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# **ALIEN SEDUCTION**

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Megan Hussey**

**MIDNIGHT SHOWCASE**  
**Erotic-aah Digest Vol. 37-08ED**

**Alien Seduction**

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## **ALIEN SEDUCTION**

Ever wondered what really happens in strange cosmic places?  
Seductive fantasies don't always take place on Earth anymore.

### **Blue Eyes, Leigh Ellwood**

Sergeant Chuck DuClay's first day on base proves to be cosmically passionate as he's seduced by a strange woman in love with his blue eyes.

### **Hellion, Mae Powers**

Tyrant Tyrah Tyranus wants to dominate the known galaxy. Agents from H.A.R.E.M. must thwart her diabolical plans. Hellion intends to kill the bitch.

### **Tigre Moon, Jenna Leigh**

Tael searched for years to find his true love to set him free of the blood curse of the Tigre Moon. Is Neri the one?

### **He Comes in Peace, Megan Hussey**

Preparing for an intergalactic mission, Muriel yearns for the solitude of space; her handsome alien copilot has other, more exciting ideas to occupy her with.

**Blue Eyes**  
**by**  
**Leigh Ellwood**

Sergeant Chuck DuClay is stuck in the desert for a year with no girlfriend and no prospects of finding one. A night of brotherly revelry leads him off base to answer the seductive call of his ex-fiance's mirage, a woman attracted to Chuck's blue eyes.

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# **Blue Eyes**

**by**

## **Leigh Ellwood**

### **Chapter One**

The desert hid little. Amazing that Patton had succeeded during his campaigns on this godforsaken continent. How in the hell did he blend?

Sergeant Chuck DuClay stared out across the expanse of sand. Steam caressed his face, and the immense heat wiggled distant objects in his vision. Even with his eyes narrowed to slits, he could still make out the base—his home for the next twelve months—blatant in the distance, like a scab exposed. All that was missing was the giant red target painted around the perimeter, indicating to enemy forces exactly where the bomb should be dropped. Beyond that, he swore he could see Europe.

*The next twelve months...*

Knowing the war raged elsewhere hardly inspired confidence of an eventless tour of duty, guarding the nearby seaports of Djibouti, which he couldn't see from his vantage point. Vigilance was a virtue well learned in his time with the Army since voluntarily enlisting after 9/11. Then, a more idealistic Chuck had yearned to defend his country and wave his flag in the face of oppression; one tour through the Middle East quickly cured him of any future inclinations toward combat. Right now, he just wanted a break.

Why anyone would think to send him here as his duty contract was about to expire... Chuck clutched his lurching stomach and tried to discern, as he had since getting assigned here, whom he had pissed off.

An invisible bump along the sandy floor jolted the Jeep, sending Chuck and his driver momentarily airborne. Private Dewayne Anderson, a blond, darkly tanned man with large, sweating hands, appeared unfazed and kept a firm grip on the wheel. Chuck, by contrast, yelped and grasped whatever was available for support, in lieu of the missing seatbelts. Beneath them, tires continued to spit light dust as they neared their destination.

Dewayne crooked his head closer, his mirrored shades still fixed on the filmy windshield. “First time?” he yelled over the noise of the engine. His accent was distinctly Southern, thickened by a tongue that seemed to extend beyond normal limits. Chuck could only nod and wonder how the soldier didn’t inhale a bucket of sand as he talked.

“Yeah.”

Dewayne grinned a wide block of brightly white teeth, a daring gesture given how the sand pelted them fiercely. To Chuck, it felt like a million needle pricks tickling his face and arms. Dewayne, however, seemed impervious, as though his wicked smile shone forth to provide a force field.

Chuck squirmed in his seat, suddenly embarrassed, as Dewayne let out a deep guffaw. It was as though his driver had interpreted his answer as an admission of virginity.

“Who’d you piss off?” Dewayne asked.

“Not a clue.”

Another braying chuckle.

Chuck attempted to join in, but didn’t have it in his heart. He averted his eyes from Dewayne, his discomfort increasing. He saw something more in his companion’s shaded gaze that spoke hidden words of interest. He could swear Private Anderson sized him up from behind those sunglasses, evaluating Chuck’s sexual flexibility and prowess. Chuck didn’t doubt men experimented with the absence of women in these isolated bases and, to be honest, the idea didn’t wholly repulse him.

*Don’t ask, don’t tell. Definitely don’t ask me.*

*Not right now, anyway.*

Chuck shook his head. The heat was really getting to him, playing on his discomfort and taunting his forced celibacy. He had no right to think ill of his escort. He’d only just met the soldier, and he couldn’t be certain Dewayne straddled the fence, much less played for the home team exclusively.

Chuck, for one, was hardly one to hop from bed to cot and back. He wasn’t like his faithless ex-girlfriend. Whatever Dewayne did, on base or in town, was not his business.

“Just to warn you now, you gonna be bored shitless,” Dewayne told him as the Jeep slowed to the guard station. “Djibouti ain’t what you call a tourist trap, so don’t be expecting fuckin’ Branson. Nightlife is one casino that amounts to watered-down rum drinks and somebody’s grandmother running a fixed roulette wheel.”

Chuck nodded, thankful for the portable DVD player packed away in his sack. His body jarred with the vibration of the Jeep and its ensuing abrupt stop before a pair of unsmiling guards. “So, what does everybody do for downtime?”

There was that wall of white teeth again, gleaming in the African sun as Dewayne held his right hand high and waggled his fingers. The formerly stern statues surrounding them broke out in laughter, and Chuck felt his face flush from something other than the dry heat. He tried his best not to make his facial expression a question, lest any of the men volunteer further information. Do the men jack themselves off, or each other?

Unconsciously he squeezed his thighs together, anticipating an ache for want. His cock had been given enough manual workouts since he broke it off with Rita. *Twelve long months*...would he have anything left to work with when he got back to the States? Assuming he would find anybody?

“It’s low fat and don’t cost nothing, and you don’t have to worry about getting tested later on. Ain’t that right?” The question was directed to the nearest guard, who checked them in with snickering salute. One sharp jerk brought the Jeep back to life, and into the base they cruised. Chuck focused on the new scenery—bland tents and sandy sidewalks, soldiers sweating in desert camouflage—and tried not to picture the passersby with their cocks hanging out, waiting to yank or be yanked.

*Cocks*. Everywhere Chuck looked he saw men. His heart sank. He hadn’t expected to enjoy much carnal activity on this tour, but just the sight of a lovely feminine form on occasion—three-dimensional, preferably hourglass-shaped and brunette—would have boosted his spirits. With his two-year engagement to Rita dissolved, he knew he didn’t even have the clandestine e-mailed nude photo to look forward to while here. He imagined the base Internet system blocked all the fun sites.

*Twelve months*. If the war didn’t kill him, boredom was certainly a contender.

\* \* \* \*

He found it odd Dewayne chose to hang around while he acclimated himself to his new living quarters. Though he would serve his tour as a Military Police officer, keeping order in a place that seemed to have enough of it, he had not been offered special provisions. Eight cots cramped the tent he now called home, leaving barely enough room for each soldier to keep a footlocker. Chuck

positioned his just so it didn't collide with the one next to his. The last thing he needed at the beginning of his stay was an accusation of denting somebody's property. He would be the face of authority here, but Chuck knew sometimes passion gave way to violence, regardless of who was on the receiving end.

He would keep his cool, however. Somebody had to in the heat of the desert.

Dewayne appeared nervous now, glancing out the tent flap as though playing the watchman. Chuck suddenly felt like a criminal, prepared to sift through blankets and pillowcases in search of contraband cookies and letters from home.

"What I talked about earlier," Dewayne said, grimacing, "you didn't...that didn't offend you, did it?"

Chuck shrugged and slowly shook his head. "Human nature, is all. If nobody's getting hurt, it's none of my business."

He relaxed, then, "What if somebody made it your business?"

Chuck frowned. "I don't follow you."

"Yo, it's like this," Dewayne began, his face all serious now. Chuck watched the young man's face soften as a strong, dark hand raked over a thin layer of buzzed blond hair. "There's a group of us that's gets together here to...watch movies."

"Okay." Chuck drew out the word in more syllables than necessary. Where was this going? Was he expected to make himself scarce while Dewayne partied with his friends? Not tonight, though. He'd just come from a twenty-hour flight and wanted to get some sleep before reporting for duty.

"Call it a group tension release, whatever. We got a guy who brings in movies to help us..." Dewayne's mouth twitched and his eyebrows bent upward to his high hairline. Years melted from his face, and Chuck now saw the giddy mirth of a schoolboy looking forward to the last bell, when he could fly home and dig underneath his brother's bed for *Playboys* and cigarettes.

"These movies," Chuck said, "wouldn't happen to be Disney features?" He lay back on his cot, crossing his ankles and resting his head in his hands. More comfortable than the standard Army pillow issued him, plus it allowed Chuck to tilt his head upward for a better look at Dewayne.

Out of the Jeep, he was lean and tall. Hardly a model, but Chuck doubted the young man was ever wanting for the company of women. Or men.

*Don't ask, don't tell.* Chuck imagined this base held many secrets.

"Whatever the opposite of Disney is, times a million."

Chuck laughed. Dewayne's childlike candor was endearing, he had to admit. The private had to be quite green to reveal to an MP that somebody had smuggled in porn. "Your secret is safe with me," Chuck said. A few dirty movies he could overlook in a place that had little else to entertain the troops.

Dewayne slouched against the main tent pole and offered a casual salute. "Thanks, man. I don't know what I'd do if I didn't at least have that to look forward to."

*Masturbate in private?* The question was best left unsaid. Dewayne was a mystery—cocksure one second and skittish the next. Small comfort, knowing that they had twelve months to get to know each other better.

"We're getting together around twenty-one hundred hours, you can join in if you want," Dewayne said.

Did he have a choice? "I don't know. It's been a long day for me and I kinda want to get some shuteye..." Chuck doubted he could sleep in the same space as a group of men pumping their own cocks in full view.

"I couldn't help but overhear," Dewayne broke it, his voice now small, "you telling that soldier back at the airport about your DVD player."

Ah. So that was the game. Entertainment was provided, just no current means of enjoying it. Pick on the new guy with the goods. Make plans concrete so he has to say yes so he won't look like the base jackass. *Nice.*

Chuck sighed. "You don't have a player?"

"We use Doug's, er, Private Dougherty's laptop, but the screen burned out.

"I can imagine why."

"Not like that," Dewayne laughed. "It was old."

Chuck now noted the desperation lining the young soldier's strained smile. Could it be the release was needed that badly for the soldiers on base? He inhaled the desert air deeply, thinking it best not to make enemies so soon upon arriving.

"Sure, why not?" That would prove to be an interesting orientation. Chuck sighed. He'd be here by default anyway, he realized as his eyes fluttered shut. He was bone tired, apt to tumble

into the slumber of dead. The tinny moans of a lesbian orgy squealing through tiny pinhole speakers wouldn't be enough to rouse him.

Bony fingers prodding his ribs, however...

"What the fuck?"

He bolted upright. Time had clearly lapsed, he could tell by the position of sunlight beating down on the tent and the shadows crossing the desert floor. Dewayne, he presumed, had long since gone. In his place was an ancient African woman with a shock of white scouring pad hair. Dressed in rags and curved by what Chuck guessed was a combination of curiosity and osteoporosis, the wrinkled woman inspected his torso and thighs. He grew uncomfortable with the way her wizened face stretched into a leering grin. Wrinkles flattened but hardly took away the age from her coal black skin.

Lips parted to reveal blackened stumps that had once been teeth. Chuck sensed his skin curdle at the sight of it.

"What are you doing?" He flinched when her forefinger came to hover over his fly, air-tracing the bulge. "Watch that." How did a civilian just walk into camp? Granted, there might be local townspeople in the base's employ, but certainly none with the authority to access private quarters without an escort.

The old woman's age betrayed her abilities. With the dexterity of somebody much younger, she had Chuck's duffel on his outstretched legs and was quickly rooting through its contents. She was one elbow deep when Chuck managed to wrest it away. "No!" he shouted, deep and slowly, hoping *No* was universal. "You do not touch this."

High-pitched nonsense spilled from her toothless smile. Beady black eyes shone and haunted him. Chuck felt his heart throb to his stomach and his ears ring with her foreign chiding. Everything sounded like *nacknacknack*, a worn tongue clicking against her upper plate. She was a human alarm.

Thankfully, Dewayne was the first to respond. The young soldier bolted through the flaps, waving his hat like slapping away a fly. "Hey, git!" He shooed the old woman out of the tent.

Slowly, she turned, acquiescent. With one endearing smile aimed at Chuck, she tottered away as though voluntarily taking leave.

"Shit, sorry about that. She knows she's not supposed to come in here when the tent's empty." Dewayne looked at Chuck and realized his error. "Er...I meant to say, when somebody *awake*..."

Chuck held up his hand and lay back down. "I get it. I take it she works here?"

“She does laundry, and some alterations. I heard too she sells home remedies to some of the guys looking for hangover relief after liberty, but I ain’t into that voodoo. There’s a daughter who brings her here. *She* speaks English, but the old lady, forget it. She makes those weird clicking noises and shit.”

Chuck smiled, his eyelids suddenly heavy again. He felt confident the old witch wouldn’t return unbidden. There wasn’t anything in the small duffel worth stealing, and she had to have seen that.

“I won’t worry about her,” Chuck said. “It’s probably best, though, that she has a soldier squire her around when she makes her rounds?”

“Good idea.” Dewayne’s voice sounded uncertain, as though confused by the word *squire*.

“It is.” Chuck began to drift.

“We still on for later.”

*Later?* And Chuck remembered his movie date with the guys. “Sure. She isn’t gonna be there, is she?”

## Chapter Two

Eager hands curled around the flagpole situated in the center of the base thoroughfare. The vantage point was an open target for curious stares, yes, but few people seemed to care for others' business around here. Soldiers and civilian personnel walked past without a second glance. Even the one anomaly in the otherwise staid military camp was ignored as she waddled slowly, almost painfully, to their designated meeting place.

A glimpse at the teasing open flap offered no great reward. Chuck was probably sleeping still; he had dropped like a stone. No matter for now. Neither one of them was going anywhere.

Not yet.

The old woman was nattering her lyrical, clicking song as she reached the pole, a scowl marring her already wizened features. Her head shook from side to side vigorously, denouncing her mission, but her complaints quickly ceased when the bills came visible. American, as the natives preferred. Worth much more than their own currency. No doubt the old woman expected to live like a queen for this simple task.

Luckily, there were no language barriers to contend with, and the woman produced the bounty. A light palm unfolded to reveal the strands of brown—clipped and clumped together, a keepsake.

Most assuredly not Chuck's, a plus.

"You got this from *his* bag, correct?" There were to be no surprises tonight, or the old woman would discover one for herself when her entire family was wiped out as punishment for her ineptitude.

A toothless smile widened, and the old woman's free hand dipped into a pocket to extract the gold lavalier where the hair had presumably been kept. A stupid move; Chuck would most assuredly miss that. At the very least, however, the soldier would have a suspect in mind.

"Give me that. That was a stupid thing to do."

She protested at first, clicking and frowning, her voice turning into a steady sheep's bray. "I don't care, you old nitwit. You have

grandchildren to feed? Here.” More bills quelled the volume of the old woman’s belligerence.

The prize was finally returned with much reluctance. The old witch grudgingly collected her finder’s fee without another word and hobbled away. A quick check of the tent flap revealed no disturbance. Chuck slept, unaware.

*Oh.* To steal just a moment or two and watch him sleep. How those strong hands might curl around the edge of a blanket, how those smooth eyelids might flutter, protecting those marvelous eyes.

*Blue eyes.* Like looking into the clear ocean, it was. Chuck’s babies would be gorgeous with those same eyes. A new generation, watching the worlds with blue eyes unknown to alien races.

It would happen, and introduce a new era of dignity and beauty to a dying race.

Soldiers and staff continued past the flagpole, oblivious and uninterested. Another more determined fist closed around the strands of hair and the locket that had encased it. It had to belong to a lover, a girlfriend...not a wife, as Chuck wore no such ring to indicate that.

Whoever she was, Chuck would soon see her again if everything worked to plan.

And it would work. It *had* to work.

## Chapter Three

*Getting to knooooow yooooou, something something something about yoooouuu...*

Curse his poor memory. Trying to recall the song seemed to be the only cure to aid the pounding pornographic rhythm making his head ache. His suggestion to mute the film had been met with an enthusiastically negative reaction. Apparently the moaning and groaning and wah-wah pedals enhanced the experience.

If only it would make everybody cum faster, they could save the rest of the movie for another lonely, horny night. He could go back to sleep and forget he had ever participated in a circle jerk. Or rather, an elliptical jerk. Bodies were everywhere, draped haphazardly around the tent.

Chuck reclined on the floor, against the side bar of his cot as best he could. The thick metal rod was situated just under his shoulder blades and made for an uncomfortable brace. It was hardly the optimal position for stroking his half-flaccid erection to orgasm. Looking around the tent at fellow bunkmates and other soldiers, though, he noticed adaptation where masturbation was concerned was a quickly learned art. Hands moved at different speeds and levels of roughness. It seemed like a race.

There were eight of them tonight. Dewayne had mentioned earlier the number might be as high as twenty, and Chuck surmised the absent must have found a better deal elsewhere. Eight bodies crowded around the portable DVD player, which was situated high on a stack of crates. Pretzel positions and splayed bare limbs decorated the tent as eight soldiers silently stroked to *The King and I...and Her and Him*.

Chuck rolled his eyes at the current harem scene, highlighted by an acrobatic group of lipstick lesbians engaged in some heavy clit-licking. So this was what the King's wives did for fun when he was off winning wars and waltzing with Deborah Kerr. He had half a mind to just quit and take a walk. His heart, and apparently his cock, just wasn't into this.

He tried to recall the last time he had been able to sustain an erection. It had to have been the last time he made love with Rita, weeks before his deployment. Looking into her eyes as he gently eased his cock in and out of her, he sensed and embraced her sadness, and dried her tears on his chest. He did his best to kiss away her fears and help her temporarily forget his pending departure by focusing on their love.

He hadn't realized then her melancholy had nothing to do with missing him while he was overseas. To Rita, this act represented their last time...period, rather than their last time until his return from Africa. Two days later, she broke down and admitted she did not want to marry a man who might come home in a body bag. She could not wear the badge of military wife and accept the risks connected to it.

So he was here in Djibouti, nowhere near the war. Last he heard, Rita had taken up with a luxury car salesman with a bad knee. Good for them. As their wedding gift, Chuck decided not to point out to Rita that danger did not discriminate, that her current love might just get run over while directing a Cadillac onto the showroom floor.

*Dream on.*

Dewayne interrupted his mentally tragic stroll down memory lane. "Man, this is some shit, yo," he groaned, and stroked his cock the way one might pet a kitten. Flat-handed, one direction down the shaft and curling around the tip. Chuck watched a drop of precum disappear in Dewayne's hand and quickly searched for another point of focus. Somewhere in the course of the clit-licking, one of the King's wives had unearthed a strap-on dildo from a mountain of silk pillows, and now the wives were taking turns on the giving and receiving end. This scene held even less appeal for Chuck.

"Yo," he muttered and let go of his cock. He moved to stand but stilled, hands gripping the cot behind him, when two soldiers abruptly darted out of the tent.

Neither one had bothered to zip up on leaving.

Dewayne didn't wait to be asked. "They just want a bit of privacy, I guess."

"I guess." Chuck wasn't about to ask for specifics. Were the two sucking each other off, or did they prefer to cum away from prying eyes? Whatever the reason, it was none of his business, just as his lack of interest in the King and his less-than-fair maids was none of Dewayne's.

"Where you goin'?" The best part's coming up," Dewayne moaned, his first orgasm of the evening apparently imminent.

“There’s a hot DP scene on top of an elephant’s back. You gotta see it.”

“I’ll live,” Chuck said. Animal cruelty wasn’t his thing. Heaven forbid it turn into bestiality when he least suspected it. He zipped his pants and stood, then stepped his way over bodies that shifted to avoid breaking contact with the screen. “Just need some air.”

He was at the flap when he noticed something glinting in a beam of moonlight. Looking down, Chuck recognized the miniature heart shape of his locket. It was still snapped shut.

*Shit.* How did it get this far from his cot? He looked back to the crowd. All eyes were on the screen. No guilty expressions offered clues.

He jammed the bauble into his front pocket, and out into the night he went. Tomorrow he’d interrogate. This was not the time to take fingerprints.

\* \* \* \*

Oh, but he had such a nice ass.

Despite the dim lamplights casting yellowed rays on the sand, despite the baggy quality of his pants, there could be no denying Chuck had a firmly sculpted, perfectly rounded backside. How delicious it would be to lift up slightly and gaze down his sweating back, watching those lovely buns bobbing up and down, up and down, during an intense lovemaking session. Feeling that cock...

*Focus, you twit. This is not wholly for play.* Indeed, this night served a greater purpose, a matter of life or death for not one person, but an entire race. To be able to pull off such a feat in a restricted area, surrounded by some of the finest fighting men in the world, would be a story to tell for years.

A tale of victory, no doubt.

Hands curled around the hair sample filched from Chuck’s locket. The soldier remained in the distance, hunched forward and walking around a large tent, out of immediate view.

Perfect.

## Chapter Four

*Oh, thank you, Jesus.*

He turned a corner and discovered the two absentee filmgoers, each jerking himself to completion. Chuck did not want to think what his reaction would have been had he seen one with his head bent over the other's lap, sucking a throbbing cock.

As it was, both men appeared embarrassed to have been caught. Odd, considering neither had a problem whipping it out in front of six other men only minutes earlier. It wasn't as though these men had less to brag about, either.

They stood, and in unison stuffed themselves back into some semblance of order, and offered casual salutes. "Dismissed," Chuck sighed, and they split around him without another word.

"Yes, army life certainly isn't boring," he muttered, and kicked up a few dust clouds to cover what drops of cum had spattered onto the ground. If he was going to rest for a bit in the quiet, he didn't want to dirty himself in other ways.

Satisfied that the sand was as pristine as it was going to get, Chuck lay back and crossed his hands behind his head, then crossed his ankles as he stretched to his full length. The inky black above glittered with a thousand tiny jewels, the constellations easily visible without the bother of strong light to cloud the sky. The low-pitched ticking of a desert insect provided a calming soundtrack to the evening, and Chuck twisted his face muscles in the dry heat, trying his best not to be lulled to sleep from the sheer serenity of it all.

Tilting his head to the right offered an expansive view of desert, sand and dark to the end of the earth. He wondered if he looked long enough, would he be able to see a thin sheen of ocean separating him from home. Was that blinking light far, far away the very tip of the Empire State Building, and beyond that would he see Virginia with its gentle waves of white cotton and green-leafed peanut plants?

He closed his eyes and willed Rita closer. She was nestled in a Norfolk love nest with an oily car salesman who used veterans' holidays to sell late model sedans. In his mind, he chanted her name, calling her to her window, to the stars that connected them. The

handle of the Big Dipper, held high to pour his love down on the city, and shower Rita with silent kisses.

She wasn't married yet, not that he knew. There was still time. Peace in the desert was a good sign. He would come home in one piece, ready to give it all to her.

Hot tears stung the corners of his eyes and rolled down either side of his face. Yes, he would come home in peace and Rita would be Mrs. Cadillac. Better he roll over in the cum-soaked sand and hope for a landmine.

He did, and met only more sand. Tiny granules crunched under his body, mingled with his skin, messed up his clothes. On his back, the alignment of the stars remained unchanged, but a deeper sense of dark crept into his vision.

Shadows blocked the distant light from camp. Soft footfalls announced an approach. Chuck sighed and prayed no other soldiers had arrived to seek private relief, whether solo or with help.

A barely audible gasp followed, and Chuck was quick to rejoin with, "I'm okay, just resting. I wanted to be alone." It didn't register with him until seconds later that the noise sounded quite feminine, unsure. Surely a soldier on patrol would have cocked a weapon with cool appraisal, not let the enemy think he was caught off guard.

How could this be, with no female personnel? Surely the natives went home for the day.

He lifted his head and let his eyes adjust to the light in the backdrop of the willowy figure standing before him. The yellowed brightness lent her an ethereal, angelic glow, shining though the pale shift that hugged her bosom and narrow hips. Bare feet tipped in toenail polish padded quietly toward him. Darn, cornsilk hair clung to creamy shoulders, smooth despite a heat that could frizz even the closest buzz cut.

Chuck propped himself on elbows. There was the kick start his cock had needed earlier. Deborah Kerr couldn't do it. All the king's horses and all the king's lesbians had failed, too. Now...Chuck shifted his hips to better accommodate the ache in his pants as his cock throbbed to full hardness.

"This is a dream," he whispered.

"No, it isn't," said Rita.

\* \* \* \*

*He* was the dream, lying languid in the shadowed sand. A perfect specimen of man, the hope of a future generation.

Her hope.

She sucked in her abdomen to further accentuate her pert, small breasts under the sheer silken fabric. Looking down, she noted her own arousal as her aureoles appeared shaded and visible, her nipples threatening to breach. The desert heat fit her like a glove, with even the slightest of movements feeling as though she had to cut a swath through the air to be closer to him.

“I was hoping,” she said, “you didn’t want to remain alone.”

Chuck offered her a loping, almost drunken grin. He was going to play along, it seemed, still convinced this was a hallucination. He would soon learn differently.

She plucked away one spaghetti strap, then the other, moving in a graceful shimmy as the fabric slid effortlessly down her body. The heat sought to penetrate her bare skin, covering her dusky nipples and taut stomach and the clipped brown hair forming a triangle over her pussy. She loved the feel of the desert at night but yearned for much more, and she could tell by the tenting of Chuck’s pants that the feeling was mutual.

She was ready for some mutual feeling.

“You don’t seem worried about us getting caught,” she noted, stepping over Chuck’s prone body to straddle him.

“I doubt any passersby will come ‘round these parts,” he said, his voice a low drawl. “Even so, what are they going to find except a heat sick soldier gone out of his head.”

“That’s the idea.” She tried not to laugh, but the incredulous expression on her lover’s face took on a more amusing quality as she neared. Surely he could sense her now, smell her arousal, and would want to rise to a sitting position. By her estimation, his face would align with her pussy, the perfect level at which he could lap at her fold and take in her juices. Her moistening slit twitched with anticipation at the hope of being licked.

“I miss you,” Chuck said on a sigh.

“How can you miss me, I’m standing right here.”

“Are you?”

She tilted her head. At this angle, he looked all the more appealing.

“For somebody looking at a ghost, you certainly are excited.” She nodded to his erection, appearing ready to burst from his pants.

“It’s a nice view. I like to show my appreciation.”

Hands now on hips, she backed away. When she thought herself at a safe proximity, she shifted her stance so that her breasts wobbled slightly. Crossing her legs high at the juncture between her thighs, she

tried to hide her pussy from view but failed. She snickered at Chuck's now pouting lip.

"Would you like to do more than see?"

"You already know the answer to that."

"Well." She braced a forceful stance in the sand again and bent at the waist. Bringing her arms closer to her chest, she squeezed her breasts together in a brazen pose and relished the gasping reaction that ensued. "Thank you. Now, can *I* see?"

Chuck relaxed deeper in the sand, bringing his elbows down so he could undo his pants. In one fluid motion they were over his hips, but it took several seconds of awkward shimmying to discard them completely. The wait was well worth it, she noted as Chuck's rod stood to attention, thick and hard and heavy. A good eight inches wavered close to the last button on his shirt, which he was in the process of removing as well.

"And if the guards come?" she prodded, stepping closer.

"I'll make sure you cum first."

"That's what I like to hear."

When she approached again she began a descent that landed her knees in the sand on either side of him. Perched on his lower thighs, she inched forward slightly so that her pussy just brushed against his cock. Underneath her, Chuck's body tensed and he sucked the desert air through his teeth.

"Shit!" he hissed. "I've missed you so damn much."

Quickly shushing him, she dipped two fingers between her moistened folds and pried them apart. She wasn't sure if, in the dark, he could see her glistening pink clit, but she made sure he felt it.

Arching forward, she rubbed her clit against the soft flesh encasing the hard muscle. Up and down, slicked by her juices, the sensation dragged over her loins and ignited the sensations pooled in her belly. So amazing such a small body part could elicit an incredible feeling and devour one whole with passion. The bud throbbed and tingled within her, unleashing an orgasmic firestorm that swept up her body and tightened her pussy. She felt the muscles involuntary clutch, as though trying to keep the goodness inside.

But one last stroke against Chuck sent her over the edge, and she wailed low, ignoring the sudden look of fear on Chuck's face. She came loud and rough, bouncing against his swollen flesh, aching to be seared and filled with the seed that bubbled on the reddening tip.

"I need you now," she grit through her teeth, and smoothed her hands down her breasts. Her nipples, pinched tight and swollen with

need, jostled with every movement closer to his cock. Chuck offered no reaction, just a gaped mouth and that same look of worry.

“Something wrong?” she chided.

“You were awfully loud a minute ago.”

