

A person with long, flowing blonde hair is lying on their back on a large, moss-covered log. They are wearing a dark, possibly black, long-sleeved top. The log is covered in vibrant green moss. The background is a dense forest with many thin, bare tree branches reaching upwards. In the upper left corner, there is a vertical line of yellow, star-shaped leaves or petals. The overall lighting is soft, suggesting a misty or overcast day.

**ALAYNE  
WARREN**

**PLYMOUTH  
ROCK 2075**

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Plymouth Rock 2075

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## **Dedication:**

To my family and friends, who give me so much to be  
thankful for every day of the year.

**Plymouth Rock 2075**

**By**

**Alayne Warren**

## Part One:

### Landing

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Hope Giovanni looked around the landing site with mounting dread. “*This* is the famous spot where the Mayflower came ashore? *This* is summer on the East Coast of Earth? *This* is where we’re going to spend the day?” She knew she sounded incredulous, even to her own ears, but if this was the right spot, it definitely wasn’t what she’d envisioned when the Professor had tagged her for this research project.

Hope turned to stare at her mentor, teacher, friend, and—she had been hoping—soon to be lover, but Professor Cal Riebochet was staring intently out the porthole on his side of the ship. She should have known. Nothing got Cal worked up more than a good old-fashioned historical site. Not even her skin-tight, electric blue bodysuit could get the Professor’s blood boiling hotter than the places he taught about in his classroom.

“Amazing. Simply amazing.” Cal’s tone was one of awe, but somehow Hope doubted that he was talking

about the new hairstyle she'd spent hours on this morning. She sighed with frustration and prepared to act interested about a site that on a 'could care less' scale of one to ten rated a negative five.

"Did you know," Cal said, starting right off in his lecturing mode, "that up until the meteor crash of 2014 thousands of visitors flocked to this site every year, just to see where the Mayflower had actually landed?"

"Hmm, yes, I think I remember hearing about that." Like about two million times.

Cal unbuckled his safety harness and moved to the back of the ship, gathering up his pack and Hope's own in one big hand. Her gaze automatically watched the play of muscles in his arm—the wrist twice as big around as her own, the forearm dusted with a light sprinkling of dark hair, the bare shoulder with muscles that bunched in tune with the ones in her own stomach. Hope had it bad for the Professor, and historical site or no historical site, she'd planned on making her stand today.

As she glanced one last time out the window on her side of the ship, she forcefully held back another sigh of disappointment. She'd been picturing bright sunlight, sandy shores, and a huge rock with a nice round surface on top just begging to have a blanket laid upon it. Hope was woman enough to admit that she'd come along on this trip not for the research value, not to see where her ancestors had been, and certainly not to discover the true meaning of that still-in-service holiday, Thanksgiving. Oh, no. Hope

Giovanni had come along on this trip with Professor Calvin H. Riebochet III for the simple task of getting him flat on his back.

If her surroundings had anything to do with it, it was going to be a lot more difficult than she'd planned.

Cal opened the hatch, and a gust of chilly wind blew through the interior of the pod, reminding Hope that she had nothing on underneath her nifty bodysuit. She'd dressed for seduction, not exploration.

Hope followed him out onto the damp, dirty ground of their landing spot. Grass was just beginning to grow again in this part of Earth, but the majority of the ground seemed to be made up of mud. Cal clomped merrily along, recorder in hand, no doubt triangulating his coordinates to those he'd memorized as the location of the former Plymouth Rock.

The rock, or rather where the rock had once been, was their destination. For decades, an actual piece of granite graced the land of Plymouth, Massachusetts, proclaiming for all to see that here was the place where the English had come upon America's shores. The rock, that piece of history sacred to many, was just one thing amid thousands that had been destroyed when a meteor landing five miles off the coast of North Carolina caused the Atlantic Ocean to flood the eastern seaboard.

Hope had never been all that interested in history. Although she'd never tell him, she'd only enrolled in

Cal's class—*Historical Sites and Landmarks of Earth 1600-2015*—to gain his attention. Seeing Professor Riebochet twice a week, for three hours at a time, had benefits that totally outweighed the fact that she had absolutely no desire in anything historical.

