

# **Invasion Earth 2: Forsaken Desire**

## **Aubrey Ross**

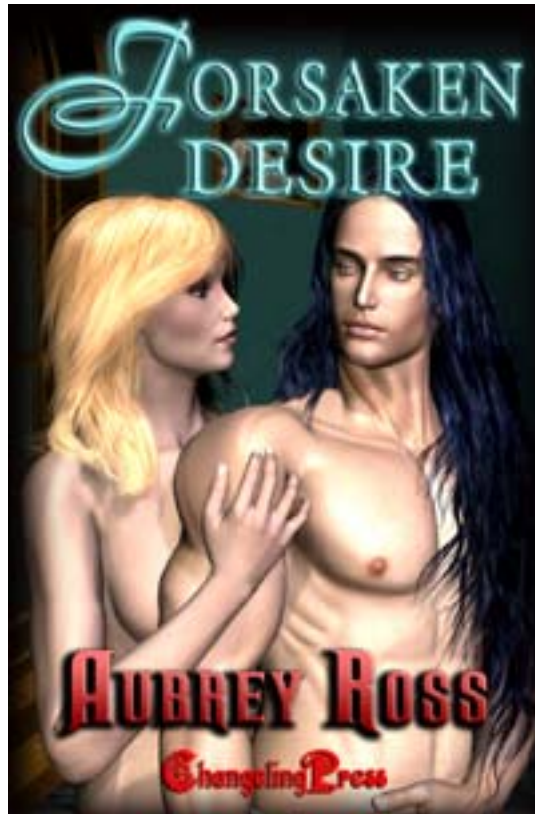
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## **Invasion Earth 2: Forsaken Desire**

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**Rhys's abuse as a Setti captive has left him emotionally distant from the conflict raging around him. The last time he trusted a woman, he ended up in a breeding pen on the Setti home world.**

**Frustrated by his son's determination to keep himself isolated, Xenos sends temptation personified into Rhys's path. Adara Kinson has proven her allegiance to the resistance despite her Setti blood. Xenos challenges Adara to find a way beyond Rhys's reserve and rekindle the passionate soul Rhys has buried beneath a mountain of responsibility.**

**Adara thinks of Rhys with fondness and affection. He was gallant during a horrible ordeal and she will always be grateful. But her Setti abilities have filled her mind with images of another man, a dark, sometimes frightening being, tormented and alone.**

## Prologue

Sylina Tesch screamed in helpless pleasure as the lash wrapped around her torso, the frayed end expertly kissing her nipple. How long had her Setti captors been at this? Hours? Days? It had all become a blur of pleasure and pain and endless aching desire. She'd lost track of the orgasms she'd been denied and the ways they'd tormented her. If the interdimensional portal hadn't depleted her energy, the bastards never would have gotten her into restraints. As it was, she could only bide her time, waiting for her levels to replenish and her control to stabilize.

"If you don't tell me what he wants to know, I've been ordered to kill you -- slowly." This one was by far the best. Was he number four or five? She honestly couldn't remember. His elongated neck and dramatically tapered torso hinted at Setti blood. A geometric pattern started on his hairless scalp and expanded across his broad chest. His slim hips and long legs made her wonder what other species had contributed to his genealogy.

"I've told you everything there is to tell." Every time she recovered enough to attempt a compulsion, he overloaded her senses and she hovered near unconsciousness again. If he would just let her come!

With a masterful flick of his wrist, Number Five sent his lash in the opposite direction, tweaking her other nipple. She gasped and her breasts quivered. The snap had been much lighter this time. Gods, he was good with a whip. He'd push the intensity right to the razor's edge of pain, where no pleasure existed, then he'd ease back and let her burn. Her buttocks tingled and her mound stung from recent kisses, and still she longed for more.

"Where is Garret?" he asked, his tone almost casual.

The cables attached to her leather manacles spread her arms and legs wide, dragging her to her toes and keeping her off balance. Sweat rolled down her trembling body, mixing with rivulets of blood and the pearly essence of her treacherous arousal. Her pussy ached as it had never ached before. The slightest hint of penetration would send her rocketing, which was why he wouldn't touch her dripping cunt.

"Garret is dead," she panted. "I told you that hours ago. I used the portal in his hideout to escape during the attack. I'd watched him activate it once before, but didn't realize where it would take me."

Five looped the whip around her neck and pinched both her nipples as he leered into her eyes. "Then why would you step through?"

"Because they would have killed me. The risk of death is better than the certainty of it. Wouldn't you agree?"

A slow, menacing smile parted his lips, revealing a double row of pointed teeth. "You've got some spirit left. I'm glad. The Midox just gave me permission to fuck you and there is nothing more repulsive than a terrified female." He took the whip from around her neck, dragging the entire length against her skin in an extended caress. "Your scent has been driving me crazy since we began."

He still wore his pants. As long as he kept his cock -- and any other Setti appendage -- away from her, she was in no danger of addiction. A good, hard orgasm would give her the control she needed to make her move.

His gaze narrowed as his fingers played through her sodden folds. She moaned, far beyond pride or embarrassment. He'd taken her to the edge over and over, then left her desperate for release.

"You are so fucking wet. I think you like being my prisoner." Pushing the handle of his whip between her legs, he rotated the smooth leather grip until the entire length was coated with cream. "Where shall I put this?" He moved one arm behind her and slid the whip across her opening. Back and forth, back and forth, he rubbed the handle against her, without thrusting into her.

"Oh gods, just let me come." She gritted out the words between clenched teeth.

Circling her core with the rounded tip of the handle, he smirked. "Shall I fuck you and then infuse you or shall we play a little more?" Her eyes widened as he relocated the grip, guiding the slick, knob into place against her other hole.

"Please, don't." She saw the ruthlessness in his eyes and knew it was useless.

"But you want to come, don't you?" Capturing her clit between his thumb and forefinger, he pressed, increasing the pressure as he drove the handle up her ass. She cried out and twisted her hips. Her frantic motion only tugged against his brutal grasp, increasing the pressure on her delicate flesh.

"Come!" he snapped. "It's the only chance you'll get."

To her utter astonishment a violent orgasm burst in her pussy, contracting her core and pulsing out through her abdomen. His fingers plucked at her clit like two persistent lips. The fullness in her ass accented the emptiness in her cunt, making her shudder and moan. He pulled the whip nearly out, then thrust it deep again. She dropped her head back on her shoulders, arching forward as his fingers dragged another spasm from her body.

Before she could recover from the dizzying pleasure, he released one of her legs from its restraint and tied the whip around her waist, leaving the handle embedded in her ass. Unfastening his pants, he raised her leg and hooked her knee over his arm. The broad head of his cock nudged against her core, demanding entrance to her body.

"Wait!" She twisted and evaded his first thrust. "You can't infuse me. I'm far more valuable to your Midox as I am."

His gaze shot to the large mirror that dominated one wall of the interrogation chamber. She'd suspected they were being observed. Was Midox Genaudi back there or just Five's superior?

"Explain." Her captor pressed his cock against her opening, a silent threat and motivation. She couldn't avoid him indefinitely.

"My mother is a succubus, a dream spirit. I'm able to insinuate myself into dreams and manipulate impulses, but only if I'm in control of my abilities. If I become addicted to Setti essence, it renders me powerless."

After a brief pause, he said, "The Midox commands a demonstration of your claim."

She was still weak. Her orgasm hadn't given her as much energy as she'd hoped. Still, she had to act now. Gathering what little remained of her strength she formed a simple, yet specific compulsion and forced it deep into Five's mind.

*"Release me now."* His gaze clouded, his body shuddered, and he lowered her foot to the floor. With deft movements, he removed the whip, freed her hands and feet and stood motionless as she crossed to the mirror. "What else shall I have him do?" Guards rushed into the cell, weapons trained on her vital organs. She held up her hands. "I only did what you asked of me. I've come to offer my services, not start a war."

Five shook his head, growling as the compulsion released. "How did you do that?" He yanked up his pants and fastened them as he continued, "I thought a man had to be asleep to be affected by a succubus."

"My father was a vampire," she stated with obvious pride. "Mind control is second nature to me." She stood proud and tall, with her shoulders squared and her breasts thrust forward. The only way to turn this to her advantage was to seize the opportunity with both hands.

"The Midox wants to know what happened to Noretta."

"If he's referring to the little waif he sent to spy on Garret, I can only presume the Resistance has her."

Five didn't speak for a moment. She wasn't sure if he was conversing with the Midox or if he disapproved of his next order. "Do you know the location of Garret's research facility?" His tone sounded tense and resentful.

"I might." Taking a deep breath, she raised her chin. She could not let them guess how weak she was at the moment, how desperately she needed energy. "What is your Midox offering me?"

Five chuckled, a decidedly unpleasant sound. "How about your life?"

She needed to proceed carefully. Much of what she was about to say was speculation on her part. As with her physical weakness, she couldn't let them realize how little she actually knew.

"I'm not as ignorant as you think," she began. "Few Setti hybrids are able to pass themselves off as human. You certainly couldn't, and the Setti's interest in Earth requires direct interaction with the inhabitants. Your Midox needs me as much as I need him."

This brought Five's brows up in obvious challenge. "What do you know of the Setti's interest in Earth?"

"Enough to know I should be having this conversation with Midox Genaudi." Another gamble. Even if the Midox was behind the mirror, she was too weak to communicate with him directly. Still, she wanted them to know she could identify the key players and considered herself among them.

Light appeared in the room beyond the mirror, revealing the creature standing there. Sylina bowed her head and lowered her gaze. Even illuminated from behind, the Setti hybrid appeared massive and utterly alien. Garret had adopted this respectful posture when he used the portal to speak with the Midox before the raid on his hideout.

"Midox Genaudi would like you to know that I speak for him," Five told her. "You may speak with him through me."

Once her energy was restored she would be able to speak mind to mind. She'd tuck that fact away until she determined whether or not their misconception could be used to her advantage.

"My association with the Setti has made me very unpopular on Earth. I request your protection and more importantly a means by which I can defend myself." Though she didn't raise her gaze, she turned toward the mirror as she spoke.

"Garret found a way to give you these things?"

"Through Garret, I learned that I can feed from a Setti mind slave without becoming addicted."

"You need access to our slaves?"



“It’s a bit more complicated than that. I gain the greatest benefit if I feed while the slave is being infused. I need access to both the hybrid and the slave.”

Five chuckled again. “I think you just like to watch.”

“I find it rather repulsive,” she shot him a sidelong glare, “but it makes me stronger and gives me more control than I ever dreamed possible.”

After another pause, Five said, “You will be allowed to replenish your energy in exchange for the location of Garret’s research facility. Then you will find Noretta and report back to me. If you do so within three days, Midox Genaudi will reward you handsomely.”

This was exactly what she’d set out to do, so why was she filled with dread? Sylina inclined her head toward the mirror, acknowledging her official position as a Setti spy.

## Chapter One

Rhys watched the viewscreen as his father, Xenos, meticulously scanned the female refugee. The monitor displayed the containment unit in the subterranean level of the Resistance Terran Headquarters. A girl sat on the bed with her legs crossed in front of her, absently paging through a comic book. Her brown hair had been pulled to the nape of her neck and her face scrubbed clean. She looked young and innocent, far different from the half-wild child his team had discovered two days before. Outward appearances meant nothing to Rhys. Few hybrids were able to control their Setti nature. Their vicious instincts and ruthless ambition usually won out in the end.

"She's modulating her signal, but I can't tell if she's doing it intentionally." Xenos hovered beside his son, a non-corporeal cloud of shimmering blue. All Setti hybrids possessed some level of telepathy. Most could intercept mental communication, so the men spoke audibly. "I sense Setti energy, yet I sense... Pixie or some sort of Fey. I can say with absolute certainty that she is far older than she appears, perhaps centuries older. Beyond that, I can't get a clear reading."

"Our tests have been equally inconclusive. She's either the product of complex genetic manipulation or her bloodlines are so diluted it's impossible to isolate all the contributing species."

Xenos chuckled. "She's a Setti mutt?"

