame both heavier and slightly taller. His hair was the deep, lustrous black of their people, tumbling down around his massive shoulders as his hands played over Tal's shaft, tormenting it until his groin ached with lust.

Tal watched him, enjoying the hard, angular planes of his face, the stern jaw, the dark, arched brows, the well-shaped lips that opened now to suck at the purple head of Tal's cock.

And what do you need of me? Cen asked, his mind-voice rumbling with both amusement and arousal. *My mouth?* Opening his lips wider, he engulfed Tal's thick shaft with practiced ease, making Tal groan in longing as Cen sucked him hungrily. *My*

hands? He slid one to Tal's balls even as he asked, rubbing the hard sacs inside their pouch until Tal gasped and thrust his cock deep into Cen's throat.

"Your ass," he rasped, fighting for control. "Cen, I need to fuck. Let me fuck you."

But their mate-bond was too strong for half-truths and, inconvenient as Cen's perception sometimes was, it could also be a joy. *Let, bond-brother? Do you truly want me to let you?* Cen looked up at him, one eyebrow arched enquiringly as he stroked his fingers up the length of Tal's pulsing shaft. *What is this strange desire I feel from you, then?*

He gazed at Tal challengingly. Tal shifted uncomfortably under his bond-brother's sharp scrutiny. Even now, he could feel the unfamiliar hunger the strange female had inspired in him -- the wish to take, to dominate, to *force*. Through their bond, Cen could sense it, just as he could sense when Tal was thinking of him, when he wanted him.

Never before had Tal felt anything vaguely like this. Was this what the mating fever was like? This unendurable frenzy which was blind to all else -- even the wishes and desires of one's partner? Or was it some strange perversion the alien female had somehow infected him with?

Either way, he could not stand it one second longer. The need was too overpowering, and Cen's teasing fingers were only making it worse. Roaring, he pushed Cen away from his cock, spinning him around and pinning his bond-brother below him, one arm twisted behind his back and the taut curves of his ass thrust skyward.

Never before had he held Cen like this, trapping him with the force of his body, holding him pinioned with his arm wrenched behind him, his shoulders shoved to the earth. A hot sense of power ran through him, and he clamped his hand tighter around Cen's wrist, immobilizing him.

Yes, he hissed menacingly. *Yes, Cen, I want to take.*

Without waiting for Cen's assent, he rammed his hips forward, jabbing his cock at the hard ring of muscle he'd penetrated so many times -- but never like this, never fiercely, unthinkingly, driven by a compulsion he had to slake right *now*...

Cen cried out beneath him as he forced his cock deeper, shoving it into Cen's tight, warm passage with an urgency that drowned out everything else. His balls swelled even further at Cen's anguished gasp, and he pushed Cen's thighs wide, spreading his ass open before him. Looking down, he watched his cock, so rigid it might have been carved of marble, pounding in and out as his bond-mate writhed below him. Cen's struggles excited him further, and he released Cen's arm to grab his hips instead, his fingers digging into the strong muscles of Cen's ass as he slammed forward, burying his cock in one hard thrust until his balls pressed tightly against Cen's.

They were full, as round and taut and heavy as his own. Listening, Tal realized that Cen's rasping cries were as much arousal as anguish. He liked the roughness, the fury with which Tal was taking him. Smiling grimly, Tal reached around Cen's powerful torso and grabbed his bond-brother's cock, pumping it in time with his fierce, punishing strokes.

He hammered into Cen ruthlessly, his balls mashing against Cen's with each thrust. The slickness of his own pre-come provided some lubrication, but even so he'd never fucked Cen like this, without the juice of the *trianna* or the thick, viscous oils of the *koabi* fruit to ease their joining. Cen's passage gripped him tightly, clamping around him as he pounded into it, his brain whirling at the sensation. It felt so raw, so harsh, just shy of painful. It was intoxicating.

Cen moaned again, and somehow Tal found the self-control to pause, his cock buried deep in Cen's upturned ass, his entire body quivering as he fought to contain the orgasm beating madly in his balls.

Does it hurt, Cen?

Yes. But I... By the stars, Tal, don't stop!

Even in mind-voice, Tal could hear the ragged plea in Cen's words. He reared backward, dragging his throbbing shaft almost free of Cen's ass. Then he slammed it home, rocking Cen forward with the force of his passion, feeling Cen's erection pulse in his grip as he worked it roughly, clenching his fist around its hot thickness.

More? he demanded, unaware of how imperious his tone had grown.

Yes. Give me more, Tal. Take me harder.

Cen's breathing was ragged, his huge, muscled body quivering under him. Gathering the juices pouring from Cen's pulsing cock, he spread them down over Cen's shaft, stroking it faster as he gave in entirely to the agony in his groin, the need to fuck, and fuck, and fuck even harder...

Cen's ass was so tight that his thrusts burned, his cock stinging with the friction. Even the pain increased his need, pushing him higher until there was nothing but the white-hot fire in his balls, the sound of his own hoarse, ragged breaths in his ears, the feel of Cen's cock spurting in his hand as Cen's orgasm ripped through him, making his passage clamp like a vise around Tal's jabbing shaft.

Tal roared, arching his back as he slammed in to the hilt, feeling Cen's muscles spasm around him as his balls clenched tight, shooting jet after jet of thick, hot jizz deep into Cen's ass.

Groaning, Tal hung over Cen's hips, feeling the waves of sensation sear through his body again and again as his cock throbbed and jerked, his balls contracting, forcing his seed deep into Cen's passage until he was utterly drained, his muscles trembling with the force of his orgasm.

He slumped over Cen's broad, warm back, quivering in reaction, feeling the smooth, warm skin against his abs, the hard swell of Cen's ass pressed tight against his groin. Slowly, as his shaft softened, he moved to withdraw.

Careful, Tal. It burns.

Cen's mind-voice was no more than a whisper, and Tal was immediately contrite. He eased gently from Cen's body, grateful for the added lubrication of his

come, then rolled onto his back and drew the larger man against him, concerned at the shudders that still wracked Cen's frame.

"Cen, did I hurt you? I didn't... didn't mean --"

Yes, but I liked it. Tal, I'm going to come again.

Turning his head to gaze into Cen's amber eyes, Tal reached down to take Cen's still-rigid cock in his hand. "Come on top of me, then. I want you to cover me with your seed."

With his hands, he urged Cen up until his bond-brother was straddling his thighs, the huge cock he loved so much jutting halfway up his flat stomach. He closed his hands over its prodigious length, and Cen looked down, his eyelids growing heavy with lust as he watched Tal masturbate him.

Tal, for his part, stared avidly at the huge purple head gliding slickly between his fingers. Tightening his grip, he felt Cen push down against him, pressing his ass tight against Tal's half-hard shaft and rocking back and forth, humping it. Cen's head lolled on his neck, his breath coming faster, his small brown nipples contracting into hard points.

Yes, Tal. Yes. Make me come again.

Reaching down between their bodies, Cen fondled his own balls. Watching those strong, deft fingers clench lightly around the hard curves of his testicles, Tal felt a fresh jolt of desire stab through him, lengthening his shaft as Cen pushed down on top of it, riding him. He gazed at Cen's cock, fascinated by the sweet, gaping slit in its tip, by the purple flush of its head, by the firm, meaty lip popping in and out of his grip as he pumped his fist up and down Cen's straining shaft.

Sweet stars, Tal! Rub it faster. Harder. Make me shoot my jizz on you.

At the thought of Cen's warm, salty fluids coating him, Tal groaned and complied, clamping his fist around Cen's huge, throbbing cock. Cen leaned into his touch, gasping and squeezing his own balls harder, his eyes closed in erotic abandon as Tal savaged his shaft. He felt it thicken as Cen's huge, hard balls swelled in his punishing grip, the skin tightening across their swollen curves...

Then Cen was coming, his hoarse cry climbing upward, his cock pulsing in Tal's fist as his juices burst from him in long, streaming jets, spurting over Tal's rippled abs, the curve of his pecs. Groaning, Cen thrust his cock hard against Tal's tight grip, fucking his hand as he came, and came, and came.

Tal felt his own cock thickening again as the slick, hot fluid pumped over his chest, his stomach, soaking him in Cen's juices. Cen's face was clenched in ecstasy above him, his gleaming black hair hanging down around his handsome features. Tal could feel every course of fire through Cen's balls, every pulse of sensation through his bond-brother's cock.

That was how it was in the mate-bond. It was a sharing so deep that not only could they hear each other's thoughts, they could experience each other's bodies as intimately as if they were their own. It still amazed Tal that his own need had been so fierce it had blotted out even the awareness of Cen's responses.

Now Tal closed his eyes as the rush of sensation returned, letting him experience Cen's orgasm as fully as his own.

Cen hung above him, mouth hanging open in rapture as he savaged his balls, squeezing them until the pain flared into bliss each time his shaft bucked and jerked, spurting streams of pearly-white come over Tal's muscled torso. The sensation was completely novel. For all the fierceness of their lovemaking, it had never occurred to either of them what ecstasy might be found in pain. Now Cen was reveling in his newfound discovery, writhing in the grip of mingled agony and lust.

Feeling Tal's mind-touch, he whispered, *Harder?*

Gulping, Tal nodded. *Yes.*

Cen clamped his sac fiercely and roared as agony shot through him, forcing a last, hard spurt of semen from his straining erection, draining every last drop from his painfully throbbing balls.

Slowly, Tal opened his eyes and looked up at Cen's satiated, passion-blurred features. Smiling, Cen ran his strong fingers through the streaks of jizz on Tal's chest,

circling Tal's left nipple with a soft, teasing touch. Then he bent to suck the hard brown nub into his mouth, licking the thick, salty fluid from it.

"Shall I lick the rest off as well?" he asked huskily, his voice even deeper when he spoke aloud than his mind-voice was. His fingers played through the slick fluid, stroking Tal's abs. "By the stars, Tal, I've never felt anything like that."

"Neither have I."

Cen chuckled and lowered his warm, full lips to Tal's. "Now that I know how good it feels, I may have to do that again sometime." They kissed, slow and deep, and finally Cen rolled off him. Side by side they sprawled on the damp moss, their shoulders barely touching, their fingers intertwined, looking up at the green roof of the jungle.

"Tal?"

"Hmmm?" Tal was half-asleep, sated and drowsy.

"Tal, what brought that on? Something happened before I came."

The discomfort was still there, Tal realized as his gut tightened in apprehension. What would Cen think of him? No An'Rath had ever desired a non-An'Rath female. It would be like desiring a betalu or a ground-sloth -- like wanting to mate with an animal!