“Really?” She leaned back. Chuck’s shaft seemed to pop forward. “I thought I was a dream nobody would see or hear. I thought if the MPs come all they’re going to see is some crazy naked soldier on his back trying to divine for water in the desert.”

“I’d rather see a hot brunette’s titties bouncing while she fucks me.”

“I think I can help you there.” Without further pretense, she crawled forward, minding his cock as she assumed position. Still soaking, impaling herself on Chuck’s length was a simple task, and she groaned her approval as he filled her.

“Sa-lute.”

\* \* \* \*

Truly, this was not a dream. Dreams didn’t feel so tight and warm and smell of lilacs growing in the dust.

He reached forward to grasp her hips as she settled on his cock. Real flesh, soft to the touch. This was Rita, come to Djibouti to surprise him, to take away the loneliness and keep him away from unnecessary Internet peep shows. Maybe this turned out to be a bad year for Caddies, given the gas hikes. Who cared, though? She was here, with him.

She belonged with him, wherever they happened to be.

He bucked his hips upward to meet her every downward thrust. The sensation of her pussy lips tightening around his cock teased his body closer to orgasm. His balls prickled, an explosion imminent. Excited as he was, he thought he might send Rita to the moon, his love surged with such power.

She laughed as he voiced that thought. “Why not? It’s on the way home.”

“Huh?” The momentary jest knocked off his concentration. An odd thing to say during sex, but then he and Rita had had their moments. Thankfully it was not enough to threaten his erection, and he quickly recovered.

He motioned for Rita to lean closer and she obeyed. Between short gasps of breath he managed a kiss. “I love you, babe.”

“I love you, too.”

He lowered his gaze to enjoy the sight of his cock disappearing into her. “I thought I’d never see this again.”

“You thought wrong, darling,” Rita said. “I’d never leave you.”

*Uh-huh.* Did she have amnesia? Where was the resolve that coldly saw him out of her apartment before his deployment? Was this really a hallucination brought on by the night heat?

Hallucinations couldn’t feel like this, though. Having made love to Rita many times, he knew this was exactly the same. Dreams of sex didn’t have this heightened perception—no smells or sounds this vivid. Had loneliness and desire to be near Rita enhanced his senses to the point that he could will her doppelganger to Africa?

*Stop rationalizing, just cum.* Analyzing the moment brought him no closer to Rita; as it was she looked at him curiously, like he had suddenly fallen ill.

One look at those beautiful breasts, swaying as she rode him, and all misgivings and doubts faded. Resuming his rhythm, his orgasm quickly followed, and he soon shot himself into her, crying her name as he came.

From Rita bellowed another noise, this one foreign and bordering on feral. She curled back, stretching her lean torso as he emptied into her. She seemed affected by the onslaught of heat—the night air coupled with his seed made for an invisible inferno that engulfed her.

“Rita, baby,” he moaned.

Rita lurched forward again. Her face was different now—elongated and sharp-edged, almost cat-like. And her eyes...

They weren’t human.

## Chapter Five

“What the—?”

He clawed at the sand and pulled himself away with such force that he disengaged from Rita and sent her reeling backward. She rolled to one side and, after gaining her bearings, stood. Grains of sand clung to places where their lovemaking had been evident.

“Chuck,” she said, her voice low and vibrating. Gone was the sweet lilt he had known. This couldn’t be Rita.

Now he wished this was a dream that would quickly end.

“Who are you? Some kind of African voodoo queen? Why do you look like her?”

“There’s a very good reason for that.”

At least this...person didn’t try to insult his intelligence by trying to convince him she was Rita. Chuck cautiously shifted to his knees and, still crouched low, reached forward to grab his pants. When the woman didn’t move to thwart him, he quickly brushed the wet sand from his cock and slipped them back on, standing as he did so.

“A good reason, huh, for making me look like an idiot. For sexual assault...”

“You can’t rape the willing, Chuck.”

“You probably did a lot worse.” They hadn’t used protection. She may well have just sentenced him to death. He knew AIDS was a big problem on the continent, and the disease wouldn’t stop at the borders of the base. If not that...

“Entrapment,” he charged. *Ah-ha!* There was that shameful bow, those downcast eyes. Somehow she got a hold of his picture of Rita, disguised herself and seduced him into pregnancy. How could he have been so stupid?

Moreover, why him? “Who are you? You can’t be military. And why me? How did you pull this off?”

The woman’s sad countenance appeared genuine, remorseful. Chuck continued the interrogation. “Are you trying to hook a soldier, any soldier? Get yourself pregnant so your baby can claim American citizenship?” This he wasn’t sure he could handle. Having kids with Rita might have been an eventuality, but with a stranger? A deceptive

one, at that. Some soldiers got a bad rap as it was, weathering various scandals...he'd done his best to keep clean. Until now.

But he was tricked. And, he realized with a heavy sigh, no witnesses would stand for him. He could only hope Dewayne had driven over some long-ago buried radiation on the way to base, rendering them both sterile.

The Rita clone raked her long fingers through her hair and came up with a short, thick clump—a curl similar to the one he kept with his locket. “It’s because of this, which belongs to you,” she said. “I applied the DNA found in this sample to my own body chemistry to assume this form. I knew if I came to you as someone familiar, somebody you still love, it would be easier.”

“Easier to what? Extract DNA?” The conversation took a left turn into bizarre. Surely not even the military had the technology to do something so *Star Trek*. “What the hell are you talking about? Who are you?”

He wanted to run, but this woman’s freakish resemblance to Rita kept him rooted to the sand. He truly hoped this was some kind of dream, or hallucination. He tried to recall whether he had eaten or drunk anything unusual that might have been drugged. He looked past Rita to see if anybody hid behind a tent, watching the scene and snickering.

They were alone. Maybe he was alone, too, struck with a grief so overwhelming that it caused him to see and hear things. Fuck things.

“I don’t expect you to believe me,” the woman was saying, her palm flattened and tilted downward. The lock of hair separated into tiny, near invisible strands and floated lazily to the sand.

“Hey!” Chuck cried.

“You were too good for her,” the Rita clone said, her eyes shimmering with tears, then light, then something indescribable.

Her face seemed to fade. It wasn’t a trick of the night, or his mind. No way could he be imagining an actual human being melting! That’s just what was happening, though. He could only sit, helpless, as the woman who had just ridden his cock to orgasm morphed and shifted flesh and hair...taking a man’s shape.

Dewayne’s shape.

“Fucking no way,” Chuck gasped.

Dewayne offered an impish grin and a shrug. His thin, nude body glowed in the night. His features were smooth and practically non-existent, as though his skin were made of rice paper. If the distant

light were to hit at a certain angle, Chuck wondered if he would see through the young man. He looked ghastly, lacking his earlier zest.

Inhuman.

Was this really Dewayne? Was the soldier still in the tent, whacking off to bad porn?

The Dewayne clone seemed to regard Chuck with a knowing silence. When he spoke the voice perfectly matched. "It really is me, Chuck," he said. "What happened between us was definitely real."

Chuck's gaze panned down to Dewayne's limp cock—no pussy to be found. What had he just fucked? "What are you, some kind of hermaphrodite?"

Dewayne nodded slightly. "Where I come from, a being's sex is more ambiguous among the population. Many of us tend to exhibit certain gender specific characteristics over others, and unfortunately that is becoming our downfall."

"Where are you from?" Chuck's eyes narrowed. "Where *I* come from, you're male or you're female."

"You could say I'm a bit of both, and nothing at all." Dewayne rippled and began to glow, his skin illuminating like a nightstick. His features became smoother, and his hair receded until nothing was left but a pale yellow humanoid standing before Chuck. Wide brown doe eyes flickered different shades—umber to gold and back—and its belly swirled a ruby red. The creature looked translucent, like a see-through doll bearing a pocket of red liquid.

An alien. He fucked an alien. Or the desert heat fried his brain.

"Holy shit," Chuck muttered. "You're definitely not from here."

The alien—he, she, it, whatever—shook its head. "No. By my point of view, we're practically neighbors, and as your world gets smaller through its technological advances, your people will see it that way. Not yet, though," it said. "Judging by your reaction, it's probably best we don't reveal ourselves at this time."

"Tell me about it." Chuck pinched the bridge of his nose. Why couldn't he just stand and leave? Suddenly, he clutched a hand to his chest, and it slid slowly down to his softening cock. "What...why?"

"Our planet is dying, Chuck," the alien said, reaching out a hand. Chuck was reluctant to take it, but quickly shook away any suspicions and obliged. He'd just had sex with the thing, and nothing happened.

"What, you're too close to the sun?" he asked.

"Our numbers are dwindling. For reasons we cannot determine, we are producing less offspring. Our population is becoming more sterile," the alien said. "The prospect of extinction has forced our

reconnaissance to other worlds to test genetic compatibility.” A thin hand, pointed with spindly fingers, caressed the dark red bubble. “I can safely say with human, there is success.”

“That...” Chuck pointed at the glow. “That’s a baby?”

“It is the hope of my people, yes.”

A baby. He was supposed to have babies with Rita, and chase his little son around the front yard with a football. He was supposed to sit his daughter on his lap and teach her colors and shapes. How many heads would this...thing...have? Would it look like him?

“Why me?” he asked. “Base full of men and you pick me.”

“Your eyes.” The answer was instantaneous, stepping over Chuck’s comments. “Our people don’t have eyes like yours, as our characteristics are so limited. I want a child with beautiful blue eyes.”

“Well, thanks, I guess,” Chuck murmured. “So, what happens now? Am I going to be hit with child support?” It was meant to be a joke, and though the alien’s smile was slight, it did little to supply more levity to this bizarre situation.

The alien instead bowed its head. “First we’ll have to see if the birth is successful, and if the child lives.” Chuck felt sullen at this. Of course, cross-breeding a human and alien would certainly have risks. What, he couldn’t say. It sounded so much like a science-fiction movie.

“If the child thrives, I wouldn’t be opposed to your having a relationship,” the alien continued.

“I think I’d like that,” Chuck said. “Alien or not, it’s a part of me, isn’t it? I should know, and I hope that...*he*...would know about me.”

“You’re a very masculine-oriented race. I gathered as much staying here, living as one of you.” The smile widened and curled one side of its face.

“I can assure you, we don’t all watch porn and engage in circle jerks,” Chuck snorted.

“I know. I have seen the best of humanity here as well. I look forward to forging a deeper relationship with your people, when it’s time.”

Chuck slowly dusted himself off and righted his clothing. “Sounds great.” What more could he say? This entire experience, passionate as the sex had been, seemed so antiseptic now. The alien hadn’t invited him back to the planet to be a daddy, leaving Chuck to assume he was only wanted for his sperm and eye pigment. In a way, it was almost insulting, but he knew he didn’t love the creature, just what it had briefly represented.

“I still don’t believe this.” He shook his head. “I must be having heatstroke.”

That long head now caressed his shoulder and the alien dared a step closer. “Believe it in three of your weeks. That’s how long it takes for our gestation. Until then...”

That glowing face neared, and Chuck instinctively closed his eyes to receive this kiss. His mind flashed briefly to Rita, how she had looked before he left, and how she was when he thought he was making love to her earlier. All at once, though, as soft lips met his own, Rita’s visage faded and brightened into something more beautiful. Light warmed his soul and slowly dissolved into the night heat.

He opened his eyes to the dim camp, the distant lamps his only beacon now and those were obstructed by the thick shadows approaching him.

“Sergeant?” one of them called. As the being came into focus Chuck recognized him as one of the men whacking off in his tent to the porn. “Sergeant, you alright? What are you doing out here?”

Chuck noted the private’s concern, and figured the boy was thinking he’d gone insane. “I—I just wanted some air.” *Got a lot more than I anticipated.* “Must have gotten disoriented or something.”

“Have you had anything to drink, sir? Newcomers tend to get dehydrated when they’re not used to the heat. Then delirium sets in, and you’re lost in the desert.” Chuck felt two pairs of hands guide him back to camp. “Come on,” the private said, “let’s head back to camp.”

“Sure.”

Neither soldier had mentioned Chuck’s disheveled look, or the cum staining his pants. Either they were being polite or figured it was residue from movie night. He walked in between them and tried to get his bearings. Tried to convince himself it was all a dream.

There had been no Rita, no alien. *It was a dream, just a dream.*

As they walked past the flagpole, brightened by a nearby lamppost, Chuck did a double-take. He could have sworn he saw a few locks of brown hair curling at the base.

**The End**

**HAREM,  
Episode One:  
Code Name Hellion  
by  
Mae Powers**

Set in an alternate Milky Way Galaxy, in the twenty-third century, the tyrant Tyrah Tyranus wants to dominate the entire known galaxy. It's up to H.A.R.E.M. to stop her diabolical plans.

Hellaina Hernandez, Code name H for "Hellion," is on a self-made mission to find two people she cares for very much. They once saved her life, and taught her to love. Now she must search her past, to ensure their future, and her own.

It won't be easy; Hellion is number one on Tyrah Tyranus' hit list.

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# **HAREM, Episode One:**

## **Code Name Hellion**

**By**

### **Mae Powers**

(2375: An Alternate Milky Way Galaxy)

Tyrah Tyranus, a diabolical tyrant, wants to dominate the entire known galaxy. It's up to HAREM to stop her diabolical plans.

### **Prologue**

*HAREM will be destroyed. No matter what it takes, no matter whom I have to eradicate.*

So, thought Tyrah Tyranus, as she sat upon her bejeweled throne, shifting her rounded derrière side to side. She loved her halogen lit imperial chair, but it prickled the rumps. She couldn't wait to conquer Earth and get some of that lovely golden Damascus silk which would make a great cushion for her throne. Her spies in black-market affairs had gotten her a sample of it. She liked fine things and even finer men. Lots of them.

Besides conquering worlds and enslaving people, she liked frekking great sex. If her partners could keep up with her libido, she'd enjoy more too. Most men were such wimps in the bedroom. Some women too. However, not everyone could have her aptitude for physical pleasures and endurance. Nor should everyone have it all but her.

The universe needed to be at her feet, not anyone else's. Maybe to other would-be tyrants she had a lot, but it wasn't enough for her. From her domed empire city, which lay on a small mechanically propelled planetoid, she conquered and ruled a vast portion of the galaxy, but not the sector she mainly wanted--Earth and its colony worlds.

She could have had it all if it weren't for those blasted HAREM bitches. Tyrah tapped her long nailed fingers on the left arm of her jewel throne. Rubbing her smooth chin with the other, she thought hard what she could do to finally put an end to the shit-heads at that covert agency. She parried well enough most of the time with Earth and its alien allies in neighboring solar systems, but they still kept her armies at bay right now.

That wouldn't be too long in ending. She already started putting spies and secret bases of operations in many of their main areas of defense and other places. Soon she would have some in every corner of the Extraterrestrial And Terran Merged Enforcements. Then the E.A.T.M.E. forces would start dwindling and getting corrupted from within. Those blasted Earth-Extraterrestrial Teams, she oft referred to as EETs, would be brought down by her armies. The day couldn't be soon enough for her.

She'd beat Earth Forces and the HAREM bitches and rule the universe. As soon as she, well her damn underlings, killed every one of the HAREM operatives.

She rubbed her hands together in glee. Oh, it was going to be such wonderful fun to see pictures and details of their deaths. Her Generals told her how gruesome they were going to do it. Her favored Generals were apt enough. They'd gotten her new presents and realms to rule. She liked that. So, she didn't beat them or bitch at them too much for their minor failures. Good help was so hard to find these days. The same with good sex.

She rubbed her crotch area, glad she was alone at the moment in her vast throne room. Damn she was horny. She hadn't had good *frekking* sex in awhile. At least two days. Though making war strategies had its delights, she needed time for enjoying her spoils of war.

Tyrah glanced towards her right, seeing her reflection in the ruby tinted, mirror wall. Tall, breathtakingly, sinfully beautiful, as an empress of her caliber and standing should be.

Many men told her that she had the loveliest limbs in any solar system. Her hair, thick and black, flowed down to her buttocks, and shone as bright as space. Her dazzling golden eyes, and cinnamon brown, silky smooth skin hypnotized most people, male or female. In addition, her inherent powers of allure couldn't be resisted--by most that is.

A sudden frown marred her delicate face. She'd only known one woman who could compete with her looks, and entirely resist her

powers of hypnotic allure. However, that woman was going to be dead worm-meat soon enough. She turned from the mirror wall, and her fingers once more began tapping on the jeweled arm of the throne. Hellion.

It was the only name ever to make her shiver. Tyrah hated all the HAREM wretches and all they represented. Mostly she hated Hellion-the longest-standing member of that damable agency. Hellion always, somehow, managed to put a glitch in her plans. She wanted to get even and get rid of all those conniving shits. Mainly though, Hellion.

She thought hard about her plans. Some might call them nefarious, but she thought they were brilliant. Nefarious. Such a silly, but catchy word. Tyrah liked being evil. It was so delicious and so evil. And ever so rewarding.

Why the hell should she be nice? No fun in that. Some might consider her selfish and a no-good evil tyrant. She didn't mind at all being labeled that. Especially, if it got her what she wanted. She wanted everything she could ever desire and then some. If it took war and psychic powers of allure and mayhem to rule the cosmos, then she'd do it. What ever it took. Who ever got in her way, too bad.

She was born to rule everything she sat her beautiful eyes upon, so the shits better damn well get use to it. She shifted her lush weight to the other side and tapped with her right hand.

She really needed to get a cushion made. Had to go with the décor of a lavishly jeweled throne of course. Now how could she thwart and destroy all of the H.A.R.E.M bitches? She sat bolt upright in her chair. *Well of course, why didn't I think of this before?*

*Instead of just trying to take them head on, I'll plan the demise of each and everyone of the pain in the asses. Such pains too, worse than her jeweled chair without cushioning. Now what to do? So many plans to make.* War sucked sometimes, but it was a necessity to get her way.

Earth could wait to be totally conquered for a couple of more months, maybe. Right now she had other pressing plans to make. Namely getting rid of the HAREM troublers once and for all. *Now what to do about that?* Tyrah leaned back in her bejeweled throne and thought hard.

Tyrah's luscious mouth tilted upwards at both corners as she gleefully thought about what made Hellion hate her so much. She absently tapped a button on the control panel on the right arm of the throne. A holo image came up. This recording was in tune to her

thoughts. A woman's image twirled in front of her. Hellion's silver blue eyes stared at her blankly, and the long braid of the woman's coppery colored hair swirled down to jutting breasts held firmly up by athletic muscles. Her soft, bronze toned body was curvaceous, healthy and seductive.

Tyrah hated the beauty of the woman. And her fucking great sex appeal. Hellion turned her down one too many times. Hellion hadn't changed too much from the feedback that Tyrah had recently gotten, but she'd be wiser, a little physically older, and perhaps stronger than before. Hellion still had that tough determined demeanor that she did when they both were soldiers in Earth Forces.

Tyrah had been tiring of being in the armed forces and wanted something besides a thankless job and crappy appreciation. Even growing up she had not been satisfied with her life. Though most of the human colonies didn't have a lot of diseases or want for goods for necessary survival, the peons on Planetoid Alpha 1 weren't worth saving. They mined a dreary world for ambryon, a chemrock that fueled EETs space vessels. Sure, they got paid for it, but not enough. It had been either that or join the war-service for Tyrah.

Her blasted parents wouldn't get off the frekking planet and go somewhere nicer to live. Her mutant powers of allure hadn't been perfected then. Tyrah joined the service to see more of the galaxy and do other things. Then she'd gone through training, where she'd met Hellaina, later known as Hellion. The two became sort of odd friends. Sure Hellaina helped her to make it through boot camp and the first year as a cadet, but Tyrah only used the friendship to get what she wanted. Nearly a half a decade later, with Hellion a captain in the forces and her superior, they'd gotten stationed on Planetoid Alpha-12. Kronuss attacked the scientific outpost and small colony there. They were all taken prisoners. Some had been killed, and some Kronuss intended to make as his slaves and cyboric warriors.

Kronuss' took a fancy to her and she'd learned quickly how to entrap him with her powers of allure. Powers she'd been perfecting for a few years since joining EETs. With Kronuss, she'd saw a way to be herself, to let the darker side she liked, to come out. She wanted the power he had, yet Hellion tried to get her out of the Kronuss' grip. That's when the two argued and fought. Kronuss had been pleased with her switching to his side. Although Hellion was beaten, the bitch somehow escaped, and disappeared even after an extensive search.

Tyrah wondered what happened to Hellion afterwards, because her adversary came back less than a year after her disappearance, and

Hellaina joined HAREM over five years after that incident, Hellion was still a thorn in her side.

Hellion, the EETs, HAREM, and any others who tried to stand in her way, would suffer for trying to interfere in her viable plans.

Hellaina “Hellion” Hernandez would suffer the worse. Embitterment, rage, and distrust, forever put a wall between them. Now all Tyrah wanted was revenge and total domination over all she surveyed. She would get it. One way or another.

She reached down to the control jewel button on the front end of the throne chair arm, and turned off the mini holo image off. She then pushed in another button and called in her Generals who were currently on the Kronuss Planetoid. She watched them come in, two by two, her most trusted Generals and their higher-up underlings followed by their entourages, servants and others under her power.

She glanced at each one in turn, her mind naming them. General Crushit, General Manacles, General Dreadus, and General Kinklin, all whom controlled and led her Mendor and Femster armies,. These were four of her best generals present. At the war fronts and other places, she had other generals and under-generals doing her bidding, like Sub-general Deith, the two-headed Lieutenant-general Lizord, and Sub-general Armgeedon. They all served her well now. She’d given them things they wanted, and strengthened her control over them in many ways that Kronuss never could.

They’d give her what she wanted, the HAREM bitches’ heads on a sparkling, silverloid platter encrusted with the rarest jewels in the galaxy. She motioned them to come closer, then stepped down towards them. They huddled near her, as only her generals were allowed to, and heard what she had planned.

## Chapter One

(Planetoid Alpha-12, Nearly six years earlier)

Someone—something—wanted to destroy her.

A tingling apprehension numbed her mind. She opened her weary eyes to the gloominess of a thin space between two concrete buildings. Her gaze alighted on a square of light coming from one of the structures. The eerie flickering from it beckoned her downtrodden soul. A light she felt she'd just escaped from.

Escape. The word echoed in her weary mind. Awareness crept into her consciousness. Then a grim foreboding told her exactly what she needed to do. Get away—as quickly as possible.

Though a stressful, weighty throbbing drove all ease from her brain, an instinctive urge compelled her to flee. A needle-sharp twinge of pain shot through her arm as she raised a hand toward her head. Gently she touched her forehead. Caked blood made sickening designs on her skin, some still slithering slowly down the left side of her face.

Her hand dropped to her right side. She felt a rip in the clothing at her waistline. There too, blood hardened. Some one or something had definitely tried to kill her. No doubt, they would try again and again until she was permanently dead. No other tangible thought stayed long enough in her fragile memory.

Laboriously, she turned her head, glancing first one way then the other. In one direction, there was total darkness, the other...the dreaded light. That way meant only certain death—definitely a trouble she didn't need right now. She wondered if ever before she had wanted to find a safe haven within the gloomy darkness that usually foretold of menacing things to come, but never safety.

Hoisting herself up from the rough ground, she half fell against a small structure behind her. She stayed there for a moment, struggling to gather herself for an effort. She had to get away. Again, she touched her waist, this time as if in recollection of something. Rubbing just below her mid-section wound, was a belt, which had once held something. Weapons. She realized she no longer had any. Man-made ones that is.

Painfully she balled a fist and released it quickly. Though some other ebbing memory flashed images of her defending herself against several blurry attackers, she knew she was in no shape to assert herself now. She could barely stand or support her weight. Still, the pain and need to escape drove her on.

She scrunched her eyes, trying to focus in the darkness. That way, and only that way, was her sole hope. Alarms would probably go off soon. They, someone, had waited for a reason. If only she could remember.

Wavering in intoxicating pain, she stared irrationally to the left and right. The pathways around the two large buildings were empty. With dire urgings and little strength, she started towards the beckoning darkness. She had no idea where she was going, only that she needed to leave this place. Beyond the two larger structures were smaller buildings, but she went in the wake away from the edifices. Buildings soon became sparse. Then she felt the ground beneath her feet soften. Grass, tall grass, sloping downwards slithered around her feet and ankles like snakes waiting to strike. Just for a brief second, she stopped, gathered her breath and dared to look over her shoulder. No one was in pursuit, and for whatever reason they weren't chasing her, or the alarms hadn't gone off, she was thankful.

She trotted on, her reasoning deadening with the thrashing pain she endured with each miserable step. Jumbled thoughts raced through her mind. A fight with another woman. Soldiers of war even. A large room where people were being beaten, like her. Then blankness and the images stopped.

Suddenly her foot hit against something hard. Before she could balance herself, her body flailed helplessly forward. She slid and twisted downward, within a mudslide. The darkness enveloped her like a deeply dug grave.

With a shocking, torturous thud, she finally hit the bottom of the muddy chasm she'd been thrust into. Tiny motes of light dazed her eyes and thunderous waves of agony kept her immobile on her back. She fought to breath, and even that felt like horrendous punches being dealt her.

Then she heard them. Threatening voices looming way above her. She sucked in her swollen bottom lip and forced her breathing to slow. Every bone in her body could be broken and she may be paralyzed for all she knew, but she couldn't let them find her. The heavy voices drifted downward, but her sore ears still picked up phrases of what they said.

“...she couldn’t have gotten far. That’s if she’s still alive. We scoped the trail of blood with our infrared detectors from the place where she escaped to this spot. Nothing but that small trickle. We’re lucky to have picked that up. If she staggered out here in the Pits this late at night, there sure isn’t anything left of her.”

“She’s a tough jez, Murb. Even General Kronuss mentioned he’d never known a female to take such a beating and still manage to escape.”

“He’s still not going to like it that we couldn’t find her. Nor is that new bitch of his. Maybe we best tell them she’s dead. I’m not stepping further into this murky soil, Perd.”

“There’s no way I am either. I don’t see how she could have survived a fall down into them bottomless bogs. She’s definitely dead...”

Then their voices faded away, and she was left feeling as if she were going to do just that – die. Her irregular breathing resounded in the black emptiness around her. And for long, torturous minutes, she lay there listening to her breaths echo the pain her whole being felt.

Once she was sure her enemies would not return, she dared to breathe outwards more heavily. Though an excruciating effort, she turned her head to one side to see if she could determine her surroundings. Her tired eyes finally adjusting to the darkness, she soon realized she lay at the bottom of a cavernous pit.

Above her, where a shorter wall of the cave met the roof, she could barely make out the darker hole she had fallen through. Her eyes then focused on the rest of the cavernous ceiling. Sharp, faintly luminous stalactites loomed above her, with several lethal projectiles pointed right down at her. An earthquake or perhaps any ground shaking movement could easily loosen one, she thought. She then wondered what morbid thoughts made her think that. She shivered and the shots of pain she derived from her own body quaking gave her the necessary momentum she needed to force herself from her lying position.

Gingerly she tried to move her arms. With an aching, horrendous effort, she pushed her upper torso into an upright position. Stopping her movements to rest, she regulated her breathing and began glancing further into the darkness. Around her were small debris of rocks, stalagmites, and rocky pathways that led further into her subterranean prison. She saw two larger openings of darkness; she could only assume, let further into this underground world of mystery

and danger. She had to believe that one of those rocky doorways would be the pathway to her salvation.

Slowly, she made an effort to stir her legs. After several agonizing attempts, she wearily managed to stand upon her feet. She took several more deep breaths and half stumbled, half walked blindly towards one of the openings. At the entrance to the nearest one, she stopped and held on to a wall to catch her breath. Then with painful determinations she trudged onward. For what seemed like tortuous, drawn out hours, she plodded exhaustedly through twisting, winding rock-hewn corridors.

The afflictions and exhaustion increased with every excruciating movement she took. She dredged further on, knowing she had had to keep going. To keep finding a way to freedom. A way to get her body healthy again; and to find out what had happened to her back there above ground. But mostly, she needed to find out who she was and why the hell those creatures...or people had tried to kill her.

What trouble had she gotten herself into? Moreover, what was it she had found out that made her life expendable to those murderers anyway? The need to know, along with her painful determination, kept her going. To where she struggled to go, she wasn't sure. Only somehow, she would get out of this damp, dark world and resolve the mysteries and madness that had thrown her down here in this dreary hell.

Abruptly she heard other noises than the shuffling of her feet against the rocky flooring or pebbles flying against rock. Stopping quickly, she propped herself up close against a cavern wall. Her heart pounded in fear as she listened carefully to what the sounds might be.

Something heavy and enormous shuffled sluggishly just around the bend in the rubbly tunnel. The vibrating boom of big rocks splattering aside a stone wall, startled her even more. Especially as the quaking thuds were coming closer and closer. The slithering crunch became louder and louder.

She backed slowly away, hoping that whatever it was, didn't come her way. Then she felt something slick and cool wrapping its way around her legs and shoulders. A slug-like creature, ominously huge and black, imprisoned her frightened form lifting her towards its huge red mouth. A mouth open and ready to suck her in.

"Put her down, Boggin." An eerie and thunderous voice exploded out of nowhere.