"See that tree over there?" The Professor's voice snapped Hope out of her reverie, and she hurried across the muddy ground on her Air Treads. As she stood beside him, she realized he still had her gear.

"Here, let me take my pack."

"No need. It's not that heavy. Plus, a gentleman always carries a lady's bag."

Hope glanced at him, mouth agape, sure he was joking. A gentleman? A lady? Sure, Cal Riebochet would most definitely fit into the category of gentleman, but there was no way in hell her square peg would ever fit into the round hole of ladydom.

Snorting was probably out of the question, as was laughing until she fell to the ground in a heap. So she shut her mouth with an audible click and stood silently beside him, determined not to open her mouth until he asked her a question she had to respond to. Then she realized he'd already done that.

Glancing around, she saw something she thought might once have been a tree about thirty yards to their right. It stood only about two feet off the ground, with gnarled limbs and no leaves. Tree? Today, anything was possible.

"If you're talking about that stump with arms over there, then yes, I see the tree."

Cal didn't even break a smile. The quiet, reserved

type he was. Unless he was lecturing, which he loved to do, and then he became loud, rambunctious, and animated. She'd been hoping that if she got him out of Professor mode and turned that hidden energy into more productive lines of reasoning—like, say, getting down and dirty with his research assistant—that she'd unleash the man she knew was hiding underneath that stuffy image.

So far, stuffy was staying stuffy, and getting dirty wasn't going to be a problem. Getting down, however, looked to be a bust.

The only way to get through this tedious day was to keep talking. For a girl like her, that shouldn't be a problem. What would be a problem was sounding like she knew what she was talking about, and sounding interesting. When you're talking to a Professor, sounding intelligent was a must. When you were talking to Professor Riebochet, sounding intelligent was imperative to your health.

"It's so dark. I mean, it's almost eleven in the morning, Earth time, and it's darker than dusk. Any ideas?" There, that sounded smart.

Hope was following behind Cal, close enough to see his glutes moving in time with his legs. All in all, a great view, even in the near-darkness.

His voice floated back to her, a mixture of professor-ism and teasing in his tone. "You didn't read over the notes I sent home with you yesterday, did you?"

How to answer that one? They said honesty was the best policy, but in this case, they could be wrong.

"Of course I did." Hope stumbled over a rock hidden in the wet ground, grabbing onto Cal's belt pack to keep from falling on her face. Seems lying for the good of the cause might not be the way to go after all.

"You all right?"

"Just peachy." She let go of his belt, reluctantly, and backed up a few inches. Pushing her hands through her long blonde hair, she smiled what she hoped was a lascivious pursing of lips in his direction. Hope had no idea what a lascivious smile was, but she was trying her best. "Anyway, I did indeed read the notes you sent home with me. I thought, however, that hearing you tell your personal opinions on the darkness would be beneficial." Holy cow, she could sound smart!

Cal Riebochet had blue eyes, the kind that looked into your own and made things thump around in the rest of your body. She could see them now, even in the murky darkness, weighing her words—probably for believability. Then he smiled, and whether he believed her or not, all was once again right with the world; cold, wet, muddy Earth be damned.

"When you put it that way, how can I refuse?" Cal turned his back on her again, aiming towards their tree. He'd put his recorder away and swung their packs over his left shoulder, a soldier of history happily marching toward their goal. "When the meteor landed in the Atlantic, the resulting tidal waves flooded the entire eastern seaboard, from Maine all the way down to Florida. Thousands of people drowned, which was quite unnecessary, in my

opinion, due to the fact that they'd had weeks of warning to move farther into the country.

But as you know, it didn't stop there. The meteor's path had bisected that of the sun's trajectory and temporarily threw it off course. Just long enough to freeze the floodwaters—in essence, to bring about a mini Ice Age. The chemical and biological make-up of the eastern states of Earth is now a lot like that of Alaska. Long months of darkness, followed by months of almost constant daylight. Vegetation has started to grow again in this part of the world, and if you want my conclusions on the matter, it's only a matter of time before human habitation can be supported once again."