Ignoring his father's sense of humor, Rhys deactivated the viewscreen. "I doubt she'd welcome the comparison."

The girl had been recovered during his newest team's most recent raid. The mission objective had been to kill a Setti shifter named Garret and the objective had been met without any other loss of life. Garret's hideout had been decimated and his

mind slaves moved to various facilities for detoxification. This slender female was the only complication to an otherwise successful mission. Rhys hated complications.

"Has she been cooperative? Who's conducting her interrogation?"

"She ignores everyone but me. When she deems me worthy of conversation, she generally asks why I'm demeaning myself with lesser life forms."

"Sounds like a Setti. She was locked in a room at Garret's hideout?" Rhys nodded. "Was Garret her father?"

"No. That's why I sent for you." He had believed Garret was the only Setti hybrid on Earth. With Garret dead, Rhys had hoped to evacuate the dimension and consolidate his resources. "It was obvious she wasn't a mind slave. I presumed she was Garret's offspring. She isn't, so why was Garret holding another hybrid captive?"

"Has she exhibited any abilities?"

"None. Which in itself makes me suspicious as hell. No hybrid is this helpless."

"Perhaps I should speak with her," Xenos said.

"I'd rather you didn't. She sensed my connection to the Guardians as soon as I touched her mind. That's why she acknowledges me and not the others. If you come in direct contact with her, she might recognize the similarity in our energy pattern."

"Has she told you anything useful?"

"She demands to be returned to Midox Genaudi, but she can't, or won't, tell me where to find him." Rhys crossed the room and slipped into the chair behind his desk. He hadn't expected to spend much time in this dimension, so the Terran headquarters was rather sparse. If the Setti were more heavily entrenched than he'd realized, he'd have to rethink a lot of things. "I researched the name. Genaudi is a recognized, lesser descendant of the Supreme Midox, however his last known base of operation was abandoned years ago."

"I'll see if I can turn up anything more current."

Rhys inclined his head, acknowledging the offer. "How many of the names on Chevon's list are legitimate Setti operatives?" The list was another acquisition of his newest team.

"They all are, or at least were. The time lapse has made some of the information obsolete, but the council is putting together a task force. If you'd like to take a less active role in all of this, I could arrange for you to head the operation."

"The Resistance is my life. I'm already a step farther away from the action than I'd really like to be."

"I suspected you'd say something like that." Xenos darkened, taking on the basic outline of a body. "I'm worried about you, Rhys. You cannot let this conflict consume you."

Folding his arms over his chest, Rhys stared straight ahead. "The Setti must be stopped. Too many have lost too much. I won't allow it to continue. But I resent your inference. I'm no more consumed by this conflict than any other dedicated warrior."

"Other dedicated warriors manage to find time for personal pursuits. You haven't bothered with a personal relationship since your return from the Setti home world. It isn't healthy for you to go this long without female companionship."

"Oh for gods' sake, Dad." Rhys rubbed his forehead and heaved a frustrated sigh. "I've had sex since I was rescued. Not that it's any of your business, but I've had sex this week."

"I'm not talking about sex, well not just sex. I'm talking about a long-term companion. If not a permanent mate, which would be my preference, at least someone who knows more about you than how to please you in bed."

"We're in the middle of a war. Find out where Genaudi is based and let me worry about female companions."

Xenos didn't argue. "I'll be in touch." He flashed out of sight and left Rhys alone to brood in silence.

\* \* \*

Steeling herself for another evening of humiliating frustration, Adara Kinson of Zylott took a deep breath and opened the door to her private chambers. "You're late," she greeted her betrothed with a playful smile.

Instead of returning her smile or taking her in his arms as he had each time he'd visited the palace, Hale motioned toward the sitting area near the hearth. "We need to talk."

Trepidation swept through Adara in icy waves. This was it. His patience had run out. He'd come to end their betrothal. She'd been dreading this conversation for weeks, yet she'd known it was inevitable. Hale had treated her with respect and gentleness, and still she couldn't respond to him physically.

He clasped his hands behind his back as they crossed the room, glancing at the bed to their right. Firelight provided a soft glow for the bed. The rest of the room was left in shadow. She'd scattered rose petals on the sheets and lit fragrant candles in anticipation of his arrival. The traditions of his kingdom prevented him from marrying a barren woman, so they would remain betrothed until she conceived.

"We can't keep pretending," he said with obvious regret even before they reached the padded bench that was angled toward the fire. "If we aren't sexually compatible, we --"

"We are." She took a quick step toward him. Then paused, calming her tone before she continued. "I just need a little more time."

"It's been almost a year, Adara. No one speaks of it. Everyone wants to pretend it never happened, but being captured by the Setti affected you more deeply than anyone is willing to admit."

A clingy silk robe was her only garment. Her handmaiden had brushed her hair until red highlights gleamed in the long blonde strands. Twisting the end of the belt around her fingers, she let the truth wash over her. This farce, though pleasant, was pointless. She could never be what he needed in a queen.

"Have you had an orgasm with anyone since your return? Despite your efforts to convince me otherwise, I know you haven't with me."

Too humiliated to verbalize the admission she lowered her gaze and shook her head. The compassion in his eyes made her inability all the more frustrating. He was handsome and intelligent, the eldest son of an affluent king, and good natured to boot.

Any woman would be thrilled by the prospect of wedding him. More to the point, Hale had been her only suitor still willing to consider her as wife after they learned of her captivity.

He caught her chin between his thumb and forefinger, gently turning her face back around. "There is no shame in what happened to you. Let no one convince you otherwise."

Why did he have to be so kind? If he'd been an arrogant jerk, it would have been easier to accept this outcome. "I can't conceive without the hormones released during orgasm and you can't marry a barren woman." Speaking the words out loud helped her solidify the fact in her mind.

"You must focus on your recovery. Political pressure is the last thing you need." He brushed her hair away from her face, a resigned smile curving his lips. "You're an amazing woman, Adara Kinson. You will make some man a fabulous wife."

She inclined her head, saddened yet relieved. "Thank you for being so understanding."

"I'll inform your brother that we have mutually agreed to dissolve our betrothal. If there are any repercussions because of this development, I want to know about it immediately."

"Zylott is Sef's top priority, but he would never do anything to harm me."

"I'm glad to hear it. Not all kings offer their sisters the same courtesy." He raised her hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles, the gesture sadly formal after the intimacies they had shared. His gaze lingered on her face, his expression thoughtful. "Perhaps your bathing attendants could help with your... recuperation."

"I no longer allow the Drahbin to attend me."

"I know, but they are physically incapable of harming you and they're said to be even more perceptive than the most attentive lover. Right now you are being controlled by your memories. If you could harness that energy and mold the images into something more pleasing, perhaps you could free yourself from the past." With one final kiss, he turned and left her bedchamber.

Adara crossed to the fire and held her hands out toward the flames, feeling chilled in spirit more than flesh. Had it really been a year since those horrible days on the Setti home world? Her body had not been violated as many believed. She allowed the misconception because the secrets revealed during her captivity had been as horrible as any rape. She felt violated, sullied, ruined. She *was* forever changed.

Should she send for an attendant? Royal bathing attendants were trained to be patient and gentle, to focus entirely on giving pleasure. Their empathic abilities ensured that they received as much pleasure as they gave, which made them coveted sexual companions. Adara sighed and shook her head. Patience and gentleness hadn't helped her respond to Hale. Every time she closed her eyes she saw her Setti captors.

"It's no use," she whispered to the shadows. "I'm... broken."

"Is he gone?"

Glancing over her shoulder, she found her handmaiden, Mercith, silhouetted in the doorway leading to her small room. "We've ended our betrothal."

"I won't pretend to be upset. He wasn't right for you."

Adara smiled as Mercith rounded the bed. Mercith was far too outspoken for a handmaiden and Adara had no one to blame but herself. She had always needed a friend more than a servant. "What was wrong with Hale?"

"Nothing." Mercith joined her in front of the fire. "He was polite, and kind, and well spoken, and about as exciting as yesterday's news."

"I've had my fill of excitement." Adara turned back toward the fire, hiding the conflict in her expression. "Hale was a welcome change of pace."

"For a time, perhaps. Not for the rest of your life. We both know you were meant for greater things."

Adara watched the rhythmic leap of the flames. Once she had believed that fate had extraordinary things in store for her, then she came face to face with what made her extraordinary. Now she just wanted to forget.

"What if... what if it wasn't just Hale? What if I can't respond to anyone now?"

"I couldn't help but overhear some of what Hale said."

“Not with your ear pressed to the door.”

Mercith flashed an unapologetic smile and shoved her hands into the pockets of her overdress. “Before you summon one of the attendants, I think you should gain a bit of self-confidence by assuring yourself that your body still knows what to do. Once you remember how good it feels, then see if someone else can bring you to orgasm.”

“I’ve never...”

“You’ve never touched yourself before?” Mercith sounded amazed.

Adara hid her embarrassment with the fall of her hair. “Attended baths were part of my daily routine until recently. There was never any reason to stimulate myself.”

“I’d want to make sure all systems were functioning before I involved anyone else.” Mercith wrapped her arm around Adara and gave her an affectionate squeeze. “I know you’ve been through hell this past year. Still, you’ve got a loving family and I think the world of you. Hale was right in saying it’s time to leave the past behind. If you can’t get things moving on your own, I’ll send for one of the attendants. You’ve felt passion before, you’ll feel it again.” She paused for a saucy wink on her way out of the room. “You just need better inspiration than Hale.”

Adara tried to find courage in Mercith’s words. Being held captive by the Setti had not only robbed Adara of her ability to feel pleasure, it had made her infertile. She’d heard that some species didn’t require a female orgasm for conception, but such was not the case with the Fahroni. Without the hormones released during orgasm, a Fahroni female could not conceive.

Dismissing the bed with a discouraged sigh, Adara lay down on the soft fur spread before the fire. She’d spent too much time in bed with Hale, pretending his touch aroused her, willing her body to respond to his gentle ministrations. She didn’t want to think about Hale. She wanted to imagine somewhere different, somewhere far from her life and this suffocating pressure.



She loosened the tie at her waist, not yet ready to bare her body to the night. Draping her arm over her eyes, she cleared her mind. She inhaled deeply and released her breath slowly, listening to the crackle and pop of the fire.

A pair of vivid blue eyes appeared within her mind. *Rhys*. Her heart fluttered and she smiled as the rest of his face came into focus. Sharp cheekbones and a firm jaw balanced the sculpted beauty of his lips and thickly lashed eyes. Awareness and attraction had arced between them when the Setti first shoved her into his cell. No! She would not think about the Setti. Her thoughts closed in on Rhys.

She'd been safe with Rhys. His nobility protected her from the desire simmering between them. Despite the Setti's manipulation and threats, Rhys had never touched her inappropriately. Even when her sobs woke him in the middle of the night, he held her, naked and trembling, and sheltered her in his arms. Anything more would have been unwelcome with their Setti handlers looking on. Still Adara used the memory to shape her fantasy.

Taking control of the image, she pictured Rhys beside her on the fur. Blue highlights shimmered in his long black hair. He parted her robe and cupped her breasts as desire ignited in his eyes. She pulled his face down toward hers, anxious for the heat of their first kiss.

His lips moved against hers and his teeth nipped. She opened her mouth, inviting the thrust of his tongue. Heat swirled and tingles danced across her breasts. Would he have been a tender lover? Was he skilled?

Many times over the past few months Rhys had insinuated himself into her thoughts. Why hadn't she explored the memory more fully? She rolled her nipples and squeezed her breasts, clinging to the image of Rhys. She imagined running her hands over his shoulders and back. Even terrified as she'd been, the muscular definition of his body hadn't been lost on her. Where was he now? Did he ever think about her?

She splayed her fingers across her belly and parted her thighs. Heat from the fire caressed her skin. Tension built as she imagined him moving between her legs, easing them farther apart. Her nipples hardened and ached, protesting the lack of attention. As

if responding to her vague complaint, phantom fingers pressed the beaded tips. She arched, surprised yet pleased by the sensation. She hadn't expected a fantasy to be quite this... tangible.