With slow movements, those monstrous tentacles release her, letting her slide down them with a soft thud to the ground. She backed

away from the blobish, grumbling creature, turning her head towards the bend in the corridor. There a dark and large shadow of substance emerged before her. It came closer and closer, until it loomed just over her shivering form.

“What the hell are you doing down in my domain?”

The sound of his booming voice drove what sanity she had left into hyper drive. She leaned her head back and inhaled deeply. Though the effort, like the deep breath, pained her, a lopsided grin spread over her swollen lips. These creatures, whatever or whoever they were, didn’t seem to want to kill or eat her. Whatever language he was speaking, something made her understand him. Or he spoke her language. Whatever that was.

“You know...if I could remember, I’d figure that’s the dumbest statement I’ve ever heard.” She forced her self to speak as clearly as she could. “I’m bruised and weary, caked with mud and blood, and you ask me what the hell I’m doing down in this stinking kingdom of yours! Mr., I’m supposed to be the one with loose screws right now, not you.”

He took a step away from her, and when he did, she noticed he wasn’t a great blob like the other thing, but a tall man in dark robes, the hood of which concealed his facial features in shadowy mists. At a snickering, rumbling sound, she turned her attention back on the blob-like thing the shadow-man called Boggin. The giant creature seemed to be laughing at the other entity. Pain or not, delirium or not, for some weird reason she found that aspect amusing. She chuckled as best she could.

The shadow-man folded his arms within each other and stared down at her. “It’s been too long since we had company, Boggin. Take this creature down to the laboratory and we’ll get her cleaned up. Then we’ll try to make some sense of this situation. And stop that inane laughter of yours!”

Boggin seemed to slither backwards a little as if hurt, and when the shadow-man left the creature to do his bidding, it slumped lower to the ground and stared at her with its bright red opening. For some inner reason that did not quite register, she was not afraid of the creature anymore.

“Never knew a...being like you that had a sense of humor, I believe. It’s a pleasure to meet you, Boggin. If I could move right this moment, I’d shake your tentacle. I take it not every one puts that buffoon out of joint?”

The ironical rumbling came back just before his tentacles stretched outward and slid around her worn body. Gently it...he lifted her off the ground, and cradled her close against him. He made some mulling sounds. They were soothing, almost relaxing to her nerves. She almost felt like a child being cradled by its mother. Could a creature this ominous and huge be so naturally gentle? Her distraught mind lost reasoning of her thoughts as it began to crunch-glide in the direction the shadow-man had taken.

She tried to stifle the groans when Boggin picked her up, but knew that her body and mind had reached their limits. There was nothing she could do but let the huge, gentle creature do as its master had bidden. The rocking, comforting sensation she suddenly felt at being held in Boggin's massive tentacle arms began soothing her, and her whole being rapidly gave in to the darkening numbness that quickly overwhelmed and engulfed her.

## Chapter Two

Doctor Jared Harrington grumbled about having a guest. So it wasn't her fault, but she was here disturbing his work. Vital work if all were true about that damn General Kronuss having taken over the damn planetoid. Well Boggin's reports and that of his comvid were proof enough, he believed. At least for him. He hoped the female wasn't working for Kronuss.

Her uniform, or what was left of it upon her looked like that of EET's. He hadn't been topside of course in years since the heads of the scientific outpost banned his work. So he'd disappeared down here to Boggin's lair years ago before the Kronuss invasion earlier this damn week.

His laboratory, deep under the science base, had been perfect for working on the newer cyboric nano-technology which he excelled at. With soft hum from his lasonic generators, and his quiet work habits, they could not have possibly detected him anyway. He glanced around the laboratory, a huge room laden with test tubes, electrical and laser ran, or laconic as it was called these days, and was proud of the stone and metal constructed room.

Those who had helped him to build it, were long gone and paid off well. Plus they didn't want to mess with Boggin. Thankfully his friendship with Boggin proved to be very lucky in the fact Boggin had erased the builder-helpers memories of the location of this site. He didn't need anyone interrupting his work.

He glanced over at his study area, where a workable desk, a couch he often sat on to read or sleep, and shelves of old books lay, and felt at home. Old circuit boards and pieces of cybernetic components lay around the room, but neatly piled up by Boggin. Along with the luminosity from some of the phosphorescent rocks and the adequately places lights, there was plenty of illumination in the room for work or otherwise.

Off to one side of the laboratory were the stock rooms with various supplies and equipment he might need and had Boggin gathered from above, time to time. Near them was the small living facility with a shower, kitchen facility, and small alcove for a decent size bed. He slept more on the long old-fashioned couch or the lab

tables sometimes. His glance turned to the far end of the cavernous, metal lab to see Boggin ministering to their uninvited guest.

He left the communications end to go over to where Boggin was cleaning up the woman. Boggin didn't look up at him as he continued probing her unconscious body by running his blob hand lightly over her. Jared knew Boggin was using some psychic healing powers on the woman. It's how he had healed Jared when Jared had fallen down here near another entrance. It was shortly afterwards that he was rescued by Boggin.

His unusual friend, like him, was the last of his kind. Well a rebel with new ideas. Boggin had been outcast from his society for thinking differently, as Jared had. The two had shared thoughts and a strange companionship had formed between them. He would do anything for Boggin, as the alien shifter creature would for him.

He glanced down at the woman when Boggin moved its hands away from her mid torso and worked on her forehead cuts. The wound on her side was already healing. Boggin had cut away the pieces of uniform stuck to her side, and now that he looked at it closer, he could see it was the silver and black of the Earth Forces. A captain by the looks of her insignia. Her face looked a little familiar, like he might have seen her on one of the upper-world reports. There had been a new assignment crew stationed here a few months back. She looked like she went through hell and back from her bruises and cuts. Someone had beaten her badly.

He wondered at her stamina. "She's had a rough time, Boggin."

Boggin formed a head similar to his own. "Yes."

Jared smiled. Boggin didn't vocalize much, and then only in small words or phrases. Their mental communications were slight too, because Boggin's brain was highly advanced in psychic communications. Still they communicated fairly well.

"You are healing her nicely."

"Physiology different," It said.

"But still human, my friend. Female of the human species. You've seen them on the communications viewer and surely when you've slipped above ground at night."

"Not close, Jared." When Boggin said his name, it sounded slow and drawn out coming from the creature's wide maw. "She is different."

He was glad his alien friend picked up the human speak well enough. Boggin, though speaking in short phrases, still had a fantastic understanding of several languages.

“Yes, she is very different. Can she be healed completely?”

It nodded its head. “Be fine soon.”

“Thank you, my friend. I’m sorry I was abrupt with you earlier.”

“Not hurt now.”

Jared knew he’d hurt his assistant a bit, but was glad Boggin knew it was a short temperamental outburst at being found down here by another being. He couldn’t take the chance that while General Kronuss was above, they and his work might be discovered. If Kronuss discovered his improvements on the cyboric nanotechnology implants, the tyrant would stop at nothing to take over Jared’s experiments and things, perhaps even destroy his labs and kill him and Boggin.

He could not let that happen. He was tired, and needed to rest for a bit. The woman would be safe in Boggin’s care. “I’m glad. Thanks Boggin. I think we’ll find out more from her when she wakes. If you are okay then with her, I’ll go get a bit of rest.”

“Yes, you rest.”

Jared turned with a smile as his friend dismissed him. Like himself, once Boggin was involved in doing something, he hated to be disturbed too. He felt pleased about that and something told him having this strange woman down here might help him and Boggin somehow. He trusted his and Boggin’s instincts. Boggin tended to the woman as if she were a prize to be treasured. Satisfied, he left the laboratory.

\* \* \* \*

Boggin glanced down at the human female. So strange to look at, he thought. So different than Jared with his fair looks and upright body. So different from females of his homeworld. They all looked alike, sort of like him, but could not morph as well as the males of Tianath. He sighed, as best a gelatinous being like him could. Humans fascinated him, which is one of the reasons his people found disfavor with him. Tianaths thought they were nothing but trouble and hid below the lands of a beautiful world to avoid them. He wanted to know more about humanoids, new technology and other things. That got ostracized from his world. He’d crash landed here in the swamps above and lived through it. In the caves below he’d made his home, and as a scientist of his world, he’d used the spare parts of what was left of his craft to start a home and lab down here.

Eventually Jared came down here a few years ago for similar reason, his people not accepting his scientific genius and curious nature. Together they built this laboratory along with some aide from

some technical workers Jared knew. They were paid by jewels Boggin found down here and then he softly removed the traces of this lab-lair from their minds, with their permissions.

Now he lived and worked quietly with Jared on things like cybernetics and nano-technology. Yet, often, he'd glimpse the upper side of the planetoid and see what went on. He'd studied the other humans as best he could. Being mostly a night creature and use to underground caverns, he'd explored the caverns and gone above land some nights. That was all before that nasty person Kronuss overtook the base.

Boggin was sure he'd seen this female above ground some time. Even if fleetingly. He never forgot a face, especially a human one. They were all so odd and different. He clicked his head from side to side, studying the woman more intently.

She was almost as tall as Jared, but not as muscular. Jared would probably call her well toned, maybe. Though her hair was a bit sweaty and matted, its coppery color was beautiful to his mind's eye. He saw similarly to humans and could adjust his physiology along their lines sometimes. It was complicated but he could often form a human body.

Jared showed him human beings in pictures and their biological statistics and how they were made up. They were a variety of species, intermixed, and a complex race. Tianaths had functions too, not quite like humans, but they had them. Most could morph into different shapes, but they had little variations in multi-colors and species, as the human aliens did. Still, they were capable of things humans could not do. However, the race fascinated him to no end.

Especially this woman. Her body pleased him. Hers was different of course than Jared's in that she had breasts and other different body parts. She was more pleasing to look at than Jared. The humans' minds and technology did fascinate him. He'd viewed whatever information Jared had brought with him and put on the labs computer drives.

Boggin, shy by nature where intimate things were concerned, could not bring himself to ask Jared about the intimate side of the human procreation means, or even view them on the computer files. Jared fascinated him as an individual with a keen mind. He looked different from the female, sure, but Boggin did wonder if she was as intelligent as Jared. He hoped so, because something about her drew him to her.

She had a beautiful, almost serene face, for a human female, he supposed. Her demeanor, he had seen, tough even through hardships,

impressed him. He'd been captivated from the first by her sliver blue eyes. He liked her humor too. Tianaths had a strange sense of humor, much like hers. She faced death and still could smile. He liked that.

He morphed soft tentacles and hands, continuing his examination of her. He briefly glanced over his shoulder to see that the lighting in the back rooms had been dimmed by Jared. The hallway opening to the rest of the complex had no doors, so he could see partly into the habitat area. Good Jared rested. His friend didn't rest enough lately. He turned his attention back to the woman.

His first physical ministrations had been to cleanse and examine her injuries. He ran a medi-corder over her, noting what minor injuries and inner physiology problems she had. He'd given her a mild sedative and antibiotic to help with pain and infections. His natural, inherent healing abilities could ascertain other problems, and heal them slowly. With a human complex organisms and bodies, he knew to take his time about how he healed and handled them. Of course, Jared had been the first he'd healed, when his friend twisted his ankle and hit his head in a fall here in the caverns.

It gave Boggin the up close data he needed to ascertain how human physiology worked first hand. That had been a start to learning more about them. This woman would give him further information that he needed. Still, he felt, at the back of his mind, that it was more than mere scientific or medical curiosity that drew him to her. He needed to know why, but first healing her took priority.

Softly he removed the uniform, what was left of it hanging on her. He gently adjusted her on the medical table, trying to place her in a comfortable position. He'd already ran the medi-corder over her, ascertaining her injuries. She had a few internal ones, the cuts and the bruises. She would be okay to use his healing powers on, as Jared had been.

He waved his morphed hands over her. Her body glowed with a soft blue tint for a few moments. She would heal in time, he thought with satisfaction. Within her he'd noticed an unusual energy. He felt it to be a psychic energy but wasn't totally sure. His people could tell evil or good folks, and even those in between. Satisfied that she would be healthy soon, due to a natural healing ability within her, aided by his powers, he found a macrobiotic cleansing cloth and quickly washed over her outer body. He started with her face, then arms, mid torso and legs.

It's when he came to her breasts and lower regions that he halted, washing the other parts first. Boggin pulled a clean cloth out of a

dispenser and one of his tentacles held the right breast still while he lowered his morphed hand to cleanse it. He gingerly wiped first one, then the other. He laid the cloth on her belly and morphed a second hand. He could not resist feeling their softness.

So big and rounded with those teasing ridges on them. Nubs, he recalled Jared saying. Aureoles were the technical name, he believed. He couldn't think straight. Her skin was soft and tantalizing. It made him ache in an unusual way he'd never experienced before. Though it startled him, the feeling was not uncomfortable. He had to explore the sensations, and her. This strong thought startled him.

Tentatively he caressed each breast further. His whole physiological and mental systems tingled and giggled with a strange delight. He drew his dark hands back. *Oh, she felt so good. So did this strange sensation. Is this how humans felt when they touched each other?* He shrugged and let the sensation fade away. He would finish cleaning her then and get back to his other duties.

He took the cloth and slid his self down to look and examine the hirsute part of her body between her upper thighs. Strange, Jared didn't look flat like she did. He shrugged, guessing it to be an oddity of the human body. His clinical mind returned. With a slow deftness, he wiped her most feminine area clean, then tossed the cloth in a bio-hazard waste bin. His maw opened as he saw pinkish skin peeking out of her flat, hairy part. When in his clinical mode he had been slightly detached while cleaning her. Now he glanced studiously, curiously at her interesting body area.

His hand reached out to touch the hairy part. It tickled his morphed palm. The tickling sensation pleased him. Opening her crevice more he peered at the pink folds with awe. *Such unusual beauty*, he thought.

Then she stirred.

Her eyes were still closed. *Did she feel him touching her?* The thought made him suddenly withdraw his hand away.

He quickly got another cleansing cloth and wiped her down. He tossed it then found a thin sheet to cover her body from the shoulders down to her toes. Boggin stepped back from the table.

Oh, by the blackness of space, what have I done?

He'd been so obsessed with his exploration of her body, he had forgotten that he was not examining her medically any longer. She might not have wanted him to touch her like that. It wasn't right. Males of his world didn't do things that intimate with a female without her permission. He pressed his lips together in consternation.

*I must not be curious any longer. I'm here as a scientist and healer and friend to Jared. Nothing more.* Boggin moved away from the lab table and the woman.

He felt suddenly sluggish. Part of his mind did too. Loneliness crept in, and so did sadness. He pushed it to the back of his mind, then slowly slid out of the laboratory and slithered into the comforting darkness of the caverns.

## Chapter Three

Jared switched on the computer console. He adjusted his buttocks in the swivel chair and looked around the lab while it came on. Boggin was still out in the tunnels, and that left him alone. He looked at the far end of the lab area and saw the woman still asleep on the med table since he and Boggin brought her here two days ago. From his own medical experience, albeit small know how, she looked to be healing fine. From standard medical ministrations and the healing powers Boggin used on her, her health seemed to be better each time he looked at her.

He took a close look at her, his male eyes appreciating what he saw. It had been a long time since he looked upon a woman this close up. Still, how she got down here, boggled him. He found the tags on her neck, and read the intergalactic language identify notice on them. She was Captain Hellaina Hernandez of the 9<sup>th</sup> Earth Fleet Corp.

He heard through the technical communications grapevines that a new unit was coming here to the planetoid. That was some time ago, before Kronuss' invasion, but he hadn't heard the name of the newest officers. He looked up her background as best he could, and found that the woman held many awards and medals.

She looked tough and beautiful. How she escaped though still amazed him, with all her bruises, cuts and internal injuries. The fact that she healed quickly gave him hope and a dormant emotion he couldn't quite identify with yet. Perhaps it was just hidden compassion for another human being. Whatever the underlying feeling, he mostly he felt relieved that she belonged with the Earth Forces. Though he didn't like the fact that anyone else came down here, at least someone from the Kronuss faction hadn't shown up.

Thankfully, he had switched down to this underground facility long before the invasion. Still, he felt the loss of his former friends, despite not wanting to be around his old colleges anymore. Boggin reported to him that there was hardly anyone left above. Only a miniscule crew of Kronuss' cutthroat military was now above ground.

He had to find a way to get them off the planetoid. His experiments and long years of research and work were almost completed.

Perhaps this woman's coming was a good thing. Despite his misgivings and turbulence with his colleagues' years ago, Jared still wanted the EETs to win the war with Kronuss. If all the military personnel were like this woman, perhaps they had a huge chance to put Kronuss in his place and thwart his diabolical plans.

He started to turn his attention back to the computer when he notice her hand moving. He arose and moved over towards her. Her eyes fluttered open the minute he reached the med table. She blinked her eyes and then put a hand over her face for a second, just before she turned to focus on his face.

Jared kept a space from her, letting her get use to him. "You're safe, Captain Hernandez." He spoke the standard intergalactic language to her. "I'm Doctor Jared Harrington and you are below the marsh land where I believe you fell into the caverns Boggin and I dwell in. None of the Kronuss guards will find you here."

She leaned up slowly on the back of her lower arms. The sheet fell off of her chest. Jared's eyes dropped to her bare breasts shaking invitingly. He almost coughed because of his startled awareness of her charms. Her eyes followed his. She instinctively put the sheet back up around her chest with one hand, but did not blush as she glanced back up at him.

"How long have I been down here?"

"Two days. You were beaten pretty badly. Do you recall anything?"

She blinked her eyes, turned away from him, looked around then glanced back up at him. "What kind of Doctor are you?"

"I have some medical experience," he kept his face straight, keeping his hands in his lab coat pockets. "I'm a genetics nano-technology scientist."

She seemed to be thinking for a few minutes and finally looked at him steadily. "I read about you on the top-side. You disappeared a few years ago."

"My work was too advanced and not accepted."

"They should have listened to you then perhaps."

"You mean because of Kronuss' cyboric minions?"

"Yes." Slowly, she sat fully upright, swinging her legs to the side of the lab table. She steadied herself with one hand and kept her sheet over with the other. Her tags swung down in between her cleavage. "Could I get something to drink and some clothing?"

He nodded. "I'll be right back with both."

Jared barely turned, when all of a sudden he found himself being grabbed and slammed down on the table. She was on top of him, not caring if the sheet dropped down off of her or not. A fierce stare lit up her silver blue eyes.

"Now why the hell are my clothes off and what was that being who picked me up?"

Jared gulped, but it wasn't easy with her hand at his throat and on of his arms pinned behind his back. Her toned legs entwined around his legs, imprisoning them. Even had she been a man, she had him securely held down beneath her. It would be quite easy for her to snap his neck.

Her hair fell down over her breast, teasing his chest, despite the lab coat and thin shirt he wore beneath it. "Let me up, Captain, I'm not here to harm you. Boggin and I saved your life. Had we wanted you incarcerated, you wouldn't have been free to put me in this hold. Not that the position is totally uncomfortable mind you."

Her eyes flickered for a moment with studious intent, and he was sure she wondered if she could trust him. She loosened her grip, and just as suddenly as she had so easily thrashed him down on the table, she jumped away from him. He moved and she grabbed the sheet back around her.

"I'd appreciate those clothes."

He nodded in the directions of the habitat area. "Follow me."

The kitchen, living room area, bathroom, and sleeping areas, even combined, were not quite as large as the laboratory. To his left, upon entering he notice she studiously took in the details of the living area slowly, with the mid sized metal dining table, the few chairs placed around it and the small kitchenette area near by with a half wall of cabinets/shelves that made it into a partial room. She turned to glance at him again and then her view fell on the bathroom hallway. A short space that separated the bathroom from the sleeping unit.

"It's to your left." He understood her look of inquiry.

She sashayed quickly to where he mentioned. Jared went to the cupboards near the door close to the hallway, and entered the entrance to the stock room. He'd put a supply of clothing there in a few different sizes. Mostly near his own, in case he ever lost or gained weight. One never knew for sure. He pulled out a pair of black cargo pants, a dark green t-shirt and some soft-soled boots like he currently wore, that were environmental safe in any environment and didn't rub the feet raw if socks weren't worn with them. He pulled out a

lightweight jacket for her of a charcoal color he knew would protect her against any cool weather. The labs and rooms had some environmental controls, but he did not always keep them on and sometimes the damp air from the caves filtered in.

She came back out a few moments later, and he stood nearby holding the clothes out to her. "I'll be back in the lab. You can find some food in the cabinets and cooling unit over there, plus something to drink."

He turned and left her there to get dressed. She looked steady enough and her strong constitution probably pulled her through the worse of her prior injuries. Boggin's healing abilities and ministrations had done the rest. He smiled to himself. Sure, he'd been upset at first finding her here, but now it might not be so bad after all.

\* \* \* \*

Hellaina tossed on the clothes he gave her quickly. They were not excessively loose on her and was thankful for that and his providing the clothing. She then headed over to the built-in cooling unit. She saw a mixture of things inside it, but took out what she believed to be water. She sniffed the flask of clear liquid, touched her finger to it and tasted her finger tip.

It was indeed water. She slowly drank a hearty sip. And then another. Once she was through, she put the flask to one side on a cabinet and then looked at the food supplies.

Hellaina found a few edible looking things she nibbled on at her leisure while looking over the room and getting her bearings fully. She stretched, as she had done in the bathroom after taking care of nature, and finally her stomach didn't gurgle any longer. She took another sip of the water, put it back down and then went into the lab area.

She walked softly, just standing inside the entrance. Once more, she surveyed the large underground encampment. She noticed it was sort of the regular standard laboratory, yet not as cluttered as a few others she'd seen over the years.

The ceiling was supported a bit by metal beams, but mostly it was rock hewn. It must have cost him a bundle, with bribes and all to get this built. Still he had kept it well hidden.

She'd heard about him, of course, minutely, and read his file when first viewing the scientific staff files after arriving on Planetoid Alpha-12. He was a wayward scientist, ahead of his time in genetics and nano-technology. After what she'd seen just after being captured, she could not allow Doctor Harrington to be captured.

Kronuss had some minions who were part cybernetic, part human. Yet the technology was crude, despite its effectiveness. Hellaina read some of Jared Harrington's reports and new his findings were more along sophisticated lines. She would find out more of what he did. Then she would have her revenge on the bastard Kronuss and his new-love, her ex friend, Tyrah.

The traitorous bitch. Hellaina remembered most of it just after awakening. She'd tried to escape, was beaten and just before they tried to kill her, using her last ounce of physical stamina and adrenalin to kick the asses of her assailants and pit them against each other.

She had jumped out of a second story window to the ground below, and rolled into a gutter half lying underneath a leaking building. She hit her head pretty bad too. When she dozed and woke later it was night. She'd had temporary memory loss and was near death. She still couldn't believe she'd made it through that bog, and lived after the rough and tumble fall into the caverns.

She would be thankful yes, but she still had her priorities, and one of them was stopping Kronuss. And killing Tyrah for letting her former friends and the innocent people of Alpha-12 be slaughtered while she saved her own worthless skin. Kronuss and she deserved each other.

She turned her head to view Jared, studying him with more intent. He wore a dark cloak when she'd first seen him. He wasn't much taller than her, but had a fairly toned muscular body and a thick head of brown hair that framed his gaunt face in nice sexy layers. His eyes were of a steel colored gray and that set off his sable brown skin coloring quite enticingly. She hadn't failed to notice his thick, sweet-looking lips and nicely rounded buttocks either.

It had been too long since she made love to such a handsome man as him, but knew that was not her first priority. He might be who he claimed, but she still had to make sure she could trust him. With the intent of finding out all she could, she went over to the communications/computer area where he sat, taking the chair near his. He ignored her for a few minutes and she looked to what he was viewing on the screen.

The face of Tyrah Tyranus stared back at her. Intense hate and disgust overwhelmed her. If it was the last thing she ever did, Hellaina vowed to herself, she would kill the conniving selfish bitch.

## Chapter Four

Boggin slithered around in the caves for hours. He couldn't bring himself to face the woman or Jared, should the latter be awake. He explored above for a bit during the darker hours. The planetoid revolved around a sun, but it was further out from one of the other planets in the Guynan System.

Beyond the asteroid rings that protected the inner Guynan Worlds. He wished he could get off this planetoid, but couldn't for any long length of time.

Slowly he made his way through tall marshy grasses and dark green and brown odd-shaped trees. There were a few lights on in some of the compound buildings, but he didn't stray close to them. His extra senses would pick up on any danger, he was positive of that. He saw less of the invaders now.

Many had left Alpha-12 since the Kronuss invasions a few days ago. They'd taken most of what they wanted, so he wondered why they still stayed here.

His curiosity made him listen intently with his heightened senses. His hearing could pick up sounds and vibrations better than a humanoid's could. He kept low, and when he saw a person or group of people coming close by, he morphed into the darkness and kept on the dark side of a building or large object.

Since he'd landed on this world, something indigenous to the swamps had heightened his morphing abilities. Perhaps chemicals or alien microbes in the water.

Whatever it was, he'd known his inner system had changed a little, and his form was now attuned to this small planet. He and Jared had yet to figure it out, but he was sure they would one day.

Voices filtered towards him in his hiding spot alongside a building. He glanced upwards, seeing a broken window, filled with light there. He blended in to the wall, and slowly slid up its length, making sure he stayed shifted to the colors of the building and darkness.

With his inner mind and extra hearing senses, he viewed into the room and listened closely to the voices filtering out of the room. He could view things through objects for a short time through his inner eye, so made the most of his abilities. He felt evil and danger within the room. Jared and the woman would want to know about what he was overhearing.

“We’ve found no traces of her, General Kronuss. Or the science data the Tyrah woman found for you encrypted in that computer file.”

“Tyrah at least has found me some new science. The data will be enough.”

Boggin saw the door inside open and he felt another evil presence enter the room. “Your ship is ready, General Kronuss. I’ve found the other secreted files you came after. They were hidden on an old computer system in a room below the main labs. It was once an older lab, but things were pulled from there but one of the computers. I repaired it to get information off of it.”

“You have proven to be very helpful, Tyrah. You are worthy to join my troupes.”

“Thank you, General. I’ve hated the EETs for a long time. I shall be honored to join your forces.”

“Consider yourself this base’s new temporary commander then. I want this place searched over the next few days. Doctor Harrington’s research will build us better, more powerful arms. Take no longer than a week. Then destroy this fucking planetoid. My sources tell me that is all the time we have to search. At least my scientists will get some data off those files you found. Good work. I shall be leaving in the morning. Join me shortly aboard my ship for a briefing.”

“As you wish, Sir.” The heavy feminine voice of Tyrah answered.

Boggin heard a laser blast and then a chuckle. “I don’t like people who can’t get me what I want. Remember that Commander Tyranus, or your fate will be the same as the former Commander’s.”

Boggin barely heard her affirmative before he glanced below and saw in the distance a few more ships landing. More troupes coming back, he believed, to do another sweep of the land. The invaders had taken most of the innocent people they’d captured off the planet, those they hadn’t killed that is.

He had to get this new information back to Jared quickly. With swift deftness, he slid down the wall and made his way around the marshland to a hidden cavern opening that led to the underground labs. He quickly went back down below.

\* \* \* \*

“So Boggin has been with you for nearly five years?” Hellaina asked Jared. “You left the compound due to conflicts of interest with your colleagues and built a base down here?”

Jared nodded his handsome head. “That about sums it up, Hellaina. We have been working down here all this time. As I showed you, he has assisted me on the genetic and cybernetic experiments. Most of it has been in theory and a few small prototypes, a child might use to play with. It’s all I could get made down here in such a short time. But the labs have been adequate and my research has kept me busy.”

“You’ve had no contact with anyone nearly all that time?”

“Nope. Until you fell in here, no one. I didn’t have the communications system on at the time of Kronuss’ invasion. I’m sorry about the loss of your people and my colleagues above. I would have tried to do something, and believe me, it will eat away at me for a long time that I didn’t.”

Hellaina studied the man, believing in his sentiments. Though not a powerful empath or psychic of any kind, her gut instincts never betrayed her, and she had always been able to tell most people’s nature. Tyrah had been one of the few that had her in turmoil, with her in and out nature of good and evil. She didn’t dwell on the bitch.

They had been talking about two hours now, and she’d managed to find out about who he was, the type of work he’d done, and how he had lived and survived over the years. Him and the alien morpher Boggin. While the main coms up above were low in frequency, Jared had shown her too, the sensitive system he and Boggin built a couple of years ago. It enabled them to detect when scanning coms were in place also, looking for hidden devices.

They’d shut it down just a short while ago, when the comsystem picked up on alien craft landing. Done quickly, Hellaina had seen that the outsiders, well the return of some of Kronuss’ ships, would not detect their underground presence. She felt deeply for the loss of those above, but part of her was glad someone survived besides her.

She instinctively believed him, but it wasn’t just her gut instinct, she saw it in his face. A lonely bewildered face she already started felt attracted to. His dark gray eyes studied her as deeply as she had been observing him during the few hours they’d talked. Other than her assignment of being based here a few months back and minor things about herself, she didn’t tell him all EETs secrets, nor hers.