Yep, Cal loved to lecture. Good thing Hope liked listening to him. Although she had to admit, this part of the class was interesting. Real field research with a good-looking, desirable man in a part of the solar system that most people her age would never see.

Habitation on Mars had come about in 2032, almost as a direct result to the flooding of Earth's eastern states. Inland, clear to Washington, DC, had been completely unfit for human living, so its inhabitants had moved west. But there was only so much space for so many people, and the Midwest and West Coast had quickly become overcrowded. The President of the United States had urged scientists to speed up their pace on the research of humans living on Mars, and the scientists had been quick and eager to respond. So, voila! Problem solved by shipping around two and a half million humans to another

planet.

Cal had been born on Mars. Hope knew that much from his profile listed on the University's recruitment website. Hope Giovanni, however, had been born on Earth. Seattle, Washington, had a very large Italian population—all those hot-blooded Italians that had left New York and Jersey before the flood had emigrated as far away from the East Coast as they could get. Hope had left Seattle, and Earth, behind at the age of eighteen. Partly rebellion, partly curiosity, she'd headed for Mars to make her own mark. She had an Earth-born College diploma in Business Administration, and was only three credits shy of earning a Master's Degree in Business. And what, you might ask, were the courses she was lacking? You've got it—history.

She was a study in contradictions, she knew. A blonde Italian. Imagine that. Her mother, however, was strictly blue-blood English. Caroline Fuller Giovanni could trace her ancestry all the way back to her great-great-great-great and so on grandfather, Charles Fuller, who was actually a passenger on the Mayflower when it landed on American soil on November 11, 1620. And she never failed to remind everyone who would listen of that very fact.

Blonde hair, brown eyes, and the temperament of her pure blood Italian father. Definitely a contradiction, and maybe an unconscious reason she enrolled in Professor Riebochet's class to begin with. Oh, it wasn't the main reason, not by a long shot, but it sounded good.

They were at the tree. Thank God, because between the rubbing of her Air Treads and the droning of Cal's lecture, she needed a rest.

"I need to set up some lights for the vids. Here, take these," Cal said, handing her both their packs. "There's a portable spotlight in there that should work fine. If you can set it up, I'll finish the recordings and get the camera ready."

All work and no play. Ah well, Hope thought, there's always the eighteen-hour return trip. Maybe by then Cal's defenses would be lowered enough for her to pounce.

Setting up the light was a snap. Hope spent fifteen minutes making minute adjustments that the Professor assured her were absolutely necessary for the perfect shot. She watched with admiration as he took picture after picture, first with the digital camera that could be hooked up directly to the University's computer, then with the still recorder that he would use to convert to slides for the class lecture she knew was coming. He brought out the video camera, assuring her that live recordings were absolutely necessary.

During all of this, Hope sat to the side and surreptitiously watched him work while taking notes on her hand-held recorder. Watching him bend, stoop, and flex had butterflies doing a dance in her stomach. She was twenty-four years old, and had been waiting for almost two years to get her hands on the one man who gave her the shivers.

It took less than an hour. A thirty-six hour round-

trip from Mars to Earth, and their entire reason for coming took less than an hour. Hope shook her head in resignation.

"Time for a break and some food, don't you think?" Cal had come to sit beside her, having packed away all the equipment and carefully wrapping everything with soft cloths before returning them to the packs. The video camera was still out, as he wanted to film the return trek back to the ship. For posterity, he'd said.

The only posterity she wanted to see was his posterior, rising and falling in the air as he straddled her. Oh, Christ.

Cal handed her a pre-packaged meal and settled in to eat his own. "So what do you think? Worth the trip out here?"

"Hmm." Hope was trying to sound noncommittal. She'd enjoyed his company, as always, but the long trip here and the prospect of the long trip back home did nothing for her.

The Professor took a sip of his bottled water and laughed. "'Hmm' as in, 'yes, sir, this was a totally educational trip and I'm so glad you asked me to come along', or 'hmm' as in, 'how the hell did this man talk me into this'?"