But Cen's hand held his firmly, reassuring and warm. Sighing, Tal closed his eyes and slowly let himself sink into the deep bond that only occurred between life-mates. Opening his mind to his bond-brother, he replayed the disturbing encounter.

He could feel Cen's responses -- surprise, incomprehension -- but he sighed with relief when he detected no trace of repugnance. Cen's interest quickened as his own had done at the strange female's scent, and he followed eagerly as Tal pursued her through the jungle, slamming her to the ground and pinning her below him.

Then, just as Tal had, he recoiled in shock as her amusement rippled through his mind.

Tal? Tal, you heard her?

Tal nodded slowly. Cen stared at him, his eyes were wide with something very close to fear.

Tal...

What?

What if she's our life-mate?

Tal gave a short, scornful laugh, trying to dismiss the idea. *That's not possible. She's not An'Rath.*

But Tal, you heard her! Only life-mates can mind-speak each other.

Yes. And that was what had frightened him most of all. In that brief second of contact, Tal had felt as if the jungle had split open around him, or as if something as familiar as the amber-petaled *trianna* had suddenly changed into something unknown and terrifying.

I don't want to think about it, Cen. I...

Shall I distract you? Sensing Tal's fear, Cen pushed back his own apprehension and rolled toward his bond-brother, his amber eyes teasing.

Stars, you're insatiable, Cen!

Cen shrugged. *You have that effect on me. And whatever she is, I liked the effect she had on you.*

I don't think I could do that again, Cen. I'm sore.

Cen grinned evilly. *Who said you were going to do it this time?*

A spike of lust shot through Tal's groin at the idea of being pinned by Cen the way he'd pinned his bond-brother, helpless under the assault of Cen's enormous cock...

But that didn't mean he had to make it easy.

As Cen reached for him, Tal smiled -- and shifted into 'Rath form. Slipping from Cen's grasp, he sprang for the surrounding trees.

Only if you can catch me, bond-brother. And we both know I'm faster.

Hearing Cen's furious roar behind him, Tal grinned to himself and ran.

Chapter Three

The light was fading quickly and Zheri was scratched, sweaty, tired and sore -- and seemingly no closer to her quarry than when she'd started.

She'd always been fascinated by the big jungle cats of Earth. She'd studied field reports and old vidtapes of the graceful creatures, wishing they were still alive. Now, remembering the way the black panther had towered over her, its golden eyes fixing her with a gaze that had pierced her to the bone, she scowled at the lengthening shadows. Night under these trees would come swiftly, she knew -- but she wanted to see the cat again. Crazy or not, dangerous or not, she wanted to see it again more than anything.

What had made it recoil like that? It had seemed almost startled, as if she'd suddenly grown two heads or something. Maybe simply being human was enough -- Zheri herself was still staggered by the idea that there wasn't another human for miles.

She didn't know. And at this rate she wasn't going to get to find out. Not today, at least. Sighing, she looked around. Whether she wanted to or not, she'd have to stop soon, and there was no sign of the...

A snarl ripped through the humid air, and Zheri froze, both elated and terrified. She paused, listening to the deep, throaty roar -- and then jerked her head up in surprise as a second roar rose to join it.

With shaking fingers, she unholstered her tranq gun, spun the dial up to full, and moved carefully in the direction of the furious snarls.

She could hear a loud thrashing, then the crunch of twigs and brush as something heavy hit the earth. Pushing deep into a concealing stand of bushes, Zheri held a branch aside, peered down into a small, moss-carpeted clearing, and gasped in wonder.

Like two sleek shadows, a pair of black, long-tailed felines wrestled viciously, tumbling each other across the jungle floor. Twigs snapped as first one, then the other, forced his adversary to the earth. Clods of dirt went flying as they pounced and grappled, snarling all the while. Shocked into stillness by the fury of their battle, Zheri watched with her heart in her mouth as they rolled and snarled and pounced.

They looked so much like the holos of the huge Earth cats it took her breath away. Lithe, golden-eyed and black as sin, they tumbled through the dusky shadows, their lips curled back to reveal sharp white fangs. They snapped and bit at each other with a terrifying savagery -- at least until one noticed that their bites never drew blood, that the jaws which could easily crush a man's leg never clamped down. For all the violence of their snarls, they were only playing.

Zheri watched them in a stunned sort of joy. They were beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. They were the most handsome creatures she'd ever seen. Entranced, almost forgetting to breathe, she watched them.

From nose to tail tip, they had to be over eight feet long. And most decidedly male -- their scrotal sacs were unmistakable. They tumbled and pounced until one of them finally pinned the other belly-down on the damp earth, his paws resting firmly on the defeated panther's back, and lifted his head in a triumphant roar.

The sound echoed through the trees, startling the lizard-birds that burst from their perches and flapped away with loud, indignant squawks. Zheri almost laughed aloud at the macho, bragging tone of that roar. But her amusement faded as the pinned cat seemed to *ripple*, like the shockwave of an earthquake running through solid ground.

What the fuck?

She stared, not believing what she was seeing. Fur receded. Limbs changed shape. A second later, the cat was gone and she found herself staring at a lithe, muscular, and very naked man.

Jesus!

Zheri recoiled, stumbling backward, dropping the tranq gun in her shock. She hadn't seen that. It was impossible. She was hallucinating -- a fever, maybe, some jungle virus the Recon team hadn't previously identified.

Christ, there was no *way* she'd just seen that!

Catching herself before she sprawled headlong in the brush, she crouched, her entire body shaking uncontrollably. With trembling fingers, she reached out, drew a branch aside just an inch, and peered through the leafy gap.

The man was still there, the panther poised above him with its paws on his shoulder blades -- his very *broad* shoulder blades -- covered by hard, rolling muscle that rippled down along his torso. Every inch of him was bronzed and lean, his thighs strong and powerful looking, his exposed ass round and taut.

The man was shaking just as she was, his whole body quivering beneath the massive beast. His face was hidden by the thick, tangled fall of his ebony hair, and it took a second for Zheri to realize his quivering was laughter.

All right, Cen, you win. Now let me up.

What the hell? He hadn't spoken. She was sure he hadn't. The words hadn't been heard in her ears, but in her mind.

Impossible. The whole thing was impossible.

But the man still lay there, laughing at the beast pinning him down.

And she hadn't heard words, really, had she? No. But she'd heard *something*, all right. Something more like a thought, rueful and amused. Something her mind had translated into...

Damn it, Cen, I mean it. You're heavy.

The cat, easily as long as the man and probably a hundred kilos heavier, simply lashed its tail, almost seeming to grin. Then it lowered its head, and Zheri felt around frantically for the tranq gun, certain the panther was going to seize the man's neck in its jaws and snap it like kindling.

Instead, the cat ran its rough pink tongue down his exposed spine, and the man let out a deep exhalation of desire.

Slowly, he rolled over, the cat shifting its paws to allow his movement. He stared up at it, his eyes dark with arousal, and slid his arms around the panther's neck. Delicately, the huge cat placed one paw on the man's broad chest and lapped a slow line down his hard, flat stomach.

Shocked, Zheri realized the man's penis was fully erect -- so hard, in fact, that it strained upward prodigiously from the nest of black curls at his groin. She couldn't help staring at its impressive length, the thickness of it, the pulsing veins that laced the shaft...

Change, then. I'm not doing it this way, Cen -- last time we did it this way I could barely walk for a week.

This time, Zheri was absolutely certain he hadn't spoken because his mouth never moved. She was hearing him in her head. And what she was hearing most decidedly wasn't English.

Week, for example, was an entirely human convention. But that was the impression she'd gotten; some relatively short, cyclical period of time. And as for the rest of it...

She blushed furiously as she realized what she'd actually "heard" was an exceedingly graphic mind-picture of what, exactly, *this way* implied. Swallowing the saliva that rushed to her mouth, Zheri tried not to glance at the panther's heavy scrotum.

Fine, then. Wuss.

The teasing thought came -- most distinctly -- from the panther.

Oh my God.

Zheri thumped to her butt with her hands clamped over her mouth as the implications of what she was seeing finally hit home.

Life. Intelligent life. And completely, utterly, staggeringly alien.

What *were* they? She watched in amazement as, with that same strange ripple, the panther's body transformed. In the space of an eye blink, the cat was gone, and a

second man, equally tanned and lithe, braced himself on his arms above the first man's hips, gazing down at that jutting erection.

Touch it for me, Tal. Stroke it, and let me watch.

She wasn't hallucinating. She could hear his thoughts. So, apparently, could the man beneath him. Tal. He answered with a groan, and slid his hands from Cen's shoulders to his own raging erection.

Zheri felt her cunt clench hungrily as a sudden wetness slicked the crotch of her shorts. She'd never seen two men touch each other. Indeed, one result of the desperate need to control population growth was that public displays of affection had come to be considered very bad form -- downright rude, in fact. So she'd never seen a couple, hetero or otherwise, do so much as kiss. And what these two were doing...

She stared, unable to tear her eyes away from the erotic scene before her.

A small part of her mind kept clamoring, *These aren't men, Zheri! They're not human!* -- but that warning voice could barely begin to penetrate the lust clouding her mind. Her gaze was fixed as raptly as Cen's on the slow, teasing motion of Tal's long, sun-browned fingers, playing up and down the throbbing length of his shaft, tracing the bulging veins, pausing to pinch the thick, swollen head.

Harder, Tal. The words were almost a growl in her head. *Touch it harder.*

Moaning aloud, Tal tilted his head back, exposing the long, corded column of his neck, and closed his hand firmly around his cock's thickness. Zheri heard Cen's ragged sigh of enjoyment and felt her clit pulse, swelling with need.

God, never in her *life* had she been this horny! Her cunt was throbbing in a way she hadn't felt since adolescence when her class's social etiquette teacher had given them a thorough lecture on self-gratification, along with instructions for the most popular mechanized sex-toys.

She sure could find a use for her vibrator right now, she thought ruefully as she watched Tal's hand glide up and down his jutting cock. She could almost feel the fire that raced along his shaft, the shivery ecstasy that flowed from his firm grip as he

worked his fist up and down, the way his balls tightened, growing heavier with his unspent seed...

Why couldn't a man like that ever want *her*? Pique trickled through Zheri's arousal. She was bright enough, and good-looking enough -- but just like Captain Hunt, these two gorgeous specimens were obviously entranced with their own sex.

Not that she blamed them. That gorgeous cock throbbed in Tal's grasp, rock-hard, its color deepening as he rubbed it faster, tugging the skin back and forth. His broad ribcage expanded with each labored breath, and Zheri could see him biting his lip in concentration.

Harder.