“Thanks for trusting me, Jared, and sharing things with me.” Her hand went out to touch his. A spark of awareness zipped up her arm and into the rest of her body. She was sure he felt it too, for his eyes darkened to a melt-one’s-heart gray.

“Like you, I learned long ago to trust my gut instincts. Besides,” he grinned impishly, “Boggin felt your goodness and compassionate nature, Hellaina. He is empath, amongst his many unusual talents.”

He told her what he could of Boggin. She smiled back at him. “He is an odd creature, but has an ironic sense of humor.”

“Forgive me, I just hated to be disturbed, and we weren’t sure at first who you worked for. I’m glad you’re on the EET side. The reports I heard on Kronuss and what he did here a few days ago, makes me know how vile the man and his followers are. War is disgusting and horrendous. None of us thought he would ever invade this close to the Guyan System.”

“Nor did anyone else. It isn’t your fault that it happened. You came down here because of a different kind of persecution. Your colleagues thought you were nuts. I’ve been accused of the same, because I’ve disobeyed orders or had unorthodox methods of dealing with situations.”

He chuckled. “I can believe that about you. Still, you made it to a captain’s status, so your methods weren’t too much for your superiors.”

“Guess not. Thank you for tending to me, Jared. I shall thank Boggin too next time I see him.”

“He goes out for long periods sometimes. His ability to morph and blend will keep him safe, but I do worry about my friend.”

She twirled in her seat to face him fully. “Tell me, Jared, what race does he belong to. I don’t think I’ve studied his kind before.”

Jared explained as much as Boggin had divulged to him. “The Tianaths don’t care for humans much, so probably stay out of the wars. Boggin is use to hiding in the darkness. I know he told me his system changed some when he crash landed in the swamps years back. We ran tests on him, and found it has something to do with the microbes of the swamp water.”

“The others never wondered about him or his ship when it crashed?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “It seemed like nothing more than a falling meteor to our detector systems at the time, and when we went to investigate, nothing but smoke came out of the swamps at the far edge of the base. Most of the people avoided them. There’s the small

marshland area you fell down in, that led to the caverns. The only other opening is the one I discovered near the end of the Marsh where it meets with the boggy waters of the swamp. It's hidden well by huge boulders and thick trees. I only discovered it by accident."

"So you explored the caverns and met Boggin?"

"Something like that. I thought he was going to eat me. I fell and he too healed me. He communicated with me mentally and we just seemed to get along. We were both outcasts and loners. Different, like you."

"Sometimes being different isn't all bad."

"No it isn't," he agreed. "Come, let's go get some java. I can still make a decent brew. When I got this place built, I made sure I had enough supplies to last a very long time. Caffeine was amongst the commodities I brought here."

She left her seat, following him into the kitchen area of the living habitat. She sat at the table as he made a quick brew from a micron processor. It zapped up a tasty brew of java, or coffee as the humans of long ago called it. The two sat companionably for a few minutes in silence. His eyes darted over her face, and she knew his interest in her grew. Like she felt before, it had been a long time since she experienced any physical interest in anyone, a male in particular.

His well-muscled body and darkly handsome face drew her to him. Of an exotic African and Italian cultural heritage, as he'd told her, his long lashes and mesmerizing eyes drew her soul towards him. Their slight touch earlier made her want more of his tempting body. It was still early and many things would complicate even a short affair. She'd never been afraid of making a first move, but hesitated now.

"This is an unusual situation for both of us. You're an attractive woman, Hellaina. I can't deny that, but I won't ravish you without permission."

She chuckled, glad he had broken the tenseness between them. "I was thinking the same thing."

His eyes sparkled with growing desire and amusement at her light-hearted repartee. "You seem to be feeling better. No grogginess. How about inside? You had some pretty nasty cuts and injuries."

She raised her cup to her lips, sipping a bit of the warm beverage before she put it down and answered him. "I think Boggin's ministrations and healing abilities have put me on the road to a fast recovery. Thanks, Jared."

He put his own cup down and reached over to gently touch her wrist. "I truly am glad you made it through. You are a remarkable woman to have survived so much."

She was about to say something to him, when she glanced up and saw Boggin standing in the doorway. Jared turned to look too. Boggin slithered over to them, stopping and scrunching down. Hellaina had the uncanniest feeling something was horribly wrong.

"Not good above." He spoke and he began telling them about things going on above ground. Hellaina listened intently, along with Jared to what he had found out. It wasn't good at all.

## Chapter Five

With their plans made, Boggin went above ground to find the materials that they all needed to make shielding bombs. Hellaina, though not weak any longer, went along with Jared's suggestions that she stay below, until Kronuss' extra guards, ships and the evil general had left off the face of Alpha-12. She knew she'd just gotten well, and her hot-head ways could botch their plans if she faced off with Tyrah right now. Hellaina couldn't have that. Therefore, she and Jared decided to fine-tune the making of the specialty-type anti-explosive deterrents.

Once more, the two set at the communications, science console command/research center, this time going over how they could best make them with what they had. They talked for nearly an hour, exchanging ideas and information. The main components, Jared had some, but there were certain small firing/energy mechanisms he needed and Boggin knew where they were. He'd get them best on a singular reconnaissance job.

"He's something else." Hellaina said to Jared sitting back in the seat and twirling in it.

"Boggin is a good friend." Jared chuckled. "But yes, he is a unique being. You get used to him after awhile. I know he's fascinated by you. You're the first human female he's seen up close."

She stopped twirling in her seat. "He examined me didn't he?"

Jared's face flushed. "He's a better medic than I am and has healing abilities. I thought he would be the best to bring you back healthier."

"It's fine. I just recall stirring and seeing him for a brief second. I think I startled him before he examined me too curiously."

"Perhaps that's why he's been avoiding staying around us. He may think he got too curious and too intimate. Your beauty is tempting."

She studied him, liking what she saw. He was worried too his friend had offended her. "Do not worry, I know he didn't mean to get

personal. It must be lonely though for both of you here, not having...well...uh..."

"Closer companionship." He finished for her. "Yes, I have occasionally missed a woman around. It's been a long time. Probably for Boggin also."

She could sense and feel his interest. His gray eyes smoldered with his desire for her. Hellaina felt moist between her thighs. Would he respond to her if she made an advance. They did have some time before Boggin came back. She hadn't wanted a man like Jared in a long time. Would she be too forward wanting to reach out and caress his creamy dark skin. She wanted to know how his body felt beneath her hands. To feel his dark skin smooth against her toasted colored flesh.

"Your eyes sparkle like blue diamonds when your interest is caught deeply in something." He leaned forward in his seat, placing his hands on his knees. "Your lips are very delectable, Hellaina. I'd very much like to kiss you."

"And more?" she asked. "I read much in your eyes. And yes, I'd like it very much if you did kiss me."

He leaned towards her as she did him. Their eyes locked for a brief moment, each saw the other's heated need for the other. At the same time as him, Hellaina moved her hand to reach up and caress his cheek. She liked the feel of his hand on her cheek. It was warm, soft and caring. Just what she needed now. Both hers went to his face then as she leaned into his kiss. His mouth covered hers gently at first. Hellion brushed her trembling lips against his in response, liking the hot silky taste of his dark full lips. She ran her tongue gingerly over the fuller bottom lip, suckling softly on it.

He let out a groan and pressed his lips closer and harder over hers. His big hands moved down over to her shoulders, gripping them in a tight hold. She pressed in closer to his kiss, deepening her response. His heat raced into her body, down her throat and gliding into her moist channel. Her hands went to his chest and she felt his hard muscles and tight nipples pressing into her exploring hands.

He ran one hand down over her clothed breasts. "You feel so good, Hellaina, so hot."

Between soft and exploring kisses, she let out a watery chuckle. "So do you. I'd like nothing better than to feel your body against mine right now."

He pulled her up out of the chair, his mouth never leaving hers. She arched into him as his arms came around her and his hands settled

on her buttocks. She slipped her arms around him then and did the same. His ass felt good in her hands. She pulled him firmer against her and felt his hardened erection through their lightweight clothing. Like her, his hands ran over her hips, her curvy waist and her chest, with sure even strokes.

With each touch they moved a step away from the chairs. Their hands were all over each other, touching, exploring, and removing clothing. Fevered kisses became bolder, longer, and hotter. His breath came heavier in its mingling wither own. Jared's large hands seared her body as they moved to cup her breasts.

They melted down to the floor on their knees, still kiss, exploring and learning how to please the other. Hellaina helped him to ease out of his clothing, and soon afterwards, he did the same for her. Naked, they caressed each other more heated, their breathing mingling and becoming raspier. She arched into his mouth as he suckled her breasts, each one in turn. She reached up and touched his bare nipples, feeling them harden like pebbles.

Both slid slowly back towards the cool flooring, he half over her. Hellaina stroked his taut ribs, moving her hands down over his lush firm buttocks. His dark body heated her own warm brown one, making her want him with an ache only he could feel. His long stiff cock pressed against her thighs. She opened up for him.

He reached down and explored her pussy, sliding his fingertips up and down her wet crevice. He inserted a big finger and she pressed her hips into his strokes. Then he removed his hand and guided himself into her. She wound her legs around his backside as he drove deeply into her. She writhed and moved furiously with him as he pounded with abandoned into her. Fierce desires overwhelmed her. It had been too long since she'd felt this good with a man.

His hips thrust heavily against hers, and she felt her body soon quaking beneath his. Jared shivered above her. His body sweated with his desires for her. Soon her groans for release mingled with his own, as their passions swept them away into the farthest reaches of space. Then the comet they were zooming on slowly dissipated, bringing them back down to the terra firma of the lab.

He leaned up on his elbows grinning down at her. "You're an incredible woman, Hellaina."

She smiled up at him. "Thank you, Jared. You're pretty damn special yourself."

He eased off of her, getting in a sitting position. "How about a shower?"

“Sounds good,” she winked at him. “I can think of lots of good things to do in a shower, besides bathing too.”

He chuckled, stood up and helped her to her feet. “I’m looking forward to it.”

\* \* \* \*

While Jared slept in the small sleeping unit, Hellaina finished putting together the things they would need to take above ground, into packs for all of them. She saw Boggin slide out of the living area to go into the lab. He moved softly moved towards her and then formed into a humanoid image so that he could sit on the sofa near the far end away from the Coms area.

She smiled up at him once she closed the last of the packs up. “I think that will do now that the anti-bombs are made. “Yours and Jared’s minds are brilliant, Boggin.”

“Thank you.”

She cocked her head to one side and studied him. “It must be lonely down here for you, even with Jared. What are the females like of your world? Did you have a girlfriend? A companion?”

He shrugged his shoulders. “It matters not.”

“It’s ok if you don’t want to talk about it.”

“Wait.” She started to move, but he slid down on the floor in front of her. “I must apologize.”

“For what?” Her instincts told her he felt bad, serious about something he wanted to say to her. She let him take his time.

“When I examined you.” He let out a deep sigh. Boggin seemed able to talk better when he was in a morphed human state. He had a similar shape to Jared, but he was still dark as space and all one unit of dark mass, with faint outlines of a body and clothing.

“You mean when you cleansed me?”

His head came up and she saw into his darkened face. His slits opened and his eye slots became red like his huge maw when in his large blobbish shape. “You did feel that? I am sorry.”

She did recall his intent examination of her. She’d slightly come to then but he was not looking at her so he didn’t know. She’d passed back out and then flickered in and out. His touches had stirred her almost like the fires Jared had opened up with in her a few hours ago. Deep within herself, a strange stir of both passion and something about her destiny surfaced.

It was as if she knew that somehow she’d be linked to Jared and Boggin in a way she never would to any one or being again. In the short while she’d known them, they had seeped into her inner self and

she realized that they had become part of her life. She didn't know why it was happening to her or why she totally felt so, just some innate part of her knew it was right. Just like when Boggin had touched her. It made her feel safe and more.

When he started to move away, she stopped him. She touched his hardened arm. Yes it felt solid to her. Would other parts of him be solid too? The thought made her smile. She couldn't believe she wanted Boggin in similar ways to Jared. She had to find out then.

"I am not sorry, Boggin. You were but curious and cared for my well-being. I am glad that I've met you and Jared. I do not know how to explain it, but I feel as if our destinies are connected."

"You do not open up to people easily either."

"Your empathy and personal assumption is correct. You are an unusual male, Boggin, but not offensive to me."

He arched his shoulders back and his head came upright as if in surprise. "I do sense something towards you, Hellaina. I do not understand it."

"Perhaps I could help. Have you ever been intimate with a human female before?"

He shook his dark head. "No. I studied human involvement after you and Jared showered."

She laughed. "I thought I sensed you coming in the room when we headed for the shower."

His face paled to gray. "I did not mean to see."

She reached up and caressed his cheek. "Don't worry. Are you curious, Boggin?"

"Umm...yes."

"Then kiss me."

"You are sure? You do not find me distasteful?"

Hellaina shook her head. No, she really wanted to find out how compatible they were. "I would like it very much if you did kiss me."

The alien male leaned his face closer to her. She leaned into him and brushed her lips to his. He shivered beneath that kiss. Hellaina put her hands to his cheeks and deepened the kiss. Boggin's morphed arms came around her. Boggin almost purred against her, she thought. Hellaina stoked his smooth-as-glass face. He felt cool and satiny beneath her warm palms. This would be quite interesting for both of them. But she knew it would be more than that.

"But what of Jared?"

"I care for both of you, Boggin. I don't know how or why, but I do. I do not think it will upset Jared."

Boggin cocked his head to one side and then the other. Then he turned to look back at the entrance to the living habitat and back at her. "I know a warm place in the caverns."

She smiled and stood up. He did too. The next thing she knew, he scooped her up in his arms. Like when he first did after they found her, his arms beneath her were soothing, but more feelings coursed through her body. His mouth slowly widened and that red glow matched his eyes. Hellaina knew she was in for quite a time as he walk-glided out of the laboratory and took her deep within the caverns.

Much later, the two were back at the labs, seeing Jared near the communications units. He got up when she and Boggin entered. For a moment she felt a bit embarrassed and wary, hoping Jared would not be angry. His sly grin told her otherwise.

"I think we all couldn't be a happier unit. Strangely so but content with each other."

Boggin was still in his dark human form, his color almost as sable as Jared's. "Not angry, my friend?"

Jared shook his head, and Hellaina let out a soft sigh of relief. "Not at all, Boggin. Hellaina has eased both our years of loneliness." He moved over and took her hand in his. "You'll always be special to us, Hellaina."

She reached up and caressed his cheek. "As you and Boggin are to me. Never forget that. Either of you. We will be together in our hearts and other ways."

"Hopefully, permanently one day," Boggin said.

## Chapter Six

Hellaina went out first of the cavern opening. She glanced to her left then her right, her laser pistol held close to her, yet ready to fire should the need arise. She briefly turned back and waved for Boggin and Jared to follow her. They came up behind her following in her wake. Both were armed. She smiled up at the two, but it was a grim smile.

“Let’s do some damage, boys.”

She almost laughed at Boggin’s gurgled groan. She knew she made him nervous. Perhaps that’s why she had taken a liking to the strange gelatinous male alien. Well one of the reasons. She brought her mind back to the situation. They had a mission to accomplish and not much time to do it in. Take down the small battalion here and stop them from blowing up the planetoid. Just an average mission.

Something her mother always did at HAREM. She guessed it was just in her genetic makeup. When she left here, she’d have to seriously think about joining it now.

She led the way, up the slope where she’d gone scouting that night with Boggin. They all kept quiet, even Boggin with his former slide-crunch shuffle. Even Jared was no longer nervous about handling a weapon. She was glad they’d let her teach them how to handle the armaments. Boggin was a quick learner and so was Jared.

Walking quickly but quietly, they made their way to a nearby docking bay for ships. It wasn’t well lit, and only a few men posted around. Boggin slithered ahead of her and took out two of them. She came up behind the others and bashed their heads together before they knew what was coming.

Boggin morphed a thumbs up and she saw that Jared waved his hand towards a hanger of the small docking bay. She and Boggin joined him there. The large open hanger bay housed two small fighter ships and a single scouter ship that would hold two beings, even one as big as Boggin. They quickly moved towards the ships and Hellaina knew the other two were as glad as she that there were no guards around them. She was thankful too that these were EET brand ships.

“As soon as Boggin and I get the shielding-bombs set you get that thing ready to go.” She pointed at the scout ship. I’ll take the fighter and cover you two. You’ll need to get that down into the deeper part of the swamp before they go off.”

“Fifteen minutes to detonation is all we have, I know.”

“We will do it.” Boggin said.

She glanced at both of them affectionately for a split micro second. “I know you will. Get the coms on, Jared. Need you to scan as quickly and quietly as you can for activity around Boggin or me.”

He nodded and disappeared into the ship. Boggin put a hand on her shoulder, or a tentacle-paw it looked more like. She knew he understood the questioning glance that she gave him. His eyes midnight blue glared blankly at her.

“Be careful. No wish to lose you.”

She patted his hand. “You too, Boggin. Now go.”

He tucked his pack over his shoulder and slid-walked faster than she had ever seen him move before in a human morphed form. She went the opposite direction. Near the science laboratories, she saw a small troupe of men moving things in and out of the building. She snuck between an alley way. The main above ground labs, she was sure, would be one place they would put an explosive. She grinned at the large trash bin in the alleyway.

Quickly she opened the heavy metal lid and softly dropped the first bomb onto the pile of debris in the bin. She heard footsteps and hid behind the end of it. Through a small inch of space behind the bin, she could see a small troupe of men going by. When they had left, she continued down the alley way, and on toward the next destination.

She ran for about five minutes before, avoiding any other minions, and finally reached her next place to plant a shielding bomb. She found three more minions moving around near a second hanger, where the underground lab computers had seen them on duty. This small sentry would be the second of three she, Jared, and Boggin coordinated to take out before they could replace the deadly bombs for shielding bombs that she, Jared, and Boggin had made.

Boggin’s nightly trips of placing strategic spy ware around had been a great help in their plans. With hidden robotic cameras, they’d been able to ascertain the Kronuss group’s plans and know where some of the destruction explosives were going to be planted. Jared’s and Boggin’s scientific estimations and calculations had figured where the others were more than likely being put down.

When they had first found out that Kronuss' minions, under Tyrah's order was going to blowup the whole planetoid, they had come up with an alternate plan. They would plant specialty-made shielding bombs next to the explosive ones. This way the inner part of the planet, especially where the cavern labs were, would be shielded against the destructive explosions of the more powerful bombs.

The shielding bombs would act as a protective force field around the areas of the caverns, and all within the projected radius would be safe from the other bombs. The planetoid would be pushed far enough away from the rest of the explosion and left to drift amongst the far rings of asteroids that were closer in to the Guynan System, ruled by the EET group, the Fregnar. An area that Kronuss' armies had yet to conquer thankfully.

Hellaina got one of them at the back of the shoulders with a hard karate chop. He fell to his knees but the other two aimed their weapons at them. She dodged the first round of laser pellets fired at her. She rolled on the tarmac and fired back. Her repeating pistol disintegrated the first uniformed man that had fired upon. She rolled again to avoid the other one's next blast. She missed him the first time, but got behind a metallic box in the hanger's.

She waited for the being to fire. He didn't, and when she looked down next to her, she saw why. A faint ticking had caught her attention. There was a dark gray box there with digital numbers on it, counting itself down. One of the bombs. The mechanism looked locked. Half an hour before impact. They were set to go off then whether the personnel got off the Alpha-12 or not. She checked her weapon and then tentatively peeked between the large metal crate she hid behind and the one stacked but a mere inch from it. They were looking this way but didn't come closer, or she felt, sense her anywhere around by any means.

She saw the last one standing to one side, but he wasn't alone. Tyrah and about four other guards stood half hiding behind some other. She hoped with her dark infrared goggles on and not in an EET uniform, that the guard didn't recognize her. Hellaina figured Tyrah, the friggin bitch, had made it far within just a few months in Kronuss hierarchy of underlings. The traitor probably used her powers of allure on the friggin bastard General Kronuss.

"We haven't spotted anyone else." She heard a voice say over some static. That was a fucking loud communications device used, she thought ironically.

“Get everyone back to this ship.” She heard Tyrah order. “We’ll set the bombs off ahead of time.”

She heard an affirmative response, and then one of the men spoke up quickly. “Shouldn’t we see if that person is live or dead, Commander Tyranus?”

“Whoever it is won’t stand a chance. Leave him to die here. Cover me. Let’s get aboard.” So the fucking shit-bitch had made it to commander. And in less than a week. Had to hand it to Tyrah, she moved fast.

Here was her chance. Kill Tyrah now. She glanced down at the ticking device. Boggin needed time to get the other bomb in place. The one by the first hanger, then the one in the dumpster, one here, and one near the swamps was all they truly needed. However, Boggin, during his mission to the swamp, would, during his run around the perimeter of the caverns land mass, set others down, just for precautionary matters.

He would be aboard with Jared pretty soon. Yet, she couldn’t take a chance a stray fire from a weapon would set this mechanism off. She had to get Jared and his work safely off the planet along with Boggin. She had to cover them with a fighter while they snuck the ship back onto the planetoid. Jared was close to finishing his work. Work that couldn’t be destroyed or allowed to get in Kronuss’ hands.

She could not fire on Tyrah and the others.

“Get aboard. We don’t see any movement. My last shot must have gotten the being.”

“Shut the hell up and get the hell aboard. We can’t take any chances. Don’t go near the crate in case the jerker set something up behind it before hand. I want those devices detonated the minute we are out of orbit.”

“But the others around the planetoid...” the guard’s voice died off as a laser blast hit him. She saw through the sliver opening that Tyrah had fired on the man.

“Anyone else want to argue with me? Good. Now move it.”

Hellaina bit her bottom lip and stayed behind the crate as whoever was left quickly rushed to the large ship in the open hanger. The building and the ship whirled with life. Looking up, she saw the hanger ceiling open up completely and the ship started to rise above into the air. Within moments it was gone. She glanced around, seeing no one else in the hanger bay. Hellaina put the shielding bomb down and started it’s countdown to sync with the other bomb.

Weapon ready, she jumped up to a standing position. No one definitely had stayed behind. She ran as fast as she could out of the hanger and destroyed anything and anyone that got in her way as she made her way back to the first hanger where Jared and Boggin were to wait for her. The hanger ceiling was already open. She saw them through a porthole in the scouter-ship. They waved at her as she climbed up into the fighter vessel. She saluted them with an “a-ok” sign. Jared did the same back to her.

Their engines started at about the same time. Boggin and Jared piloted the other ship out of the hanger. She geared the other up, and followed in their trail. Within moments after they were out in space, the devices went off. She pushed her ship to its fullest capacity, circled, and hovered nearby the scouter vessel.

Explosions went off, lighting the darkness of space. Dust, debris and the inner cavern lab area, and several chunks of the planetoid near the caverns radius blew out in several directions. They had accomplished their mission. She followed their ship through clouds of dust particles, and saw them enter a huge crater within the large asteroid rock. When they were inside, she fired on the edge of the rock near their entry. Second before the fire hit them, a force field lit up and then it became dark, to match the crater opening.

The piece of asteroid rocketed powerfully off into space, it's trajectory going towards the Guynan System. She hid the fighter vessel behind pieces of blasted rock and kept the ship on stealth mode while she flew at a safe distance in and out and around it, swerving to keep from being hit by rocketing pieces of debris from the first blasting of Planetoid Alpha-12. From now on, every one would think it and who remained on it were dead. She hoped Kronuss and his minions would think that from now until doomsday.

With the ship and the supplies that Jared had been loading while she and Boggin set the bombs, they would be safe and secure out of the way of Kronuss for a long time. Their new asteroid would blend in safely with the rest of the asteroid belts surrounding the Guynan System. However, once there, she might never be able to find it again.

In her heart, she knew that would be the best thing to do. To leave the men she had come to care for, alone and forgotten. Their work and their lives were too important to ever fall in Kronuss' hands. She knew they would understand in time, and was glad, when she saw the shield up go up, they both had known she would make it. Her chest became weighty with her choice, but she it had to be done. They would understand. The Earth and Extraterrestrial Forces need her

back. Yet, that's not where she was heading now. Now that she saw they were safe.

She programmed in the final destination she'd be using this old ship for. One of the HAREM outposts were just a few days away by its fastest speed. It was time she took her mother's advice. It would be a more fruitful way to stop the evil she knew would be coming. Kronuss' evil days were over soon. Yet in his quake, Hellaina knew another evil was coming. One she should have seen a long time ago.

One day, she vowed. Tyrah Tyranus would die at her hands.

## **Epilog**

(2375: Mid-year, current time)

Hellaina “Hellion” Hernandez picked up the large mega-machine gun and aimed towards the row of mechanical dummies coming for her. She snapped the large clip in place, pointed at the row of them, then she let it rip. A loud round of ammo lasered out in front of her sweep. The heavy metal practice droids were melted in seconds. A wry tilt played upon her lips for a moment. Going on thirty-five and she still had the hang of it.

Hellion studied the melted pile of android parts and debris. Battle-droids were easy targets. Even dangerous practice bots such as these. Well for some of her colleges anyway. She’d much rather be ripping the insides of Femsters and Mendors instead of androids. Of course, some of the henchmen and women of Tyrah Tyranus were threaded in some places with cyboric parts. Like arms and thighs and sometimes eyes.

Femsters and Mendors were Tyrah’s main minions, who worked under hers and her generals’ orders. They were men and women from different worlds Tyrah subjugated with psi-allure and drugs. Then their mental and physical personas were reprogrammed to do Tyrah’s bidding. The poor souls’ bodies were threaded with cybernetic implants, enhancing their physical and mental qualities. They were mostly similar in heights and body weight, but sometimes Tyrah allowed a few of them to retain their original constitutions of racial patterns.

Yet, they always wore the garnet and gold uniforms of the Tyranus Order. A uni-suit that allowed free movement, could withstand most weather, and kept its wearer in vital health in most conditions. Much like the uniforms of the Earth & ET forces, it was one piece and particularly formed to its wearer’s height and body mass. Only Earth uniforms were black with silver markings, and came with extras to aid and give further protection to its owner. Like keeping them warm or cool in various weather conditions, and being a

protection for their bodies, from the neck to ankle, against various deadly attacks of different means.

Tyrah didn't care if her minions dropped dead in battle, but Earth forces did, so their scientists took every precaution and use of Nano-Technology they could in order to save their warriors' lives. The oval insignia of the sun surrounded by a group of stars representing the main worlds of the Earth-Fed, was the only decoration on the uniforms besides patches of rank and the silver arm bands of the units the warrior was assigned to. To complete the outfits, most wore conditionary, serviceable black boots and a hip sling micro pouch that held needed emergency essentials.

Earth warriors were not stamped on the temple, forehead, or anywhere, with any label of conformity. However, all of Tyrah's underlings wore her mark with the ruby star sliced with a thunderbolt, imbedded on the left temple side of their head, just above the ear. Some bore the Tyranus tattoo on the right side of a Scorpion Stinger-Beast. Though processed with cybernetic or oft called cyboric mechanisms, underneath, Hellion believed these beings still had some inklings of emotions. It couldn't always be proven though. Tyrah kept a tight reign on her generals and underlings.

Hellion put the practice weapon to one side on the armament table and pulled off her protective goggles. She'd had enough practice for one day. Hellion gathered her duffle bag she'd brought with her, and glanced around the huge practice area. Only the service clerk and a few others were in the vast room, talking or practicing in one of the other mini, enclosed battle simulation and actualization areas used for war practice. She didn't see anyone she wanted to really stay and have a conversation with, and did the perfunctory nod that most did when they said hello or good-bye to others around them.

She made her way through the halls of the HAREM agency. HAREM was nearly fifty years old, but not all its members were. It worked closely with the Earth Forces to stop Tyrah's mercenaries and her plans from ruling all of the colonized-grouped worlds. Tyrah had already conquered a quarter of the known solar systems, but the galaxy was vast, and there were still places even Tyrah or the Earth Forces didn't know about. However, Tyrah's diabolical plans and actions kept the Earth Forces on their toes, and HAREM and the PIMP Organization too.

PIMP was mostly made of men, though they had some females working in their file rooms and other administrative places. Whereas, HAREM did have some men agents, who partnered with the females,

the covert male agency had mostly men. They were an EETs run group. It wasn't gender rivalry, it just happened that way. The PIMPs often didn't know who was in HAREM, much less all of what HAREM stood for or did. Nevertheless, that was the way some female heads of the Earth Forces liked it. HAREM knew more about PIMP than it did about the female-ran agency.

Sometimes HAREM was known as Harmz and PIMP was known as Pimz, including the agents that worked for both organizations. Hellion hadn't met a man who could keep up with her yet. She kept a straight face as she sauntered down the halls, seeing others, who saluted her. Though she was the daughter of the founder of HAREM, Hellion was glad that she wasn't shown favoritism. Avenger, her long-time friend, some of the newer members, and some Smart Teks ran the compound and Ops sections. Everyone worked well towards putting dampers in the Tyranus Order. Hellion intended to keep on doing her part to aid in getting Tyrah once and for all out of Earth and Harmz way.