Hope had to laugh. Cal Riebochet was almost twenty years her senior. His black hair was cut in what was once called a military style, shorn close to his head. His eyes sparkled in the dusky light, and the dimple in his chin just begged to be kissed. She'd always been attracted to him, ever since seeing him

come into the University Affairs office where she worked. At the time, she hadn't been enrolled in any classes. She simply worked there to earn money, to pay the bills, to make a life of her own. When she found out he was a Professor, she'd been intrigued enough to find out what he taught. When she learned it was history, it had taken her over six months to work up the desire to sign up for his class. She really, really hated history.

But the thought of spending six hours a week with the hunky stud Professor had finally convinced her to take his class. If only he'd let her teach him a thing or two, they could have a beautiful teacher/student relationship. However, and it was a big however, there had never been even a hint that Professor Riebochet fraternized with his students.

Great for his reputation, very bad for her plans to seduce him.

Cal was still smiling at her, and Hope felt that now was the time to come clean—at least about history. "I guess it's more like 'Hmm, it was interesting, but not so interesting that I'm wondering why I gave up two days of my life for it.'"

"That's an honest enough answer, Hope. I know you hate history."

She was shocked. He knew? But if he knew she had absolutely no desire in his class, why did he choose her as his assistant for the trip?

"Because I wanted to spend more time with you, away from the classroom."

And he was a mind reader to boot.

“Yes, well, umm.” *Brilliant, Hope. You’re the epitome of sophisticated conversation.*

He turned those eyes in her direction. They were sitting close, on a blanket she’d stuffed into her pack in case they did, indeed, decide to do the deed—deed being, in this case, a lunch break. Hope could see each individual eyelash, could trace the curve of his eyebrows if she just lifted her hand. Her hand, though, seemed glued to the bottle of protein shake she was now crushing in her grip.

What should she say? Gee, I’ve wanted to spend more time with you alone since I first saw your delectable body walk into my office? Well golly, it’s about damn time you noticed that I’m not just another blonde history addict? Or, in all honesty, hot damn, now let’s get busy?

In the end, she decided a combination of the three would be the best way to go. After all, she’d come along on this trip for exactly this purpose, right? And Giovannis weren’t known for missing opportunities, especially the kind that came in six-foot-four-inch packages, wrapped in body-hugging material that left nothing—*nothing*—to the imagination.

Hope’s hands left their death grip on the beverage bottle and somehow, of their own accord, wrapped themselves around his upper arms. They were nose to nose now, and the Professor’s startled squeak, although not manly, had her wanting to squirm against him.

“I hate history. We both know it. Just like we both know that the only damn reason I enrolled in your

class was to get close to you. If you didn't know it before, well, you know it now." Hope lowered her voice, and her face, until her words were nothing but a breath upon his lips. "I'm really glad I came along on this trip. It's been, how should I put it, fairly enlightening. But I'll admit, I had ulterior motives for coming along."

"What kind, umm," Cal started, clearing his throat, "exactly what type of ulterior motives are we talking about?"

It was Hope's turn to smile, and she watched his eyes widen as she let her tongue escape to lick along his bottom lip. "The kind that have nothing to do with past history, and everything to do with making our own."

And then she kissed him. Hope Giovanni, Italian hell on wheels, daydreamer of libidinous thoughts during college history class, planted one full on her Professor.

It was heavenly. In the dark haze of what should have been a noonday sun, Hope kissed Cal Riebochet with all the pent-up desire she'd been hoarding for months. And to her surprise, he kissed her back just as ardently.

This was no gentle exploration, no hesitant taste of forbidden fruit. Oh, no. This was a full-out, fingers tangled in hair, wet and sloppy exchange of saliva. Hope had spent countless hours wondering what sort of passionate man lay beneath the exterior of her cool Professor. With one kiss she knew, exactly, just what getting it on with this man would be like.

She pulled away, breathless, and realized Cal held handfuls of her hair. She didn't go far, and when he moved to pull her back to him, she didn't resist.