Silently, Zheri seconded Cen's hoarse command, a frenzied hunger pouring through her. God what she wouldn't give to touch that thick, straining cock, to squeeze it as fiercely as he was doing now, his fist closing down so tightly that the bulging head was almost purple...

Tal groaned, the sound vibrating low in his throat, the muscles in his forearm bunching as he savaged his cock, his hand moving faster, faster...

Stars, Cen, please! I'm going to come if I don't stop now!

Then come, bond-brother. Come in my mouth. Let me taste you, Tal.

Zheri almost whimpered aloud.

Lowering his head, Cen opened his lips, and Tal pistoned his hips up off the ground, burying his cock in Cen's waiting mouth. With a roar that reminded Zheri of Cen's triumphant howl when he'd pinned him, Tal closed his fists in Cen's long, thick hair -- hair as coal-black as his own -- and drove himself upward, his thighs quivering as he pumped his cock, over and over, between Cen's full, soft lips.

Oh, sweet God.

Zheri swallowed, her eyes glued to the place where their bodies came together. Even in the deepening twilight she could see Cen's cheek curve inward as he sucked furiously, then released Tal's thick, straining erection to lash his tongue over the

engorged, purple tip. He closed his lips around it again as Tal thrust in, his hands buried in Cen's hair, forcing Cen to take him in to the hilt.

Zheri was staggered at how rough they were with each other -- Cen sucking Tal's cock in a ravenous frenzy, Tal slamming his cock up into Cen's waiting mouth -- but Cen urged him on, his thoughts hot and urgent.

That's right, Tal. Fuck me. Fuck my mouth hard. Fill my mouth with your cock -- I want you to choke me with it.

Zheri's knees buckled. Her clit throbbed in agony. God, what would it be like to be fucked that fiercely? To be pinned by that rampant, pounding cock?

Roaring, Tal dragged Cen's head tight against his groin, holding him there as he bucked upward; once, twice -- then he was coming, roaring in ecstasy as his entire body arched, shoving his cock deeper into Cen's mouth as he ejaculated.

Zheri could see Cen's throat muscles working as he swallowed over and over. A small, glistening pearl of milky fluid escaped his lips, gleaming slightly in the twilight, and dribbled down onto the ebony nest of Tal's pubic curls.

Zheri moaned.

Now do me, Cen. Tal's thought was almost pleading. *Do me as hard as I did you. Take me, Cen!*

His eyes gleaming, Cen raised his head, releasing Tal's still-throbbing cock from his mouth. Tal drew his thighs up against his chest, hugging them to him in clear invitation.

Oh God. Oh God, were they really going to fuck in front of her?

Zheri felt her womb contract, a fresh spurt of fluid slicking her cunt at the very idea. She panted, horribly conscious of the noise of her breathing, terrified that they'd hear her, that they'd find her...

That they'd stop.

Her cunt was an agony of unfulfilled need, and her nipples scraped deliciously against the fabric of her shirt. Surreptitiously, she rubbed her thumbs over them, teasing the already supersensitive points.

Please, God, please. Don't let them stop.

Biting her lips to contain her groans, she pinched her nipples tightly just as Cen knelt between Tal's spread thighs and worked one finger deep into Tal's rectum, pistoning it back and forth. Then he withdrew his finger and guided his shaft -- longer, even, than Tal's was -- to that tight, exposed opening, prodding it gently and then withdrawing until Tal writhed below him, desperate for his cock.

Damn it, Cen. Fuck me!

Grinning, Cen leaned forward, trapping Tal's thighs between their two chests. His back muscles gleamed like bronze in the dim light as he lowered his head, claiming Tal's mouth in a deep, searing kiss that left Tal panting and squirming, tilting his hips upward in longing.

Please, Cen. Tal's mind-voice was almost pleading. Please, I can't take any more.

Zheri knew exactly how he felt. Her clit was so swollen it ached, and the crotch of her panties was completely soaked with her juices. Her fingers savaged her nipples, pinching and rolling them as she rocked her hips forward, as desperate to be pierced as Tal was himself. Her clit throbbed as her motions rubbed it against the inseam of her shorts, and a searing bolt of lust made her clench her jaw desperately.

She was so close to coming!

As if teasing them both, Cen nudged his hips forward, clearly enjoying Tal's desperation. Both Zheri and Tal moaned in mingled desire, and Cen answered them by shoving his hips forward in one punishing thrust.

Tal's head snapped back, his features contorted in mingled agony and desire, and as Cen rammed his huge cock in a second time, Zheri felt her orgasm rip through her. Biting back her moans, she squeezed her eyes shut, waiting for the searing waves of ecstasy to ease.

They didn't. If anything, they spiraled even higher, buffeting her with sensations she couldn't comprehend. She'd almost swear she could *feel* Cen's shaft invading her, feel it pounding down into her hot, tight hole with a need that throbbed in his overlaid balls.

In a panicked delirium, Zheri realized she could feel every inch of his rampant erection, feel the tightness of Tal's passage gripping it, feel the delectable agony that drove Cen to thrust, and thrust, and thrust...

What the... Tal, did you hear that?

The startled thought pierced the haze of hunger and confusion in her mind. She froze, her heart pounding savagely, suddenly terrified -- what would they do if they caught her watching? Nervously, she opened her eyes and saw Cen lift his head, his sharp, questing eyes gazing straight at her hiding spot.

Oh, shit.

Carefully, Zheri crawled backward on hands and knees, moving as silently as she could. She saw Cen disentangling himself from Tal's embrace -- then a twig snapped beneath her boot and Cen's head jerked up, his eyes blazing.

She didn't wait to see anything more. Leaping to her feet, Zheri ran.

Chapter Four

No! Let her go, Cen.

Tal grabbed his arm before Cen could change shape, holding him back. Cen snarled in fury, whirling, his free arm coming up to strike his bond-brother...

Cen froze, panting in shock.

"She's the one, Tal. She's our life-mate."

Tal's eyes were as wide as his own. Cen could see the same knowledge lurking in their amber shadows as Tal nodded slowly. "I know."

With a trembling hand, Cen pushed his long, heavy hair back from his forehead. The jungle around them was almost pitch-black, wrapped in a curious, expectant silence. "I almost hit you. Tal... I wanted her so badly I almost hit you."

"It's all right."

Cen gave a short, unsteady laugh. "Well, now we know what the mating fever feels like."

"Actually," Tal replied wryly, "I have a feeling we've barely scratched the surface."

They stared at each other for a long moment, shaken.

"Tal, what *is* she?"

For all his strength, Cen felt almost like a cub again -- scared and uncertain. Need pulsed through his body, a desire so strong he could feel it tugging at him, urging him to go after the female, to take her, claim her...

He sighed as Tal pulled him into a rough hug, his voice hoarse with the same desire as he whispered into the night, "I don't know. But we're going to find out."

* * *

Zheri crashed through the jungle, barely able to see where she put her feet in the darkness. Vines whipped at her. Thorns raked at her legs. Her pulse thudded in her ears, blotting out any sounds of pursuit. Her side ached, and finally she stopped, leaning against the rough bark of a tree as she strained her ears, listening.

Nothing. She could hear nothing. Even the small, furtive noises of the jungle dwellers had ceased, leaving her surrounded by a heavy silence that felt almost like a question -- *who are you? What do you want?*

And why, rather than relief, did she feel a strange, piercing regret at her escape?

You know why, Zheri. You wanted them. You wanted them more than any man you've ever met.

But they *weren't* men. No matter how they looked, they weren't even vaguely human.

Congratulations, Zheri, she thought tartly. You finally discover an intelligent alien species, and what's the first thing you want to do with them?

Laughing shakily, she dropped to her knees at the base of the tree. Her pack was gone. She'd dropped the tranq gun when she saw Tal change shape, and had never recovered it. She was stuck in the middle of the jungle with nothing but her belt tracker and the clothes on her back.

Well, at least I can find my way back. As soon as it gets light, I'll head back to base and...

And what? Report to Captain Hunt that this planet was already taken, thank you -- they'd just have to move on and find another?

Zheri sank back onto the soft earth, wrapping her arms around her legs, feeling the heaving of her lungs slowly ease. She knew how urgent their mission was. Earth's resources were almost exhausted. The air that was piped in and circulated through the underground cities was getting harder and harder to purify, its oxygen content lower with each passing year. The vast wheat fields, carefully encased under biodomes, were slowly being leached of nutrients they had no way to replace.

If the Recon teams, scattered throughout the galaxy, couldn't find new homes for them -- and soon -- people were going to die. Not hundreds, not millions -- billions.

Sitting in the jungle night, feeling the pulse of life all around her, Zheri stared blindly into the darkness, thinking of all the people she'd left behind on Earth. Margo, her sister. Her dorm-mates in the massive student enclave she'd been assigned to. The teachers she'd had, the friends she'd made, the lovers with whom she'd played around, but never took the final plunge...

They would die. All of them. They might be dying already.

In her mind, she saw the two panthers again, wrestling through the dappled shadows. Lithe. Lean. Wild. And innocent, she knew -- no cities, no crop cultivation. How could they possibly imagine the threat that was looming over them?

It wasn't a question of intelligence. For all the rampant racism that had marked humanity's history well into the last century, there was no fundamental difference between the brain of an aborigine and that of a computer programmer. But they didn't have the references, the acquired experience, to even begin to understand the danger that faced them.

It must be beautiful, she thought, picturing the two of them running through the jungle, in panther form or in human. Everything they needed there for the taking. No wars. No crime. No striving constantly for technological "improvements" that were often deadly in the long run.

What would happen to them if she simply returned to camp, told the captain that there was an alien, humanoid species living in the jungle?

She wasn't naive. She knew what had happened to the Australian tribes, the Native Americans, the primitive peoples living in the vast jungles of South America. Conquest and elimination -- it was the story of her people, over and over. The more technologically advanced overwhelmed the simpler, every time.

And then drowned in the stink of their own pollution.

With a sob of frustration, Zheri dropped her head forward onto her knees. What was the good of taking this planet, anyway? In a few hundred years, or a few thousand, they'd just end up in the same boat. They'd wear it out, destroy it, and have to move on again.

But if they didn't take it, people would die.

Zheri rocked, hugging her knees, letting the tears slide down her cheeks as she sobbed. Why did it have to be her? Why was *she* the one faced with this decision?

And what was she going to do?

Slowly, she became aware of a strange eldritch glow around her. Lifting her head, Zheri saw vague, watery moonlight sifting in patches through the dense leaves. The first of Terrana III's two moons must have risen.

It wasn't a lot of light, by any means -- in fact, it seemed to create more shadows than it dispelled. But it was enough.