Rhys trailed his fingers along her inner thigh, over her smooth mound and up the other side. Relaxing into the fur, she let the sensations wash over her. Hunger gradually burned through the all too familiar isolation. Even before she understood the source, she'd sensed that she was different. The dull ache had been with her longer than she could remember.

Restless and ready for anything to fill the emotional void, she opened her mind further and accepted more. She was hardly even touching herself now, just imaging his hands, directing his touch with her mind and her desire.

He suckled her nipples, dragging the hardened crest against his teeth as he let go and moved to the other side. His breath wafted across her moist flesh and she shivered. Would he lick her clit, suck the sensitive nub as he was doing with her nipple? A violent shudder shook her body. Anticipation or fear? She wasn't sure. The attendants had used their mouths on her, but she'd never felt comfortable enough with Hale to ask, and he'd never offered.

An especially powerful pull on her nipple drew her back into the fantasy. She traced her slit with her middle finger, shocked by the heat and the moisture gathered there. Was she always this hot and wet?

*You like this game,* a deep male voice whispered in her mind.

She squeezed her eyes shut and fought against the uncertainty threatening to shatter the illusion. The voice hadn't sounded like Rhys. This man spoke with an unusual accent, an odd growling quality that... What difference did it make as long as her body continued to respond?

Holding herself open with one hand, she pushed two fingers into her core.

*Let me.*

Her hand seemed to grow, thicken and lengthen as if it were not her fingers pressed inside her pussy, but a man's much larger hand. She turned her face to the side,

afraid to move, afraid to surrender to the power of imagination. It was just a fantasy. It had to be a fantasy. Her hand pumped and the phantom fingers moved right along with hers. Slide, thrust, slide, thrust. Her inner muscles rippled and cream trickled into her palm.

Lips pulled firmly on her nipples. A wet tongue circled her areola, making her squirm and moan. She wanted that mouth between her thighs, needed those lips sucking on her clit, but her hand was in the way.

*I want that too, sweetheart. Move your hand.* A scalding wave of desire accompanied the thought and Adara cried out.

She could no longer ignore her senses. This was no fantasy. Her eyes flew open and she snatched her hand away from her needful body. "Who the hell are you?"

## Chapter Two

Adara clutched the front of her robe as her gaze darted around the shadowed room. "Who are you?" she asked again, but she saw no one.

*Why did you reach out to me if you didn't want to meld?* Her pulse sped and her throat constricted. Anger and frustration flowed across the link as freely as desire had moments before. *There's a name for females like you. Mind-tease.*

She sifted through her telepathic strands, determined to isolate the source of their connection. Her skills were minimal. She'd only begun to work with her brother Nyx. "You said I reached out to you. What did you mean?"

A deep chuckle vibrated the telepathic link, sending electric sensations all through her body. *You made an offer. I accepted. Isn't that how it's usually done?*

"The offer was unintentional. I was... that is, I didn't realize I was..."

*Where are you?* He asked as her words trailed away. *Are you at the main complex or in one of the smaller labs? I don't recognize your voice.*

"I don't know what you're talking about," she admitted. "I suspect I inadvertently tapped into your telepathic frequency while I was letting my mind wander."

His sexy chuckle brought a guilty flush to her cheeks. *Your mind wasn't just wandering, doll, and we both know it. And the only ones who can access this strand are the ones they've changed. You must have their DNA somewhere in your makeup. Maybe you don't even know it yet.*

A cold lump formed in the pit of her stomach. She folded her legs beneath her and pressed her hand over her heart. "Are you talking about the Setti?"

*Aren't you one of their lab rats? I thought you were...*

His voice faded and Adara shuddered. She couldn't sense him any more. Damn. Was he really a Setti captive? If he was, she needed to notify the Resistance. They might be able to trace his signal to a Setti stronghold.

She pushed to her feet and adjusted her robe, debating what to do. It was late, but this could be important. Should she wait until morning to talk to Nyx? Several things the man said bothered her. He'd mentioned a main complex as well as smaller labs. She decided to see if Nyx would respond to her telepathic page.

*Isn't it past your bedtime?* Her brother's voice sounded within her mind.

She smiled. *I'm sorry to bother you, but... I really need to see you, if it's not too much trouble.*

"It's never too much trouble for you." He materialized before she finished the thought. Tall and lean, his strength emanated from his mystic power rather than physical abilities. She threw herself into his arms and clung to him, unprepared for the staggering rush of emotion that inundated her being as his arms closed around her. "There now. What's all this?"

They had always been close, but learning that she too had Setti blood created a bond their other siblings could never understand. She clutched his thick, heavily embroidered robe, trembling as she fought back tears.

"Hale and I dissolved our betrothal."

"I'm not surprised." He eased her to arm's length, his leaf green gaze searching her face. "Did you love him?"

"No."

"Then why are you so upset?"

She mentally tested several versions of the explanation, dismissing each before they passed her lips. "Maybe I should have asked you to bring Minuette."

He quirked one eyebrow in silent challenge. "Why would you need my bonded mate?"

"Because she's a woman."

His gaze narrowed on her face. "Did Hale --"

"No. It was nothing like that. In fact, that was the problem." There was no delicate way to put this so she rushed through the explanation. "Hale is not able to wed a woman who has not proven her fertility and I have not been able to prove my fertility since my release from the Setti home world."

"That's why you ended the betrothal?"

"Yes."

He pushed his hair out of his eyes, trying hard to hide his confusion. "And this is why you summoned me from my bed?"

"Of course not."

"Are we coming to that part?"

She shot him a warning glare and hurried on. "I was... attempting to find a solution to the problem when I inadvertently made contact with a person I believe is being held captive by the Setti."

His features fell into an expressionless mask, but she could see the speculation in his gaze. "I'm trying not to embarrass you, but I suspect that is going to be difficult. Was this person male or female?"

"Male." She glanced away from Nyx before she added, "I thought he was part of my fantasy in the beginning."

"What changed your mind?"

"No one has an imagination that good. Suffice it to say the exchange became interactive."

"This was a telepathic exchange? He never actually touched you?"

"Correct." She didn't detail the sensations he had created without the benefit of physical touch. Some things a brother just didn't need to know.

"And you inadvertently instigated the communication. He didn't reach out to you?"

"I could sense his feelings quite clearly." Much too clearly for her peace of mind. "He was just as confused as I was."

Nyx nodded and stroked his chin, firelight accenting the subtle red tones in his dark hair. "What else did he say?"

"He told me only people with *their* DNA can access the telepathic strand and he asked if I was one of their lab rats. He mentioned a main complex and smaller labs."

"Do you know his location, at least the dimension from which he was transmitting?"

She shook her head. "The link terminated rather abruptly. I'm not sure what happened."

Nyx paced in front of her for several moments, his robe fanning out behind him with each agitated pass. "The Setti have played with genetics before, but never with much success. If that is changing, we need to find out where these labs are located. Can you contact him again?"

Heat crawled up her neck as she realized what it would entail. "I can try." She crossed her arms over her chest and rubbed her upper arms. "Is there any chance this was a trap?"

"With the Setti there is always a chance. Isolate the strand and shield the rest of your mind. Can you do that?"

"I think so."

He hesitated, concern creasing his brow. "I can link with you while you contact him and reinforce --"

"That's not necessary. I'm just being paranoid. I contacted him. They have nothing to gain by revealing the location of these labs and everything to lose."

"If you sense danger at any point, reach out for me."

"I will. I have to test my skills sometime and this man seems harmless. No, less than harmless. I recognized the emotions he conveyed." She glanced into the darkness. "He's another victim of their cruelty." Nyx still loitered, so Adara shooed him away.

"All right," he grumbled. "Report back to me first thing in the morning."

Adara nodded and Nyx blinked out of sight.

The stranger thought she'd intentionally contacted him for some sort of telepathic sex. Was this encouraged by the Setti or did the captives use the contact to keep from going insane?

Moving to her bed, she slipped off her robe and crawled between the sheets. The faint scent of roses filled her nose and sent a pang of sadness to her heart. She'd exchanged an empty future with a king for a... she didn't know what this was. Perhaps her imagination had been playing tricks on her. She felt isolated because of her Setti blood and suddenly another Setti hybrid needed her help? It did seem a bit too convenient. No, it hadn't been her imagination. She'd heard his voice and felt his telepathic touch.

She snuffed the candles and arranged herself on her back. The sheet covered her naked body, while her hands slid freely over her warm skin. Should she think about Rhys? She'd been imagining him before. She rolled her nipples and pressed her lips together, concentrating on the faint pulsing of her core.

*Are you going to pretend it wasn't intentional this time?* His tone was gently mocking.

She found the strand he was using and sent her question directly to his mind. *Why did you leave?*

*These melds are designed to make us more agreeable. They aren't meant for conversation. As soon as our arousal drops below a certain level, the link is impossible to maintain.*

*We'll just have to keep each other interested.*

*I'm game.* She felt his hand cup her breast and his mouth brushed against the underside of her jaw. *What's your name?*

*Adara. And yours?*

*Javier.* His accent was especially apparent in his name, but she didn't recognize the lilting cadence. *Part your lips. I want to kiss you.*

She felt his lips slide against hers and the teasing nip of his teeth before his mouth settled over hers. His tongue pushed between her lips and she curled her tongue around it, sucking gently as he started to pull out.



*Greedy. He chuckled. I like that.*

Raising her hand, she tried to touch him. Her fingers passed through empty air and came to rest against her belly. *Why can't I feel you?*

*You really haven't done this before?* The wonderful kisses continued. She still felt his mouth moving against her lips and his tongue sliding over hers. *We create sensation in each other. We aren't actually touching. That's why you had to open your mouth. I can't move your body.*

*Can you feel it when I return your kiss?*

*Barely.* He tweaked her nipple. *You need practice.* She concentrated on the link, sending a stronger signal. *Better. Now, touch my chest.* She started to raise her hand again. *With your mind, sweetheart. Your hands won't help you here.*

He caressed her breasts and explored every hidden recess of her mouth. She longed for the warm press of his body and the scent of his skin. Sexual melding would never replace the real thing. Still, this was exhilarating.

She wasn't doing this to enjoy the sensations. She needed to find out more about his situation. Even as she tried to convince herself, desire thrummed through her bloodstream and heat tingled along her nerve endings.

*Where are you, Javier? How many captives are in your complex, how many handlers?*

*Questions like those are sure to sever the link. The last thing I want to think about is... damn it.*

Adara opened her eyes as his presence slipped away. This was going to be tricky. She wasn't adept enough to give him pleasure and as soon as her questions distracted him, he lost the connection. She had to be bold. Despite years of correct deportment and careful restraint, her only hope lay in unleashing her passionate nature. She cupped her breasts and pinched her nipples, channeling the sensation across the fragile link.

*Javier?* She filled the name with longing, letting him sense the true depth of her need.

*I don't think I have the patience for this, sweetheart. Try Kamn. He loves virgins.*

Letting the sheet slip to her ankles, she reached between her thighs and parted her folds. *I want your mouth here. Now!*

## Chapter Three

Earthy, evocative female musk wrapped around Javier. He clutched his hands and burrowed deeper into his lumpy pallet. How was Adara transmitting *scent* across their telepathic link? She'd sworn she'd never melded before.

Tuning out the dismal cubicle that had caged him for the past eight months, he slipped his hand inside his grubby pants and closed his fingers around his shaft. He couldn't see her really, just a faint impression of long, reddish blonde hair and slender limbs. She reached between her thighs and offered her pussy to him. How long had it been since he'd actually touched a woman? How long since he tasted that salty/sweet cream?

*I want your mouth here, she whispered. Now!*

Desire lanced through him and his cock bucked within the circle of his fist. He pictured himself between her thighs, tracing her slit with his tongue. Passing the image to her made her moan, which in turn increased his excitement. He licked and sucked, nipped and stroked, until she shook beneath him.