"I've never, ever, kissed one of my students." He sounded disbelieving, as if he couldn't understand how he'd managed to get in this situation. If he asked her, Hope thought, she'd tell him it was the bodysuit.

"I've never kissed a Professor, either," Hope said, sucking Cal's bottom lip into her mouth. The sounds they both made mingled together, and Hope inched closer, until she was practically on his lap.

"This," he started, stealing another kiss, "is probably totally against protocol." He kissed her again, his tongue tangling with hers as she squirmed against the erection poking against a very sensitive part of her anatomy. "Actually," he continued, pulling her head back to lick a path of fire down her throat, "this might very well get me fired."

"Hmm, no, I don't think so," Hope panted, her nails digging into his shoulders. "Two consenting adults, both of legal age, outside of the classroom? I don't think," she gasped on an intake of air as his right hand came around to her breast, "that they'd have any grounds to fire you."

Cal licked her nipple, right through the material of her suit, and her breath left her in a rush. She felt wetness rush to that spot between her legs, and wondered if he'd be able to tell how turned on she was. When he suckled the nipple into his mouth, her body jerked once, hard, against his lips, and an orgasm ripped through her.

When the spasms subsided, she was half lying across him, her arms weakly wrapped around his waist, her head somewhere in the vicinity of his chest. Cal rubbed her back, small, warm circles with his hands that she could feel all the way to her belly. How embarrassing. The man had only to suck on her nipple and she came like a mare in heat.

"I am so ungodly embarrassed." The words were muffled against his suit, and Hope thought, if she was lucky, he wouldn't be able to hear her, and thus could pretend that none of this had just happened.

"Hope, there is absolutely nothing for you to be embarrassed about. Now get up here where I can see you."

"Don't want to." God, her cheeks were on fire, all the way to the roots of her hair. And she could feel against the breast that Cal had somehow just used to finagle her into a mind-blowing orgasm the growing erection he was doing nothing to hide.

Cal laughed out loud. He raised her up gently, one hand on the back of her head and the other wrapped around her upper arm. He brought her up until their eyes were on an even level, and then he did something that surprised the shit out of her.

Professor Calvin H. Riebochet III lowered his mouth to the opposite breast, and did it again.

The spasms didn't last as long this time, but they were just as powerful. When it was done, and she once again floated back down to reality, she wondered what the hell could possibly be wrong with her. She wasn't a virgin. Sure, it had been a while

since she'd had sex, and she'd been fantasizing about having it with Cal on a regular basis, but that didn't explain why his touch, why the simple act that he had performed, would produce such physical results.

*Get a grip, Hope. Do you really care why it's happening like this? I'd think, after all this time waiting, that you'd be jumping up and down with joy that the man you've been attracted to for so long can actually give you the orgasm from Heaven.*

Inner voice of reason was right. Who cared why, or even how?

"Well, okay, we know that works. That," she said, reaching up a hand to stroke his cheek, "was absolutely incredible."

"Yes, it was," Cal answered, smoothing back a lock of her hair that had worked its way across the bridge of her nose. "And you, Miss Hope Giovanni, are pretty damn incredible yourself. Now, back to what we were discussing."

Discussing? They were discussing something?

"Don't be embarrassed. When, and if, we do anything together—sexual or not—I don't want you feeling sorry or embarrassed." He was stroking her hair, and her nipples still ached. Her lower extremities pulsed in time with the feel with his hand, and Hope was afraid that very soon she was going to do something else horrible—like start shaking from another Cal-induced climax.

"I'll try my best."

"Good. Now," he said, laying her back to rest on their lunch blanket, "I'd like to see what else I can do

to get that response.”

All Hope could think was, *Oh, goodie.*

## **Part Two:**

### **Takeoff**

Professor Calvin H. Riebochet III was a man who lived and breathed the past. He constantly submerged himself in all things historical—history was already written, just waiting to be explored. Cal very rarely submersed himself in the future, as he knew that it was only what he made it. His hope was that someday, twenty, fifty, or a hundred years from now, someone would spend as much time digging into his present as he did that of others.