Hellaina finally reached her destination, her own secure office in the compound. She placed her palm on the door emblem of HAREM, the pouty lip-kiss imprint overlaying a comet of fire. Thankfully, they didn't use the stupid thing on their uniforms. But, Hellaina never liked uniforms, even when she worked for Earth Forces. She wore her black cargo pants, sleeveless v-neck tank shirt, comfortable boots, and a matching hip length jacket. Even those now in charge didn't always like her appearance, but she could care less. They didn't fuck with her, and she didn't tell them how to run HAREM. It worked out fine that way.

The door slid to one side and she entered. It wasn't a really big and lush office, but had a hover sofa to one side, a comfortable old desk with light fixtures, state of the art computerized communications equipment, and a few holo-pics on the desk. Behind it lay a large acrylica shelf, clear in color and filled with a few mementoes and books her younger sister Kaera had sent her over the years as presents. Two slick modern armchairs and a holo-synthesizer near the one large rounded window completed the room. A small bath unit and storage area was attached to the room via the door on the wall between the window and shelf.

She threw the duffle bag and her jacket on the sofa and went to sit behind her desk. She pulled the small silver keyboard near her after switching on the console. The flat silver-white screen came on immediately after powering up. Hellion typed in her requests to the

computer-sophisticated data banks. She had a few things to go over, before she went on her self-assignment. She needed to remember something. Though most of the time she had good recall, she still liked to read data over, just to make sure she didn't forget anything. In addition, she liked to keep her self aware of the latest news and events going on, plus scientific data and updated info on the agents out on assignments.

The science lab-tech she'd last spoke to said there were new data bits being uploaded that day, so until they were finished, the system would be a bit slow. Finally it hummed and the face of Tyrah Tyranus blared on her screen. A face of charm and diabolical meanness.

Tyrah was a selfish bitch who didn't care what it took to get her way. She wanted to rule everything, no matter the cost. HAREM was there, along with others, to stop the maniacal woman's struggle to galactic domination. Hellaina leaned closer to the monitor, propped her elbow up and cupped her chin in her palm to let it rest. With her other, she touched a button to bring up other images further. She needed to recall some data that was important to her self-mission. Her mind still dwelled a bit on Tyrah, or as sometimes the heathen was referred to—T-rex. The bitch was a creature that gobbled up anything in her path.

Years ago they had been something of friends. Then the woman's darker side surfaced. Hellaina tried to make her see sense, to stop Tyrah's sinister traits from coming out. But, after they had been captured by Kronuss, there was no help for Tyrah. After escaping the two heathens, Kronuss and Tyrah, she'd disappeared for a while. When she resurfaced, she joined HAREM, much to her mother's satisfaction. By then, Hellaina developed other skills and improved on other ones she'd learned over the years in the Earth Forces. During those long years, Tyrah had become more formidable. All of Harmz tried to thwart Tyrah as best they could, in places and ways that the EETs couldn't. Now their members were larger and the agency had grown with even more sophisticated weaponry and communication facilities.

Hellion was ready to stop working for them for a while. But not just yet. She had kept a secret close to her heart for more than five years now. She needed her HAREM resources to go on this self-mission of hers, to save the life of someone dear to her. She'd been passed along a piece of information a few days ago. She could not let the life of some one who saved hers over five years ago, be lost. If what she learned was true, and Tyrah was going back to the old

science outpost where Kronuss captured them, then she had to go back there herself. Tyrah, nor any of her cohorts, could be allowed to find out what she, Hellion had found and left there years ago. Not only would an innocent life be in danger, but so but so would years of confidential scientific research and accumulated data. The Tyranus order could not be allowed to have access to the information.

She'd read the files before, but had closed them up and hidden them deep into her computer system where no one could get to them. She needed the files now. She needed to remember what she had put in her report. Remembering what had happened to her, what she had closed herself off to five years ago, was now important to not only saving that innocent life, but perhaps many other innocent lives within the Earth-Extraterrestrial Colonies and Planets.

Tyrah would destroy the abandoned science post if she knew what Hellion had left behind there. She could not allow that. Even if this time she didn't return from her self-appointed mission. Others might just nuke-bomb the place rather than let Tyrah and her minions get their hands on the groundbreaking data and research. Hellion couldn't blame them if this leaked out.

She however owed two very people a huge debt. That, for her at the present, was just as high priority as saving the galaxy. She could not let this chance slip from her fingertips. Hellion knew she should have gone back and gotten them off of the planetoid, years ago. But both had refused to come. They knew she could not stay.

Now she had the means to save them and get them off that blasted place. Come nova or comet, she would bring them back, the very...male beings she cared for the most.

**The End, for now...**

**Tigre Moon**  
**by**  
**Jenna Leigh**

The Tigre are a race of accursed people from the planet of Maurania. Some say, they are immortal, others say they are demons. None know when they came into being. However, they have spread throughout the known galaxy. Some quest for their mates, the descendant of the planet that escaped the curse, others simply survive, torn between their human and animal half.

Tael has searched for many years to find the one true love to set him free of the blood curse of the Tigre Moon. Is Neri the one?

<http://www.jennaleighzone.com>

# **Tigre Moon**

by

## **Jenna Leigh**

### **Chapter One**

New Earth 2350 A.D.

Neri stood at the end of the line waiting for someone to buy her. She had been with her mother up until her death earlier this year. She was now twenty-one seasons old, much too old for the slave market. But her mother had been much beloved of her owner and had been allowed to keep her only child with her. That love did not extend to the daughter, however. Even though he was her father, he had no qualms about selling her.

Neri kept her head down, looking at the dirt floor beneath her leather slippers. She wore the gauzy dress of ladies of the night. She was ashamed to admit that she had no idea of the role they played. Her mother had sheltered her most of her life from the seamier side of their existence. Neri sighed as she listened to the auctioneer droning on about the girl ahead of her. Apparently, her assets were much more of a commodity than Neri's were as he expounded on both her virtue and knowledge of bed games.

Neri wondered how one could be both innocent and knowledgeable at the same time. Her attention drifted, but when the auctioneer began to speak again, she realized he was selling her now.

The auctioneer's assistant prodded her. "Look up, girl. Your eyes are going to make us a mint."

Her eyes were unusual in this land of dark haired dark-eyed people. She stood out like a sore thumb. Her hair was brown with streaks of red and dark gold, just like her mother's. But her most arresting feature was her eyes. They were a clear turquoise, shining in her lightly tanned face. Her lips were full and red, and her nose was straight. Otherwise, she didn't think too highly of her features.

However, the slaver had rubbed his hands together when he first saw her.

“This is Neri of Salvador. Note the eyes—she is rumored to be a hybrid human, her ancestors are from the legendary world of Maurania. The women there are said to be the most skilled of lovers in the known universe.” This was news to her; she had lived in the village down river all her life. If she were from this other planet, surely she would know it.

“Who will start the bidding?” The auctioneer began to call out amounts and hands went up quickly. Neri stood as still as stone, her heart pounding in her ears as she awaited her fate. She was so afraid, she thought she might lose the meager breakfast she’d eaten earlier.

“Turn around.” The handler pulled on her arm when she didn’t obey immediately, turning her first to one side then the other. When she faced front again, she noticed someone staring at her. He was tall with golden brown hair; he was frowning at the platform. Had she done something wrong? He held her gaze as he made his way down to the front.

“I will give you twenty thousand dachas for her,” he called out in a deep baritone that vibrated from the soles of Neri’s feet through the top of her head. The other bidders took a collective breath at the price he offered.

The auctioneer rubbed his hands greedily and rapped the gavel on his podium. “Going once, going twice, sold to the gentleman down in front for twenty thousand dachas. You have made a wise purchase, sir.” The man ignored the auctioneer’s oily smile and held his hand out to Neri.

“Come along.” He waited until she put her hand in his larger one and let him lead her down the steps in front.

“Please pay at the front, sir. Enjoy.” The auctioneer laughed, and the other men in the crowd leered at Neri. She stuck close by her new owner’s side as they walked among them; all moved aside for his larger bulk.

Her head barely reached his shoulder; she felt dwarfed by him. She had a sinking feeling in her stomach while she watched him pay for her. She now belonged to this stranger. Where was he taking her, and what did he expect when they reached their destination?

## Chapter Two

He didn't speak, just put his hand on her shoulder and guided her to his air glider. She waited for him to tell her where to sit, and when he did so she moved quickly to obey. If she did what he said, maybe he wouldn't hurt her.

She kept her head bent and her lashes lowered. A gentle caress on her cheek made her look up at him in surprise. "Don't be afraid. My name's Tael." His voice was low and gentle.

She smiled tremulously in return. "My name is Neri."

"A lovely name for a lovely girl." He sat down in the glider, palming the control. "Hold on. We are heading toward my ship. We'll be going fast." They zoomed straight up into the air then flew toward the horizon.

Neri remained silent for the whole journey to the launch pad. Once there, the glider headed for a long silver ship. A home she still didn't know the name of, she realized suddenly.

When they docked, he took her hand in his and led her to entrance of the larger ship that would take them out of Earth's atmosphere and beyond. After they reached the front of the craft, he strapped her into a thickly padded harness. All the while, she stayed mute, afraid of doing anything to antagonize him.

Part of her was afraid, but another more adventurous part was excited at the prospect of going off her home planet. Her father was rich, but not wealthy enough to take space voyages, and if he had been he surely wouldn't have taken her.

"Are you ready?" His voice interrupted her musings.

"Yes." She studied him from beneath her lashes. His hair was the color of dark honey, his skin almost as dark. As if sensing her stare, he turned to look at her. There was amusement lurking in the depths of his green eyes.

"We are almost ready to launch." They sat at the front of the craft in large cushioned seats. From this position, she could see the deep blue sky and the fluffy clouds floating past. The sun was bright; she thought this might be the last time she actually saw the sun, at least from this planet.

“I’m ready.” She clenched her fists in her lap and he laughed. Her shoulders hunched at the suddenly sinister sound.

The engines powered up and the ship shuddered. She squeaked and held onto the armrests so hard her knuckles went white. The pressure from the launch pressed her back into the seat and made her whole body ache.

“Not much longer, just hold on.” At his words, she turned and watched his long-fingered hands clenched on the steering mechanism for a long time. “No, look there.” He pointed.

She looked out the window just in time for the craft to burst through Earth’s atmosphere, and suddenly stars surrounded them. The sudden lack of pressure made her jerk forward, but the harness held her safely in place.

At her wide-eyed stare, he explained about the large metal framework that made up a gate to his universe, telling her that it would shift them through space at a rapid pace much faster than her world’s technology would ever allow. Tael keyed in the coordinates, and their speed increased at an alarming rate.

When she gasped, her new owner reached his hand out and squeezed her arm before he went back to steering the ship. Suddenly, fear clenched in her belly and she felt faint. He was a stranger, and he was taking her to an even stranger place. What did her future really hold with a man who owned her body and soul?

## Chapter Three

The girl trembled violently. Tael felt it and frowned. Why was she afraid now? He put his hand on her arm and she jumped. Ah well, fear or no, she would know him before this day was done. Looking much like Earth, his home planet came into view, and he banked the craft into orbit. “Re-entry isn’t as bad as the launch,” he promised her, thinking she was afraid because of that. She simply nodded and held very still.

He angled his entry so that it wouldn’t be too bumpy and then set the navigation to his home. After that, it was just a matter of waiting for the craft to finish the journey on its own.

Soon, they were surrounded by aqua seas, and finally there was a dark spot on the horizon. “There is my home.” He pointed toward the slowly growing island. She didn’t even blink, simply sat forward staring out of the window. Her eyes were wide and again filled with what he thought was fear.

A small spit of land served as a landing strip. He expertly guided the craft toward it, clicking the controls to slow the rate of speed. They landed with a small bump, slowly rolling to a stop. Their entire trip took less than half an hour.

“Let’s get going.” He led her from the craft and up the landing strip toward what looked like dense jungle. The path curved sharply to the right, and when they rounded the bend she caught her breath in amazement. His home was formidable, huge and gleaming, hidden like a jewel behind the screen of jungle.

Tael watched her face, delighting in her reaction. She was awed; of course, all were when they first came here. His magic had built this place, stone by stone. She didn’t know what he was yet. By the time she did, it would be too late. If she was truly a descendent of Maurania, she was the perfect companion for him.

Neri followed Tael up the slight slope to the front of the palace. There were two guards posted on either side of the door. Neri looked up and one of the guards winked at her. She looked back down at the ground quickly in case her new master thought she had provoked this exchange, unaware that her thoughts were clearly broadcast straight into his head.

This was his world; his powers were much greater when he was on his home planet. Now he could hear what she thought as if she were speaking out loud. She was afraid of displeasing him; however, he didn't think that could happen. Tael shook his head at the man, warning him that this one was off limits.

The minute they crossed the threshold of the palace, she stopped in confusion and looked around. The shielding around the palace caused a disconcerting sensation; he knew she'd felt the slight tingle along her skin.

Tael took her arm to reassure her. "It's alright, come on."

He led her to the women's quarters, stopping outside the door. "Your place is here. Do not roam about the castle without an escort. I will call for you when I want you. Is that understood?" She nodded and he smiled at her, leaning down to kiss her lips softly. "Take this time to get used to your surroundings. You are going to be here for a long time."

"I will, master." Her voice was soft and low.

He frowned. "No, not master. You must call me Tael." Their relationship was not going to be as impersonal as that.

\* \* \* \*

"Tael." She forced the name out against all her training. In all her years in her father's household, she only once called him anything but master. He hadn't allowed it. Her mother had called him by his given name, but she was the only one allowed to do so. The one time Neri called him father had earned her a beating she never forgot.

"Good," he said, opening the door. "Ladies, this is Neri. Please make her feel welcome. I will be back for her later." His smile was wide and wicked. The feminine giggles that greeted his comments sounded relaxed and happy, not afraid. Maybe he was a good master—she hoped so.

"Come in, Neri!" A girl about her own age beckoned her forward. "You have the most beautiful eyes." She took her hand and led her to the other women. There were about ten, ranging in age from eighteen to twenty-five. All different sizes and races were represented, and all were staring at her. She blushed at their scrutiny and looked down again.

"Oh look, she is shy. We will soon cure her of that." A pretty blonde tittered behind her hand, not unkindly.

"That, or Tael will," another added, making them all laugh.

Neri blushed again, unable to help it. They were so nonchalant about something that she had never done. She didn't know what was expected of her here, so she stood there waiting.

"Come and sit down. My name is Mara." The other girl led her to a pile of cushions where the others were reclining. They all looked at her as if she were some new treat. Neri waited for a clue as to how she was supposed to act.

"Where are you from, Neri?" A red haired woman lounged on a pile of cushions. She popped a fat grape into her mouth and grinned. "I am Lire, by the way."

"I am from Salvador, on Earth." Neri sat down, nervously smoothing her skirts into place.

"Oh, I knew a man from there once. He was not nice at all." A petite raven-haired woman sat beside her and touched her hair softly. "You have pretty hair. My name is Seelie."

"Thank you." Neri was astonished that they were all so nice to her. "So do you."

"Well, this is wonderful. But we are all going to have to introduce ourselves." A tall brunette interrupted their conversation. "I am Caro, this is Aria, Celize, Ito, Bren, Zaron, and that grumpy one over there is Lena. Ignore her, she is always like that." Caro laughed when Lena frowned at her. "We think she was born this way and just gets better with practice."

"Shut up," Lena snapped then gave Neri an absent smile. "Nice to meet you, Neri," she said and went back to her sewing.

"Thank you." Neri's head whirled as she tried to remember the names. It wouldn't do to forget and offend them. She knew enough about living with other women that giving offense could be almost suicidal.

An older woman came through the door just then, interrupting their conversation. "Ladies, it's bath time, the waters are just right, come along." She clapped her hands together briskly then stopped to smile at the newcomer. "I am Delana, and you must be Neri. Come child, don't be shy."

Neri had no choice but to follow them, and soon they were all naked and in the large pool. The other women were splashing each other and talking as they bathed. Neri stayed over by herself, washing her hair and watching.

Soon oils were brought out, and all of them were directed to the low padded tables alongside the pool. Neri lay face down on a table with a towel across her hips. What she thought would be frightening,

or at the least embarrassing, turned out to be a pleasurable, relaxing experience.

Caro moaned from the table beside her. “Do you know, before I came here I worked at a tavern for my uncle? My feet hurt every night after working. Now, I don’t have to lift a finger other than serve Tael. And that is no hardship.” Her lips curved into a wicked smile. “Don’t be afraid. He won’t hurt you, you know.”

Neri said nothing, just tried to keep calm. Someone handed her a goblet of wine and told her to drink it. The other women got one as well. Neri drank deeply, hoping it would calm her nerves. Soon her eyes drifted closed, and she fell into a restless sleep.

## Chapter Four

“Is the spell working?” a deep voice asked from a long way off. She felt like she was wrapped in thick blankets. She could move, but didn’t really want to. Her eyelids were so heavy she couldn’t lift them.

“Yes, it seems to be,” another answered.

“Good, it helps if they are relaxed the first time I come to them in my other form,” the first voice said. There was the sound of the door shutting and then silence.

After a brief struggle, Neri forced her eyes open and looked around. Where was she? The chamber was lit by braziers scattered around the room. The bed she lay upon was huge with dark burgundy hangings that were soft to the touch. Neri was dressed in a long white nightdress with lacy ruffles along the hem. She rubbed the fabric between her fingers, marveling at the silky texture.

She tried to sit up but found that it made the room spin in an alarming way. So she lay back down, staring at the ceiling in wonder. It was painted with winged creatures all around the edge. In the middle, however was another creature. She’d never seen such a thing, but had heard of them in legends.

It was the Tigre. She knew of them from pictures in a forbidden book her father had. He was not aware that Neri could read; she and her mother kept it secret.

According to legend, the Tigre was a dual natured being, half man and half beast. The one you got depended on the phases of the second moon of their home planet. Their whole race was under a curse because a woman had refused the God of the Beasts in his pursuit of her. She had been turned into this fierce creature, it was said, and only when she found her true mate was she freed from the curse.

Her children were not so lucky. Now they were all damned to follow in her footsteps. Each one had been born with the same dilemma. Some went mad. Many were hunted down and killed, or enslaved. Some found their escape, and others lived out their long

lives yearning for the one that would free them and enable them to control the beast within.

“Neri.” A voice whispered, echoing in her mind.

She opened her eyes wide and looked around. There was no one here.

“Neri. Come here.” Again it called; her heart thundered in her ears. Magic was considered sinful. The demons used magic.

She stood up, compelled to follow the direction of the voice in her head. She stumbled and almost fell when she reached the door, but then she steadied herself and continued out into the hall. The voice led her outside the compound into the jungle. A small lucid part of her was afraid, but her mind was foggy from the drugs and the command of the voice.

The next thing she knew, she stood in a small clearing, looking up at the twin moons of this strange planet. She blinked in confusion and looked around for a few minutes. "Am I dreaming?" Maybe she had been walking in her sleep. Shrugging, she turned to head back inside before she was caught out here and punished. The only rule she seemed to have was that she not leave the women's quarters unescorted. She'd done that now, no matter that it had been accidental.

She walked quickly back into the forest, hurrying to get back before she was missed. She turned toward where she thought the palace was and kept going. She felt as if she were being watched. Neri turned her head this way and that, looking. She couldn't see anything. But she felt it, all the same.

\* \* \* \*

He watched her as she paused to look around warily. The dappled moonlight was bright enough to shine through the gown she wore, showing him her curvaceous figure as if she were naked.

He crouched down, ready to make his move.

She stopped with a confused frown. "I am going the wrong way."

He smiled as he heard her talking to herself. Her heart was pounding so loud, he could hear it from here. He could smell the oils from her bath earlier.

When she turned back around, she headed right for his hiding spot and he waited, tensed and ready. He would hunt well tonight. Neri stopped suddenly, and her already pounding heart began to race. He waited in the brush not five centens in front of her.

"Hello?" she said. "Is someone there?" All she got in response was a low growl. Neri reacted immediately. She made a small squeaking noise then grabbed the hem of her nightgown and ran.

*Yes!* He took off after her. He liked them to give a good chase before he caught them. She glanced back and screamed, her stride never faltering. Her legs pumped faster and faster.

He kept her in his sights. Now he could smell her fear and her sweat. It excited him, almost as much as the sight of her breasts when she'd turned to look back. She would be his before the night was over. Body and soul, he would own her.

## Chapter Five

Neri's vision blurred. She wiped the sweat from her eyes and kept going. She could hear the creature moving in the brush behind her. All she'd seen was a large dark shape with glowing yellow eyes. She didn't dare look back now. If she saw it clearly, she knew she would lose control of her limbs and fall. He would be upon her immediately.

The roar that came from behind almost accomplished the same thing. It reverberated through her bones, making her chest ache. Her lungs ached with each breath she took. The drug was still in her system, and her body was growing tired.

A twig snapped behind her and she screamed. She chanced one more look back, promptly stumbling over a root at the edge of the path. Neri went down hard and lay there ready to just give up. Then she set her jaw. No, she would not. She steeled her resolve and turned to fight.

The creature was much closer than she had thought. When she turned, she was face to face with it. A small cry escaped her lips at the sheer size of the beast crouched down in front of her, staring at her hungrily.

His shoulders were almost as wide as she was tall, covered with short fur bleached of color by the moonlight. His long muscular arms and legs were also furred. However, the claws captured her attention for the longest time, looking fully capable of ripping her apart. His face was a cross between man and cat, seeming almost human until he opened his jaws and showed off his long ivory fangs.

She had to crane her neck to meet his glowing green gaze. He was a cat-like beast, but larger than any cat she had seen before. Her heart began to pound as it dawned on her what he was. He was the Tigre.

"No!" She started to back away again. He lifted one large paw and brought it down on the hem of her nightgown. She tugged at it,

but he just crouched there staring at her with his head tilted to one side.

“Please let me go,” she pleaded then gasped when his large head dipped down and he sniffed her neck. She sat completely still, afraid to move. He moved closer, settling himself beside her, still holding her captive with his paw on her gown. “No,” she whispered.

*Yes.* Neri’s head began to swim as he once again began to speak into her mind. *You are mine now.*

He shifted into a slightly less animal form, but still far from human. His eyes still slanted upwards, and his face and body were covered by striped orange and black fur. The beast now had hands, tipped with dangerous looking claws. She recognized Tael when he smiled down at her, although it was more a snarl than a smile. She lay there unable to move. What had he done to her? She tried to struggle, to push him away; it was no use, her limbs were held immobile by his magic. “Tigre,” she whispered.

“You’re right, that’s what I am, and you will become much better acquainted with me very soon.” His voice was rough and guttural, almost a growl. He put his hand on her belly and she felt the warmth radiating from his touch. He moved down out of her line of sight.

For a long moment, there was only silence. Then her eyes widened when she felt the slide of his rough tongue along her ankle. She shuddered as it slowly moved upward, and fire shot through her veins. The hem of her gown bunched up around her thighs, and then he impatiently ripped it to shreds leaving her naked and trembling beneath his feral gaze.

Her mouth opened and closed as she felt the warmth of his breath on her inner thigh. She was going to be taken by a demon. Her soul was in jeopardy. This was what her mother had spoken of when she said to be careful walking down dark streets alone. This was... *Oh.* She gasped at the first rough touch of his tongue. “Oh,” she sighed.

He growled low in his throat, and she slowly moved her head to look down at him laying there between her outspread thighs. He waited until her eyes met his then he slowly licked her along the outer rim of her sex.

Neri’s eyes widened when he pressed his wide mouth against her and purred. She arched off the ground, fighting the magical bonds he had placed on her.

Then he opened the folds of her sex with his tongue and lapped at the sensitive nub of flesh hidden there. The roughness of his tongue moved over her and she moaned. She was shaking, he could smell the

fear, but beneath it lay a hint of arousal. They were warring with each other, and with each subsequent lick the arousal won.

He chuckled, a dark wicked sound, one that made her think of demons again, but by this time she simply didn't care. His fingers spread her open to his gaze, and he stared down at the petals of her sex opening to him like a small pink flower. The tiny bud at the top of her slit jutted out impudently, awaiting his attention. He laved her with the flat of his tongue and then speared the peak with the tip. His mouth covered the soft nether lips and he purred.

She gasped when the first wave of pleasure crashed over her. The slow slide of heat between her legs became a sharp burning need. Her hands clutched at him to bring him closer.

Tael licked the juices from her sex before running his long tongue inside the hot wet cavern between her legs, touching her deep inside. She screamed, her thighs tightened on either side of his head, the soft fur tickled her legs and she shuddered. He moved his head from side to side, dislodging her legs once more.

He gave her slit one last long lick and growled. She shuddered with another climax, her eyes rolled back in her head and she went limp. He continued licking her, moving slowly up her body as he gave her breasts the same treatment. He lapped at each pink nipple in turn, making them harden into tiny points. "Did you like that, Neri?" His voice reverberated in her ear.

"Yes." Neri was stunned more than anything. She had never felt anything like this in her life.

She saw stars behind her closed lids when he had purred against her core. She felt the wetness on her thighs. The heat of him rolled over her body, making her inner muscles clench with want. She wanted, oh she wanted something. His rough tongue on her breasts only made her want more. He nuzzled her neck, rubbing his jaw along it. Then he stared down into her eyes.

He pressed his weight down on her, the warmth of his body blanketing her from the cooler night air. His face was but inches from hers, he looked humanoid, but his teeth were elongated, his face was covered with fur, and he had pointed ears also tufted with the same soft fur.

She reached up and touched one, scratching it like she had the cats back home. He responded the same way as they did, by purring and leaning into her caress.

"Are you still afraid?" His eyes stared intently into her own, willing her to answer truthfully.

Neri shivered, but shook her head. He moved back down between her legs, pleased that she wanted him still, and began again. Her soft cries filled him with a need to take her, to make her his own in truth, to brand her as his own for all time.

## Chapter Six

She closed her eyes for a moment, and she felt a slight change in the air. When she opened her eyes again, she was no longer in the forest, and there was no large cat-man hovering over her. Instead, she met Tael's familiar green stare. She looked beyond him and saw that she was back in the bedroom with the painting on the ceiling. Back inside, without even remembering how she got there.

"Neri?" he whispered as his hands smoothed over her skin. "It's time." His fingers slid inside her warmth and began to thrust. She arched against his hand when he brushed his thumb across that pearl hidden there. She began to burn for him, but he held back.

His mouth covered hers. He licked her lips until she opened her mouth for him, then he thrust his tongue in her mouth as he did his fingers in her sex. She screamed and writhed. She opened her legs wider to give him more access to her body.

Tael's mouth moved to her breast, and he took her nipple in his mouth, sucking hard and fast. Neri's hands tangled in his long hair, pulling him ever closer. She said his name as a plea. He finally answered it as he moved to lie between her legs.

"Look at me. I want to see your eyes when I take you," he told her in a soft command. When her eyes met his, he slowly guided his shaft inside her. She was soft and wet, but he knew she was an innocent.

He encountered the proof of her innocence a second later and stopped. Her eyes were wide; he was stretching her to the point of pain, no matter how he had tried to make her ready. "It will hurt, but only for a moment," he promised.

Neri nodded and closed her eyes. Maybe it would be over with quickly.

"No, open them," he said again.

She obeyed, and he moved quickly, thrusting through the barrier. She cried out and started pushing at his chest.

"No, stop," he told her, pulling her close. "It will be alright."

She didn't think so, but what choice did she have? He wasn't going to stop; she wasn't so innocent as to believe that. She was right,

soon he began to move again, he was gentle but the pain was still there.

Tael wrapped her legs around his waist and began to thrust a little harder. She gasped with each movement he made; he finally moved his hand between their bodies and found her center once more. His thumb made slow soft circles around it, and he smiled when she clenched around him, squeezing his cock with her inner muscles. Now it was time for the magic to begin.

It moved across her skin slowly, the small vibrations made the fine hairs on her arms stand on end. "What was that?" She felt a low buzz sensation along her nerve endings. He shook his head, still plunging inside her, concentrating.

Slowly, as if it were a second skin, it slipped down her face like water, cool and undulating. She gasped when it reached her breasts, and so did he. Their feelings began to churn together, becoming a heady brew to intoxicate the senses. The feeling moved lower over her abdomen, and finally it found her core.

His magic coursed through him and down onto her skin. At first it was a soft feathery caress, flicking once at the pearly nub as if it were questing again, slightly harder this time.

Neri cried out, bucking her hips against him. The magic responded as well, the vibrations became even stronger. She writhed beneath him, and when she opened her eyes they'd changed to a bright blue color.

Tael felt every shock of pleasure that moved through her body. The magic was now centered on her clit, massaging it with precision. He moved them to the edge of the bed. He watched her face, the way she bit her lip and then licked it. "Do you like that?"

"Oh Goddess, yes!" Her words were breathless and strained.

He smiled and flipped her over, pulling her up on her knees. He entered her from behind, his hands gripping her buttocks as he did so.