*Show me where you are. I want to be with you.*

Her plea made little sense, but he didn't care. He could taste her and smell her and feel her warm pussy throbbing against his lips. It was so real. Thrusting his tongue directly into her core, he opened his mind and allowed her to roam. If she found comfort in his experience, then let her...

Why would his experiences be any different than hers? Panting harshly, he felt his desire ebb.

*Don't stop. Please, I was almost there.*

If he wasn't enjoying himself so completely, he'd be tempted to push her out. But their link was effortless now. His tongue slid and his lips pressed, holding her open for

his intimate caress. He inhaled her scent and drank in her taste, and still it wasn't enough. He needed to feel her ripple around his fingers, knowing she lost control.

Pushing two fingers into her snug pussy, he savored the heat and the rush of excitement that flowed into him. It had never felt this real before. Her inner muscles squeezed him and she rocked her hips pushing her clit against his mouth. He flicked her with his tongue, warning her to be still, then captured the little nub between his lips and sucked. She cried out, her passage contracting as release swept her along.

Before the last ripple passed, he pulled his fingers out and thrust into her with his tongue.

*Oh, Javier.* She pushed up against him, bombarding him with pleasure as well as an elemental hunger that shocked and thrilled him. She didn't know, couldn't understand the significance of these sensations. Another orgasm shook her and her cream filled his mouth. She wasn't Phylehan. This was just another sexual meld to her. But her scent, her taste, her...

*That was unbelievable.* She panted, her body going limp beneath him. *You have no idea how long I've waited to feel like this again.* She retreated a bit, blurring the intimacy of their connection. *No, I've never felt anything like this before. Thank you.*

His cock was still rock hard, but his fingers were wet and her taste lingered in his mouth. How was this possible? *You aren't a lab rat, are you?* Dread spiraled through his desire. He'd seen what the Setti could do. How effortlessly they manipulated minds and created illusions. *Are you one of them?*

*It's not what you think. I won't lie to you. I have Setti blood, but I'm not like them.* She reached for him with both hands as he pulled. *Please, let me explain.*

He slumped against the cement wall, his physical need forgotten. The link blinked out, leaving him alone and shaken. Was she some new handler amusing herself at his expense? How had she found out about the sexual melds? None of this made sense.

Pushing to his feet he approached the front of the cubicle. A transparent section in the wall allowed him to see into the corridor and the two cells adjacent to his. "Kamn, are you awake?"

A muffled snort came from the cubicle across the hall and to the right. "As if anyone could sleep with all that moaning and gasping? Who were you mind-fucking anyway?"

"That's a damn good question." He leaned his shoulder against the wall. "How long have we been at this facility?"

"Eight months, two weeks, four and a half days, but who's counting?"

Javier understood the wistful anger in his friend's tone. Kamn had begrudgingly participated in a breeding program at their previous location. For some reason "direct implantation" was the only method of insemination that resulted in children. Lab rats didn't breed well in captivity, so the handlers found all sorts of enticements and motivations to get their pets to perform.

"Still haven't been able to contact Beth?" Javier asked. They'd been transported to this secluded facility before Kamn found out if his procreation partner was carrying his child or not. His inability to contact her telepathically was making him downright surly.

"It's not just Beth. I haven't been able to contact anyone."

"That's why this meld caught me by surprise. I thought we were out of range of everyone."

"The worse you need release the farther your range grows. It's not unusual." He could hear impatience in Kamn's tone, so he didn't argue. In fact, he said nothing more.

Adara's inexperience had been obvious, yet their connection had been more detailed, more intense than anything he'd experienced before. If she had been Phylehan the exchange would have made perfect sense. But that was impossible.

Moving back to the low cot that served as his bed, he sat and stared into the darkness. The handlers hadn't come to feed him on the same night Adara touched his

mind. Somehow these events were connected. He needed to figure out what the Setti were trying to accomplish with this newest test.

He closed his eyes and rested his head against the wall, listening and alert.

\* \* \*

Adara looked from Nyx to Xenos and back to her brother. Why was the Guardian here? "I hope you didn't trouble Xenos with what I told you last night. I have very little to report." Very little she was willing to discuss at any rate. Her interaction with the stranger had been exciting and cathartic, but she still knew no more about him than she had when she'd spoken with Nyx the night before. She slipped into one of the chairs arranged before her brother's desk and folded her hands in her lap.

Nyx smiled and glanced at his supervisor. "I hadn't said a word, but I'm sure Xenos will want to hear all about your adventure now."

The first time Xenos appeared to Nyx, the Guardian had scanned his mind for a familiar image and taken on that shape. Kin of Zylott had been dead for years at the time, so the image hadn't been quite as comforting as Xenos intended. Nyx had long since gotten over the shock of working for his father's ghost, while a little chill ran through Adara each time Xenos solidified.

"Would you prefer I take on another form?" Xenos asked.

"I'm fine, really." This was Rhys' father. Xenos had played a vital part in their rescue from the Setti home world. She owed him her life and her sanity. "Did I interrupt something? Should I come back?"

"Not at all," Xenos insisted. "I came to speak with you." He moved closer, his shape blurring around the edges. "My son has managed to capture a Setti hybrid. He's questioned her several times, but she won't cooperate with him. I thought she might be more agreeable..."

"With one of her own kind?" Adara tried to keep the resentment from her tone and failed.

Xenos didn't answer her question directly. Remaining near her chair, he said, "She's a squirrely little thing and she's hoping we'll be fooled by her youthful

appearance. I assure you this is no helpless child. When they first found her, she refused to speak to anyone. She sensed what Rhys is and deemed him worthy of conversation, but that's about all."

"My rescue resulted in the Setti home world being sealed. It was the single most detrimental act the Setti consortium has ever suffered. Why in all the inhabited worlds would she respond to me?"

"You're a Setti princess, a direct descendent of the Supreme Midox. If you play your role well enough, she will feel compelled to *worship* you."

Adara scooted to the edge of her seat, anxiety making her glance toward the door. Where was her newfound boldness now? She'd spent the past year trying to bury the memories, running from the realization of what she was and the evil that flowed through her veins. A vile Setti shifter had deceived her mother, repeatedly taking on the form of her father in the hopes of creating a child. The despicable seduction had resulted in Nyx and Adara.

Nyx's extraordinary abilities had made him suspicious and given him time to accept the means by which he'd been conceived. Adara, on the other hand, had been completely unaware of the possibility that Kin Zylott was not her biological father until the Setti kidnapped her and thrust her into a breeding pen with Rhys.

"This girl would sense the same thing in me that she would sense in Adara," Nyx said. "I'll --"

"Are you willing to demand sexual subjugation from a thirteen-year-old girl?" Xenos asked. "We know she isn't what she appears to be, but we can't allow her to know we sense her deception. It would force her to act and we need to learn as much as we can while she's still docile."

"What does she know that's so important?" Adara asked, refocusing her thoughts on the present. "Can't Rhys just scan her mind?"

"She's an enigma. Even I can't get an accurate reading on her. We're not sure if she's modulating her signal intentionally or if it's part of her genetic manipulation, but it's imperative that we learn more about her."

"Where is she?" Adara looked away from his perceptive gaze before she added, "Is she still with Rhys?" Fantasizing about him was one thing. Was she really prepared to see him face to face? Her senses were still humming from her bizarre encounter with Javier the night before. Rhys had been the conduit, the fuel she'd used to build the fire. Would she be able to control the flames once she was in the same room with him? Rhys was easily the most attractive man she'd ever met.

"She's at the Terran Headquarters, as is Rhys." Xenos touched her arm, drawing her gaze back to his face. "Is that a problem?"

"No. I was just curious." A smile tugged at the corners of her mouth. Her nipples gathered and heat pooled between her thighs. She'd slept like a baby after her phenomenal orgasms. But this morning the restlessness had returned. Maybe Rhys was just what she needed right now.

Xenos nodded and flashed an oddly triumphant smile. "It's settled then. How long do you need to prepare for a few days in the Terran dimension?"

"Not long."

After a short pause, he said, "So, tell me about this adventure."

She licked her lips and averted her gaze as a distinct throb erupted in her core. "I inadvertently made contact with one of the Setti's captives. I haven't been able to learn as much about his situation as I'd hoped, but I assure you, I'll keep trying."

\* \* \*

"Enter," Rhys called, not bothering to look up from the laboriously detailed report he was skimming.

"Is this a bad time?"

A year hadn't changed that soft, feminine voice. Adara Kinson. *Princess* Adara Kinson, he corrected with a smile. He hesitated a moment longer, savoring the anticipation curling through his body. He'd thought about her often and fantasized about her... *That wily bastard!* His father was playing matchmaker.



He pushed back from his desk and banished all emotion from his expression. "What can I do for you?" Was she being used by an expert manipulator or was she a willing participant in this game?

Her delicate brows drew together over her pert little nose and she cocked her head to one side, staring at him with wide, gold-flecked green eyes. "Shall I step out and try again? I certainly didn't mean to piss you off."

The feisty undercurrent in her apology made him smile. "Did my father send you here?" He hoped his bluntness would save them both a lot of unnecessary stress. She was just as delectable as he remembered, but the timing couldn't be worse. Her gown shone like fine emeralds, the golden lace accenting her smooth ivory skin and the hint of fire in her blonde hair.

"Why do you ask? And why are you so hostile? I've done nothing to deserve it."

"My father is having some fun at your expense. He's been worried about my inattentiveness to my social life, so he sent me someone who is sure to shake my concentration."

She folded her hands in front of her and smiled. "Thank you, I think." Had her mouth always been so plump and rosy? Speaking of plump and rosy, his gaze descended to the generous swell of breast displayed by the square neckline of her gown. "Is there a hybrid?"

He returned her smile. "Is that how he lured you here?" Motioning to the sofa against the far wall, he watched the gentle sway of her hips as she crossed the room. He started to return to his desk then, unable to resist the temptation, he joined her on the sofa. "I have no doubt Father has ulterior motives, but having you talk with the girl isn't a bad idea."

Her head came up and she looked around, her eyes narrowed and alert. Setti sensitivity could rival his clairvoyance if the hybrid's mind was well trained. Had Nyx been working with Adara? When they'd met on the Setti home world she hadn't even been aware of her abilities.

"He's coming closer," she whispered, obviously sensing something he had yet to feel.

"My father?" He couldn't imagine who else she could mean.

"Yes." She sounded annoyed. "He claimed to have an urgent appointment when he left me in the entry hall. Why is he sneaking around?"

"He probably wants to check our progress."

Rebellion flared within her eyes. "Well, I say we give him exactly what he wants." She hiked up her slim skirt and climbed onto his lap, straddling his thighs. "Kiss me." She shoved her hands into his hair and pulled his face to hers before he had the chance to oblige her.

Rhys opened his mouth and angled his head, scanning the room as her lips slid against his. Sure enough, he detected his father's presence in the far corner by the door. He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her tight against his chest. What if this was part of the plan? Wouldn't it make more sense to confront... Her tongue pushed between his lips and his thoughts scattered. Her mouth was soft and enticing. She tasted spicy and tangy and warm.

Dragging the tie from the back of his hair, she ran her fingers through the long strands as he took control of the kiss. She might have started this impulsively, but his body responded with a year's build up of anticipation. He'd wanted to kiss her the first time he saw her. If they'd met under different circumstances, no force in the universe would have kept him from knowing her taste.

Curving his fingers around the back of her neck, he fit his mouth more naturally over hers. His tongue slid and his teeth nipped. She mirrored his every move. He couldn't get enough of her sweet taste and her eager response. He fed her his breath and accepted hers in return. They clung to each other as the room spun around them.

"He's gone," he whispered against her parted lips.

"I know." She kissed him again.

He disentangled her fingers and eased her back, forcing his gaze to remain on her face. "Your brother is a king." Someone needed to explain the significance of that to

his body. His chest ached and his cock was so hard his uniform pants were in danger of bursting. Worse, he was ready to toss up her skirt and fuck her right here on the couch. A princess deserved better, a whole hell of a lot better.

“And your father is a Guardian. What does our lineage have to do with what we’re feeling right now?”