Standing, Zheri glanced down at her belt tracker, studying the signal. Only eleven kilometers back to the base camp. She was surprised -- she'd have thought she'd come farther than that. The camp lay westward, a little north of her current position.

Resolutely, Zheri turned south and began picking her way back along the path of her flight. She had heard them, had been able, somehow, to understand them.

She could only hope they'd be able to understand her, too.

* * *

For all her resolve, Zheri still froze when she heard the rustling of movement in the bushes beside her. She'd walked for only ten minutes when she'd first felt the sense of being watched. Now she was sure of it -- she hadn't found the panthers.

They'd found *her*.

She kept her strides firm, her head up. What did she really know about them, after all? What would they do, if she approached them directly, tried to speak to them? All too clearly, she pictured the flowing muscles, the powerful jaws, the ivory teeth...

Something flashed through the shadows off to her right. Zheri bit back a shriek. Her heart thudded in her chest -- but it was more than just fear. She could feel her blood coursing through her veins, pounding in her skull, her groin, her clit. The arousal that had faded during her flight returned with a rush as she remembered watching them, their bodies intertwined in a passion that had left her breathless, yearning...

The bushes rustled behind her, and the larger of the two flashed past in a blur of ebony, black against the night's blackness.

What did they want? Why were they stalking her? They seemed as hesitant to make contact as she was, and yet she could *feel* them, there in the darkness, their thoughts fixed on her as intently as hers was on them. Heat seemed to pour through them, through the very air around her, encasing her in the warm, fragrant night like a womb.

Dear God, what did they *want* from her?

Stopping in her tracks, she stood still as a statue, frightened and yet determined to end this, one way or another. Holding her breath, she waited.

They slid from the shadows, almost invisible against the darkness, their great amber eyes glowing as they slowly twined toward her.

She came back.

Yes. Is she still frightened?

Startled, Zheri realized she could tell them apart almost automatically. The "tone" of their mind-thoughts was as distinct as voices. The one called Tal had a clear, rich tone, a warm, pleasant tenor that nevertheless had a strength to it, a force of will as if he were used to commanding -- and receiving -- obedience. Cen's was deeper, harsher, more abrupt.

Not as much, I think. That was Tal. He gazed at her levelly while Cen circled her, padding silently. She was acutely aware of him behind her, of her exposed back...

Tal, I want her.

Zheri spun, gasping at the blunt, primal hunger in Cen's thought. There was no mask of civilization over the raw urgency of his desire. The alien amber eyes stared at her flatly, almost on a level with her chest.

Christ, how could any cat be that huge? And when he said he wanted her, did he mean as a man, or...

She whimpered, half in terror, half in anticipation. Vaguely, against the blackness, she could see the thrashing of his tail, the way he sank down on his haunches, preparing to spring...

Cen, no! You'll terrify her! We can't just --

Yes. I must have her.

Zheri moaned, her voice thick with lust. *Please...* she thought incoherently, and felt the cats freeze in shock. *Oh, please...*

All recollection of the Recon team, of her mission there, was blotted from her mind by the fire pulsing through her groin. Caught in the same urgency that raked through their minds, Zheri reached out blindly, driven by the frenzy pounding inside her, as damp and dark as the jungle itself, heavy with heat, with mystery, with fever.

Her hands closed on smooth, warm fur, so soft it was like silk sliding between her fingers. They arched into her touch, moving closer until they brushed against her thighs, stroking themselves against her.

She could barely see them. Black against the blackness, they were nothing but sleek, muscular shapes flowing like water beneath her hands. It didn't matter. The night whirled around her, heavy with promise. Her overladen senses reeled as the two cats circled her, their bodies intertwining, rubbing against her. A long, soft tail twined between her bare legs, and she gasped as it stroked the sensitive skin of her inner thigh.

What is that? It's not skin.

Cen's growl echoed in her mind. She puzzled over his words until understanding dawned -- he was talking about her clothes.

Slowly, as if hypnotized, she tugged at her shirt. Two pairs of eyes gleamed at her as she pulled the grimy tank top over her head, staring fixedly at the full, heavy curves of her breasts. In her mind, she heard a low, ragged groan of arousal. The larger panther stretched his head forward and ran his hot, rasping tongue over her erect nipple.

Zheri moaned.

You can hear us.

Yes.

The two cats paused, their great golden eyes turning toward each other. *She's the one, Tal. She's our --*

Cen's thought was too complex for her to grasp. Maybe her mind lacked a word to translate the concept. Their gazes turned back toward her, and once again she could feel the lust pouring off them, filling her with a heady eroticism that was, and yet wasn't, her own. It was as if her sense of herself had split, flickering from her own mind to those of the two panthers before her. She was intensely aware of the coiled heat inside them, the hardness of their straining cocks, the raging fire in their loins...

They wanted her. Wanted her with a ferocity no man had ever begun to show her.

And I want them just as badly, she admitted, swallowing in a throat gone suddenly dry, terrified and yet racked by a desire so strong she couldn't fight it, couldn't deny the aching need in her cunt, the hard, throbbing fullness of her clit...

Closing her eyes, she saw herself in the darkness, far more sharply through their eyes than any human could see, standing in her shorts with her full, heavy breasts bared to the night, the nipples crinkled to taut darkened points. She saw the first panther lave his tongue over her breast again, the slight raspiness of it making her whimper and writhe. Automatically, her hands dropped to her shorts, tugging at the belt buckle, undoing the button...

As she slid her shorts downward, the hot, humid air of the jungle stole between her swollen labia, mingling with the dampness soaking her crotch. Her outer lips were thick with lust, begging to be pierced, and the tender inner folds almost itched with need. Remembering the sight of Cen poised above Tal, readying himself to plunge into his waiting body, Zheri groaned and kicked off her shorts, far too impatient to remove her boots.

When the first panther lowered his head and snaked his tongue through her nether curls, she whimpered and spread her legs farther.

You want this.

It wasn't a question, but Zheri answered anyway. *Yes.*

Cen's tongue lashed out again, this time dragging, slow and heavy, over the engorged ridge of her clit. Zheri felt her knees give way as a bolt of lust slammed through her belly. Her legs collapsed under her, and she found herself kneeling on the damp earth, reaching out blindly to loop her arms around the warm, furred neck before her.

Cen?

The great yellow eyes gleamed at her. *Yes. And what is your name?*

Zheri.

Zheri. He seemed to roll the word around in his mind, almost as if tasting it. In his thoughts the name became deeper, warmer, more sound than word. *Zheri. I like that. You liked watching us, Zheri, didn't you?*

Yes, she whispered, embarrassed and yet unable to deny it.

You liked watching what we did to each other, Tal and I.

Yes.

Now you want us to do it to you.

Zheri almost fainted with the force of her hunger. *Oh God. Yes.*

She felt a sudden movement behind her. Turning her head, she could see nothing in the utter blackness -- not even the glow of amber eyes -- but a moment later, she felt warm skin against her own, strong hands that curved around her rib cage and tugged her back against a broad chest.

"Tal?"

He was kneeling behind her, his hard, muscled body pressed against her own. He spoke, but the sounds were meaningless to her, a sort of deep, rumbling growl that she could sense nevertheless was language.

"I don't --" She broke off abruptly, realizing he could no more understand her words than she could his, and repeated the sentence in her head. *I don't understand.*

Neither do I, beautiful one. The only thing I know is that I need to have you. We need to have you.

His hands slid up her belly to her breasts, curving to cup them. Then his fingers closed over her nipples, rolling the aching points until Zheri cried out in delight, arching into his touch, urging him wordlessly for more. She could sense the way his desire redoubled, his fingers clamping tighter, tugging with a fierceness that sent a fresh burst of dampness trickling from her passage. She'd almost forgotten Cen until his tongue lashed her slit again, lapping her sodden folds and then probing delicately inward.

Yes, she heard Tal say in her mind. Yes, let him in, Zheri. Let him please you.

Moaning, she leaned back against Tal's strength, letting him support her body as she moved her knees farther apart, giving Cen easy access to her cunt. His tongue flicked over her clit, making her shudder and gasp, then plunged into her cunt with a suddenness that drew a high, eager cry from her throat.

The panther's tongue was so much larger than a human one. It probed deeper, pressing against the walls of her passage in a way that made Zheri moan with delight. Then it withdrew quickly to swipe across her clit before plunging in again.

Over and over, he repeated the process, fucking her with his thick, agile tongue until she was literally reeling with lust, held upright only by Tal behind her, his strong, rough hands squeezing her breasts. His cock rubbed against her ass and Zheri almost wept with the need to have it inside her, to feel at last what it was like to have a man buried to the hilt in her cunt. She arched, rocking between them, pushing herself harder against Cal's eager tongue, tilting her hips to press back against Tal's huge, hard shaft.

She needed... needed...

What if you get pregnant?

Zheri froze, the old, deeply ingrained prohibition warring with her desire. She must not get pregnant, she *must* not. Earth was already so overcrowded...

Except she wasn't on Earth. The realization struck her, and she gasped with laughter even as Cen's darting tongue pushed her nearly to the brink. She wasn't on Earth, and they weren't even human. What were the odds they could even cross-breed?

Laughing like a wild thing, Zheri reached out to them, surrendering herself to the fury of their passions, knowing they could hear her disjointed, ecstatic thoughts.

Yes... Oh yes, please... Please, whatever you want. Take me, fuck me, eat me...

For a second, she almost thought she saw a flash of ivory as the cat before her grinned in the darkness. Then his tongue found her clit again, lashing back and forth across it as Tal savaged her breasts, squeezing their fullness and then pinching the nipples until a sharp, delicious agony raked her body, stabbing into her aching groin. Cen swirled his rough, heavy tongue over her clit unmercifully, forcing her higher, higher...

The agony inside her burst into white fire, and ecstasy pulsed through her cunt as Cen thrust his tongue into it over and over even as Tal pulled her harder against him, grinding the length of his massive erection against her bare bottom. Panting, she hung between them, feeling aftershocks blaze through her with an intensity like nothing she'd ever experienced, leaving her gasping, sweating, her hands buried in Cen's ruff and her body slumped laxly against Tal's.

She was intensely aware of the satiation of her own body, and yet desire, overwhelming and undeniable, still pounded at her. Once again, she had a sense of duality -- only no, that wasn't right, was it? Her consciousness felt split in three, feeling the ravenous, raging fire of Cen's lust, the deeper, more controlled power of Tal's passions, her own hunger flickering back to life.

Instinctively, she turned toward the man behind her, unable to see him in the blackness of the jungle night, but comfortingly aware of his strong arms around her.