The trip to Earth to see where Plymouth Rock had once stood was a life-long dream, and he hadn't hesitated to bring Hope Giovanni along for the ride. His only plans for the day were to get as much information about the original landing spot of the Pilgrims as he could. Pictures, live video feed, notes—everything he needed to take back home and explore in further depth. He hadn't, in any way, shape, or form, set out to seduce his research assistant.

Hope was a beautiful woman. Cal had no doubts at

all about the number of willing and able men who lined up outside the woman's door. She was intelligent, funny, and very, very nice to look at. She was also, in Cal's mind, off limits. Ever since he'd first met her, that day he'd walked into the University Affairs office looking for a customary budget form, he'd been attracted to her. But Professor Riebochet would never, *ever* fraternize with a student. Of course, when he'd first seen her, she had only been a University employee, not a student. But it had never even crossed his mind to ask her out at that time. After all, Cal had no time for anything except the past.

But then Hope had enrolled in his class, and Cal had known from the start that the woman, although undeniably smart, had absolutely no interest in history. So why, he asked himself, would Ms. Giovanni take his class?

The answer had to be that she was just as attracted to him as he was to her.

But he hadn't acted on it, not in all the long months that he'd agonized as she sat in his classroom, taking notes as he got caught up in his lectures, casting sly glances his way when he lowered the lights and fired up the videos for class presentations.

He'd never acted on it, because it just wouldn't have been the right thing to do. Sure, other teachers, many of them full Professors like himself, had engaged in relationships—mostly sexual—with their students over the years. But Cal Riebochet prided himself on having standards and morals above the

average man. He could control his sexual desires, could reign in his desire for one pretty, young student.

Until today.

Today, Cal and Hope were far from home, alone in a place where humans hadn't lived for years. And Hope Giovanni was wearing a skin-tight, electric blue bodysuit, and it was clear as day that it was *all* she was wearing.

A man could only take so much.

Was it rationalization? You betcha. But Cal was interested in more than just a quick bump and grind with Hope—he hoped that this encounter today, once he declared his interest, would turn into something that lasted beyond just today.

The woman was fire. A few kisses, a few caresses, and she'd literally burned up in his arms. The knowledge that he'd brought her to orgasm, not once, but twice, with only his mouth upon her breasts was like kindling to his own fire.

He wanted her, and he wanted her now. And later. And later after that. Cal Riebochet very well may have found the one woman who could make him do the one thing he'd never thought possible—quit living in the past, and start living for the moment.

Cal lay beside Hope on the blanket, just watching her. She was embarrassed, he knew, for having such a lusty response—and so quickly—to his touch. But she shouldn't have been embarrassed, not at all. It was unbelievably arousing to have such a responsive woman just an arm's length away.

"You are such a beautiful woman, Hope."

"I didn't think you'd noticed." Her voice was low, thready, her breaths coming shallow and fast.

"Oh, I noticed all right. From that very first day in the Affairs office, I noticed."

A little frown formed between her eyes, and Cal had the urge to kiss it away. "If you noticed that long ago, you had to know, too, that I was interested in you. But you never did or said anything that made it seem like you were interested in return."

Cal smiled. "I know. I was attempting to be the upstanding Professor, the one who would never engage a student—or even a co-worker—in a relationship that could possibly damage his University standing."

"I think that if two people decide they'd like to embark upon a personal relationship away from University grounds, it wouldn't be any concern of the Board at all."

"You're probably right. But you have to understand, Hope, that I haven't been involved with anyone since my wife died eight years ago." It didn't hurt as badly now, talking about her in the past tense. "And when I saw you, all the pent-up sexual tension that I'd been ignoring for a very long time came crashing down, and I ran away from it."

Cal stroked Hope's cheek, his fingers light as they trailed down her neck, through the valley between her breasts, lightly drawing circles around her navel. "It's been a very long time since I've been interested in anything except history, Hope. And I had no way

of knowing, totally and completely, that you were even interested in me that way."

"You could have asked."