Her hands were clenched in the bedclothes, and she buried her hot face in them. His hand caressed one creamy globe of flesh then he lightly slapped it. She jerked in surprise but grew even wetter. He laughed and did it again when he discovered that she liked it. He squeezed her ass, rubbing his thumb up and down the cleft. She groaned and pushed her hips back against him. He slid deeper inside, filling her. "Tael."

The magic arced between them, a live and visible thing. The colors shifted from deep green to bright blue. It moved inside her sex alongside his shaft. Somehow, it found each and every sensitive place

and stimulated it. She stiffened when she felt it moving along his hand on her buttocks. Then the magic found another target.

When he flipped her over, her eyes had rolled back in her head, and he knew she wouldn't last much longer. His weight pressed her down on the bed as he began to move faster. He pulled her legs over his shoulders and went even deeper inside her. Tael smothered Neri's screams with his mouth on hers.

The magic flowed around them both, surrounding them like an aura. As she jerked and moaned beneath him, he felt her heat clenching him, milking him. Finally, he threw back his head, and his hoarse shout drowned out her soft pleas and cries.

Neri screamed his name when he plunged one last time inside her. He lay there spent on top of her, stroking her hair and her face, telling her that she was beautiful. He felt the spasms that still held her in thrall.

The magic wouldn't leave her until it was ready. For hours, he held her as the spell stroked her body to a fever pitch time and again. Finally, right before dawn, it faded, leaving her spent and sore.

Tael looked down at her where she slept sprawled on top of him. Her body was soft and warm as she lay in exhaustion. He stroked his fingers through her hair, and she shivered even in sleep. With the soft sound of her heartbeat in his ears, his eyes closed and he gave a satisfied sigh as he drifted off to sleep as well.

## Chapter Seven

Neri had been on the island for a month now. After the first day, Tael hadn't come for her again in either form. She assumed that he had grown weary of her once the blush of innocence wore off. She shrugged to herself and tried to pretend that it didn't matter. But it did. She felt something when he looked at her, a powerful urge to do what, she didn't know. She wanted to find out.

She planned on sneaking toward the private rooms in the back of the palace, hopefully to find him. She wasn't supposed to go into those rooms, but she didn't care, she had to see him again. Something pulled her towards this man, and she wanted to know what it was.

So, today after their walk in the garden, the women were returning to their quarters for the evening meal. Neri followed along, last as always, hoping to sneak off to Tael's rooms. She was plotting it all out when a rustling sound right off the path caught her attention and she stopped to investigate it.

Tam, the captain of the guards, came back to herd her along. "Neri, come, you must stay with the group. It's safer."

"Why?" She turned to face him, her eyes meeting his directly. This was something new for her, and she found she liked it. Looking into someone's eyes wasn't allowed at her father's home. She'd have gotten ten lashes for it. But here, she'd realized that she was no longer thought of as a slave. Tael made that perfectly clear to her, and if he hadn't the women would have.

"Don't ask questions, just obey." His hand firmly gripped her elbow, practically dragging her behind him. She'd looked back and seen a glimpse of orange and black in the lush foliage of the garden.

"Is that the Tigre, is it Tael?" She almost choked when her eyes met the bright green ones staring out of the bushes at her.

"Yes, come on, hurry." Tam's eyes were hard and grim. "He will catch you if you don't." At that, Neri ran into the women's quarters, leaving him staring after her with a perplexed frown on his face.

\* \* \* \*

Tam watched the last one go and shut the door safely behind them then he turned to look at the large palm to his right. "Are you stalking her now?"

All he got in return was a growl.

"Tomorrow is the day you will return to normal, correct?" He parted the leaves and looked down on the large cat as it glared back up at him. Finally, the feline nodded and stalked off, growling the whole way.

\* \* \* \*

Neri sat in the small enclave hidden behind the heavy curtain and tried to calm her racing heart. He wouldn't come in here, would he? She trembled, wiping away her tears. Finally, she curled up and sobbed with her hands against her mouth.

She'd been sleeping badly for the past month. She wished for Tael to comfort her, but he hadn't come. Soon, exhausted, her eyes drifted closed, and she began to have the dream again almost immediately.

It was always the same. She was running and the Tigre was chasing her in full tiger form, and it wanted to kill her. She had made it angry. What had she done? That, she couldn't remember. The roar echoed through the forest, making her stumble and fall. She screamed as the Tigre leapt on her then he tore out her throat, and that was when she always awoke, shaking and crying.

Now she woke in the same condition, but the sight that met her eyes was from her nightmare. It was dark now, and all of the women had gone to bathe, leaving her alone in the large chamber.

The Tigre was sitting in front of the padded bench, staring at her. She muffled her scream with her hand, afraid of making any sudden moves or sounds. But he only tilted his head to one side questioningly.

Neri moved back as he came forward. The large feline placed his head along her forearm where she'd flung it out in her sleep and stared into her eyes. He didn't seem angry now, the opposite in fact. He pushed her back by moving his head closer. Soon, there was room for him on the wide bench.

She gasped when he leapt up to lie alongside her. She let out the breath she'd been holding unconsciously.

He lay there with his back to her. *Rest.* His voice reverberated in her mind. It was a command she readily obeyed. Her eyes immediately closed and she sighed in contentment.

Tael felt her arm come across his side. She buried her face in his neck. He began to purr and both soon fell into a deep slumber. This time, the dream was much different, and neither stirred again for the rest of the night.

## Chapter Eight

Neri's eyes fluttered open. She squinted at the bright light streaming down on her face. She'd slept the whole night through. Of course, she'd had a wonderful companion in the large warm cat, unless, he'd been a dream as well.

"Neri." Tael called to her from the open doorway. When she looked up and smiled at him, he came to sit beside her. "Hello, beauty. I have missed you these past days." He sat down on the side of the bed and reached out to stroke her hair back from her face. She leaned into the caress, much like the cat that he was.

"Why did you not come before?" she asked. Then her face flushed. She shouldn't question him. It wasn't her place.

"I am here with you now." He answered simply and held out his hand. "Come." Neri took it without hesitation, and he led her down a corridor where she'd never visited. "I want you here with me, in my study," he informed her. "You can sit there and look out the window." He indicated another wide seat with cushions scattered along one end.

Neri looked around in wonder. There were things she had no idea about the use of in this room. Some were frightening in the extreme, others were just mysterious. But then her attention was caught by something much more enticing—books, thousands of them. She reached out with a furtive motion to stroke her fingers down the spine of one.

"Neri?" At the sound of his voice, she jerked her hand back as if she'd been caught stealing. "Neri?" He stood right behind her now.

She swallowed hard and turned to face his wrath. She wasn't supposed to touch the books; she knew it was forbidden for a woman to know how to read. She bowed her head and trembled, waiting.

Tael frowned down at the top of her head. "Did I startle you?" He put his hand on her hair, stroking his fingers through it. "Look at me." He tipped her chin up and smiled. "Tell me what is wrong."

"I won't touch them, I promise." She waited for him to hit her or have her whipped as her father had done when he caught her looking at the books in his library with such longing in her eyes.

"Touch what?" He was genuinely puzzled by her at times, especially now when it took all his energy to stay in this form, never mind trying to read her thoughts. Suddenly, it dawned on him what she meant. He picked a book at random, making sure it was in a language she would understand, and then he took her to the large window seat. "Take this and read it. If you don't like it, pick another." He leaned down to kiss her lips lightly and was surprised when her arms went around his neck and she pulled him even closer. Her mouth covered his and opened. He groaned and sank into the kiss. "Love, you don't have to thank me," he began, and then her mouth moved over his once more.

"Neri," he whispered as she began to kiss her way down his chest. He groaned when her tongue flicked out to circle his naval. Her hands were soft and warm as they undid the laces on his pants, freeing him. She gripped him softly and looked up at him from her position between his thighs. It was as if she were asking permission.

He chuckled and pressed the back of her head, guiding her toward his shaft. His hips bucked when he felt her mouth on him. She licked the head of his cock, teasing it with her tongue and then sucked the tip of him into her mouth. She'd learned this the morning after their first encounter. His fists clenched in an attempt to keep from grabbing her and taking her.

Neri smiled to herself and ran her tongue along the underside of him. She cupped his sac in her hands lightly; his muscles clenched in response. "Do you enjoy this?"

"Yes," he hissed. "I will enjoy this more, though." He pulled her up to straddle his lap. She looked down at him with wide eyes. "I do like these skirts, and the under things that go with them as well." He fiddled with the sides of the silky material.

"There aren't any to go with it."

"That is why I like it." His grin was wicked as he slowly slid her down onto him, inch by inch, watching her expression.

Her eyes were half closed, and a smile curved on her full lips. She put her hands on his chest for balance when he began to move her hips in the perfect rhythm to bring them both fulfillment.

He felt her muscles clench around him and stopped. Her eyes flew open, and she looked down at him in bewilderment. "You

finish.” He sat on the edge of the seat and turned her around so her back met his front.

Neri gasped at this new sensation. She almost fell forward, but he stopped her with his hand on her waist. “Let’s get rid of this shall we?” He pulled the ties of the skirt free and then did the same with the top. Her skin glistened in the bright sunlight that filtered in through the windows. He smoothed his hand up and down her belly.

One hand drifted up to a full breast. He squeezed it playfully and smiled when she arched against his hand. Her nipple hardened against his palm and he pinched it, rolling it between his fingers. Her body tightened around him again, this time harder.

“Tael.” She moaned and bit her lip, rocking her hips back and forth. He didn’t answer her, just moved his other hand between her legs. In this position, she was delightfully exposed to his explorations. She jerked against his fingers as they slid between the silky wet folds of her sex.

“Do that again,” he whispered against her ear. “Move your hips for me, just like that.” His fingers found her center and began to stroke softly.

She sucked in her breath and rocked her hips, slowly at first. Her arms reached back to wind around his neck, holding her in place. Her head fell back against his shoulder as she moved faster and faster, setting a teasing, uneven pace.

Finally, he couldn’t take her teasing any longer. He stood up and positioned her with her knees on the bench. She screamed as he plunged inside her.

His hands gripped her hips then he pulled her head up by her hair and bit her neck, holding her in place. He growled as his hand drifted down between her legs to touch her once more. She trembled with each thrust; he could smell her arousal, and that in turn sent him spinning out of control. His teeth grew sharper as he began to return to his animal form; he fought it, not quite succeeding.

His teeth were bared in a grimace. He pulled his cock almost completely out of her before slamming it back inside. She squeezed him, her sex gripping him like a slick fist. Magic arced through the air, and he began to shift.

As he thrust inside her, he felt the barb protruded from his shaft and it gripped her, holding him in place. “Neri.” He froze, the tendons on his neck standing out with the force of the sensations bombarding his system.

She pressed back against him. His hand slid up and down her back, soothing her, or himself, she couldn't tell which. He began to move again; with each thrust, he roared her name.

His cock swelled larger, and with each pulse she squeezed him harder. He leaned down and again locked his teeth on her neck, then flicked his tongue to catch the blood from the small wound. She spasmed out of control, screaming his name and bucking her hips against his. The sound of her flesh hitting his only heightened his pleasure. He felt her inner muscles convulse around him, and then he lost the battle, spilling his seed inside her.

He collapsed against her, and for long moments they lay there, unmoving. His hands splayed over her hips and he jerked against her spasmodically. She pulsed with each movement, her whole body shaking with the force that washed over them both.

He held her so tightly she couldn't breathe, but she didn't want him to let her go. This was the most wonderful feeling she'd ever known. But soon, he eased out of her body, pulling her to him as he lay on the wide bench.

"Neri, did I hurt you?" He stroked his hands up and down her back. He hadn't used any magic to bring her pleasure this time. He hadn't been able to do so; all of it was channeled into keeping his human shape. It was too close, too close to the time of change for him to be with Neri. She was his, he knew it now. He had never had to wait before with any woman. She called to his magic, his beast. She was his alone. Now he could only wait until the next moon reached its fullest stage, then she would surrender herself to him and the Tigre.

She shook her head and sighed contentedly, snuggling her head beneath his chin.

"All this started over a book," he mused.

"You will really let me read?" Her voice was tentative and quiet. When he nodded, she put her arms around his neck and hugged him. "Thank you."

His heart thudded slow and hard in his chest. It took so little to make her happy. Any other woman would have asked him for jewels or gowns, but all she'd wanted was a book. Ah, well, he'd give her all the books she wanted if she'd stay here with him. "No—thank you." He pressed his cheek against her hair and closed his eyes.

## Chapter Nine

“She won’t like it.” Tam sighed, looking out the window.

All the women were in the garden, seated on benches—or in the case of Neri and Seelie, walking around picking flowers. Each new day was a discovery for their new guest. She seemed happy. He hoped that lasted.

“It isn’t an option. She will do what I say.” Tael stared at the two women as well. “Seelie is very pretty.”

“Yes, pretty and small. Too small. Remember the condition she was in when we brought her here.” Tam’s expression was bleak.

“That was due to mistreatment.” Tael began what was an old argument. He’d bought the girl because she’d looked so pitiful as she stood on the auction block. Her previous owner had misused her to the point where only Tael’s healing gifts had saved her from being barren. “She is fine now. You know you want her. Every time she comes near, you turn into a rutting boar.”

“I do not,” Tam snapped back, baring his teeth in a grimace. “What I want is irrelevant; she wouldn’t survive the process, and you know that.”

“She might surprise you.” Tael grinned at him and slapped his back before becoming serious once more. “That isn’t the point of this discussion. Will you do as I ask?”

“You know I will. And, if I ever find the one for me, you will do the same?” he asked.

“You know I will.” Tael watched Neri with eyes that began to glow. “I don’t want to hurt her, Tam. What if I do?”

“You don’t know the look on your face when you see her. Even in your other form. He cares for her, watches her every move, in fact. It’s quite sickening.” Tam teased.

Tael sneered at his brother. “At least I’m not sniffing after the same woman for two years without even having a taste,” he shot back.

“Have you been with Seelie?” Tam’s question seemed casual, but both knew it was anything but.

“No. She was yours from the first. I’m not so blind that I can’t see it.”

The other man shrugged his shoulders. "Mine or not, I won't take her." The grim tone belied the hunger in his look.

As if they heard them talking, the two women looked up. Neri saw the dark look on Tael's face and quickly looked away. "She is frightened of me," he whispered.

"She is frightened of everyone. Her father owned her, but hated the sight of her and had her beaten for the slightest reasons." Tam shook his head. He couldn't see how someone could do that to their own child.

"How do you know this?" Tael asked.

"I am the keeper of your women, all they do is chatter. They got that out of her within a week. I just listen." Tam laughed. "She is getting better. She and Caro had it out today, but she held her own. Seelie was about to step in, though. If she had, I would have broken it up, but Neri did fine."

"What was the fight about?"

"Caro accused Neri of stealing your affections. Neri told her that if they were that easily stolen, they more than likely were not hers to begin with. There was some minor hair pulling on Caro's part. Then Neri hit her in the stomach and ended it." Tam shrugged. "They fight, it's common."

"I want her moved to my rooms, now." Tael insisted. "Now!" His voice dropped to a low rumbling growl. "I will have Caro removed immediately."

"No, you won't. She's only fearful of losing her home. They're dependent on your whims for their creature comforts. Caro was a slave with no pay, little food. She's just afraid of going back." Tam had watched Caro. She would be a problem, unless he did something, and he intended to. "You need to give her to one of the guards as a wife, or set her up with her own business. She would thrive in either setting. Caro with a brood of children, now that is a nice picture."

"Any likely candidates?"

"Yes. Marco adores her. She feels something for him. Do you want me to see to it?" Tam waited.

"Please. And send Neri to me." He never took his eyes off the window.

"Tael, if you hurt her, or kill her, what then?"

"I won't. She's the one. I can feel it." His heart knew; he only hoped his body and his magic listened.

"What if it's only wishful thinking? She's really only a child. She's been sheltered all her life, by her mother with love and her

father with greed. He wanted her kept innocent so he could sell her,” Tam stated bluntly.

“I know that. I wish she were more educated in the ways of the world. But she isn’t. I cannot find fault with it either. With each new discovery she makes, it’s as if I see it again for the first time as well. I love her, Tam.” Tael’s eyes were no longer glowing either in anger or desire.

“Does she know?”

“I haven’t told her, and I won’t.” He waited, but his brother said nothing else. He heard the door close quietly.

\* \* \* \*

“Neri.” Tam spoke quietly, but his voice still carried over the women’s laughter.

“Yes?” She looked up at him with a trusting smile. He feared he wouldn’t see that smile again any time soon.

“Tael wishes for you to come to his study.” He watched her go and then looked back at Seelie. “Hello, little one.”

She bristled, as always. “I am not little, Tam.”

“Yes, you are. Go back to the other women, this doesn’t concern you,” he said more harshly than he meant to.

“That’s where you belong, as you’re not a man at all.” She turned to go, but he spun her around to face him.

“Don’t push me. You may be too little to fuck, but you are just big enough to spank,” he warned.

“If you try it, Tam, I will show you how much damage a small woman can do to a large, slow man.” She gave him a saccharine sweet smile that didn’t fool him one bit before she jerked her arm out of his grip and stalked off.

He narrowed his eyes and stared after her. She would feel the flat of his hand on her backside if she didn’t learn to curb her tongue. He shifted to relieve the pressure that picture caused behind the lacings of his pants. “Seelie,” he called and watched her shoulders stiffen before she turned. “Be careful of that mouth; it will get you in trouble if you are not careful.”

“I am not worried about you,” she informed him loftily.

He growled and took a step forward. Seelie’s eyes widened, but she stood her ground, lifting her chin defiantly. He gritted his teeth, spinning on his heel. Her mocking laughter followed him from the garden and rang in his ears for hours afterwards.

\* \* \* \*

Neri knocked on Tael's study and entered at his call. "You wished to see me?" She stood there waiting for him to turn to her. When he didn't immediately, only looked at the garden, she began to get nervous. She flinched when he began to speak.

"Neri, did you get into a fight with Caro?" He kept his back to her, but his voice stroked nerves like acid.

She had to swallow the lump in her throat twice before she could answer him. "Yes."

"Why?" He turned then and came toward her; the unearthly grace in his walk was frightening at moments like this. He stalked her; she felt it in his gaze and in his movements.

She backed slowly away, wondering if she could make the door before he caught her. But where would she go? They were here on this island with no other land for miles. She laughed to herself as she realized something. She was never getting away, she saw it in his face when he looked at her, felt it in his hands when he touched her. And, truthfully, she didn't want to.

Tael's eyes never left her face. "Why?" Somehow, he'd gotten right in front of her without her noticing. His body was warm, and she smelled the soap he'd used this morning on his skin.

Suddenly she whirled, intending to take flight, where she didn't know, only wanted to be away from him. He reached out, slamming the door with one hand. He put his arm around her waist, holding her easily when she struggled. "Tonight, when the moons are in their zenith, you will be in my chamber ready. Do you understand?" He kissed her ear softly, and she shivered in response. "You will do exactly as I tell you if you wish to live." He released her. "Go and rest, you will need it."

She nodded and ran.

\* \* \* \*

Later when Tam came back and told him that Marco, the guard, would be happy to take Caro as his wife, Tael nodded absently. He told his brother that this would be the night.

"Are you sure?"

"I am." He all but growled his response.

"So be it. About Seelie," he paused. Tael looked at him, his eyes lit with amusement. He'd witnessed the altercation between them in the garden. He only arched his brow when his brother hesitated. "I want her."

“Fine, after this night is over.” Tael waved his hand. “She will comply with my wishes in this.” He wasn’t speaking of Seelie, but Neri.

“Does she know anything about what we are?”

“Not much. Take her to my rooms and lock her in with this book. Tell her I said to read it.” He handed Tam the book and went to sit at the large desk that dominated the room. “Until tonight.”

## Chapter Ten

Tam searched for Neri, but she was nowhere to be found. Finally, he ran Seelie to ground in the very back portion of the garden. At first she refused to tell him of the other girl's location, but he shook her hard enough to make her head spin. "Tell me, it is important to Tael's future."

"She ran into the forest. She said he was going to beat her. I told her he would never, but she didn't believe me. He wouldn't hurt her, would he?" She looked up at him with wide eyes.

"No, not intentionally," Tam replied, as truthfully as he was able. He turned to go search for her, but Seelie's next words stopped him.

"I know what you both are." Her calm matter of fact tone stopped him in his tracks.

Tam turned back to look at her in astonishment. The women all thought that the large cats were just pets of Tael's. The women treated them that way, and the two men let them, for the most part. "What am I?"

"You are the Tigre, the man beasts of lore and legend. My father studied them before he died. I was sold after that. But he taught me much about them. I know all of the stories—I have known from the first. Who shall be the helper in the next step of his claim on her? You?" He slowly nodded, waiting for her reaction. "Good, then she will be fine."

"Why do you say that?" He moved closer to her, his hand reaching out of its own accord to touch her sleek dark hair.

She shivered but didn't move away. "I know you, Tam. You are a kind man. You wouldn't harm her. If you wish me to, I will speak with her. I didn't before as I didn't know if you wanted her to know." She waited for his answer.

"Come with me." He held out his hand to her. "If you knew what we were, why weren't you afraid? Do you know we can kill with a thought? That we are ten times stronger than a normal man?"

"Just because you are different doesn't make you bad. The man that owned me before was very bad. Tael took me from him. I know

for a fact that he went back and killed the man. I saw the blood on his clothes.” She spoke quietly as they walked.

“Call out for her,” he ordered grimly. He had been unaware of this, but he shouldn’t have been surprised. Tael was softhearted when it came to those that were helpless, but that didn’t mean he wasn’t also deadly.

“Neri! Come out. I will help you,” she called. At first nothing, then they heard the rustling in the brush off to one side and waited. Neri stepped out, her head bent.

“Come along, Neri.” Tam kept his voice gentle and soft. She was crying. “Don’t cry. He won’t harm you.”

“He’s angry with me for fighting with Caro.” Neri’s voice was back down to a whisper, like it had been when she first came.

“He’s not.” Seelie tossed her hair over her shoulder. “Everyone fights with Caro because she’s bossy. She thinks she’s the head of this household. You only took her down a peg or two. She’ll be fine.” Neri smiled softly when she rolled her eyes. “I fought with her. In fact, Tael himself had to come in and separate us. I didn’t get a beating then, nor did Caro. We were confined to our quarters for a week though. Come along. You and I have much to discuss.” Seelie took the taller woman’s hand and led her back to the palace like a child.

Tam was amazed at the confidence the tiny woman possessed. She was much more than he’d first thought. He was beginning to believe his brother’s words. Or maybe he just wanted to believe it.

\* \* \* \*

Seelie opened the book and looked at Neri. “Do you know how to read?” When the other girl nodded, she sighed in relief. “Good, read this passage and then you and I will talk.” She stood and walked around the room.

After Neri finished reading, she looked up with questions in her eyes.

Seelie forestalled her comments with some of her own. “Do you know I have never been in this room?” She smiled at the other girl. “The others have, and tease me about it incessantly. They say I am too small and Tael should have thrown me back. However, he kept me here, safe with him. He has guarded me like the most precious treasure.”

“I am glad,” Neri told her quietly, wondering what the other woman’s point was.

“I am as well. If not, then the two of us would never have met. And I would not be in the position to help him. In doing so, I am repaying a debt to him I thought I never would. Neri? Do you understand what is going to happen tonight?”

Slowly, Neri nodded then she shivered. “I don’t know why.”

“I do. He wishes you to be bonded to him for always. This means he loves you. You are both from the same race, at least he thinks so. However, your ancestors were not cursed as his were. This means you are more receptive to his magic and more able to cope with his differences. Tael will do this. It is an urge he cannot deny. Do you understand so far?” Seelie came back to the low couch and sat down beside her.

She waited for Neri to nod the affirmative before continuing. “I know you have been with only him. I’m sure he’s very happy about that. Most men are. However, you will have to do this.” Seelie tapped the illustration in the book, drawing her eyes back down to it.

It disturbed and frightened her, but on another deeper level it made her feel strange. Her abdomen fluttered, and she felt heavy, heated through by the thought of this happening to her.

“He won’t hurt you—well, a bit, but it will be over soon, I promise—and it says you’ll like it.” With a gamin grin, the raven-haired girl took the book and turned to another chapter. “Here, read that. Then you can go and get ready.” The sun was setting and soon the time would come.

## Chapter Eleven

Neri stared blindly at her own reflection while one of the servants twined flowers in her hair. She thought over all she'd learned today. She knew she'd come to love Tael, who'd treated her like something precious from the very beginning. While she was afraid of what was to come, she wanted it to happen as well. She'd felt the magic coursing through her veins the first time she and Tael made love, and something inside her began to awaken. Now it throbbed in time with her heart, and her belly ached with each slow pulse. She clenched her teeth and fisted her hands in her lap.

She could very well be the one for Tael. If she wasn't though, both of them could die. She sipped her wine and sighed, giving the serving girl a weak smile when she pronounced her hair finished. Why were they so worried about how she looked? It would only get messed up again. Soon it would be time. They were all so happy. She was only numb. Seelie was with her, keeping up an incessant line of chatter about everything and nothing.

Her head began to spin lazily. She blinked a couple of times to clear it, but it didn't help. Magic shifted through the air, churning on the currents of the small breeze that came in through the open window. She lifted her head and inhaled deeply. It teased her flesh, calling out to her to come. She wanted to go, to bind herself to him for all time. This was what she'd been born to do. Her own magic was waking up, telling her it was time.

\* \* \* \*

Tael waited in his room. He felt the animal within him struggling to break free. He couldn't let this happen. Not now, not tonight.

"Will you sit down? Your pacing is making me nervous," Tam complained.

"I am not pacing."

"Yes, you are. Sit!"

“Tam, don’t push me. It’s bad enough without your mouth,” Tael growled. His voice was deeper than normal; his brother could hear the roar inside it.

“Calm down. That is why I am here, remember?”

“That’s what makes me so angry,” Tael told him. “What if I...”

“What if the moons fall out of the sky? For Zurna’s sake! Sit. Why don’t you drink something? Take one of those infernal potions, like the one you poured down poor Neri’s throat, to calm yourself. If you don’t, even I won’t be able to help you, and this will all be for naught.” Tam stood now. “I am going to see what is taking them so long.”

“She ran, Tam.” Tael squeezed his eyes shut.

“She thought you were going to beat her for fighting with Caro. I explained that. She’s not afraid now. She and Seelie talked about what will happen. If you had explained this whole thing before, she would be fine now. Not terrified and more than likely sick from it.” Tam shook his head. “I’ll bring her back so we can begin.”

“I’ll get ready.” Tael stood with his hands fisted at his sides, trying hard not to lose what little self-control he had left. He looked around the room and laughed. “Let’s hope she’s ready.”

The room was dark except for the moonlight. They had moved a large bed onto the balcony. What was done had to be witnessed by the moons, ritual called for it. The others were all sequestered in another part of the palace. He didn’t want any interruptions.

Two of his most trusted guards now stood sentry duty at the entrance to his quarters with instructions that only Tam, Neri and, if need be, Seelie could enter. All others were forbidden. It was for their safety as well. Magic was a dangerous thing, uncontrolled magic more so.

\* \* \* \*

Neri started when Tam called her name. She looked up at him dazedly.

He glared at Seelie. “You are to stay inside this chamber, is that understood?”

She nodded gravely. No back talk for once.

He smiled at her then and walked over to where she sat. Leaning down, he took her chin in his hand. “If you are very good, I will get you a present.”

“What?” she wanted to know.

“Me.” He kissed her when she opened her mouth to give him what was surely a good retort. His tongue darted inside, mating with her own.

She resisted at first but then melted against him for a minute. Finally, he pulled away and laughed at her glazed expression.

“Remember that I shall be thinking of you, Seelie,” he told her huskily. She shuddered when his hands slid over her thighs. He stopped before touching the one place she wanted him to, and she growled. “Good night, Seelie. Sleep well.”

Tam picked Neri up in his arms and made his way back to his brother’s quarters. He whispered reassurances to her when she began to try to get down. “Do not fight him. Remember, you agreed. You have to accept him wholeheartedly for this to work.” He spoke quickly as they neared the door.

Tam set her down inside the door, turning to close and lock it. “It’s dark.” Neri swayed as she spoke; he quickly put his hand on her waist, guiding her through the room onto the balcony. “Where is Tael?” She kept the quaver out of her voice, just barely.

“Here,” a low voice growled.

Neri looked up and screamed once. Tam’s hand slid up her arm and tightened. She calmed and took a deep breath.

“So it will begin,” Tael rasped out, his voice fighting its way past a throat made more for roaring than speaking.

He was the half man half beast thing she’d thought had only been a dream. It was real. His features were feline and human, a seamless mixture that looked beautiful for all its alienness. He was the Tigre. And tonight, he would claim her, or they would both die.

## Chapter Twelve

Tael stepped into the light and stared down at the woman he would claim as his own. His hand came up to caress her cheek, but she shrank back, her eyes wild in her face. The only thing holding her up was his brother's arms around her, a fact he didn't like at all. But there was nothing he could do about it now.

"I am here to aid you," Tam said formally. These were words of a ritual as old as their people.

"I accept your help. I am honored by your offer." Tael answered him just as formally.