I don't... How can I hear you in my head? How can I... She gulped. How can I feel you?

The rolling murmur of the chuckle vibrating in his chest needed no translation. *Because you are our* -- That word again, the one she couldn't seem to grasp. Words flickered through her mind, none of them quite fitting his meaning. *Beloved. Essence. Slave.* Then -- oddly enough -- *mistress.* How could she be both? It made no sense.

None of it made sense.

I don't understand.

She felt Tal shift slightly, in frustration perhaps. Slowly, methodically, he explained. *We are the An'Rath, the jungle people. Among our kind, we mate in threes -- two bond-brothers, one female. Together, we are trianna, the three who make one. We are --*

Again, that dizzying profusion of words, of concepts. *Family. Sister. Life-force. Mate.* The vastness of the concept he was trying to convey staggered her.

That's not possible. I'm not even -- Zheri groped for the word -- *I'm not An'Rath.*

I know. Yet you hear us. You feel us. Can you not feel our desire?

Yes. Yes, she could. The deep, erotic hunger pouring off the two males seemed to flow through her very veins, making her body throb with renewed need.

Images flickered through her mind, fleeting pictures of the three of them intertwined in passion, coupling with an urgency that left her breathless. She could feel the strange, coiled tenseness of Cen's feline body, his tail lashing with an impatience that equaled her own. She was aware of the ache in Tal's groin, the deliberateness with which he held himself back, the frantic desire that pounded just beneath the surface...

That is how we know you are our mate, the third who completes our trianna. It is the gift of bond-mates, to hear each other's thoughts, to feel each other's reactions. And it brings with it a passion, a need, that is undeniable. Never have Cen and I desired a female the way we desire you.

Zheri moaned.

Do you not feel it? Tal's hands slid again to her breasts, cupping their fullness. Then one trailed down over her belly, his fingers playing through the soft curls covering her mound. *Do you not feel the same need, Zheri?*

Yes, she whispered, her cheeks flaming in the darkness. No man had ever stirred her this way. No man had ever made her long to spread herself before him, welcoming - - no, *demanding* -- his cock inside her, inside her cunt, her mouth... A sudden image of Cen rearing above her as she knelt on all fours like a cat, thrusting her ass up to greet his dominant strokes filled her mind, and the heat coiling in her belly tightened into delectable agony, drowning out her questions, her incomprehension, her lingering fears.

She needed them, needed them *now*, with a physical ferocity she'd never even have suspected in herself.

Yes, Zheri whispered again, her mind-voice tight with urgency. A noise that was half-gasp, half-growl spilled from her throat as she tore herself from Tal's grasp. Leaning forward onto her arms, she found herself face to face with the enormous black panther that was Cen, and gave him an almost feral grin. *Yes. Now fuck me.*

With a ripple of motion, the cat was gone, and Zheri felt hard, callused hands sliding over her shoulders, up her neck, tangling in her hair as Cen tugged her face toward him.

At the same time, Tal caressed her upturned ass, squeezing its curves as he rubbed his cock back and forth through the sodden slickness of her folds, teasing her, tormenting her delectably. The thick rim of his cockhead dragged against her clit, stoking the fire inside her higher and higher until at last she thrust her hips backward even as Cen pushed his erection firmly against her parted lips.

Opening her mouth to receive him, she gasped around his thickness as Tal slid his cock inside her unexplored cunt.

It was staggering. Not only could she feel their hands on her, their cocks pressing into her hot flesh, she could also feel the sudden throb in Cen's balls as she closed her lips around him, sucking his cockhead. He growled above her, his deep voice rasping in his throat as his body stiffened, already on the verge of climax. Behind her, she felt the way her cunt clamped around Tal's shaft, so tight he gasped, frantically fighting to keep himself from plunging into her.

But she wanted him to. She wanted them both to take her, to loose the desperate hunger she could feel building inside them. And the most wonderful thing of all was that she knew they could feel her impatience, her need, as acutely as their own.

No, Cen murmured even as Tal said, *It will hurt, little one*. Zheri could tell their thoughts apart as distinctly as if they were speaking aloud. *It will hurt, this first time. I do not wish it to hurt. Be patient.*

Tal's right hand slid down between her thighs, unerringly finding the nub of her clit even as his left clamped around her hip, stilling her motions. Slowly, he nudged his cock deeper, spreading her open, and Zheri whimpered at the size of it. God, he felt huge! His shaft invaded her, inch by inch, muscling its way inside her, gliding on the juices that seemed to gush ceaselessly from her cunt.

Cen, too, held her head firmly, stroking between her lips with a gentleness that was in direct contrast to the way he'd sucked Tal, urging his bond-brother to fuck his mouth harder, faster...

The deeper, velvety rumble of Cen's chuckle filled her ears, even as his voice spoke in her head. *Yes. But we have been making love with each other for years. And what you are doing --* he groaned as Zheri closed her lips tighter, pulling the warm, meaty firmness of his tip deeper into her mouth *-- is going to make me come any moment.*

Then do it, Cen. I want to taste you. I want to feel you come in my mouth.

Cen's groan deepened, and Zheri could feel Tal's own arousal flare upward at the tension growing in Cen's heavy balls.

Cen's thought was a gasp, shared between all three of them. *Tal, I can't last.*

Tal's fingers caressed her clit, rubbing in a small, tight circle over the hard, throbbing ridge. Zheri's own hunger seemed to tighten like a knot inside her, and her cunt clenched greedily around Tal's shaft.

More, she whimpered, pressing back against him. She could feel his cock jabbing lightly at the resistance inside her. *Tal, take me!*

Roaring, he rammed himself forward, piercing her in one hard thrust, his fingers pressing hard against her pulsing clit.

Pain ripped through her, sharp and searing, and she cried out around Cen's cock in her mouth even as Tal's deft touch pushed her into climax. Agony and bliss twined inseparably along her nerves, making her toss her head even as Cen groaned above her, his hands fisting in her hair. Sucking furiously, she goaded him on, reveling in the hot gush of his semen as he cried out, his body arching into her, his cock pounding between her lips, forcing her jaw wide as he filled her mouth with his come.

Tal's hands found her hips, clamping around them with a masterful ferocity as he slammed his cock home, burying himself so deep she could feel his balls pulsing against her nether lips as he came inside her, flooding her passage, his balls clenching so hard Zheri could feel his thighs quivering against hers with every jet of his seed.

Gasping, they clung to her, their cocks buried inside her. Her mouth and cunt worked eagerly at their straining shafts, tugging at them, hungrily swallowing each surge of come until they groaned and slumped above her, utterly drained.

Oh, Zheri. Oh, little one. Cen stroked her cheek tenderly as he slowly withdrew from her mouth, chuckling as her tongue probed at his slit, gathering the last salty taste of his juices. She whimpered as his shaft slid from her lips, only to find it replaced by his tongue as he lifted her up and kissed her deeply.

Carefully, Tal eased his thick cock from her still spasming cunt, and Zheri was suddenly aware of her trembling knees, the deep ache in her belly from her violated passage. Her muscles trembled, drained of strength, and she felt Tal and Cen lower her to the soft moss between them. Strange cries and rustlings, the night sounds of the jungle, returned to her consciousness, and for a moment she felt horribly exposed, lying naked but for her boots in the impenetrable blackness.

But a moment later she felt Tal and Cen stretch out on either side of her, once again in panther shape, their bodies surrounding her in the velvety darkness like a promise of safety. She could feel the rumble of breath through their massive chests, vibrating through her, rocking her into somnolence.

Now sleep, little one. Zheri. Our life-mate.

Closing her eyes, Zheri rested her cheek against the warm, silky fur of Tal's shoulder, pleasantly aware of the soreness of her body, the knowledge that they had taken her, finally, into her complete womanhood. Yawning like an overtired child, she slid into sleep, watched over and protected by her two massive lovers.

Chapter Five

The Recon team!

Her sudden thought jerked Zheri out of sleep. She sat up quickly, remembering the steely coldness in Captain Hunt's eyes, and felt a sinking sense of dread curl in her gut.

Shit. Oh, shit.

What had she been thinking? She hadn't even tried to warn them. She'd just...

Zheri blushed as the memories came back to her in a rush. *My God, did that really happen?* Yes, it had. The unfamiliar soreness in her groin, the result of Tal claiming her virginity the night before, was undeniable.

Her lips curled in an unfamiliar smile. Her entire body felt loose, relaxed in a way she'd never experienced before.

If this is what making love does to a woman, she thought, it's a wonder anyone ever does anything else.

The last of her self-recrimination faded as she saw the huge, naked man lying beside her, stretched on his back, his long black hair falling down around his shoulders. His eyes were closed, one arm flung out, his hand open, palm upward, fingers curled slightly as if still cupping her cheek.

Cen. She knew it. His features were heavier than Tal's, blunter, more forceful. Tal was actually the handsomer of the two, with his strong, sculpted jaw, his chiseled cheekbones. But Cen had a feral appeal all his own.

And where was Tal? she wondered, glancing about her. She was sitting on a carpet of green, springy moss, dotted here and there with beautiful, amber-colored flowers, the sepal at their center a deep, rich crimson. There was a crumbling, moss-covered log just above Cen's head. A small stream trickled nearby, its surface stroked

by the trailing ends of vines that hung down from the trees like a curtain, enclosing them in a small, private, light-dappled space.

It was so beautiful. Peaceful. Secretive. And humans were going to destroy it, if she couldn't stop them.

Zheri rolled onto her side, amused to realize she was still wearing her boots. Propping herself on one arm, she studied Cen's features. Delicately, she traced the line of his powerful jaw, the surprisingly gentle curve of his full lips.

The image of Captain Hunt, his handsome face grim and forbidding as he'd faced her down inside the scout ship, rose in her mind, and she shivered in apprehension, curling close beside Cen. Warm skin brushed her cheek as she settled her head against his shoulder. She gazed down the solid arc of his broad chest, noting the silky black hairs that surrounded his sun-browed nipples and trickled over his rolling pecs.

Lightly, Zheri traced a circle around his left nipple, watching as it tightened under her touch, drawing into a small, tight point. Placing her hand flat on his abdomen, she reveled in the deep, calm motion of his breath.

Nothing would happen to him, she vowed. Nothing would happen to *any* of the An'Rath.

Determinedly, she snuggled against Cen's reassuring bulk, hugging him. She slid her hand down his abs, feeling the bands of muscle under her palm, the small indentation of his navel. A burgeoning warmth crept through her belly, making her acutely conscious of the soreness inside her, the strange, bruised sensation in her cunt, both painful and pleasant at once.