Her throaty words shoved his good intentions further to the side. “Sweetheart, you aren’t mistress material and I can’t get married right now. My life is way too complicated --”

“Who said anything about marriage? I just got out of a betrothal I didn’t want. I’m certainly not looking for a marriage proposal.” She pushed against his chest and crawled off his lap. “I find you physically appealing. I’ve imagined having sex with you since our unfortunate introduction. If the feeling isn’t mutual, I apologize.”

He caught her wrist before she scurried away. “The feeling is more than mutual.” Pushing to his feet, he pulled her back into his arms. “Why do you think my father was so anxious to get us together again? He knows how attracted I was -- am -- to you.”

“Then I don’t see a problem.” She pressed herself against him, her gaze warm and inviting. “I desperately need an escape from royal responsibilities and you want to annoy your father. Let’s indulge our mutual attraction. No commitment, no expectations, just mind-blowing sex.”

## Chapter Four

Pressing the knife blade deeper into the man's thigh, Sylina watched a fresh stream of blood escape the wound. The man screamed and she extended her tongue, catching the crimson rivulet before the precious fluid escaped down his leg. He whimpered and strained against the bonds holding him nearly immobile.

"Are you having fun?"

Naked and on her knees, with blood dripping off her chin, she whipped her head around to glare at the Setti hybrid. Number Five stood just inside the doorway to her private lair, a fact that would have terrified her a few days before.

"If anyone sees you --"

"I would be harder to explain than you? You look delectable dressed in blood. Has anyone ever told you that?"

She wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, only managing to smear the gore up her arm. "Why are you here? The Midox gave me three days."

"And you've squandered the first two fucking and feeding. Didn't you get enough before I sent you through the portal? You certainly seemed satisfied."

Absently fondling the man's cock with one hand, she glared at Five. "I've squandered nothing. I've located all but two of Garrett's mind slaves."

"I thought Rhys had the mind slaves." He ambled across the room, his gaze moving boldly over her naked body. She pretended not to notice. It wouldn't do for him to realize how well she'd enjoyed being mastered by him.

"Not his feeding stock," she said dismissively. "His handlers, the ones he used to run his labs."

Five ran the point of one claw across the man's chest. A red welt trailed in the wake of the deep scratch and the man cried out around the gag muffling his cries. "Is

this one of the notorious lab rats? I've heard about them since I was assigned to Midox Genaudi, but I've never actually seen one before."

Still on her knees, she rocked the blade back and forth, sending more blood rolling down his leg. "On the contrary," she said in between licks, "this is one of the handlers."

"Would you like my help interrogating him?"

She shivered imagining the agony they could inflict together. The only thing more exhilarating than passion infused blood was an orgasm triggered by pain. She'd already learned what little this handler knew, but Five didn't need to know that.

"I'd welcome your assistance." She watched him uncoil the whip from around his narrow waist and shivered as he flexed his arm. This poor soul was already addicted. After they'd made him beg for mercy, she'd have Five infuse him while she siphoned off his energy. Anticipating the hours to come, she closed her lips around the handler's cock and waited for the sound of leather hitting flesh.

\* \* \*

Something dark and elemental stirred within Adara as she stared up at Rhys. Even dressed in his simple Earth clothing, with fatigue etched into his face, he was by far the most appealing man she'd ever seen. Her memories were nothing compared to Rhys in the flesh. Yes, Rhys in the flesh... naked and thrusting between her thighs as his blue/black hair streamed all around her. His heartbeat thudded beneath her palm and the distinct ridge of his cock pressed into her belly. Breathless and a bit confused by her own brazen behavior, she stepped back.

Never before had she been this bold. *Princess* Adara wouldn't dream of propositioning a man. Princess Adara was proper and obedient -- and useless! The rapid-fire events of the last few days had been liberating, *and stimulating*. She was finished living by other people's rules.

She wanted Rhys and he wanted her. Why shouldn't they both have what they wanted? They would abandon themselves completely to lust without thought or reservation. They'd earned this small happiness at least. Heat thrummed through her

blood and made her pulse pound. They would do all the things she'd imagined and more. She wouldn't leave this dimension until her restlessness eased, until this ache had been filled to overflowing!

Should she slip to her knees and unfasten his pants? Was he as wonderfully endowed as he'd seemed as he rubbed against her? No, better to make him wait. She didn't want to appear too eager. Laughter bubbled up within her. A little too late for that. *No commitment, no expectations, just mind-blowing sex* didn't leave a lot of room for interpretation.

"Tell me about the girl." Maybe some distance would help her think coherently. She strolled across his office, feeling the heat of his gaze on her ass. He liked what he saw. It made her want to show him more. To strip away her garment as his gaze devoured her flesh. She'd never been so acutely aware of a man before. Feminine power surged within her. Why had she waited so long to take control of her own life?

"She'll only speak to me, but she's said nothing important." His voice sounded throaty and hushed.

"We thought about sending Nyx." She dragged her index finger across the front edge of his desk, picturing all the wicked things they could do on the hard, level surface. "He can probably play the role of arrogant Setti more believably than I can."

"She wouldn't believe him unless he insisted on some form of sexual favor."

"Which is why I'm here and not my brother."

"You know," he moved toward her, his stride long and fluid, "her main objection to me has been my association with humans. If she believed I served a worthy master, that I'd been testing her in some way, perhaps she'd be more cooperative."

Adara faced him and leaned against the desk, arching her brows as she gazed into his eyes. "The Setti are nothing if not deceitful. I'll pretend to be your servant, then 'confess' to being your Mistress when she senses my superior nature."

An approving smile parted his lips. Would he kiss her again? Would he bend her over his desk and take her roughly from behind? Her mind provided a detailed image of him doing just that. With her skirt bunched around her waist and his pants tangled

around his ankles, he filled her aching pussy again and again. Desire pulsed through her body, building in intensity as it settled between her thighs.

"This could be more interesting than I anticipated," he said.

She grinned. "I certainly hope so."

He caught her wrists as she reached for the buttons on his shirt, blue fire igniting in his eyes. "Once I get you naked, you'll be that way for a good long time. You better at least meet the girl before we play. It's time for her evening tray. Why don't you take it to her?"

She gazed longingly at the conspicuous bulge in the front of his pants. "I'll have a hard time convincing her I'm a lackey in this gown."

"Good point." His gaze swept her body from head to toe, lingering on the swell of her breasts and the juncture of her thighs. "Let me see what I can find."

Rhys paused in the hall outside his office and braced his hands against the wall. Despite the lust raging through his body, he had to think. What did he know about Adara's people? How would her brother respond if he learned she'd indulged in an illicit affair? She had just broken a betrothal, which implied marriage was always attached to her physical relationships.

*No commitment, no expectations, just mind-blowing sex.* Her offer echoed through his mind and Rhys groaned. He turned and leaned against the wall, raking his hair with both hands. Honor, and interdimensional diplomacy, demanded he treat her with respect.

"She's not a child," he grumbled, pushing away from the wall. He needed to find out more about this broken engagement. If she had a few wild oats to sow, he'd be happy to help her declare her independence. On the other hand, if she'd been hurt, he would not take advantage of her pain.

The Resistance didn't have uniforms. The majority of their work was covert. Teleporting down to the research level, he grabbed a lab coat and returned before Adara had time to cause trouble.

He staggered to a stop an instant after he entered his office. Shoving the door shut behind him, he leaned against the panel, thankful for the solid wooden support at his back.

The little vixen sat in his chair, her clothes neatly folded on his desk. Her long, shapely legs were propped on one corner, tipping the chair slightly back. Against the black leather her naked body appeared sleek and supple. She'd taken down her hair. The thick strawberry blonde mass flowed in waves around her shoulders.

"Nice chair." She smiled, tilting her face as she stared into his eyes.

"Gods, you're so beautiful." He couldn't move, could barely breathe. If he touched her, he'd lose the fragile remnant of his control. "Who ended your betrothal?" He'd meant to broach the subject with a little more finesse, but the last thing he'd expected was to find her naked when he returned.

She bent her knees and lowered her feet to the floor. "He is my *ex-fiancé*. What difference does it make now?"

"I know you think this is simple, but have you ever had a casual affair before?" Her annoyance allowed him to approach her. He could deal with her hostility. Her sexual aggression was a lot more complicated.

"This is perfectly simple," she insisted. "Either you want me or you don't."

He grabbed the arms of the chair and tipped it back again, bending over her until their noses nearly touched. "Why are you avoiding my questions? Have you ever fucked someone just because you wanted to be fucked?" Her eyes widened and he chuckled. "Have you ever said the word?"

She was silent for a long time. Her lips trembled and she stared into his eyes, her expression inscrutable. Then she raised her chin and pressed her lips together as determination spread through her gaze.

"I agreed to marry a man my brother had chosen for me. Hale was kind and... appropriate, but his touch left me cold. You may or may not be aware that Fahroni females can only conceive when their bodies provide a complex combination of hormones. These hormones are released during orgasm."



This was more information than he'd requested. He'd just wanted to be sure she was emotionally ready to resume sex.

"I couldn't come with Hale," she said more succinctly. "I had been unable to reach orgasm at all since I returned from the Setti home world."

Moving one hand to the back of the chair, he stroked her face with the other. "Did Hale understand all you suffered at the hands of those monsters?"

"Their threats and intimidation aren't what haunted me." She licked her lips and lowered her gaze to his chin. "Knowing what's inside me held me paralyzed with fear. I was terrified my features would shift as I reached climax, so I just blocked out the pleasure."

He cupped her chin with his fingers, raising her face until their eyes met. "I've touched your mind, Adara. Your heart is pure, even if your intentions are a bit sullied at the moment." She started to say more then blushed and looked away. "Tell me the rest. I want no secrets between us."

"I wanted to be certain it wasn't just Hale, so I... let's just say this won't be the first time I found pleasure in your arms."

He grinned, thrilled by the knowledge that she'd fantasized about him. "Say the words. What do you want me to do to you?"

"I want you to kiss me until you're good and hard."

"I'm already hard. I've been hard since you walked into my office, but I'll be happy to kiss you again. What shall I do once we're both breathless and hot?"

"Put your fingers inside me --"

"No, say the words. Say I want you to finger-fuck me while you suck on my nipples." He kept the chair tipped back with his knee, while he unfastened his pants, his gaze boring into hers. If she wanted a casual lover, she better be prepared to get sweaty and sticky and hot.

"I want you to finger-fuck me while you suck on my nipples." A flush spread across her breasts and up her neck. The princess liked talking dirty.

"Then what? Tell me now. Once I start, there won't be any talking, just cries and gasps and moans."

"After I come really hard," her eyes sparkled and she bit her lower lip before she rushed on, "I want you to fuck my mouth. I want to watch your face while I suck you right to the edge of climax."

"I don't get to come?"

"Not in my mouth -- this time. I want to feel you inside me and I'm not willing to wait until you get hard again."

"How do you want me to fuck you? That's what this is, princess. It won't be gentle or *appropriate*. I'll fuck you hard and fast, and I won't stop until we're both trembling and sated."

"Yes." Her lids drooped and her nipples hardened. "I want it just like that."

He kissed the tip of her nose. "On the couch, or the floor, or --"

"Bend me over your desk and fuck me from behind."

Lust stabbed into his gut at her whispered words. She'd said it. All pretence was stripped away. They were simply a man and a woman, determined to wring what pleasure they could out of life.

He tore his tee shirt off and tossed it over his shoulder, sinking to his knees as she spread her legs wide. She scooted to the edge of the chair and hooked her ankles behind his back. Kissing had been first on her list, but her breasts distracted him. Full and firm, the twin mounds beckoned with their pink areolas and pebble hard tips. He cupped one, rubbing the nipple with the pad of his thumb. She pressed into his hand, her lips parted, eyes closed.

Taking advantage of her acquiescence, he moved his hand to her other breast. Her nipple was already flushed and peaked. He marveled at her responsiveness. His gaze descended along her trim torso. Delicate folds peaked out from between the outer lips of her sex. Soon! He'd touch her and taste her and fill her. His cock twitched in approval.