He laughed. "You're right, I could have. But that would have taken nerve that I simply don't have. Oh, it's true," he said, stopping her comments, "I'm a bruiser in the classroom, I know, when it comes to things I'm passionate about, like things that took place hundreds of years ago. But when it comes to women, Hope, I'm totally lost. I've been out of the game for a long, long time, and I don't even know the protocols anymore. And I'm guessing that seducing your research assistant on an off-planet expedition really isn't good protocol."

Hope leaned up on her elbows and placed a light kiss upon him, the barest brush of her lips against his own. "I think, Professor, that nothing about our relationship is the norm. It's been a long time for me, too, as if you couldn't tell. I've wanted you for what seems like forever. I listen to you speak in class, and my heart gets all fluttery. I sit next to you during after-hours, dictating your notes, and my palms get damp. I dream about you at night, and other parts of me get wet. Cal," she said, lying back down and pulling him with her, "I say protocol be damned."

And it was as simple as that. She was right. They were legal, consenting adults, both caught up in emotions and desires that had nothing to do with history, nothing to do with classroom etiquette, and everything to do with the needs of a man and a woman.

Protocol be damned.

Hope's long hair was spread out like a curtain of silk on the red blanket she'd brought along. Cal lowered his mouth, taking hers in a battle of tongues and teeth. He hadn't felt this stirring of desire in so long that it was hard to keep control, hard to keep himself from stripping her naked and burying himself inside of her in one hard stroke.

He forced himself to slow down, working his hand behind her neck to undo the clasp that held her suit on. Peeling it down her body was like unwrapping a present—smooth, bare skin, shining bright as moonlight in the darkness that enveloped this part of Earth.

"You are so, so beautiful."

"Let me see you, too, Cal. Please." Her breathing had sped up, and her breasts were rising and falling in the dim light. Her nipples were hard, again, and he wanted nothing more than to cause that explosion deep inside of her that he'd done before. This time, though, he wanted to bring about that reaction with his mouth on other parts of her body.

Cal undid his own suit, roughly pulling it off until they were both naked. He knew what she would see—a body he kept in shape by his vigorous workout sessions in the virtual reality cage, the scar on his abdomen from a wreck that happened on an expedition over ten years ago, and an erection straining for release inside of her sweet warmth.

"Now, Cal, now. I've waited so long for this."

But he wouldn't rush it. Not this, their first time,

simply because they *had* been waiting so long. He wanted to prolong it, to get every drop of pleasure from this very basic of acts. Humans had been coupling for millennia, and he had no desire to hurry through it this time.

He brought his mouth back to her, to the hollow of her shoulder, to the side of her breast, down to her navel. If he could wring a climax from her by suckling her breasts, what would happen if he used his mouth on her silky womanhood, if he suckled her clit the same way he'd sucked on her nipple?

Cal needed to know. His first taste of her was Heaven. All woman, hot silk, tangy sweetness that said she wanted him, desired him, needed him. He savored her the way he would a fine glass of cognac—slow licks, sharp inhales and exhales of breath upon that sensitive skin, long swipes of his tongue against her swollen flesh. Hope writhed beneath him and as she tried to close her legs, he clamped them open with his hands upon her hips, baring her for the unrelenting pleasure of his mouth upon her.

“Cal, oh God, Cal. I’m going to come again.”

He hummed against her flesh, knowing that she was close, lapping at her wetness as a cat would lap at cream. And when he felt her hands clamp against his head, pulling him closer, pushing him away, hips bucking like that of a wild stallion, he suckled her clit between his teeth as he had done with her breasts.

This climax was nothing like the others. Hope’s screams echoed through the darkness, her hands

moving to dig nails into his back, her legs spasming against his head as if she'd never be able to let go.

It seemed to take hours before her shivering subsided, before she relaxed, limp and sated, onto the blanket.

Cal smiled and smoothed the damp hair back from her face. "This makes me sorry that I waited so long."

Hope could barely move, but her hand raised to bring his lips back to her own. Cal could still taste her as their mouths mingled, that salty essence that said he'd had her in the most intimate of ways.

"I want to be inside of you. I have protection, in my back, if we need it."

Her heart rate had slowed, but he could still feel it, slow and steady, underneath him. "We don't. Modern medicine on Mars makes it absolutely impossible to become pregnant until you take measures to ensure that it does."