Then her hand encountered something warm and hard, and yet soft as velvet. Curling her fingers around his erect shaft, Zheri trailed her fist down it, marveling at its thickness -- only to feel Cen's hand wrap around her wrist, holding her hand still.

Careful, little one. I am not as patient as Tal. If you keep that up, I may not be able to wait.

Wait for what?

For Tal to return. He chuckled and, rather than pushing her away, closed his fingers over her hand, pressing it tighter against his shaft. She squeezed hesitantly, dragging her fist up to the thick rim of his cockhead, and Cen sucked in a ragged breath.

Emboldened, Zheri repeated the motion, stroking all the way down to the base of his cock until she felt the fine, springy softness of his curls against her fingers, then drawing the skin upward, noting the way his shaft seemed to throb in her grip, growing even harder. Cen groaned lightly.

Like that? she asked.

Yes, little one. Just like that. Can you not feel what you're doing to me?

She caressed him again, closing her eyes and allowing an awareness of the sensations flowing through his body to unfold in her mind. Her cunt throbbed in response to the tension growing inside him. She squeezed his cockhead, drawing a first dewy bead of pre-come from it, smiling as she felt Cen's reaction, the way his balls pulsed as the urgency in them increased.

It was amazing. With each touch, each stroke, Cen's need spiraled upward. Experimenting, she squeezed harder, and felt a first rush of wetness between her own thighs as Cen bucked in her grip, thrusting his cock deeper into her grasp. His eyes were closed, his head thrown back, exposing the strong column of his neck. A trickle of slick, warm fluid leaked from his cockhead, and Zheri swirled her finger through it, rubbing back and forth over that small, alluring slit. The muscles in Cen's throat worked as he swallowed.

Oh, Zheri.

Clamping her fist around his shaft, she pumped it faster, squeezing as hard as she dared. White-hot lust bloomed in her mind as Cen responded, hanging helpless in her grip, all his attention focused on the sensations her hand was drawing from his body. He writhed beneath her, and Zheri experienced an overwhelming sense of power at the way she could reduce this glorious man-beast to a groaning, lust-maddened animal, desperate for her touch, her taste, her cunt...

You would do anything I told you to, wouldn't you, Cen?

Yes. His mind-voice was a groan, harsh and needy.

Then I want you to fuck me. Fuck me the way you fucked Tal.

Cen's eyes flew wide as he looked at her, picking up clearly from her mind what she wanted. *It's not that easy, little one. It takes practice.*

Sitting up abruptly, he reached for one of the tri-petaled flowers that dotted the glade. Plucking it, he held it out to her. Smiling, Zheri sat up and took it, twirling it between her fingers with her elbows resting on her bare thighs.

This is the trianna, the flower of the An'Rath. It symbolizes the bond between life-mates, he told her, stroking the three individual petals gently, following their golden curves to where they joined together in the center. *It also facilitates that bond,* he added with a quick grin. Reaching out, he took the flower from her hand and peeled the thick, pulpy stalk in two.

Clear, viscous fluid welled forth, sweetly scented and glimmering slightly in the jungle's dimness. Cen stroked his finger through it, gathering the juice of the *trianna*. Gently, he pushed at Zheri's shoulder until she lay back against the moss, listening to the trickle of the stream. The air was soft this morning, cooler, less humid. It must be very early yet.

Yes, Cen answered. Tal is bringing breakfast. He looked up at her, his amber eyes glowing with mischief. *But I'm too hungry to wait.*

With that, he stretched on his belly between her thighs, his upper half propped on his powerful arms as he lowered his mouth to her glistening cunt. Zheri moaned as his mouth closed around her clit, sucking it gently until it thickened beneath his prodding tongue, swelling with need.

Reflexively, she opened her thighs wider, and Cen moved downward, running his tongue through her folds. At the same time, she felt him cup her ass with one hand, lifting her easily as he buried his tongue in her cunt, devouring her with a hunger that made her gasp in arousal as she felt his response.

Stars, Zheri! I could eat you all day.

Driving his tongue deeper, he sucked at her cunt, eagerly swallowing her welling fluids. Zheri moaned, closing her eyes, giving herself over entirely to the sensation of his tongue deep inside her, his soft lips nibbling at her clit... and then she felt his other hand slide between her ass cheeks, running slowly toward the tight, puckered entrance she'd imperiously ordered him to violate.

He trailed his finger lightly over it, smearing her rectum with the juice he'd gathered from the *trianna* flower. It was cool and slippery, soothing her tender flesh, and Cen's finger slid easily through its moistness, working it patiently over her clenched, taut opening until Zheri felt the first stirrings of impatience, both like and unlike the desire to have a cock inside her cunt. This was a deeper, more unfamiliar hunger, and she whimpered as she thrust her hips upward, urging him to enter her.

Gently, he eased his finger inside her, spreading the tight band of muscle slowly. The pressure teased her, both delectable and yet unfulfilling -- she wanted more.

Not yet, Zheri. Patience.

Purposefully, he returned his full attention to her cunt, covering her clit with his mouth and suckling it until she was groaning below him, her back arching as she pushed down against the teasing pressure inside her ass. Digging her fingers into Cen's long black hair, Zheri dragged his mouth tighter against her, moaning wordlessly.

Yes, Cen. Yes! Suck me. Make me come with your mouth. And please, please fill me. Fill my ass, Cen.

Growling his own need, Cen suckled harder, working her clit with his lips until Zheri writhed on the very brink of orgasm. At the same time, he pumped gently into her ass, gliding his finger in and out of her tightness until she could feel her rectum clenching and releasing around him, trying to draw him deeper, deeper...

Slowly, he lengthened his strokes, allowing himself to penetrate further. Zheri drew her knees up instinctively, spreading her ass wider, trembling with delight as he probed her thoroughly, gradually speeding his strokes until he was pistoning his finger in and out of her in time with his lashing tongue.

Yes, more! she panted, and Cen, feeling her need, thrust his finger in as deep as he could, letting her body clench around it as his tongue and lips tugged at her clit, tumbling her into a vast, roaring emptiness where there was nothing but the fire searing along her veins, the gush of her juices as she came in his mouth, the intoxicating hardness buried deep in her ass...

No. There *was* something else. Something more. A strange, contained sense of arousal, a hunger that seemed to suck at her, at both of them, devouring their delight as it drank them in...

Opening her eyes, Zheri turned to see Tal standing at the edge of the tiny glade, half-hidden by the twining vines, his eyes huge as he watched them with his hand moving over his rock-hard erection.

She smiled, and slid her hands up to her breasts, watching Tal's gaze follow her every movement. Cupping their fullness, she squeezed her breasts together, then closed her fingers around her nipples, rolling and pinching them.

Cen drew himself up, kneeling between her thighs, his hand dropping to his jutting erection. Zheri smiled at the sight of her two lovers watching as she toyed with her breasts, their jaws lax with desire, both of them now -- she noted, amused -- tugging at those beautiful, hard, straining cocks.

You like watching, do you? she asked, her eyes dancing.

Yes, Tal murmured. *I've never watched Cen with anyone before.*

That's because I've never wanted to be with anyone else before, Cen growled. Tal laughed.

Now you know how I felt yesterday, watching the two of you. She grinned. *I think I want to watch the two of you again.*

She pinched her nipples hard, and laughed as the two of them groaned in unison. *Tal, come here.*

He came and knelt beside her as Zheri pulled herself to a sitting position, her back against the moss-covered log. Firmly, she took his hand and guided it to Cen's shaft, closing his fingers around it. Cen moaned and followed suit, wrapping his hands

around Tal's erection as Zheri tugged them downward by their hair, forcing them to bend over her. Gazing down between their bodies, she had a perfect view of their cocks.

Now rub them. I want you to make each other come for me.

They didn't answer, not in words anyway. But she could feel the sudden upsurge of their need as they lowered their mouths to her full, aching breasts, their long ebony hair falling around her like skeins of black silk, and suckled her with a hunger that made her cunt clench.

Leaning her head back, Zheri watched from under heavy lids as their hands glided up and down each other's shafts, squeezing and tugging with an urgency that thrilled her. Reaching down between their thighs, she cupped their balls lightly, Tal's in her left hand, Cen's in her right. She rolled them gently between her fingers, marveling at the size of them, the heaviness, the way they seemed to swell with their loads of semen.

What would it be like, to feel those huge, hard sacs pulse against her palms as they erupted over her soft, naked body?

She was about to find out, she realized as she watched their frantic motions. The muscles in their forearms rippled as they pumped each other's cocks, jerking each other off with an ability fine-tuned by practice and the deep, unspoken awareness of each other that life-mates shared.

Closing her eyes, Zheri could feel the frenzy building inside them, the almost unconscious directions they gave each other. *Harder. Faster. Stroke the rim, the tip. Squeeze it, Tal. Oh, Cen, yes. Make me come on her.*

Their mouths tugged her nipples with a fierce, desperate need, flicking the aching tips with their tongues, occasionally grazing their teeth across them, making her gasp. She could almost come just from this, just from the sight of them and the feel of them suckling her breasts.

Harder, she whispered, and heard them whimper as their fists clamped around each other's shafts, squeezing almost viciously. Their cockheads were so swollen the skin was stretched tight, gleaming with the pre-come that flowed from their gaping

slits. She felt their sacs tighten as their balls contracted up against their groins, so full they felt almost like marble.

Now come for me. Lift your heads and let me watch you.

Releasing her nipple, Tal rocked back on his knees. Groaning, Cen tore his mouth from her breast, his amber eyes almost orange in the heat of his desire, his heavy features clenching in agony as Tal's strokes pushed him over the edge. Roaring, he reared backward, his cock jutting before him, his balls pulsing in her grasp as his orgasm ripped through him, sending his semen spurting in warm, thick strands to splash over Zheri's heaving breasts.

Tal's eyes darkened at the sight -- and then he, too, was coming, his slit gaping as the rush of fluid spilled from it in hot, liquid jets, mingling with Cen's come as it coated her. His eyes closed as he threw his head back, his whole body arching as he climaxed, stream after stream of jizz striping her rosy nipples with creamy fluid.

Reaching out, Cen smeared their mingled juices over her breasts, squeezing them, tugging at the nipples. Zheri watched, panting, as the last of Tal's come spurted in glistening lines across Cen's fingers. Taking Cen's wrist, she drew his hand upward, sucking the salty fluid from each finger in turn.

Groaning, Cen dropped his head back to her breast, his tongue lapping avidly, swirling over her nipples. Tal joined him, licking their mingled juices from her breasts until Zheri dropped her head back, surrendering to their ministrations.