He swept his hand from the small of her back to her nape, his fingers lost in her silky hair. Her lips were moist and parted, waiting for his kiss. She shifted her legs, drawing him closer as he teased her mouth with his tongue. She undulated against him, her mound rubbing up and down along his shaft. Gods, he needed to be inside her, needed to see if reality would match the sweetness of his dreams.

"I take it all back." She panted harshly. "Just fuck me now."

Pleased by her eagerness, he guided her hands to the top of the chair. "Keep them there until I tell you to let go."

Her breasts heaved and she nodded. He moved her feet to his thighs and tilted the chair back, bracing it with his knees. She spread before him, open, ready, cream gleaming on her folds.

Desire scorched his senses, driving him onward, but a voice in the back of his mind questioned her agitation. How did a woman go from being terrified of passion to craving carnal fulfillment in a few days? He traced her slit with his middle finger. She arched clear off the chair. Watching her face, he pushed into her core. She shook, her inner muscles fluttering madly.

"Adara?"

She blinked and blinked, but couldn't keep her eyes open. "Don't stop. I need your cock. Please, no more teasing."

"Sweetheart, did you take something to increase your responsiveness?"

"No." She pumped against his hand, driving his finger deeper. "More. I need more!"

He pulled back and added a second finger, and then a third. She clutched the chair, impaling herself relentlessly. This wasn't natural. She twisted, frantic and demanding. He splayed his hand over her belly, steadying her hips, while he found her rhythm with his thrusting fingers. Cream coated his hand and the inside of her thighs. His cock throbbed in time to her firm pulses, more than ready to assist with her "rescue."

Slipping into her mind, Rhys scanned, searching for the cause of her frenzy. He'd only begun the sweep when she cried out and pushed up against his thighs. Her cunt rippled around his fingers and pleasure blasted his telepathic receptors. He gasped, fighting back his own release. He hadn't come in his pants since he was a youth. He'd be damned if he'd lose control now. Slowing his pace, he prolonged each frantic wave and dispersed her excess energy.

She sagged against the chair, her breathing gradually returning to normal.

"Adara?" Easing his fingers from her body, he waited for her to open her eyes. "No secrets, remember? What the hell is going on?"

## Chapter Five

Adara crossed her arms over her breasts, aftershocks of pleasure zinging along her nerve endings. "I don't know what's wrong with me. I've felt... wild ever since..."

"Ever since what? Finish the sentence." He knelt in front of her, bare to the waist, hair flowing over his broad shoulders and down his back.

"Ever since I melded with Javier."

"Who is Javier?"

"I'm pretty sure he's a captive of the Setti. He refers to himself as a lab rat."

Rhys shot to his feet and her chair rocked forward as he moved away. "You're pretty sure he's a captive? Wait, what does this have to do with the increase in your sex drive?"

She stood as well and snatched the lab coat off the floor where he'd dropped it. Slipping into the simple garment, she explained how she'd encountered Javier and what little she'd been able to learn during their telepathic melds.

"The sensations this man creates are realistic enough to make you come?" Though his features were devoid of emotion, she detected jealousy in his tone.

"It's hard to explain exactly how it works." Familiar heat sizzled through her bloodstream and her gaze focused on his mouth. "All I know is I was thinking about you, imagining your hands moving over my body, and somehow I found Javier."

He watched her closely, his mouth tight, gaze speculative. "Did he actually sense your Setti blood or did he suspect you because of the ease with which you controlled the images?"

"I'm not sure. He asked me if I was one of them and when I admitted I wasn't a lab rat, he terminated the link."

"Have you been able to contact him since?"

"I haven't tried. Your father was there the following morning and you know the rest."

He crossed his arms over his chest. "When did you intend to tell me all this?"

"When and if I learned something useful." She pulled her hair back from her face and looked around for something to tie around it. "I know you were in my mind a few minutes ago. Did you sense anything unusual?"

"I have no idea what's causing your... increased appetite."

"It's not so much that I'm sex crazed," she objected, "I just rush toward the finish line once the cycle is started."

"I'd like to run some tests, if you have no objections."

"Why don't I introduce myself to the girl before this thing gets the better of me again?"

"I'm not sure I want you exposed to further risk until we know what we're dealing with."

"I'm just going to hand her a tray and see if she reacts to my being in the room."

"In and out, minimal conversation." He quickly pulled on his shirt. "And I'll be in the control room just down the hall."

"Yes, sir." She added the title with a playful wink as she fastened the snaps on the lab coat. Her bright green, velvet pumps didn't match the utilitarian uniform, but he hadn't provided an alternative.

He opened the door and motioned her to their right. "Did my father bring you directly here or have you secured lodgings?"

"I left my overnight bag in the front hall. Your father assured me you'd have suitable accommodations. I should have realized he was up to something."

The headquarters had obviously been a residence at some point in time. She was not familiar enough with Terran history to guess their location. Not nearly as lavish as Kinson Palace, the high ceilings and elegant archways still conveyed classic charm. He escorted her through a sunny atrium and into an older part of the house. His boot heels tapped against the highly polished floorboards.

"The upper level is my private apartment. The garden level and second story are used by the Resistance in whatever capacity is needed. All high security information and personnel are contained below ground."

"I presume the mysterious refugee is being housed below ground?"

"Yes. There are three holding cells. My father constructed the shielding mechanism protecting our guest."

"Protecting our guest or protecting us from our guest?"

"It's hard to say with the Setti."

They reached the kitchen and Rhys waited while a thin young man arranged a simple meal on a tray. "We'll take it down to her, Dan."

"Of course, sir. I took food down to the guards a few minutes ago and they said she's been quiet all day. She just sits there reading or staring off into space. It's sad to think what she must have gone through."

Rhys took the tray from the younger man and led Adara to a steep flight of stairs nestled in the back corner of the walk-in pantry.

"What an odd place for a stairwell," she said as she followed him down.

"This was the servant's entrance to the storage rooms below. The large, open spaces were the easiest to convert for our use and the secluded location of the access is an added security feature. We've sealed it off from the rest of the house." He glanced over his shoulder and smiled. "Besides, I usually just teleport down."

Two guards sat in the control room, one stood post outside the holding cell. Three armed men to guard one girl? Were they being paranoid? Adara hoped they were.

Rhys handed her the tray and nodded toward the control room. "I can see and hear everything that happens in that room. If there's any hint of trouble, I'll flash in."

"This is recon only. I'll be back in a minute or less."

The soldier outside the containment unit scanned open the door for Adara. She stepped into the tiny room and placed the tray on the square table.

"Are you hungry?" she asked casually, expecting to be ignored.

"You smell like a whore." Her dark eyes narrowed and Adara felt the girl try to slip past her mental shields.

"Don't be impertinent." She used her most imperious tone, allowing a lifetime of training to shape her posture. "You may scan my mind when and if I offer you the privilege. Are you unharmed?"

The girl swung her legs over the side of her bunk, her eyes owlishly wide. "Did Midox Genaudi send you?"

Adara laughed. "A mere Midox hasn't the authority to send me anywhere. Now answer the question."

"Get me out of here."

"Have they harmed you?"

"No, but I want to go home!"

Adara took a menacing step toward the girl, who immediately bowed her head. "Eat your dinner," Adara said and turned toward the door.

"Wait! Who are you? Will you --" The door slid shut cutting off the rest of her question.

Rhys was waiting for her in the hall. "Were you able to maintain your mental shields? She's a remarkably strong telepath."

"Why is she still sitting there?" Adara shook her head. "I only sensed her true nature for a fraction of a second, but I'm certain she could have teleported out at any time."

"I suspected the same thing." He looked at the guard meaningfully. "Let's go upstairs, where we'll be more comfortable."

She took his hand and the corridor faded to black. Before she had time to panic, light erupted around her and her senses came back to life. "Can you please warn me when you're going to do that?"

He chuckled. "I thought I did."

They were in a large, lavish bedroom. She shot him a challenging glance. "This is rather decadent." The massive bed was spread in royal blue with threads of gold woven



through the fabric. Floor to ceiling windows had been draped to match and the furniture was heavily carved of reddish brown wood.

"No, this is majestic. The bathroom is decadent."

She glanced toward the adjoining room, partially visible through an open doorway. If she let her mind wander down sensual paths, they would never accomplish anything. "Why didn't you want me to speak in front of the guard? Don't you trust your own people?"

"Ordinarily I wouldn't hesitate, but this girl isn't what she seems. And until I figure out what she gains by pretending, I'm not taking any chances." He made a sweeping gesture toward the small table near the windows. "Can I get you something to drink? I really haven't been a very good host."

"And I've been a less than cooperative guest." She glanced at the bed as she strolled toward the table he'd indicated. Would she spend the night in his arms or would he politely suggest she sleep in one of the guest rooms as soon as they'd quenched the fire in their blood? "I'd love a glass of wine, something obnoxiously sweet, if you have it."

An enigmatic smile curved the corners of his mouth. "What I don't have on hand, I can certainly procure."

He blinked out of sight and Adara felt his absence with physical intensity. She wasn't doing a very good job of guarding her emotions. Already her heartbeat leapt each time he smiled and her body longed for the shelter of his strong arms. This was casual, sexual, nothing more. They would pleasure each other and then walk away.

*You smell like a whore.* The girl's accusation echoed through Adara's mind. She'd never been that wet before and their erotic journey had just begun. If Rhys could make her that hot with his fingers, imagine what he could do with his mouth, and his cock. She pressed her thighs together and suppressed a groan as desire rolled through her in a long, tingling wave. Had the guards sensed her smoldering arousal? They knew she was up here with Rhys.

*No, he's up here with you. This is your life, your choice.*

He returned as suddenly as he'd departed. "If you don't like this one, I'll try again." A corkscrew protruded from the top of the wine bottle and he held two crystal goblets in his hand.

The wine was cool and fruity, and obnoxiously sweet just as she'd requested. She let it roll across her tongue as she gazed into his eyes. "What do you do when you're not hunting the Setti?"

He pulled out one of the chairs for her and sat in the other. "I'm never not hunting the Setti, thus my father's frustration."

"How could I forget?" She crossed her legs and took another sip of wine. "Was your dedication inspired entirely by your captivity? How long have you headed the Resistance?"

"I founded the Resistance." The goblet looked especially fragile within the circle of his long fingers. He gazed into the wine as he spoke, his expression inscrutable. "My captivity was one of many horrors my family has endured at the hands of the Setti. But this isn't a personal vendetta. The Setti are amoral and ruthless. Sealing their home world greatly slowed the expansion of their confederation, but they are still very much a threat."

She looked out the window. Beyond a wide, railed gallery spread endless, thickly forested hills. Could everyone in the Resistance teleport? Or was the headquarters not as secluded as it appeared?

"How long were you betrothed?" he asked after a few minutes of companionable silence. This was one of the things she'd noticed about Rhys while they'd been together on the Setti home world. They didn't need to fill every moment with banal conversation, just being near him was comforting.

"Three months. When word of my 'tragedy' spread, my suitors all seemed to drift away. Hale was the only one left, so I agreed to the match."

"It was a political union?"

"Yes."

He raised his goblet and took a drink. "That's wretched. You really like it?"

She shook her head and pushed her glass aside. "I was being polite." He started to stand and she caught his wrist. "And I didn't want you to leave again."

"It's important that we run some blood tests, but I haven't been able to reach the physician I have in mind. I won't trust your health to just anyone." He flashed his knee-melting smile. "How are you feeling? How often does the hunger return?"

"It's not like that. I don't start craving sex, at least that's not what happened before." She took a deep breath, wondering how he would respond to her next suggestion. They hadn't even had sex yet and she'd seen flashes of possessiveness in his eyes. "I think we should try and contact Javier. Even if he didn't do this to me intentionally, he might have some idea what's happening."

Rhys crossed his arms over his chest and narrowed his gaze on her face. "Sexual stimulation triggers the connection?"

She nodded. "I'm hoping with your assistance I can keep the link open even if he tries to shut me out."

"Then you and I need to be linked as well."

"I agree."