Neri watched him warily. He stood taller than ever, his body was almost entirely covered in the black and orange fur of the cat she'd seen so regularly. In the back of her mind, she'd known he was the Tigre, but now, face to face with the reality, it was almost too much to take in.

He raised his hand, and she noticed the claws. His teeth were razor sharp fangs that glinted in the moonlight. But his eyes were the most terrible part. They were green and glowing; his pupils were elongated like a cat's. His nose was slightly wider, flaring at the nostrils as he took in her scent.

He leaned forward and sniffed the side of her neck, smiling when he stepped back. "You are mine." He spoke the words that sealed her fate.

Tam held her loosely in his arms. She was grateful, because she didn't think her legs would hold her up right now. Thinking about what came next made her knees even weaker.

"I am," she agreed, her heart thundering in her ears. Her pulse quickened as he continued to stare at her.

Tael moved forward, and she pressed her back against the other man. If she made any move besides one of compliance, Tael's control would snap. He would kill her, but not until she begged to die.

She trembled when Tael's hand began to skim up her leg through the slit in the side of the skirt she wore. Tam shifted his hands to her waist after hissing for her to keep her mouth shut. She nodded that she understood. In fact, her throat was so dry now she was unable to

peak. She felt Tael's hands stroking up her legs. His feline smile was not comforting in the least, but she kept still by force of will alone. She had been telling herself repeatedly she would not fight. But she couldn't stop the jerk of surprise when his fingers found her.

Tael snarled at the dress again when it got in his way. His other hand went to the top and ripped it in two, throwing it aside. He gazed at her breasts gleaming in the moonlight then filled his hands with them. The peaks stiffened, and he laughed a low dark sound that filled her with both dread and anticipation. He slowly ran his thumb across the hardened nipple then scraped it with his claw. She drew in her breath quickly but otherwise stared mutely up at him. His head lowered to kiss her once, gently.

"Tael," she whispered.

He nuzzled the top her breasts, licking one then the other. He slid his hands to her waist and pulled her onto her toes, taking one dusky nipple into his mouth, sucking hard, his tongue lashing the sensitive peak to painful hardness. He slid his mouth upward, to the fleshy part of her breast and raised his eyes to hers, waiting. At her nod, Tael's fangs sank into the soft flesh of her breast, marking her.

"Yes." Molten heat shot through her veins. The slow building of pressure began to intensify between her legs. She shifted, opening her thighs and pressing her mound against the bulge of his cock. He slid closer, releasing the soft flesh between his teeth to stare up at her from those slitted eyes. For a brief second, she saw *him* in there, watching her, before he was gone, leaving the animal in place again.

\* \* \* \*

Tael tasted the blood and growled deep in his chest, beginning to shift even further. He felt Tam's magic snake out and catch the change before it could happen. He lifted his head and stared at his brother for one tense moment. The Tigre licked his lips and snarled at them both before he let loose a low eerie growl that set their teeth on edge.

Tam moved toward the bed, never taking his eyes off his brother. He pulled Neri close, his hand splayed over her belly. "Are you ready?" he whispered and, at her nod, he lifted her onto his lap. The wide head of his cock was poised at the entrance to her sex.

She was wet, more than ready, for this at least. As he slid inside, she shivered, gripping his cock. She was wet and warm. Tam bit back a groan and tried to control his own hunger. All he wanted to do was plunge inside and find release. The tension was becoming thicker by the minute.

“It will be fine. Just relax.” His words were low, but she heard them and put her legs on either side of his own, spreading her body for Tael’s hungry gaze.

Neri felt Tam’s magic along her body, felt it reach out to Tael. He stood there with his head lowered, growling at the couple on the bed. Then he moved quickly, grabbing Neri’s hair in his hand and jerking her head up to kiss her once more.

Tam thrust upwards and she gasped, her body responding to him despite her fear. As he filled her, Tael moved between her thighs and pressed his mouth against the curls of her sex. She did scream then, not out of fear but from desire.

He began to lick her at the same time as Tam thrust inside her. Her hands moved to Tael’s shoulders, bringing him closer to her body. His tongue rasped along her tender flesh, stroking her in time to the movements of the other man inside her. He licked along the outside of her nether lips then moved quickly back to the center, sucking and lightly nibbling at the soft peak that jutted out from his attentions.

She moaned out loud, her head lolling back on Tam’s shoulder. She stared at the moons in wonder. They were no longer far away but very close now. She felt her own heartbeat melding with the two men. With one man filling her, thrusting inside, and the other devouring her, she was swept away in sensation. The pressure grew, crested, and then the wave broke. She came, her body arched up against Tael’s mouth, but Tam kept moving. She screamed and jerked in his arms. Each time she thought it would stop, they just kept going.

Tam slid up into the bed and lay on his side with Neri clasped loosely in his arms. Her back was pressed along his front. Tael slid up beside her, his stare intense. “Now?”

Neri nodded but couldn't stop herself from stiffening when she was pressed between the two of them.

Tael tipped her face up to his, kissing her once more. His mouth covered hers as he pulled her legs around his waist. He slowly thrust inside her. She hissed as he did so, for he seemed to swell in place.

Then Tam's hand moved to her waist. He looked at his brother and nodded before he gently guided himself inside the furled bud of her anus. She'd been told what would happen, but nothing prepared her for the slow slide of Tam inside her. Pain exploded, blooming up her spine.

Her eyes widened and she gave a muffled screech against Tael's mouth. Tam didn't stop, just kept going, his shaft wet with her own juices easing the way. Soon the magic coursed through them both; she was but a conduit, and she felt nothing now but pleasure, both the men's and hers as well. She was impaled, trapped between them and didn't care. Her hand fisted in the fur covering Tael's chest. He covered her hand with his own.

He moved inside, and Tam withdrew until only the head of his cock remained. Each brother moved in synch, neither inside her at the same time. The sensation made her head swim. She wasn't hurting any longer; on the contrary, she wanted more. She'd take it if need be. Her body trembled and ached for them both to fill her at once.

Lightening filled the sky and they all screamed. Neri's head lolled on Tam's chest, and she whimpered in her throat. Her sex burned, her body felt tight, full to overflowing with the men and their magic. She clenched around Tael, her eyes closing when he finally plunged back inside her.

Tam's head fell back as he fought his brother's changing with his own magic. It flowed over Neri, quickly pulling him in like a lodestone. He began to thrust as well. She moved with them, her body riding the wave of desire that wrapped around them all like an electrical current.

Tael was straining against the bond of the moon. Neri's mouth was soft and pliant beneath his, the only thing anchoring him here. The only thing keeping him from turning into his pure animal form was her. The magic swelled, and then burst.

Tam's eyes widened when the backlash hit them. "Tael!" he yelled in shock.

Tael's only response was to growl and move faster.

Neri felt her mind ripped asunder under the onslaught of the magic that warred between the two men. Something was coming.

Something she'd never known existed, but it felt so familiar. She shuddered as it slid inside her, fitting itself to her like a hand inside a glove.

The earth shook even harder, the plaster began to crack on the balustrade of the balcony. "It is not supposed to do this," Tam gritted out.

"You will have to ride it out. If we stop now, the whole island will blow," Tael told him, his voice less human than ever.

Neri's eyes began to glow in the moonlight. Her hair rustled in a nonexistent breeze. She spoke in a voice unlike her own. "I am Neri. I will be one with you this night, Tael of Maurania, Tigre, the Cursed One. By the Goddess of the Moon, Maurania, by the right of my people, I free you," she intoned. Her head fell back, and they were all bathed in the bright turquoise glow of her own magic now awakened.

Tael shifted back to human form. He screamed her name as he found his release. Neri's hands fisted in Tael's hair and she pulled his head down to hers. She pressed her mouth against his, and he felt her tongue slide along his lips before he opened for her.

The feel of her magic jolted through his body like a live wire. His back arched, pressing him deeper inside. He felt the pressure building, heading toward something he could not fathom. On the shore, the waves crashed as if the tide were no longer pulled by the moon but by Neri herself. She was the moon, the sea, the planet itself. But as she gave, she also took from him, and her body began to change as well, becoming more feline in shape, her eyes tilted up at the corners, her teeth lengthened. She threw back her head and laughed, a free joyous sound that broke the dam holding his control.

Tael felt part of his own magic leaving him, and part of hers resting in its place. A burden was shared. And the curse was lifted.

Neri screamed once more, her body milking them both with each wave of her climax. Then, with a flash of lightening and the booming of thunder, it was over. The three on the bed were drenched in a sudden downpour. The fat drops sizzled on their heated skin.

Tam moved onto his back and stared at the sky in wonder. Then he turned his head toward his brother, still entwined with his mate. "Tael?" he said in a worried tone.

"Yes." Tael breathed harshly, unable to move.

"What happened?" he wanted to know.

"I am not certain. But we survived, and that is all that matters. Neri belongs to me now," he assured him.

## Alien Seduction

Neri lifted her head and cupped his face in her hands, bringing it down to hers for a long possessive kiss. When she released his mouth, she smiled up at him and purred out in a voice that was more powerful and sure than her old one. “And you belong to me as well, Tael, forever.”

He stroked his fingers down her cheek and gave her a crooked grin, “I do.”

With a satisfied sigh, her eyes drifted closed.

The clouds moved away, and the third moon of Maurania shone full and bright in the night sky, bathing their tangled limbs with her light. They were tied to her, but she was also tied to them. Their pull on her had brought her much joy this night. She couldn't wait until the next time.

**The End**

**He Comes in Peace**  
**by**  
**Megan Hussey**

As she prepares for an interplanetary flight mission, the recently divorced Muriel yearns for the solitude of space. Yet, her handsome alien copilot, far from being the green, scaly creature Muriel expected, has more exciting ideas.

**<http://goldenmuse.tripod.com/>**

**He Comes in Peace**  
**by**  
**Megan Hussey**

**Chapter One**

Muriel Stone needed a little peace and quiet in the sanctity of a distant refuge. Since her favorite day spa was booked for the weekend, the far reaches of outer space would simply have to do.

Not a bad destination, she supposed, considering her stance as the captain of a starship that explored the far corners of the universe. This mission in particular promised to further her career and, more importantly, to quench her constant thirst for knowledge and new discoveries.

On a recent mission, her husband Wade had discovered a new planet; a small but exquisite gem of the cosmos that boasted rich foliage and ebullient waters, the clearest of skies and the most bountiful of flowers.

Radiant and unsoiled, this virgin land was discovered by Wade and his first mate, junior officer Stacey Germaine. While they explored this ethereal realm, they also explored one another. Now Wade's first mate in duty was poised to become his second mate in life; Wade took leave of his career in space to enjoy an early retirement.

*Fitting, as he also has taken leave of his senses.* Muriel sniffed as she made her way to the office of her commander, Phillip Morrow.

The further exploration of the mysterious pleasure planet, while a formidable and even potentially enjoyable mission, seemed like a consolation prize to Muriel. Even so, she graced her long-time commanding officer with a serene nod and beam.

“I thank you for this mission, Sir,” she shook Morrow’s hand as she took a seat beside his desk. “I look forward to exploring in full this fertile, beautiful planet. I also relish the opportunity to get away for a while, alone and unbothered.”

Morrow frowned and shifted uncomfortably.

“Muriel, I’m afraid there’s been a slight change in plans.” Folding his hands tightly before him, the commander leaned forward to look her directly in the eyes. “It seems that another planet in our solar system has expressed an interest in the exploration of this planet.” He shrugged uneasily. “We’ve agreed to coordinate a joint mission with the planet Eternia. When you go to the pleasure planet, Muriel, you will be accompanied by a first mate, an Eternian space explorer named Jaron Ken.”

Rolling her eyes, Muriel folded her arms and released a long, frustrated sigh. “The one time I need a little space—literally, I guess—I must share my mission with a total stranger.”

Philip grinned and clicked his tongue sympathetically.

“I know, Muriel, and I’m sorry. Even so, I think you’ll enjoy Jaron’s company. He hails from an enlightened planet and will add much knowledge and insight to your joint mission.”

Muriel thought a moment, then shrugged. “Okay, I’m game. So when do I meet this enlightened alien?”

## Chapter Two

The starship *Melpomeme*, although named for a muse of ancient mythology, stood as a compact model of modern technology. Muriel never failed to marvel at the craft's ability to travel at lightning speed and to gauge its own direction and control its own pace.

Muriel fully pre-programmed the ship, as well as others in its fleet.

*If only I could pre-program my life.* She snorted, trudging slowly up the sloping ramp that led to the ship's portal.

Pausing at the entry, she briefly contemplated the stranger set to share her celestial journey.

Although she knew some basic facts about Eternia, a planet renowned both for its landscape and peaceful, productive way of life, she knew nothing of its people.

For all she knew, her second in command could be green, scaly and bug-eyed.

*As long as he's quiet and gives me my space, I don't care if he has three heads and webbed feet.* She swung open the portal door and climbed agilely inside.

She recognized immediately the vast control panel that truly distinguished the *Melpomeme*; a state-of-the-art work of modern technology that she and Wade designed together.

*We were a good team, at times.* She bit her lip as her gaze shifted to the luxurious royal blue couch that had served as an occasional trysting spot for the couple. *How did we come to this?*

"Captain Stone?"

Muriel's troubled meditation was startlingly disrupted by the sound of a deep, masculine voice.

Jerking her head upward, she came face to face with the man who would share her mission.

*Well now, he's not green after all.* She regarded with approval the man's bronzed skin and planed, flawless features.

His face was framed by a long mane of luxurious ginger brown hair, and topped a tall, muscular frame.

As Muriel offered her hand in greeting, she drank in the vision of warm, exotic eyes that shone a pure, ethereal ebony. She savored the feel of a strong, firm hand that also managed to be gentle and reassuring.

"It's a pleasure to meet you." He further dazzled her with a flawless full-toothed smile. "I'm Jaron Ken, your second in command."

*Sweet.* Muriel grinned in spite of herself as she regarded the gorgeous man before her.

An unfamiliar, though not unwelcome, tingle coursed Muriel's spine as she and her first mate assumed their posts before the ship's control panel.

"I'm pleased that you'll be joining me for this mission," she nodded affirmably. "Your planetary profile was most impressive."

Jaron snorted and waved away her praise.

"I'm but a newcomer to the field of space travel." With this, the alien tipped his head reverently in her direction. "I recently graduated from the very space academy you helped to found."

Muriel started. "I knew your name sounded familiar. You graduated at the top of your class at the Astroacademy."

Ducking his head, Jaron shrugged sheepishly. "You prepared an excellent course of study, Captain Stone. You've perfected so many aspects of interplanetary travel." He paused, pinning her with an admiring, wholehearted gaze. "I'm truly honored to fly by your side."

Chuckling, Muriel patted Jaron's back as she turned toward the console. "I have the feeling, Jaron, that you and I are going to get along smashingly."

\* \* \* \*

For the first time in a long time, Muriel Stone felt light and carefree.

Flying always gave her a feeling of giddy elation. And as *Melpomene* now launched high into the atmosphere, her ship kissed the heavens in an ethereal arch that lifted her into her element. Here she felt both free and in control, not to mention in awe, as her gaze devoured the ebony sky scape that distinguished the bounds of space.

The stars shone luminously at this close proximity, and the planets likened multicolored marbles of perfect hue and roundness. From the moment of takeoff, Muriel felt consumed by a soulful peace that felt dreamy and surreal. She welcomed the opportunity to work

quietly in solitude, away from the prying eyes and pitying stares of friends and co-workers.

Long considered a respected officer and groundbreaking space explorer, Muriel now bore another, less flattering moniker: cuckold.

*If they're going to regard me that way, I'd rather they not regard me at all.*

On this mission, by contrast, she only had to deal with one set of watching eyes—and they were the most beautiful she'd seen.

"Isn't this wonderful, Captain Stone?" Jaron's enthused, boyish smile only enhanced her good mood.

"Call me Muriel." She returned his beam. "And yes, it is."

Seated side by side at her ship's console, the couple turned together to admire the velvet spectacle that lay just outside the circular window forming the border of Muriel's ship.

"This is only my second mission." Jaron nudged Muriel. "I just know I'll learn so much from you."

"Well, I hope so." The captain shrugged. "Though judging from your takeoff techniques, you don't have that much to learn."

"Thank you!" Those dark eyes widened and illuminated to glorious effect. "I can't imagine higher praise coming from a better source." With this, he winked playfully. "Even so, just know that I fully intend to watch and copy your every move on this mission."

"That I can handle," Muriel nodded with a chuckle. "I feel, though, that I have just as much to learn from you." Leaning forward, she pinned her flight partner with a curious gaze. "Tell me something about Eternia."

Jaron brightened noticeably at the mention of his home planet. "Muriel, Eternia is a place of peace and wonder," he gestured expressively. "While space—in its eternal darkness—holds its own special mystery, the landscape of Eternia shines in its colors. The flowers resemble finely cut gems, and the buildings reach far upward into the sky."

Jaron's articulate, warmly spoken words sent chills up Muriel's spine. "It sounds lovely," she praised. "You make it sound lovely." The captain shook her head, slightly overwhelmed. "I have to tell ya', Jaron, dudes on my planet generally don't speak as you do."

*Or look as you do. Drat it.*

Her whimsical meditation was disrupted by the sound of Jaron's soft, melodic voice. "Personally, I attribute the beauty and sanctity of our planet to its matriarchal leadership." He raised a finger for

emphasis. “My mother serves as a commanding officer of Eternia’s premiere space fleet. She taught me always to respect, revere and submit to my female superiors.”

“Submit?” Muriel coughed loudly.

“Are you all right, Captain?” Jaron’s brow furrowed in apparent concern.

Waving away his words, Muriel straightened noticeably in her chair. “Fine, fine,” she nodded briskly. “It’s just that I once was married to a man who wanted me to retire and birth a new crop of future fleet commanders. After being left for a woman willing to fulfill that demand, I must admit some surprise at your words.”

Jaron shrugged. “I someday would love to be a husband of the house,” he nodded, “but not before I accomplish my share of space missions, aboard ships such as this one.”

“Why not do both?” Muriel cocked her head curiously. “On my planet, we allow men to be workers and fathers, simultaneously.” *Wow, my buddies back at the Cosmos Cantina would howl with laughter if they heard this conversation.*

“Truly?” Jaron sat forward, obviously interested. “So, will your next husband work outside the home?”

Muriel snorted, and shook her head. “Honestly, Jaron, one marriage proved more than enough for this chicksta. I have the feeling I’ll be flying solo for the duration.”

She exhaled sharply as Jaron’s firm, manly hand boldly canvassed her shoulder. “Muriel, I may not know you very well. All the same, I feel qualified already to make one firm assessment about you.” He pinned her with a penetrating gaze. “You never give up.”

\* \* \* \*

Throughout the day, Muriel and Jaron coordinated a flight plan that would take them to the border of the as yet unnamed, newly discovered planet of beauty and fertility.

Yet, in Jaron’s eyes, no beauty—be she human or celestial—could rival Muriel Stone.

Tall and strong, the captain had a strongly lined face and an agile, muscled frame. On her planet, he assumed, she would not be considered pretty, at least not in the conventional sense. Even so, her glacier blue eyes and shoulder-length blonde hair held an undeniable essence of feminine beauty, as did her full, firm lips.

For Jaron, Muriel’s true beauty lay in the wise, often humorous words that flowed forth from those lips.

While attending the school that Muriel co-founded, Jaron had read books filled with her theories and ideas. Amazed by her intellect, he greatly looked forward to the day they would meet. When faced with the opportunity to work with her, he at first felt overwhelmed. How could he, a recent graduate of the Astroacademy, begin to match her level of skill and expertise?

When faced with Muriel Stone, the woman—the bright, kind, funny, attractive woman—his admiration mounted. His fear and apprehension diminished. And within his heart grew yet another emotion; this one the strongest of all.

Desire.

\* \* \* \*

As Muriel and Jaron continued their work, they reviewed the informational profiles regarding the planet of their destination.

Muriel admired the wide-eyed enthusiasm and unbridled admiration with which Jaron approached their task.

*He reminds me of myself ten years ago, when I was fresh out of flight school.* She grinned as she regarded the intentness of the alien's gaze as he reviewed a computer-generated astromap of their destination. *Only I'm not sure if I was ever that ridiculously hot.*

Seeming to read her thoughts, Jaron slowly raised that almond-eyed gaze to meet hers.

"You know, Muriel," he said her name like it was the sweetest poetry. "For the duration of this mission, you and I will be all alone—alone together on a planet of pleasure." He pursed his lips sexily. "Any ideas about how we can spend our free time, Captain?"

Muriel shrugged and cleared her throat loudly. "I don't foresee a great deal of free time in our immediate future." She raised a finger for emphasis. "True, we do want to explore the beauty and natural resources of this planet. Yet we also want to gauge its potential as the site of a new civilization, as a productive global force in our universe."

"I understand," Jaron stroked his chin thoughtfully. "In our observations of earthbound cultures, several Eternian ambassadors have noted the impressive power and productivity of your planet. Naturally, you'd want to introduce these traits to this new civilization."

Nodding, Muriel grinned wryly. "Do I sense the imminent approach of the word 'but' in this conversation?"

“No, no,” Jaron shook his head swiftly. “I’d never question the strategies and success of your mighty planet.”

Yet with this he gestured expressively out the window before them, to the clear and radiant star scape that formed the backdrop of their celestial journey.

“What we’ve also observed, however, is that earthlings seldom take the time to stop and smell the rowboats.”

“Um...” Muriel gaped openly in the face of this assertion. “I guess most of us earthlings aren’t keenly aware of the appealing scent of rowboats. Could you possibly mean roses, Jaron?”

“Yes, those are lovely as well,” the alien nodded. “On Eternia we seize every available opportunity to indulge our senses.”

*You can seize me anytime, baby.* The raw, carnal notion came unbidden to Muriel’s mind as she caught sight of Jaron’s manly arms and bulging, well-defined chest muscles, defined as they were through a rather revealing button-down jacket with no shirt underneath. *Maybe these pleasure-seeking Eternians are onto something.* She couldn’t help but grin.

“Would you like to know another interesting factoid about Eternia, Captain?”

The sound of Jaron’s deep yet softly toned voice ensnared Muriel’s attention.

“Sure. I’m all ears,” she nodded. “What else, pray tell, should I know about Eternians?”

The alien charmed her with a dazzling—if slightly mischievous—full-toothed smile. “We can read minds, Captain.”

*Oh drat it. So now he tells me.*

Rising abruptly from her place at the ship control panel, Muriel walked with quick steps and averted eyes to the door of her cockpit.

“We’ve had a long and intensive strategy session,” Muriel threw these words over her shoulder as she made a hasty exit from the cockpit. “I think I’ll take a break and visit the exercise room.”

\* \* \* \*

In his days as a young space explorer, Jaron Ken had already beheld many ethereal sights.

Yet in his mind, even the most radiant celestial vision failed to rival the sight of Muriel Stone in her element.

Standing solidly at the center of her exercise room, the captain lifted substantial weights with the greatest of ease. He marveled

openly at the flex of her arms, as well as their sleek, slightly muscled texture.

Her skin gleamed golden in the rays of an overhead light, and a look of studied concentration etched starkly across her planed, patrician features.

*What an astounding woman. Could I ever think to woo her?*

Before today, Jaron would have dismissed this notion with a self-effacing laugh. What could a recent Astroacademy graduate possibly offer a veteran, indeed legendary, starship captain?

Today that question had found its answer, and Jaron had found his second mission, one that took utmost importance in his mind.

He wanted Muriel Stone, and in a multitude of ways.

As an officer, he wanted to serve and impress her with his knowledge and fortitude.

As a friend, he wanted to support her through the emotional tragedy of her divorce.

As a lover, he wanted to seduce, pleasure and totally satisfy her.

*And there's no time like the present to start.*

Donning a catlike beam, Jaron advanced with smooth, sensual strides into the exercise room.

"Could I help you in any way, Madame?" His voice softened to a seductive purr. "As always, I'm at your command."

Yet his smile dissolved as Muriel regarded him with knowing, serious eyes.

"Jaron, I've been thinking of the conversation we had this afternoon." Setting aside her weights, Muriel turned to fully face her second in command. "And I want to reassure you that while I do have a duty to explore this new planet, I also intend to preserve its natural beauty and the dignity of its resources."

Pausing, she offered him a small but genuine smile.

"As the recent victim of disrespect, lieutenant, I have no cause or intent to disrespect others," she nodded affirmably. "And while I seek to explore new planets, I also like to enjoy them."

Touched, Jaron extended a bold but gentle hand to cover Muriel's sweat-lined arm.

"I would expect nothing less from you." He squeezed her arm gently. "And I want to assure you in return." With this, he drew closer to her and tightened his hold on her arm. "I aim to help you enjoy it."

Chuckling, Muriel ducked her head in a rare show of girlishness. "Enjoy the new planet, you mean?"

## Alien Seduction

Arching his eyebrows, Jaron graced Muriel with a mysterious smile before turning slowly away.

“Take my words any way you like, Captain.”

### Chapter Three

That evening, Muriel completed her day's duties with a phone call she didn't want to make, one to the man who first discovered her target destination. He was also the man who broke her heart.

"Hello, Muriel." She still warmed in spite of herself at the sound of Wade's deep, even tones.

His next words, by contrast, left her nothing but cold.

"I was sorry to hear your mission began this weekend. Stacey and I really wanted you to attend our wedding."

Muriel snorted. "Sorry, Wade, but I must admit that—on my list of favorite things to do—an interplanetary mission would indeed supersede my ex's wedding." She shrugged with a wry smile. "Then again, so would the act of gouging out any given vital organ with an ice pick."

"I suppose I deserve that," Wade sighed deeply.

"That would be my guess," Muriel nodded in agreement. "Now, let's get down to business."

As Wade divulged the details of his interplanetary trek to their newly discovered planet, Muriel's psyche fought off the image of his impending nuptials, and of the woman who would take her place at his side.

As an empowered and self-sufficient woman, Muriel could live without Wade.

*I just never thought I'd have to.*

They attended a space academy together then went on to form one of their own. Wade had taken her heart, her virginity and, for a while, her name. They had worked and lived together, and planned a bright, productive future.

Now he would carry out their plans with another woman. In another place.

Meanwhile, she was stuck in outer space...

...With the sexiest, most gorgeous, most sensitive man in the universe. And he seemed to dig her too.

*Screw Wade.* Muriel grinned smugly in the direction of her defenseless telephone receiver.

“Muriel?” Oblivious to her ire, the recipient of this pointed sentiment sounded halting and confused.

“I think I’d better go now, Wade,” Muriel grinned in spite of herself.

A long pause ensued.

“Are you all right, Muriel?”

“I will be, Wade, very soon. No worries about this chicksta.”

\* \* \* \*

As Muriel emerged from her chambers, she came face-to-face with the man who appeared as if in response to her unspoken wishes.

Silently taking her hand, Jaron lead her to the expansive, lowly lit dining hall of the *Melpomeme*.

Sparsely furnished and designed with sleek, clean lines, the dining hall generally boasted the appearance of a functional official mess hall.

Tonight, this appearance was altered somewhat by the presence of two brightly lit vanilla candles at the center of the dining table; the sound of a melodic new age flute filtered gracefully through an unseen sound system.

Muriel immediately relaxed as she advanced into the room and eased into the cushioned chair that he pulled out for her.

“When did you find time to arrange all this?” she gestured broadly to her redecorated surroundings. “It’s the perfect way to mark the first night of our mission.”

“A good way to mark our first night,” Jaron said and kissed Muriel’s hand in a most gallant fashion then assumed a seat beside her at the table.

The two sat silently for a moment, staring into one another’s eyes as the music and lights continued to soothe their senses.

Jaron, Muriel noticed, had traded his lieutenant’s uniform for a sleek black shirt with matching pants and jacket.

*He looks the part of the sophisticated date.* She blanched somewhat as she regarded her own steel gray uniform. *I still look the part of a space captain.*

“And that’s the sexiest thing in the world to me,” Jaron’s smooth, sensual voice disrupted her abashed meditation.

Muriel snorted, and waved away his softly spoken words. “How could anyone perceive this get-up as sexy?” She waved a long, authoritative finger scoldingly in his direction. “And stop with the mind-reading deal. It freaks me out, royally.”

Chuckling, Jaron squeezed Muriel's hand and moved closer to her.

"Drop your defenses, Muriel." He pressed his full, succulent lips tenderly against her cheek. "I'm not an alien invader, or your ex-husband."

Resting her head briefly on his shoulder, Muriel exhaled noticeably.

"Believe me," she beamed. "I know and keenly appreciate both facts."

Soon the couple enjoyed a pre-prepared dinner of space-friendly meat and vegetable packets; basic and unromantic fare that Muriel nonetheless savored after a hard day's work.

"So, Jaron..." She relaxed noticeably in her seat as she regarded her charming young dinner date. "What first inspired you to take up space travel?"

She loved the way his eyes came alight at the mention of his life's work.

"When I was a lad, I spent every weekend in the Eternian amphitheater, watching three-dimensional science fiction films." He beamed radiantly at the memory. "I longed to be the hero of my own adventure, to fly through space, explore new civilizations. I wanted to do it all."