Closing her eyes, she gave in to the ecstasy blooming inside her, the bliss that shot through her womb as Tal's fingers closed around her nipples, pinching them tightly. Cen's tongue lapped eagerly at the undersides. The heat pouring off their massive bodies surrounded her as they caressed her breasts, squeezing them, licking them, devouring them with a single-minded hunger that left her gasping, panting, desperate for more.

Then she felt them move. Dazed she let herself be lifted, turned. Opening her eyes, she saw Tal below her, stretched full-length on the moss, his still-hard cock jutting up to receive her. Cen, kneeling between Tal's legs, cradled her in his massive arms, his

hands clamping the underside of her thighs, spreading them open as he lowered her smoothly onto that gorgeous, waiting cock.

Inch by inch, it invaded her, spreading her passage wide as it filled her completely. His cock probed deeper as Cen lowered her, and Zheri felt her inner walls clench around it, grasping, eager for more.

It was the strangest experience, being so utterly passive. She hung in Cen's arms, his biceps bulging against her sides as he raised and lowered her, gliding her up and down Tal's cock. Faster now, he forced her hips upward, then dropped her down until her swollen clit was pressed against Tal's pubic bone. Holding her there, Cen rubbed her back and forth, rubbing her against his bond-brother's body. Zheri moaned as he worked her hips in a circular motion, tormenting her clit delectably.

She could feel the gathering fire in Tal's loins, the way his massive cock throbbed inside her, seeming to thicken even further as her cunt clenched around him. Her own orgasm hovered just beyond her reach, throbbing through her, building higher and higher and yet never quite cresting.

With an exquisite control, Cen kept them both on the brink, moving Zheri as he pleased, sometimes lifting her for a few fast, hard strokes, sometimes gliding her back and forth so lightly that her mons barely brushed Tal's pubic curls. Whimpering, Zheri hung in his arms, marveling at his strength even as she surrendered to it utterly.

And with every moan, every pulse of heat in her groin, she felt the delicate mind-touch of her life-mates sharing her delight, and allowing her to feel theirs. For hours, it seemed, Cen held her there, working her back and forth over Tal's cock, trapping her in a mindless delirium where every pulse of Tal's erection, every bolt of ecstasy as her slick passage clenched his shaft, was conveyed to her as clearly as his wordless, groaning gasps. He controlled them, and yet every moment of delectable torment was a gift as he held his own desire ruthlessly in check to pleasure them.

The ache building in her womb was so far beyond anything she'd ever felt. It was like a thunderstorm gathering in the distance, the pressure inside her growing with each stroke, every clasp of Cen's fingers as he rocked her hips forward, trapping her clit

against Tal's hard abs. She couldn't stand another second of it. She wanted it to never end. Her mind seemed emptied, her thoughts blotted away by the awareness of Tal's arousal, her own seething need. There was nothing, nothing in the world but the two men loving her.

As delicately as he'd controlled their lovemaking, Cen led them slowly into climax. Never in her life had Zheri been so intensely aware of the orgasm unfolding inside her -- the heaviness in her womb, the way her clit pulsed, swelling even further. Then the heat inside her spiraled upward, flushing her cheeks as her labia thickened, dragging delectably against Tal's throbbing shaft. A roaring filled her ears as the tension in her cunt rose to its peak. It snapped, flooding her cunt with juices, sending jolts of bliss through her entire body, making her nipples ache. She cried out, over and over, feeling her passage spasm around Tal, gripping him as his own ecstasy burst from him, exploding into her as Cen stroked her up and down Tal's pulsing shaft in sudden frenzy.

She whimpered as a second orgasm took her, racking her body with uncontrollable waves of bliss as Tal's climax continued, his groans hot and heavy in her ears as her cunt squeezed him tighter, milking every last drop of come from his spurting shaft.

Roaring, Cen pushed her down onto Tal, burying his bond-brother's cock up to the hilt in her clenching passage. His hand pressed down firmly on her hips, forcing Tal even deeper as she and Tal quivered uncontrollably, the agony of their passion searing through them again and again until at last Zheri slumped, limp and trembling, down onto Tal's heaving, sweat-slicked chest.

Cen stretched out beside them, his long, lithe frame molded against Tal's, his arm draped possessively over Zheri's back, hugging them both close. They were so amazing -- passionate and yet tender, powerful and gentle.

She couldn't let anything happen to them. She *couldn't*.

Chapter Six

Her sleep was troubled, filled with vague, nebulous nightmares that fled as soon as she opened her eyes. Tal was watching her, his gaze fond and soft, but there was a shadow beneath the gleaming gold of his eyes.

What distresses you, Zheri?

I... She shook her head. How could she tell them? What would they think of her?
It's nothing.

He raised one eyebrow, amused. *It is very difficult to lie to a life-mate, little one. Believe me.* He grinned at Cen, who chuckled.

Pulling herself up, Zheri reached for her discarded clothes as Tal rose and laid out the breakfast he'd gathered -- fruits, what looked like a soft cheese, some sort of meat which, Zheri was relieved to see, was cooked.

She reached for the cheese, curious. *I thought you just ate raw meat.*

Tal laughed, the sound as clear and reassuring as the burble of the stream. *In 'Rath form, yes, we do. But it is pleasant, is it not, to have a little variety?*

She nodded, still curious. *How do you make this?*

From the milk of the devi. From his mind, Zheri got an image of a gazelle-like creature, moving across the savanna in vast herds. *They belong to the An'Shar, the grass-dwellers. We trade with them for the milk, sometimes the meat.*

The An'Shar? she asked. Then her eyes widened as Tal pictured a massive, striped cat, even larger than Cen, padding through the tall plains grasses.

And they... they change, like you?

Yes. They are An'Shar, just as we are An'Rath.

Are there others?

Tal nodded. *But you haven't answered my question. What distresses you?*

Zheri sighed, and helped herself to a handful of brilliant ruby-colored berries before she replied. They were delicious, both tart and sweet at once. She savored them slowly, wondering where to begin. *I'm not like you, you know.*

Tal nodded. *Yes.*

I am a human. From a different... place. A different planet.

Strangely, she could almost hear the word translating in their minds. Their eyes widened. Zheri sighed again, feeling at a loss. Their worlds, their experiences, were so different. How could she hope to make them understand?

Relax, Zheri, Tal whispered. Don't try to tell it. Simply open your mind and show us.

She glanced at him, then at Cen who nodded reassuringly.

Closing her eyes, Zheri stopped trying to explain and instead pictured the history of her species -- mankind's apelike ancestors, slowly venturing from the protective shadows of a jungle not so different than this. The development of tools, the discovery of fire. She felt rather than saw her life-mates nod. Then the smelting of metals, the development of the wheel -- she heard the startled amazement in their thoughts, and what felt like admiration.

But the admiration faded as she continued, showing them the accelerating growth of technology, the cities spreading like a virus across Earth's surface, swelling and expanding until they ran together. Unflinchingly, she showed them the destruction of the environment, the millions of species who perished in less than a century under mankind's industrial domination. Then the exploding population, the scarred, barren soil, humans retreating like rats into their massive, subterranean warrens.

It didn't even take a war, she thought mordantly. All it took was human greed and folly.

She showed them the first Recon drones, the last fragile hope of mankind, springing into the vastness of space, their signals sending back atmosphere analyses, soil samples, digital images to a starving, despairing people. And then the scout ships following the drones to likely planets, including Terrana III.

When she was done, she simply stared at them, waiting, terrified of their reaction. They would hate her. How could they not? She was an alien, an enemy, sent here to take their planet from them. They would despise her. If they were smart, they would kill her -- and every other member of the Recon team.

But even their hatred would be better than this utter silence. They had blocked her out completely, their minds closed to her in shock.

Tearing herself from them, she sobbed aloud. *I'm sorry. I'm so sorry!*

They stared at her, their eyes widening in surprise.

Is it your fault, little one? Tal asked, his mind-voice unbelievably gentle. *Did you do all this? Did you make those decisions?*

No, but...

You are our life-mate, Zheri. His tone was firm, inarguable. *Nothing can change that. There is nothing you could do that could make us hate you.* Behind him, Cen nodded, his eyes warm and comforting.

Reaching out blindly, she felt their arms enfold her, cradling her between them as she sobbed out her fear, her confusion, her grief. *But what will happen? What will become of you?*

In her mind, images of conquered people rolled like grainy film footage, stark and awful. She felt the stillness in their bodies as they saw what her species had done, over and over, to its own kind.

There would be even less mercy for them.

We will think of something. Tal's tone was grim.

Cen added, *If we have to, we will fight.*

Zheri almost smiled as she picked up the anger in his thoughts -- yes, Cen would take well to fighting. That massive body, those powerful, straightforward emotions...

But how could he fight a laser beam? Or a bomb?

No. If there was something to be done, she would have to be the one to do it. Only what could she do? Every time she thought of Captain Hunt, she quailed. He

would follow his orders no matter what the cost. He would never, as she had done, let some nebulous concern for another species overrule his loyalty to his own.

Drawing away from her two lovers, she wrapped her arms around her knees, worrying her lower lip as she pictured the coldness of his gray eyes, the inflexibility of his stance. It was ironic that once he would have been as persecuted as the An'Rath were soon to be, just for being gay.

She didn't see the sudden glance Tal and Cen gave each other. Somehow, she had to make him see what he was doing was wrong. And if not...

Take him to the An'Shar.

She glanced at Cen, unable to fathom the amusement she felt from him. *Why?*

But it was Tal who answered her, the same humor rumbling through his thoughts. *Just do it, Zheri.* His mind fed her directions, and she memorized them, still puzzled.

And you think it will help?

Tal grinned. *Very likely.*

What if it doesn't?

If it doesn't... Suddenly, his face was grim. If it doesn't, Zheri, then you are not to blame for what happens. Remember that.

You are our life-mate, Cen added. We will always love you.

"Then love me," Zheri cried aloud, terrified at the thought of losing them. "Love me now, both of you."

Taking her face gently in his hands, Tal drew her lips to his, kissing her deeply as Cen caressed her body, his fingers trailing over her breasts, her belly, gliding along the cleft between her thighs. Then he turned her face toward his, holding her gaze with his amber eyes even as he kissed her, his full, soft lips claiming hers with a determination she couldn't resist. She let her eyelids fall shut as his tongue plunged deep into her mouth. *Take me, Cen.*

Drawing his head back, Cen gazed at her one last time. Then the man was gone, and the panther stood before her, his broad, black shoulders gleaming in the greenish light of the jungle. Zheri glanced uncertainly at Tal, who wrapped his arms around her.