\* \* \*

Javier felt Adara nudging against his mind. Why wouldn't she leave him alone? He didn't want to play her twisted game. Morning had come and gone without food. Had she arranged the oversight as punishment for his attitude the night before? Kamn was pacing his cell grumbling under his breath about sadistic handlers and the injustices of life in general.

Reinforcing his shields, Javier leaned against the cold, cement wall. The pressure increased, burning and stinging. *I don't want to meld, you sick fuck. Leave me alone!*

*Javier, listen, just listen to me. I'm not a Setti hybrid. I'm not a handler. I want to help you.*

Sensations flowed in along with her urgent thoughts, hands, mouths, skin sliding against skin. How was she doing this? Clasp his head between his hands, he eased his hold on his shields, allowing her deeper.

Images flickered within his mind. Red threaded through golden hair. Blue streaked black. A woman straddled a man's face. Her slender body skimmed his chest as the thick length of his cock disappeared into her mouth. Lust gripped Javier's belly and made him groan. His balls drew up tight and his neglected cock throbbed with envy.

*If you have a lover, you have no need for me.*

*But you need us,* an authoritative male voice snapped. *Be still and listen carefully.*

*Where are you being held?* Adara asked.

Sexual energy saturated his mind, maintaining the link despite his resentment. He didn't want to watch her with another man. He wanted her mouth on his cock and her cream on his tongue. He wanted to roll her beneath him and bury himself to the balls inside her tight pussy.

*This isn't fair.* He struggled against the pleasure assailing him. *They will punish me as I've never been punished.*

*Not if we come get you.*

He laughed. As if that were possible. Focusing on her mouth, he imagined the firm circle sliding up and down his shaft. It didn't matter that his fingers provided the pressure, in his mind she was here, sucking, licking, humming in pleasure as he moved against her tongue.

*Where are you?* she asked again.

*I'm in the Terran dimension on a remote outpost called Earth. I doubt you've heard of it,* he explained in a breathless rush.

*How many Setti labs are on Earth?* the man asked. Javier tried to ignore him and feel her sweet mouth caressing his cock. *How many?*

*How the fuck should I know? I've seen two.*

*Javier, we really do want to help you. Do you know where your lab is located? How many others are being held there?*

He didn't care if this was a test. What more could they do to him? Death was certainly no threat any more. *Just me and Kamn. Our handlers have suddenly decided we don't deserve food. I don't suppose you know anything about that?*

*How long have you been without food?*

*Since I first contacted you. Rather odd coincidence, don't you think?*

*I had nothing to do with it. Tell me exactly where you are and we'll organize a rescue.*

*Well, there's one small complication, Red. I don't know where the hell I am.*

*Let me tag you. The man intruded again. I'll follow the signal to your location.*

*Not a chance.*

*I can force the signal into your mind but it will not be pleasant.*

*I suppose you're not a Setti hybrid either.*

*Access my mind across the link. You'll see what I am.*

Not at all sure he liked the arrogance in the other man's tone, Javier hesitated. If there was even a remote chance this was for real, he couldn't squander this opportunity. He pumped his cock with long, fast strokes and projected himself across the link.

The man accepted his presence with only a bit of resistance. Strong muscles and shrewd intelligence, driving ambition, and a hint of ruthlessness. Awareness of the other man's nature burst through Javier. Rhys. His name was Rhys. Authority and a massive store of latent energy. Did Rhys even realize his full potential? Stunned, Javier drifted closer to Adara.

Her scent drew him onward. Hunger twisted and pulled. He grabbed her hips with Rhys' hands and lapped her cream with Rhys' tongue, absorbing her taste and savoring her cries of pleasure. *His. This pussy was his. This clit was his!*

*Back off!* With a scalding surge of energy, Rhys forced him out of the meld.

Javier screamed and clawed, determined to reactive the link, frantic for another taste, desperate to rejoin his mate...

## Chapter Six

"I will send a team in to rescue Javier but you aren't going near him!"

"It's not your decision to make." Adara knelt in the center of the bed watching Rhys pace beside her. "He needs me. I can feel it. Whatever is affecting me is multiplied a hundred times in him."

"He's not your mate," Rhys said emphatically.

"How can you know that? While he was moving through your mind, I was moving through his. He's from a planet called Phyleha. His people possess the ability to adapt effortlessly to any environment." Rhys stopped his angry stomping and looked at her.

"That's right. A race of beings incapable of surviving outside their home dimension might be interested in a people like that."

Rubbing his closed lids with his fingertips, Rhys rolled his shoulders once before he went on. "How long have the Setti been experimenting on these people? And how far have they come?"

"I'm not sure. Javier has been in captivity for years, perhaps longer than he was free."

"You were able to sense all of this in such a short time?"

"There were no barriers between his being and mine. I absorbed as much information as I could."

"Do you understand why he became so possessive?"

She licked her lips and stubbornly kept her gaze on his face. Desire still simmered within her. The men's abrupt termination of the meld had left her aching.

"The people of Phyleha use sexual melding as a sort of courting ritual. They share sensations and spend time together without revealing where their interests lie.

This keeps conflict to a minimum. You see, once a female gives her permission for a male to claim her, any Phylehan male has the right to challenge the claim. After all challenges are fought, the female lives with the victor for the rest of her life."

"How..."

"Savage?" He just raised his brow in response. "Javier had never known anything resembling civilization until the Setti captured him, and now the transformation has made it impossible for him to return."

"What do you mean? How has he been transformed?"

"The climate on his planet is subject to violent and unpredictable changes. By making him more genetically sophisticated, the Setti made him too refined to survive in his natural environment."

He stepped closer to the bed, his expression grave. "I understand why the Setti would want to incorporate Phylehan DNA into their physiology. But why have they changed Javier? What have they transformed him into?"

"The ultimate breeding machine." She shuddered and crawled toward the edge of the mattress, needing to be near him. "Do you know how I was conceived?"

"A Setti shifter took on the appearance of your father and seduced your mother. It's a common practice, though the women seldom conceive."

"This is along the same lines. They intend for Javier to slip into a woman's mind and create a burning need so he can appear in the flesh later and fulfill that need."

"Is he aware of their intentions?"

"I don't think so. He doesn't understand the Setti as we do. They've made sure of it." She released a long, shaky breath. "We have to get him out of there, and not just for his sake. If they complete his transformation, he will become a biological weapon spreading their DNA across countless dimensions."

He paused for a moment, his expression thoughtful. "If they've put this much work into him, they're not going to give him up without a fight. I'll assemble a team as soon as the sun goes down. Javier said he's been without food since you first contacted him. How long ago was that?"

"This will be the second night."

"I wonder if Garret's death has something to do with the change in routine. If he was using mind slaves as handlers, they would have been freed by his death."

Goosebumps broke out on her arms as she considered the possibilities. "Wouldn't they have freed the captives or at least reported their location to someone who could help?"

"You're giving too much credit to a former mind slave. They wouldn't incriminate themselves, if they were even capable of rational thought once Garret's hold on them was severed. Without immediate detoxification, withdrawal is almost always lethal."

"Which leaves the lab rats locked in their cages, starving to death."

"I know the situation is dire, but we can't do this alone."

"Why do we need to wait until sunset? Are you going to involve vampires?"

"I have a different nocturnal race in mind." He took the final step, pressing his knees against the side of the mattress. His gaze caressed her face, but his hands remained at his side. "They're called the *Nac O'te* and I've been impressed with their abilities."

"I've never heard of them."

"We share a common enemy. The Setti incursion is far worse in their dimension than it is here on Earth. I've been working closely with their leader, Arabel."

Images of bare-breasted, sword wielding soldiers erupted in her mind and Adara smiled. "These fierce warriors are led by a woman?"

"You'll have to reevaluate your impression after you've met the Prime *Nac O'te*."

His gaze focused on her mouth and she placed her hands on his warm chest. Their passion had been interrupted, discouraged, and postponed. Still she craved his touch. Danger loomed before them, making her all the more determined to share these moments with Rhys.



He wrapped his arm around her waist, his gaze blazing into hers. "I want to finish what we started, Adara. But I won't fuck another man's mate. Was his reaction part of this transformation or did his Setti blood somehow bond with yours?"

"I want to help Javier." She outlined his mouth with her thumb, her fingers pressed against his firm jaw. "But I *want* you."

One of his hands moved down to cup her bare bottom while the other tangled in her hair. He pulled her head back and to the side, claiming her mouth in a demanding kiss. She opened to his questing tongue, craving his aggression and the culmination of their love play. Her body didn't seem to remember the orgasm he'd given her in his office. She needed him inside her and she needed him now.

Rubbing against his belly in brazen invitation only made him deepen the kiss. She'd been wet and aching since she arrived on Earth. How much longer would he make her wait?

She reached for his cock. He caught her wrist and pulled her arm to the small of her back. "I think we both need to take the edge off or this is going to be over before it begins."

"Calming me down isn't going to happen, but I'd be happy to finish what Javier interrupted." Pushing him back just a bit, she sat and moved her legs to either side of his. "In fact, watching you come topped my list, if I remember correctly." Tension passed down the length of his body and his cock bucked, arching away from his belly. "He certainly likes the idea."

He brushed her hair back from her face and bent to kiss her mouth. "Are you sure you don't mind?"

Instead of assuring him with words, she sucked the plump head of his cock into her mouth. His hands stayed in her hair, his eyes staring deeply into hers. She hooked her heels around his calves and tilted her head so she could move without breaking eye contact.

Hot and hard, he slid against her tongue. She swirled her tongue and sucked, loving the way he groaned and the strain obvious in his expression. *Don't hold back*, she

urged, opening her mind. *Let me feel your pleasure. Let me know your taste as you've known mine.*

His hips rocked, his fingers tightening but not hurting. Hotter and harder, his shaft stretched her lips. Gods, he was big. Long and thick, and... He thrust to the back of her mouth, interrupting her delighted inventory. He shuddered and his seed escaped in hot bursts. She swallowed quickly, using her entire mouth to draw every last drop from his pulsing length.

"Oh, stars," he whispered as he pulled out of her mouth. "I'm never going to let you go."

Rhys was shocked by his own words. Adara was selfless and daring, intelligent and brave. Everything about her appealed to him. Still he already had a demanding mistress and the Resistance wasn't willing to share.

Forcing away the blunder, he swept her into his arms and placed her in the middle of his bed. She looked damn good there, one might even say perfect with her red/gold hair spread out around her and her body flushed with anticipation.

"I'd like to keep you to myself today," he said with a rakish grin. "Can we avoid another interruption?"

"Each time we melded, I've contacted Javier. Now that I understand what's going on, it shouldn't be a problem."

"Good." He joined her on the bed, spreading out along her side. She brought his hand to her breast and smiled. The nipple hardened with the first brush of his thumb, so he bent to taste it. "One day, when we both have a lot more patience, I'll make you come touching nothing below your waist."

She laughed. "I'm lucky if I come at all. I don't think either of us have that much patience."

He sucked deeply on one nipple while he firmly rolled the other. "One day, I'll prove you wrong."

"But not today?" She sounded adorably hopeful.

"Not today." She bent her knees and opened her legs in unmistakable invitation, but he wasn't quite finished exploring her delectable body. "I think I owe you one."

Using his leg to push hers flat again, he scooted down along her supple body. "Rhys, I am so ready for you, I'm going to die if you don't... you know."

"No, tell me." He parted her folds with his fingers, exposing her swollen clit.

"I want your cock inside me, thrusting hard and deep." She grabbed his hair and gave it a firm tug, but he ignored her. "I don't want to come again until you're inside me."

"Too bad." He stroked the hood protecting her clit with his tongue, then looked up to gauge her reaction. "I'm not going to fill you until you come again."

"You're sadistic," she whispered, as he pushed back the silky skin and breathed across the ultra-sensitive nerve.

Direct contact made her cringe, so he released her hood and returned to the circular motion. Her intoxicating cream beckoned. He longed to thrust his tongue into her core and feel her muscles contract as she came. She struggled against his hold and pushed against his head, trying to make room for him between her thighs, even as she attempted to avoid his teasing. He refused to oblige her in either regard, focusing entirely on her clit.