Leaning forward, Jaron gestured expressively. "In high school, my class took a 'far a field' trip to Mars," he enthused. "My instructors noted that, while my classmates talked and frolicked through the trip, I explored my new environment and took pains to identify the rocks and plants I had learned about in class. They suggested I pursue an education at your Astroacademy."

With this he turned his warm, admiring gaze slowly in her direction.

"Before I went to your school, Muriel, I read your books." His tone resounded low and reverent. "Your enthusiasm for space exploration seemed to mirror my own, though your wisdom well-exceeded mine."

Muriel beamed graciously, but shook her head. "Give yourself time, Jaron," she patted his back in a sincere show of support. "A few years ago—though I'll stop short of indicating how few, or how many—I too was a kid who sat spellbound through sci-fi movies, though most featured muscle-bound heroes who looked nothing like me." She shrugged. "I myself have spouted a few muscles, over time."

The point is that most, if not all, of these films starred male action heroes. And the few that featured females often proved more comical than inspiring. The heroines, and I use that term so loosely it's not even remotely funny, often wore little more than a bikini and a gun belt. Three guesses on which object the camera focused on most."

Jaron chuckled as Muriel rolled her eyes heavenward. "As the end credits rolled, the only thing that struck wonder in my heart was the listing of a wardrobe specialist in these credits. As I saw it, the 'heroine' never wore enough to justify the existence of a wardrobe specialist. And it seemed particularly cheesy when you saw her levitating in the nude."

Jaron shrugged. "Myself, I never had a problem with that part." He grinned sheepishly.

His captain pointed an accusing finger in his direction. "Stop it now, Jaron. You're beginning to sound like an earth dude."

"Oh no! I'm so sorry." Jaron's tone was touchingly sincere, and he blushed adorably.

"It's a joke, Jaron." With this she smiled, and her gaze softened. "I probably wouldn't mind if I spotted some studly guy levitating naked in my antigravitational chamber. I guess at that point in my life I just needed a different brand of inspiration.

I found it at school, of all places," she nodded affirmably. "My science teachers encouraged my interest in space exploration and suggested the books and classes that would help me succeed." She gestured expressively. "They supplemented my hopes and dreams with a good, sound dose of valuable information."

Jaron took in his breath, and his eyes came alight with a warm, inspired glow. "So that's why you started the Astroacademy." His awestruck voice was barely above a whisper. "You wanted other kids to have the same opportunity for learning and growing."

Muriel felt pretty inspired as she considered Jaron's observation. "I have to tell you, Lieutenant," she chuckled, "I've thoroughly enjoyed this dinner date." *Dinner dates with gorgeous men who praise you to high heavens always prove an enjoyable, if all too rare, experience.* "It is getting rather late, though. I think I'll retire for the evening."

Sipping his wine, her dinner date arched a curious eyebrow. "Would you like me to walk you to your cabin, Captain?"

Grinning knowingly, Muriel shook her head. "It's my ship, Lieutenant. I think I know the way."

## Chapter Four

Early the next morning, Muriel awoke alone in her small, tidy cabin at the far corner of the *Melpomeme*. Her sheets, she found, were soaked with sweat, wrapped around a body that radiated with the heat of frustrated desire. Although Jaron didn't visit her cabin last night, he had gained sure and unmistakable entry into her dreams. Throughout the night, his vision permeated her psyche, naked and radiant in its masculine glory.

First he appeared as a mysterious, illusive image, one that floated like an ethereal specter above her head. Then the dream intensified, delivering him finally into her arms. Her hungry hands canvassed his bare, sweaty flesh as she engaged him in a kiss so heated and intense that her breath suspended outright.

"I didn't know it was possible for a woman to enjoy a wet dream." She bit her lip self-consciously as she considered the night's events.

Ah, but what other term could she use to describe this erotic dream trance, this nocturnal journey that had taken her to the limits of her deepest, most secret fantasies? And beyond.

Jaron had done things to her she had only imagined, and it had all felt so real; she felt his kiss, the touch of his fingertips...

...And, finally, the sublime penetration of his hungry cock.

*Okay, now I know this is a dream.* At the time, she watched the events of their lovemaking unfold like a deeply engaged spectator. *They don't come that big in real life.*

Now, however, she wasn't so sure. She felt exalted, excited and, in a way, satiated.

*Satiated, but still horny as hell.* She shook her head as she arose finally from her functional, iron-railed single bed. *That was some dream.*

As much as she enjoyed her nocturnal adventure, she dreaded her real-life meeting this morning with its hunky subject.

*I'm supposed to discuss astrological flight coordinates with the same dude who thoroughly drilled me in my dreams.* She shook her head.

After an extended cold shower, Muriel donned her usual steel gray uniform and made her way slowly to the ship's cockpit, which, much to her relief, was vacant.

Taking a seat before her control panel, the captain yawned broadly as she flicked open the square astroviewer that, via a brightly lit cylindrical screen, would display her 'to do' list for the day.

She blinked startlingly as, in lieu of her usual message of welcome, she read a cryptic phrase that read more like an invitation.

*Just for you, Muriel: A Jaron Ken production.*

Before she could question this odd turn of events, and turn of phrase, Muriel witnessed the videotaped image of her own antigravitational chamber; a room she frequently used for training, and at times for recreation.

Someone else apparently saw fit to use the room for playful purposes. Muriel gaped as the figure of her dream man floated freely into her line of vision. She immediately recognized Jaron's long, silky brown hair, which now flew freely behind him in the air. This crimson cloud proved a radiant frame for the planes of his flawless face and a pair of almond-hued eyes that well-matched his bronzed skin.

Jaron's firm hands made broad, fluid strokes in the air surrounding, almost as though he was an intergalactic merman.

Finally, she allowed her gaze to venture beyond the familiar, to fully inspect the entirety of Jaron's muscled form.

A spectacular example of alien manhood stripped bare for her pleasure.

*Just for you, Muriel...*

The words flowed seamlessly into her psyche to accompany his impeccable image, a vision that consisted of a massive bronzed chest, two toned, tautly muscled legs and a long, hard, fully erect shaft.

Floating gracefully on his side, Jaron revealed himself totally and unabashedly for her pleasure. Then he executed a graceful, seamless set of twists and turns that stole her breath.

"Amazing," she watched transfixed as Jaron performed an airborne ballet that made her pulse race.

All the while, he never shifted his gaze from the camera, or, she surmised, from his intended audience.

As his dark, sultry gaze seared her very soul, his manly hands thrust suddenly forth in her direction.

Wiggling his eyebrows playfully, he crooked a teasing finger in her direction; yet she only looked away and used her own hand to cradle a tension-wrought head.

When faced with such overwhelming temptation, how could she focus on her mission?

*Now that my personal life lies in shambles, I at least have to keep it together professionally.*

Yet when one's nipples stood hard and erect, and her clit felt akin to a fiery furnace of restrained passion, 'keeping it together' posed a bit more of a challenge. Just a tad, anyway.

*I have to get a hold of myself.* Sitting abruptly upward, she straightened formally in her seat and flicked a button on a nearby remote; an action that blackened the screen before her and removed the tempting images from her vision.

Ah, but not from her psyche...

"Good morning, Captain."

Soon her tempter stood solidly beside her, dangerously close. Even as she avoided his penetrating gaze, Muriel couldn't ignore his clean, masculine scent, or the sheer intoxication of his presence.

"Good morning, Lieutenant." Muriel kept her gaze trained on the steel-encased control panel before them. "Did you get a good night's rest?"

Jaron shrugged and rolled his almond eyes as he took a seat beside her.

"It's a mite difficult to rest when you keep having wickedly erotic dreams about your commanding officer." His words, though lightly spoken, held a passionate meaning that sent thrilling chills coursing up Muriel's spine.

She boldly decided to meet the sensual challenge he so openly presented.

"Yeah, I know what it's like to fantasize about a co-worker." She raised her head to shoot a sly smile in his direction. "Especially when you wake up to the image of him in a homemade porno."

She shrugged and arched her eyebrows. "At least I'm assuming that was you. Maybe we just picked up Playgirl-TV on our satellite feed."

Chuckling, Jaron fixed a warm, strong hand on Muriel's sturdy shoulder.

“That was me, all right.” Cocking his leonine head in a curious gesture, he pinned her with a playful pout. “So how did you like my performance?”

Clearing her throat loudly, Muriel shifted in her seat. “You levitate exceptionally well.” She attempted an official tone. “And you look exceptionally good naked.”

“Why thank you, Captain.” He drew noticeably closer. “Would you, per chance, like to see a live re-enactment? Here and now?”

Suddenly Muriel’s head shot up, and she faced in full his smoldering gaze and his full, slightly parted lips. “Come on, Muriel.” His voice lowered to a delectable whisper. “We’re all alone up here. No one will judge you. You can relax, you can enjoy yourself. No one will know...” With this, he wrapped a strong, inviting arm around her shoulders and whispered more tender sentiments. “I’ll do anything, Muriel, to bring out the passionate woman I know lurks within you. Anything, baby, just name it.”

Muriel trembled as Jaron pressed his lips boldly against her cheek. Then, in an even bolder move, he blew gently into her ear. “You can give your subordinate officer two separate sets of instructions, one for day,” he delivered a long, smooth, daring lick to the side of her cheek. “One for night. Command me as you would your ship, Muriel.”

Muriel’s heart raced, and she felt a telltale wetness permeate her feminine area. *As much technical equipment as we have around this place, I hope I don’t short-circuit something.*

Her meditation was startlingly disrupted by the sudden emergence of a new, vividly detailed picture on the screen of her nearby teletransmitter, a device that allowed advanced communications with the outside world.

She confronted the image of her commanding officer. As he appeared seated behind his lattice-paneled cherry wood desk, Philip Morrow gave the impression of a smug, professional, and—much to Muriel’s relief—fully dressed space commander.

“Good morning, Muriel and Jaron.” Morrow nodded politely in their direction.

“Good morning, Philip.” Muriel shot Jaron an apologetic glance as she edged sharply away from him. “What can we do for you this morning?”

*What can I do for you this evening?* Muriel jumped as Jaron’s smooth, sensual voice permeated her psyche.

She had read in Jaron's planetary profile that he could communicate telepathically. Apparently, he had just seen fit to demonstrate this skill in the presence of her commanding officer. Drat that horny alien.

"How have you two fared on your mission?" Philip's warm but official tone once again sliced soundly through her passion struck, if also slightly annoyed, ponderings.

"We're enjoying it greatly," Jaron winked subtly in Muriel's direction. "We're looking forward to further in-depth space exploration."

"Excellent." Morrow clasped his hands together in an apparent show of approval. "I can tell by your astral chart that you're making excellent time. You will reach the pleasure planet by midnight tonight."

*And if you like, Muriel, I can bring you to pleasure even sooner.*

*Stop that now. It's an order.* Muriel grinned smugly as Jaron's cocoa-hued eyes widened with surprise.

*See, I can communicate telepathically too. I learned, and now teach, the skill at the Astroacademy. So there.*

Muriel leaned forward to address her commanding officer, who did not seem to intercept their telepathic communication. She figured that was a damned good thing.

"We greatly look forward to beginning our exploration of the pleasure planet," she said, nodding affirmably.

"Wade discovered a rare and beautiful gem of the universe." Philip displayed a rare full-toothed beam, but only briefly. "I'm sorry, Muriel. I didn't mean to bring up your ex-husband."

Shaking her head, Muriel nudged Jaron under the table.

"I've moved on," she assured Philip.

Morrow nodded and regarded Muriel with thoughtful eyes.

"You do seem more chipper, Captain, I must say." He stroked his chin thoughtfully. "You must truly enjoy your work."

*Especially when my co-worker is so darned hot...*

The thought sprang unbidden to Muriel's mind.

At first relieved that she hadn't said these provocative words aloud, Muriel shifted uncomfortably as she reminded herself of one important factoid.

The hot alien could read minds. Drat him to blazes.

\* \* \* \*

After administering a thorough briefing regarding their galactic destination, Morrow dismissed Muriel and Jaron to their own devices.

Assuming once again her role as the consummate professional, Muriel began to state her own plans and expectations regarding their mission.

“The first thing we should do is tour our landing site.” She raised a sturdy finger for emphasis. “We need to, as they used to say in those moldy oldie sci-fi movies, search for signs of intelligent life.” She paused and shook her head. “Sometimes I have trouble locating signs of intelligent life on my own planet. But I digress...”

“Muriel.” Jaron’s intent, thoughtful stare warmed her to the core—and simultaneously rendered her as skittish as a colt in heat. “Just before we spoke to Commander Morrow, we were on the verge of a very heated, very passionate encounter. Now we’re talking flight coordinates.” His feather soft cinnamon brown hair brushed appealingly across his shoulders as he cocked his head to one side. “To borrow an earthbound phrase, Captain, what gives?”

Leaning forward in her seat, Muriel folded her arms firmly before her.

“For your information, Lieutenant,” her tone was firm and cool, “we have a job to do here. A new planet to learn about, perhaps even colonize. Doesn’t that prospect excite you?”

“Not as much as you do, Captain.” Jaron leaned forward until his face loomed dangerously close to hers.

Muriel chuckled dryly. “Always the tease, aren’t you?” she snorted. “Do you want to know exactly what I think of your flirtatious ways, Lieutenant?”

Properly chastised, Jaron shrugged uneasily. “Go ahead.” He bit his lip in a seeming gesture of self-reproach. “Lay it on me.”

“Oh, I intend to.”

Leaning forward, Muriel grasped Jaron’s beefy shoulders and covered his mouth with hers. Slanting her mouth downward, she seared his luscious lips with a hard, intense kiss.

Immediately rising to her sensual challenge, Jaron laved Muriel’s mouth with a soft, long tongue. His lips, meanwhile, pressed and massaged her own.

The couple shared a long, leisurely kiss; soon their hands and tongues merged to form an intimate cocoon. Their lips both teased and devoured as they spoke a truth that was simply beyond words.

“Enough.” Finally Muriel did speak, and she pulled slowly, almost painfully, away from the subject of her desire. “We have a job to do.”

Jaron nodded, but he seared Muriel’s lips with a second quick kiss as he pulled away. “Our time will come, love.” His smile shone soft and seductive. “And soon.”

\* \* \* \*

The remainder of Muriel’s day proved comparatively uneventful, as she finalized a landing plan and reviewed Wade’s notes that reflected his initial observations of the pleasure planet.

Yet, even as they immersed themselves in the technical side of their job, the couple never forgot to have fun. While reviewing Wade’s voluminous notes, Muriel broke out a bottle of non-alcoholic cider tonic and challenged Jaron to a unique drinking game.

“I’ll read his report aloud to you,” her voice cracked as she attempted an official tone. “Every time he mentions himself, take a drink. Every time he mentions Stacey, take two.”

Guffawing outright, Jaron leaned forward to kiss her smiling lips.

“That man was such a fool, Muriel,” he gestured toward the report. “He may write eloquently and be a distinguished officer. I’m sad to report, however, that he’s also a royal, unmitigated buffoon.”

Nodding approvingly, Muriel clapped Jaron’s back. “Expert assessment, Lieutenant. This chicksta is recommending a raise for you.”

As night fell, they paused in their duties to enjoy a light, quiet dinner accented by more laughter and pleasant conversation.

“Muriel, these last few days have been...” Jaron paused, clearly at a loss for words.

“My sentiments exactly.” Muriel leaned forward to nestle Jaron’s neck, then pondered the sheer uniqueness of this action.

*Did I ever nestle with Wade?* She pursed her lips thoughtfully. *As I recall, we saluted one another at the altar.*

“To tell you the truth, Jaron, I really wanted this to be a solo mission.” She beamed warmly and, just for the fun of it, nestled that studly neck one more time. “Now, though, I couldn’t imagine this mission without you.”

*Or, for that matter, my life.*

*What was that, dearest? I didn’t quite ‘hear’ you. I fear I was chomping my lettuce too loudly.*

*Probably for the best, Jaron. Probably for the best.*

## Chapter Five

The planet of their destination shone like a diamond on the star scape; an ethereal symbol of newness and fertility. A glowing light that shone against a backdrop of ebony velvet, the planet shone as a welcoming beacon to weary travelers and held its current beholder strangely transfixed.

In her extensive and distinguished career, Muriel had explored many planets and star systems. Even so, she had never beheld such a pure vision of radiant celestial beauty.

*Well, maybe I should amend that notion.* Muriel now turned her gaze to the man beside her, who, with his wide, awestruck ebony eyes and glowing skin, likened to a celestial vision.

The two said nothing, only joined hands and turned once again to face the planet of their destination.

Their planet.

"I guess I'd better prep the *Melpomeme* for landing." Muriel raised Jaron's hand to her lips for a playful peck.

Yet Jaron held fast to her hand and planted his kiss on her lips.

"For a moment, darling," he replied, turning her gently in the direction of the panoramic vista before them, "just enjoy."

As directed, Muriel allowed her gaze to wander beyond the ship that she commanded; she saw their planet through Jaron's eyes.

She saw the aqua panorama of distant waters, and the diamond-clear sheen of a sky that seemed limitless. Even from this distance, she saw what appeared to be forests of lush foliage and floral displays, the colors of the rainbow.

"I can't wait to visit this planet, Jaron." For the first time in years, she felt like a junior spacewoman. Heck, she felt like a kid. "I can't wait to see it with you." She grinned sheepishly as Jaron turned her body once again, so that she came directly into his arms. Enveloping her in a tight, warm embrace, he covered her mouth with his.

Muriel sighed deeply as she drank in his deep, sensual kiss, accented by velvet soft lips and a long, delightfully limber tongue.

As this tongue laved and explored her mouth, Jaron's fingers mirrored this motion, treating her to a tantalizing shoulder massage.

Muriel's hands cupped Jaron's planed cheekbones as she thrust forth her tongue, meeting his kiss with a passion that betrayed her erotic hungers. Finally, she drew back to stare deeply into his dark, exotic eyes, eyes that appeared all the more radiant when tinged with the mists of passion.

"I really do have to tend to my duties." She patted his cheek and gave him an apologetic grin.

Jaron nodded, but winked devilishly as he turned back to his station at the control panel.

"If I have it my way, Muriel Stone," his voice lowered to a seductive purr, "soon I'm going to tend to you."

\* \* \* \*

Another hour passed before the *Melpomeme* soared effortlessly into the atmosphere of the pleasure planet. As Jaron Ken stepped carefully down the ramp and onto the field in which they landed, he found himself confronted with the unparalleled beauty of a rainbow.

Much like the rainbows that sometimes appeared in the airs of Eternia, this multicolored arch shone radiant with the hues of nature's palette.

This rainbow differed from most, however, in that it rivaled the sun in its size and scope. This rainbow held a vast and noble court over the planet's sky and drew the immediate heed of its current beholder.

Eventually, Jaron's gaze shifted downward, where he further beheld the beauty of his new surroundings.

Indeed, it seemed that the colors of the rainbow had descended from the sky to paint the landscape below it. The leaves of the trees shone emerald green, as did the blades of the grasses in the field. These trees bordered a sparkling blue stream of pure, unsoiled waters, and towered above ferns an almost unearthly shade of ruby red and golden yellow.

"Muriel, come quickly!" Jaron turned toward the head of the ship where his captain had just completed her post-landing inspection of the *Melpomeme*. "You just have to see this."

In Jaron's eyes, nothing rivaled the spectacle of a beaming Muriel as she came to join him in the field. The two joined hands as they surveyed their planetary discovery.

"It's beautiful," Muriel squeezed Jaron's hand.

“Perfect.” Jaron nodded affirmably. “Eternia, in all its beauty and splendor, cannot rival this place.”

He paused to savor the feel of a softly flowing breeze as it blew gently past them, and the sight of a silken feathered peacock as it trod the grasses before them.

“This is the ideal place for explorers.” A still smiling Muriel turned fully to face him.

Jaron returned her beam and savored the sight of her golden hair as it stirred gracefully in the winds around them and the sight of her azure eyes, alight with the wonder of a new discovery.

“An ideal place,” he whispered as he cupped her bronzed cheek, “for lovers.”

Suddenly, he leaned forward to kiss her, but frowned as she drew away from him. Her smile dissolved abruptly, and her lashes fell to shield eyes that inexplicably brimmed with tears.

“Muriel, what did I say?” Jaron shrugged helplessly.

“Nothing, Jaron.” Muriel patted his arm reassuringly. “It’s just that as I experience the sheer exhilaration of the pleasure planet, I know my husband felt a similar sense of intoxication.” She paused and shook her head. “This planet, Jaron, destroyed my marriage.”

“Muriel, let’s talk about this.” Jaron watched helplessly after the forlorn woman as she retreated quickly up the ramp of the ship.

“I just need a few moments alone, Jaron.” Her voice trembled slightly as she disappeared into the cool safety of the *Melpomeme*.

This, Jaron suspected, was the closest the stoic captain ever came to showing any degree of vulnerable emotion. As much as he hated to witness her sadness, he knew he had the ability to shift her mood, to show her that some types of emotion were infinitely more pleasurable than others, and that ecstasy could be felt just as keenly and fully as pain.

## Chapter Six

Now seated before the control panel of the *Melpomeme*, Captain Muriel Stone felt anything but in control. She valiantly fought the rare sheen of tears that flooded her eyes.

*Just when I think I've regained my balance, my life, a memory comes along to knock me down.* She rested her worry-lined forehead in the palm of her hand.

She recalled the joy she had felt when Wade told her of his planetary discovery. She envisioned herself standing proudly at his side as he accepted awards for his achievement; more vividly still, she imagined a second honeymoon on the pleasure planet.

*I guess I was somewhat correct.* She shrugged and smiled dryly. *In just a few days' time, he will take a second honeymoon—with a second wife.*

*So why don't you enjoy your second honeymoon with me?*

Muriel jumped as a deep, manly voice cut cleanly through her troubled thoughts and sent a succulent chill down her spine.

*Come again?* Muriel cocked her head curiously.

*And again and again, my baby.* Jaron's telepathic voice sounded playfully teasing and irresistibly sexy. Blast that alien.

*Jaron, we mustn't forget.* Muriel straightened noticeably. *We have a job to do on this planet.*

*So do your job, Captain Stone. Come explore.*

Smirking in spite of herself, Muriel arose from her seat and once again stepped through the portal of the *Melpomeme*.

Her smile dissolved to an open-mouthed gape as she beheld an otherworldly vision of sheer ethereal radiance.

At the head of a nearby brook stood a cascading waterfall with crystalline streams that now doused and coated the naked body of another natural wonder.

Posed perfectly beneath the descending streams of the waterfall, Jaron's muscles shone brilliantly when wet; the toned planes of his arms and legs were slick with ebullient water droplets.

His long, luminous hair, plastered as it was to his broad, beefy shoulders, shone like wet bronze. And his almond eyes shone forth with a passionate fire that stole Muriel's breath.

*Come to me, Muriel.*

Not just yet.

Two could play at this game of seduction, Muriel decided.

Soon she stood in the emerald-hued meadow that bordered the lake. Never breaking the locked glance that seemed to bind and unite them, she slowly unbuttoned the steel gray uniform that concealed her body and passion.

*Not for long.* She beamed as she saw Jaron's gaze come alight with the heat of desire.

"Do I have to beg for you?" His low, raspy voice reverberated with frustration.

Shaking her head, Muriel walked slowly toward the waterfall.

\* \* \* \*

Soon Muriel found herself enveloped in the hot, wet embrace of a gorgeous, loving man. Running a long, wet tongue down her neck, Jaron stroked her hips and rubbed her sturdy thighs until a succulent wetness emerged between her legs.

Then, fixing his manly hands around her waist, he buried his head in her chest. As he licked and kissed her breasts and nipped teasingly at her nipples, her own hands canvassed his strong, delectably wet back.

Soon their arms and legs locked in a timeless embrace, and abruptly Jaron lifted his head to pin her with a searing gaze.

"Use the voice of your mind, Muriel," he coaxed in a whisper. "Tell me what you need, what you desire. I'm at your disposal, Captain."

"I don't need words, Lieutenant." Eager to prove her point, Muriel pressed her body firmly and surely into Jaron's. Throwing her head back to cool her flushed face in the streams of the overhead spray, she brazenly squeezed his tight, rock hard behind.

"I've been waiting to do that for so blasted long," she said, grinning devilishly.

"And I, love, have waited to do this."

Kneeling abruptly before her, Jaron planted sweet baby kisses along Muriel's taut abdomen. His fingers, meanwhile, playfully tickled the sensitive skin of her feminine folds.

Opening herself to him, Muriel sighed as his agile, talented fingers tickled and massaged her feminine fruit. Soon these fingers were replaced by his mouth.

Moving his gorgeous head rhythmically from side to side, Jaron lovingly suckled her clit; his newly freed fingers, meanwhile, slipped effortlessly into her hot, wet pouch and began their own celestial exploration.

Thriving under the influence of his expert attentions, Muriel buried her hands in the silken depths of his shiny, luxurious hair before reaching down to squeeze the firm, well-muscled shoulders she loved.

Once again, throwing her head back to bask in the descending spray of the waterfall, Muriel felt another exquisite sensation as Jaron's hands worked their special lover's magic, tickling and stroking her very core.

As his tongue licked and laved her clit, his fingers found the source of her greatest pleasure, her g-spot.

Glad that they were alone on the planet, Muriel let forth with a mighty cry of total intimate satiation.

As her body was overtaken by pulsating spasms of ecstasy, she fell forward into Jaron's strong arms; effortlessly, he swept her up in his embrace, and her legs locked themselves around his waist.

He held her fiercely to him as finally he entered her, and his strokes ran deep and penetrating. They kissed deeply and clasped their hands as they reached an earth shattering mutual climax.

Moments later the two played like love struck youths in the crystalline spring that flowed just beyond the waterfall. They splashed one another, stole underwater kisses and clasped hands to float in a slow, serene circle while staring deeply into one another's eyes.

"Jaron, this day has been incredible," Muriel clasped his sculpted cheeks in two loving hands and kissed him warmly.

"Muriel, every moment I've known you has been incredible." Beaming brightly, Jaron warmed his hands between hers. "I can't wait to see what the rest of our mission will bring. And afterward, I want to start seeing you seriously."

Chuckling, Muriel raised Jaron's hands to her lips for a loving kiss. "I'd say we've already gotten pretty darned serious, Jaron." She wiggled her eyebrows. "And you know me. I'm always willing to explore things further."

## Chapter Seven

*Three months later*

Muriel Stone just had to admit it. Naked levitation had its benefits.

Especially at the end of a long day on a newly discovered planet when one had discovered, explored, recorded and catalogued to the point of exhaustion.

Now it was time, she decided, to float leisurely in the embrace of one's gorgeous young lover, to hold his flawless body in her arms and fly to a higher plain of intimacy.

As their lips met for an airborne kiss, Muriel admired the way Jaron's flexible, well-muscled limbs propelled him still deeper into her arms. Suddenly he twirled her freely in the air, and their tongues met to perform their own heated tango. Their bodies slid deliciously against each other but never parted, seemingly united by an unseen force. Muriel did manage to slip a strong, purposeful hand between them, to finger and tease a long, hard cock that seemed to defy gravity.

Their passions ignited in their unfettered atmosphere, and soon they merged fully; Muriel's hips raised gracefully to meet the probing strokes of Jaron's long, delightfully levitated shaft. Now both their bodies merged totally in a thrilling new atmosphere, and their sighs and moans flowed freely in the air around them as Jaron surged powerfully into Muriel's femininity.

His strong hands both held her securely in the air and grasped and massaged her waist, her breasts pressed delightfully against the planes of his smooth, massive chest.

They broke their kiss only long enough to say, "I love you," and to stare meaningfully into one another's eyes. Then, symbolically, they soared upward to the ethereal heights of ecstasy.

Minutes later, the two floated silently in a perfect circle; their serenity, sadly, was fleeting. As Muriel swirled easily in the direction of her teletransmitter, she came face to face with the image of her ex-

husband. Yet she only smiled and waved broadly as Jaron wrapped his arms protectively around her waist.

“Why hello, Wade. To what do we owe the pleasure of this call?”

Raising a sardonic eyebrow, the stoic Wade stroked the thick, bushy moustache that Muriel secretly loathed.

“Well I must say, Muriel, you do indeed appear thoroughly pleased.”

Jaron guffawed outright. “Thoroughly, sir,” he nodded affirmably. “I make sure of it.”

“Morrow told me that you two have gotten quite cozy,” Wade sneered openly at Jaron, then shifted his gaze to Muriel. “I’m glad you had your little fling, Muriel, just as I had mine. I wanted to let you know that my wedding was cancelled. I came to my senses just in time and gave the bimbo her walking papers.” He shrugged, and shifted with evident discomfort. “I’m ready to come back to you, if you’ll have me.”

“So your engagement is off?” Muriel gaped, and shook her head sadly. “That’s a shame. Jaron and I, after all, were just about ready to pitch the concept of a double wedding.”

The shocked look on Wade’s face was nearly as priceless as the feel of Jaron in her arms.

**The End**

(Publisher’s Note: Playgirltv.com really does exist.)