"Yes, Zheri," he whispered in her ear. His words were like the rumbling voice of the panther, low and hissing, but her mind translated his thoughts automatically. "Let him take you like this. Let him show you all of what An'Rath means."

Heat pulsed through Zheri's cunt as she thought of having that lithe, massive beast above her, black fur against bare skin, his breath hot and heavy against her neck as he entered her...

"Yes," she breathed. "Oh yes, Cen. Tal. Let me love you."

Pulling her with him, Tal stretched out on the moss, his black hair tumbling around him as he lay back. He gazed up at her as she moved to where she wanted, kneeling between his thighs as she lowered her mouth hungrily to his cock. It was already half-hard, thickening even as she took it between her lips.

She loved the scent of him, the musky-salt fragrance of his groin, the taste of his cock as it lengthened inside her, pressing against the back of her mouth as she sucked it. And she loved the sensation of Cen's gaze on them, watching avidly as she pulled Tal's cock deeper into her mouth.

Running her hands over Tal's biceps, she squeezed them lightly, then slid her palms down his powerful forearms and laced her fingers through his, lifting his hands to her head. Groaning, he buried his fingers in her hair, clenching it as she slipped her hands under his hard, curved ass.

Plunging her head downward, she tugged him upward, urging him deeper into her mouth. His hands went still in her hair as he asked, *Are you sure, little one?*

Yes. I want you to fuck me. Fuck me as hard as you fucked Cen.

Letting her lips go soft in invitation, she let the memory of the two of them play through her mind, and heard Tal gasp as he watched himself pistoning up into Cen's mouth. Smiling, Zheri thought very privately, *One of these days I'll have to introduce you two to mirrors.*

Now love me, Tal, she ordered. Love me like you'll never let me go.

She moaned in delight as Tal's fists closed in her hair, urging her head downward even as he pressed up into her waiting mouth. His shaft was so hard, pulsing against her tongue as he glided between her lips, his hips rocking gently. Zheri whimpered in longing but he ignored her, fucking her at a slow, delicious pace that had her squirming. Reflexively, she tilted her hips back as she bent over him -- and felt Cen's rough, warm tongue lap her slit.

Zheri moaned and spread her legs wider, pushing her ass into the air. Tal tugged her head down hard against him, burying his cock in her mouth. She slid a hand between his legs, cupping his round, heavy balls as Cen's tongue glided between her folds, teasing her unmercifully. The heat inside her was like the jungle itself -- hot, damp, pulsing with life. She needed them, needed them with a desperation she'd never have guessed existed. Not having them would be like not having air, or food, or water -- she'd die without them.

Please, she whispered frantically, oh, please fuck me!

Grabbing her hair, Tal dragged her head downward as he pumped between her lips, fucking her with a fury that exhilarated her. Her throat ached, but she didn't care -- she pushed down even harder against his strokes, taking him to the hilt, sucking eagerly at the bulbous tip as she felt his climax building. She wanted to wait for him, wanted to come as she felt his juices explode in her mouth, but Cen's tongue kept prodding at her throbbing clit, forcing her up over the edge. She cried out, the sound vibrating against Tal's cock as she came, arching her back, desperate for something to fill the aching void inside her.

Tal lifted her, sliding his cock from her mouth as he slid her up his body, settling her atop his long, jutting shaft. She gasped as she felt the enormous head press between her folds, nudging at her opening. Then his hands closed on her hips and he pushed her downward, spearing her with his cock as she collapsed against him, feeling the tremors start again.

Her cunt gripped his cock, and she felt him clench his jaw, fighting to hold back the orgasm pulsing in his balls. After a moment, he slid his hand to her thighs, pulling them up alongside his rib cage until her breasts were mashed against his pecs, her ass utterly exposed. Stretching his arm out to the side, he plucked a *trianna*, deftly slitting the stalk with his fingernail as he reached down between her thighs with one hand, spreading the dripping juices over her exposed sphincter.

She moaned in anticipation as she realized what Tal intended. She could hear Cen behind her, watching, his tail lashing impatiently. Tal's finger prodded lightly at the tight band of muscle, slipping easily inside. He pumped her ass once, twice, then withdrew with a groan.

Cen, take her now. I can't last much longer.

Zheri whimpered as the great cat moved over her, his massive paws resting lightly on her back, the soft fur of his belly brushing her tailbone. Then she felt the tip of his cock gliding through the slick sap of the *trianna*, and held her breath in mingled fear and impatience.

His cock glided between her ass cheeks as he worked it through the flower's juices, coating it thoroughly. The sensation of his shaft slicking back and forth across her opening made her poignantly aware of the fullness in her cunt, the delectable feel of Tal's shaft buried inside her, stretching her open -- and equally aware of the strange, yearning hunger inside her for more.

Please, Cen, she whispered, almost begging. Please, give it to me. Fuck me. Fuck us both, now!

Roaring as he had when he pinned Tal, Cen reared above her, his haunches tightening as he pressed his cockhead against the tight opening. Whimpering, Zheri held herself still, forcing herself to relax as he slowly spread her open, muscling his way into her ass. The head of his cock slipped past the ring of muscle, and he snarled his arousal as her sphincter clenched hard around his shaft. Holding himself still, he waited until her muscles relaxed just a bit. Then, inch by inch, he forced his huge cock inside her.

Oh, sweet Jesus! Zheri bit her lip, quivering, trapped between the pain and an arousal fiercer than any she'd ever known. It hurt, but she'd scream if he stopped now. She wanted him inside her, all the way...

Beneath her, Tal trembled with desire, lust pounding painfully through his balls as he felt his bond-brother entering her, his cock increasing the pressure against Tal's own shaft. He was right on the edge, Zheri knew, and she whispered desperately, *Not yet, Tal! Please, not yet!*

Drawing in a ragged breath, Tal clenched his eyes shut and willed himself not to come.

Cen's haunches pressed downward, forcing her hard against Tal, her clit mashing against his pubic bone as Cen thrust deeper, filling her in a way she'd never even imagined. The two cocks inside her felt like twin shafts of marble, so rigid she felt impaled on them. Her own orgasm hovered, making her cunt quiver around Tal's straining cock. Every other muscle in her body felt like it had been turned to water. Limp, utterly passive, she lay sandwiched between them, listening to the thud of Tal's heartbeat as Cen's cock pushed deeper, and deeper, and deeper...

With a last, spasmodic thrust, Cen buried himself in her all the way to the balls and froze above her, trembling as hard as Tal was.

Stars, Zheri! You feel incredible. Can you feel it?

Closing her eyes, Zheri caught the echo of sensation from Cen's mind, the pressure of her ass gripping him, the stimulation of Tal's cock pressing against his own, separated only by her sensitive flesh.

Quivering, panting, they clung to each other, letting the sensations flow back and forth between them, feeling their orgasms climb upward from no more than the awareness of each other's arousal. She could feel Cen's thundering heartbeat as if it were her own, the agony in Tal's groin as sharp and immediate as the hunger in her own womb. Tal pressed upward slightly, and she felt them both jerk as their balls rubbed together, hard and full and aching.

It was too much. The sudden stab of need as they both bucked into her shattered her control, and Zheri arched her back, crying out, begging them incoherently. Rearing back, Cen rammed his haunches forward, his cock gliding slickly in and out of her tight hole. His thrusts dragged her up and down Tal's body, grinding her clit against Tal's pubic bone as her cunt clenched his shaft, rocking them both into a frenzy of need. They gasped, clinging to each other as the great cat pumped into her ass.

Cen's snarls rasped in her ear as he fucked her hard. Her breasts dragged against Tal's chest, and she felt him thrust upward, jabbing his cock into her in time with Cen's strokes. She lay between them, Tal's warm, smooth skin against her belly, Cen's soft, thick fur against her back, overwhelmed by the sensation of their two cocks pounding into her, stretching her open, filling her until there was nothing but the pressure of them inside her.

They took her firmly, almost desperately, claiming her with a hunger she could not deny -- not now, not ever. She was theirs, theirs to take as they liked, to fuck whenever, however they wished, however *she* wished, sharing ecstasy between them like the very breath that gave them life.

They were her life-mates. Now and forever.

She could feel the fire building in Tal's balls, his cock swelling even further inside her cunt as he rammed into her, her hard, aching clit rubbing against his taut abs. Zheri's head lolled loosely as Cen pounded her ass, his need spiraling even higher as her body clenched around him, gripping him unmercifully as the first tremors seized her. She heard their groans as her muscles tightened and the agony in her clit flared up into bliss.

Crying out, she pleaded wantonly, *Yes! Oh yes, Cen, take me! Fuck me harder! Make Tal come in my cunt, fill my ass with your come. Please, please take me now!*

Shrieking in lust, the huge cat jabbed his cock inside her, the furred swell of his scrotum pressed against her labia as he came, his seed pumping into her in hot, endless waves.

Tal arched below her, slamming himself home, his orgasm bursting from him as he groaned, his jaw clenching, his hands opening and closing on her hips. Dragging her tighter against him, he ejaculated in wave after wave, soaking her cunt in his juices even as Cen filled her ass.

They clung to each other, shuddering as they peaked, their bodies jerking spasmodically as bolt after bolt of ecstasy lanced through them, draining them utterly. Finally, limp and exhausted, they collapsed in a heap, rolling to one side so that Zheri was cupped between them, their softening cocks still buried inside her quivering flesh.

Opening her eyes, she was startled to see the light fading again already. Where had the day gone?

Then she laughed at herself, remembering. *Time flies when you're having fun, Zheri.*

Yes, it does. Tal smiled at her and stroked her cheek gently, his amber eyes soft with satiation. *I love you, little one,* he whispered.

And I. Lazily, Cen curved a paw around her chest, the velvet pads brushing over her nipple. Then he yawned, the deep-throated sigh echoing through the trees. Zheri laughed. Snuggling between her two lovers, she firmly refused to worry about tomorrow -- tomorrow, when she would return to camp.

She had no idea what Tal's cryptic directions would lead to. But she trusted him. Tomorrow, she would lead Captain Hunt to the An'Shar -- and then they would see.

But for tonight she would sleep in the arms of her life-mates, and not worry about anything at all.

Stormy Sommers

After years of hiding her manuscripts in obscure, misleadingly-named computer files, Stormy Sommers decided it was time to come out of the closet and share her abiding love of all things erotic -- and preferably fuzzy. An avowed cat-lover, she nevertheless refuses to discriminate on the basis of species, and married a human despite his lack of fur. The cat still rules the roost, though!

You can visit Stormy on the web at <http://www.stormysommers.com>, or join http://groups.yahoo.com/group/stormy_forecast to receive her monthly newsletter.