"Good. Because I want nothing more than to feel every inch of you wrapped around every inch of me."

There'd been a time when he'd been one smooth operator, a man who could prolong his own needs for however long it took to satisfy the woman he was with. Cal knew that prolonging anything wouldn't be necessary with Hope Giovanni—the woman was more responsive than any woman he'd ever known. They'd experience pleasure together, and he had a feeling that it would be the most intense feeling he could even imagine.

His entry was sure, swift, and a bit rougher than he'd intended. When Hope cried out, he was alarmed

he'd hurt her. But her hands came to grasp his rear, and she pulled him deeper inside, lifting her hips until he could feel the curve of her uterus.

They were as completely, deeply joined as a man and woman could be.

Cal's thrusts were hard and fast. His moans of pleasure mingled with Hope's as they strove for that ultimate of feelings. He took her mouth roughly, kiss after kiss, as he used the fingers of his left hand to tweak her nipples, pulling in time with the thrusts of his cock.

"I'm going to come, Cal, now."

It was all he needed to hear. He thrust even harder, even faster, even deeper, and felt the beginnings of her orgasm wrap around him. As he spilled his seed inside of her, his cry of release was a guttural sound against her neck.

He collapsed on top of her, trying and failing to support his weight, as her arms wrapped around him.

When he could speak, the sweat had dried upon his back, and he realized that all two hundred pounds of him was undoubtedly crushing the woman beneath him. He raised up on his arms, planted a kiss upon her forehead, and rolled over to lie beside her.

"That was the most amazing thing I've ever had the joy of taking part in."

Hope's laugh was muted as she rolled onto her side to face him. "You know, at the beginning of this trip, I didn't understand why it was so important to actually see Plymouth Rock. Sure," she said, running her hand absently up and down his arm, "the

Pilgrims instituted Thanksgiving, but for me that's always been a holiday to use as an excuse to take the day off work, visit with family, and stuff myself."

She laid a kiss on his chest, near his heart. "This year, I feel like I have a whole hell of a lot to be thankful for."

Cal kissed her gently, and pulled her down until her head lay upon his chest. "I think that this is one Thanksgiving I won't soon forget."

They dozed for a while, until the cold seeped through the warmth of their bodies. They dressed hurriedly, neither speaking, and as Cal grabbed their packs, Hope picked up the video camera for the return trip to the ship.

Glancing down, her eyes widened as she turned to him, and she silently held the device out to him. Cal looked down, and couldn't suppress a smile. "Well, I did say I wanted to make a film for posterity."

"You jerk, that's not posterity, that's pornography!" But she was laughing, and Cal joined in.

The video camera had been left on, and as he rewound the disk, he realized that their entire sexual encounter had been recorded for the entire world to see. "Maybe we should keep it," he said, but Hope shook her head.

"Oh, no. No naked pictures hanging around for future blackmail material. We leave it here."

Cal thought about arguing, but she was right. This was private, and anyway, he didn't need a reminder of what having sex with Hope felt like. He planned on

doing it again—right away—anyway. He turned around, and suddenly knew the perfect way to dispose of it.

He popped the tape and walked to the small tree that was now all that was left of the original Plymouth Rock. Digging around the roots, he made a space in the made big enough for the tape, then gently placed it in the hole and covered it back up.

“We’ll always know that Plymouth Rock is here. It can be our spot.”

The trip back to the ship was a quick one. Once the ship was back into open space and on autopilot, Hope turned to him, a question in her eyes.

“Don’t worry, Ms. Giovanni. I know what to be thankful for. And this year, it’s you.”

Making love on a ship traveling at mach speed through space was another thing he’d always wanted to try. And in his opinion, there was no time like the present.

## About the Author

**A**layne lives in the heart of Illinois, the state in which she was born and raised and has always resided. She has a wonderful, supportive husband, two eerily intelligent and rambunctious children, and the new-found ability to stay home and write full-time. Between doing book reviews, writing, and being a typical PTO mom, she hopes to keep writing long into the future.