She went still beneath him, her breathing harsh and fast. Turning her face to the side, she made a low keening sound and then bowed against his mouth. He wrapped his arm around her thighs and stayed with her until the last shiver of sensation passed.

Her face was flushed and her eyes unfocused as he moved on top of her. She opened for him, drawing her knees up high against his sides. He rubbed against her clit a couple times before positioning himself at her entrance. She blinked away the lethargy.

"Ready?" He wasn't even sure why he felt compelled to ask. She'd requested, commanded, and begged for this.

"I'm going to kill you if you don't."

Pushing into her with just the head of his cock, he paused to savor the hot grip of her wet core.

"More, damn you." She kicked his butt with her heels.

Unable to resist an instant longer, he drove his full length into her pussy. She trembled and hooked her ankles over the backs of his thighs. Scalding heat washed from his head to his toes, momentarily trapping his breath in his lungs. Why was she so tight? He groaned out loud. Her inner muscles massaged him like a velvet fist, squeezing to the point of pain.

He pulled back just a fraction, amazed he could move at all. She sighed and pulled his face down to hers. Their kiss tasted of passion, spiking his excitement and muddling his thoughts.

She held his face between her hands as he thrust into her. Rhys reached for her mind, needing the intimacy of spirit as well as body. He wanted to be surrounded by her as well as moving inside her.

He tore his mouth from hers, working his way down her neck as he thrust harder. Her breasts quivered with each firm drive and he shifted his weight to his knees so he could reach her nipples. She combed her fingers through his hair and met each of his downward thrusts.

Sensations spun around them, swept through them and focused within them. Rhys didn't want it to end. Her pleasure heightened his and his encouraged hers. They fed from each other, taking as freely as they gave.

Draping her legs over his elbows, he pounded into her, taking her more forcefully than he had intended. The feelings pulsing across their telepathic link assured him she wanted this, that she craved his demand and needed to surrender.

Pushing her legs up and back, he rolled her hips up off the bed and thrust to the balls as he came. His orgasm burst within him, then shot from him, igniting an equally powerful climax in her. She trembled, her inner muscles milking the length of his cock as they clung to each other.

He moved her legs to his waist and rolled to their sides, keeping himself buried deep inside her. Her eyes were closed and her lips parted. He tucked her hair behind her ear and waited for her to stir. She cuddled against him, her head pillowed on his arm. She looked so content. He hesitated to disturb the afterglow, but he couldn't ignore what he'd felt and all he knew about her.

"Sweetheart," he ran his index finger along her jaw and she finally opened her eyes, "I know you were betrothed, but have you ever had a lover before me?"

Her gaze narrowed before she looked away. "Why do you ask? I'm pretty sure you enjoyed that."

He turned her face back around. "I know the Fahroni are freer with their sexuality than many cultures, but you are a royal princess. You had to have known you would likely marry to benefit the kingdom and your husband would expect a virgin bride."

"Why is this an issue now?" She firmly squeezed her inner muscles. "The conversation is moot. You are my lover now. That's all that matters."

"I'm not sure I agree." He grabbed her bottom as she tried to separate their bodies. "Did Hale ever fuck you?"

"What was the point in fucking me if I couldn't provide him with an heir? He touched me and I touched him, but he was so clinical about the whole thing I never even came close. That's when we ended the betrothal."

He was pretty sure he hadn't felt her hymen tear, but she'd been so damn tight. Did he really need to know the details? There was one possibility that bothered him. "I didn't think you'd been harmed physically on the Setti home world. If they didn't..."

"Oh for gods' sake, Hale didn't want to hurt me the first time, so he asked that I have my hymen removed before we began our little visits. I might as well not have bothered. We never got that far." She sighed and tucked her head under his chin. He could no longer see her expression. "If we had been sexually compatible, I would be a married woman right now."

Rhys wasn't about to let that comment slide. He rolled to his back and arranged her on top of him, pushing her up so she straddled his hips. "No commitment, no expectations, just mind-blowing sex? Sounds like you need to add no regrets to your list."

"You're right. I started this. I have no right to grumble."

He'd known from the start her offer was ridiculous. Adara Kinson wasn't capable of casual sex, and neither was he. He'd done nothing to temper his emotions while he made love to her. She had to realize the intensity of his feelings. His cock hardened and grew, stretching the snug passage only he had entered.

"I'm willing to stop pretending anything about this is casual." She smiled her approval and guided his hand to her breast. "The only part that bothers me is knowing that we're giving in to my father."

## Chapter Seven

Two anxious strides took Javier from one side of his cell to the other and back, over and over again. He couldn't stop moving. His head throbbed and tension rolled through his muscles like the subtle warning of a cramp that never materialized. *Adara*. He needed his mate. He must claim her before the breeding frenzy drove him completely insane.

"Starvation sure as hell wouldn't have been my choice of deaths," Kamn snarled and a muffled thud turned Javier's head in time to see the other man bounce off the transparent panel at the front of his cell.

Javier dragged his fingers through his hair, shaking his head to dispel the buzzing. Her scent surrounded him. Her taste was still on his tongue. He growled.

"I second that," Kamn said.

*Javier, can you amplify the tracker signal? We're having trouble locating you.* Adara's voice sounded so close, so clear. It was a vile Setti trick. They were trying to push him over the edge. Desire lodged between his thighs and banded his chest. He closed his hands into fists, his nails biting into his palms.

He'd lived with pain and degradation, coped with loss and isolation. How was he supposed to combat hope?

*I know we're close, but Rhys can't get a lock on you. Were you teleported in to the lab?*

*I was sedated.* He pressed the heels of his hands to his temples. Savage instincts surged from deep within him, crashing through years of conditioning. He must have her. *Here. I am here.* He projected the thought with every fiber of his being.

Adara staggered back under the force of Javier's mental blast. They'd been searching the forest for hours and found no sign of the lab. Rhys had easily followed the

tracker signal to this secluded section of mountainous countryside in a state called Oregon. Three massive *Nac O'te* warriors had joined them just before they left the Terran Headquarters.

"There are no structures of any kind," one of the *Nac O'te* reported as he rejoined Rhys and Adara. "The lab must be underground."

"We've come to the same conclusion," Rhys said.

"Didn't you feel that?" Adara pressed her hand over her heart. "Javier just about knocked me off my feet with the intensity of the signal."

Rhys scowled. "All I feel is the tracker signal. He must be using the other link."

"I don't think he knows how to access any other kind."

"Do you still sense him?"

She shook her head and glanced at the hulking, heavily armed *Nac O'te*.

Rhys squared his shoulders and cleared his throat. "Gather the others on the other side of that rise. I'll transmit the lab's location as soon as we're able to pinpoint our contact's location. Make sure the others are ready to teleport."

"Yes, sir." His features were perfectly composed, but Adara heard the smirk in his tone.

"Come here." The command sent a tingle down her spine.

"We are not going to... meld while three soldiers stand around waiting for me to come."

"Do you have a better idea?" His eyes twinkled in the moonlight.

"You're the tracker. Why don't I go down on you?"

"I don't want to mind-fuck Javier. You're the one who insisted on being part of his rescue. Now get your ass over here."

Her face flamed as she remembered the wicked things he'd done to her ass a few hours before.

"What are you thinking about, sweetheart?" He caught her wrist and pulled her toward him as he leaned back against a wide tree trunk. "You're suddenly awfully quiet."



She pressed her hands against his chest and licked her lips. "Maybe if you just kiss me, I can activate the link."

Ignoring her breathless suggestion, he grabbed her bottom with both hands and guided her onto his thigh. Her mound rubbed against his muscular leg and he bent close to her ear. "Getting naked is out of the question. We won't have time to redress." His smile flashed in the darkness and he took her face between his hands. "Did you like what I did in the shower? Is that what you were thinking about?"

After foolishly admitting she enjoyed the attention of her bath attendants, he'd demanded to know everything they'd done to her. He seemed to take it all in stride until she explained that they used slender wands to tease her so her virginity was left intact.

He'd coated his long middle finger with shampoo and turned her toward the smooth marble wall. Then he pushed that soapy finger right up her ass. Just the memory made her body thrum with dark desire. He'd flicked her clit with his other hand, while his finger moved in her ass. It had been starkly erotic, not tender or sweet, and it had made her long for more than his teasing finger. If his cock wasn't so damn big...

His mouth covered hers, his tongue tracing her lower lip before dipping inside. "I can take you like that without hurting you, but we'll have to work at it."

She groaned and wrapped her arms around his back. "Stay out of my mind."

"I don't need to read your mind to guess your thoughts. I said get your ass over here and you just about had an orgasm." He nipped her bottom lip. "We're definitely going to have to explore this a little later." He unfastened her pants and eased his hand inside, effortlessly finding her clit with his middle finger. "Oh my, you're sopping wet. Get busy and activate that link or I'm going to fuck you against this tree."

She wasn't sure she'd mind being fucked hard and fast with her legs wrapped around his waist. If it wasn't for the other team members waiting for Rhys to signal them, she might have provoked him toward that end. He stroked her clit and fucked her mouth with his tongue. It would have to be enough for now.

Clutching his broad shoulders, while her senses came alive, she found the link she'd used before and reached out for Javier. After only a moment, his image came into focus. He lay on his back on a cot, a threadbare blanket draped over his bent knees. The rhythmic motion of his arm made it obvious what he was doing beneath the blanket.

*Send me a stronger signal, Javier, but not as strong as you sent before. You just about knocked me out.*

*I need you. I need you now!*

Desire flared across the link, desperate and savage. She'd never sensed emotions so feral before. Gasping, she clutched Rhys shoulders and tried to stabilize the connection. *We're here. You're safe now. Just let me feel where you are.*

He drove another wave of scalding hunger deep into her mind. *Come to me.* It was half demand and half plea.

Knowing Javier was beyond embarrassment, she passed his signal to Rhys.

*Why is he here? I need you.* Javier's eyes opened, wide and luminous in his gaunt face. He bared his teeth and raised his hips as he tugged up his pants.

"I've got him," Rhys said. She kept the link open as she quickly righted her clothing. Rhys signaled to the others and took her hand. "The lab is deep. You better let me drive."

She wasn't about to argue. Her head spun and desire pulsed through her body. Darkness closed in on them and she clung to Rhys. The momentary void allowed her to purge her senses and clear her mind. If she didn't keep her wits about her, she'd be no use to anyone.

They materialized in a small, dimly lit room. The *Nac O'te* warriors surrounded them, creating a protective barrier with their bodies. She glanced up at Rhys, wondering how he felt about being protected for a change. His features had fallen into the expressionless mask he'd perfected over the years, but his eyes were wide and assessing.

A doorway opened at each end of the long, narrow room. He motioned two of the *Nac O'te* in one direction as he and the other warrior crept toward the opposite

doorway. They'd found no ventilation shafts or access tunnels. How was this place kept habitable?

Rhys motioned her back and she responded with a rebellious shake of her head. *Stay here until we clear the room.* He used their private telepathic strand and infused the directive with warmth and tenderness. She glared at him. He wasn't playing fair at all.

Willing to compromise, she stayed a few steps back, giving them time to clear each area before they moved on to the next. They found a room equipped for medical procedures and a surprisingly sophisticated laboratory, but where was the staff? Who conducted the experiments?

"This requires a bio scan of some sort," one of the *Nac O'te* said as they reached a door at the back of the lab.

As Rhys and the *Nac O'te* messed with the scanner, Adara reached for Javier. *Are you locked in the room at the back of the lab?*

Shock and disbelief poured into her mind. *You're in the lab?* A muffled clanging began on the other side of the door. *Can you hear that?*

*I can hear it. What does it take to open this door?*

*Just Setti DNA.*

She touched Rhys on the upper arm. "Let me try."

Both men looked at her askance, but she stepped directly in front of the scanner and held her breath as a beam passed over her body. The door hissed and then slid neatly into the wall.

"I'll be damned," the *Nac O'te* muttered.

Rhys kept her behind him as they advanced. The ineffective light source created more shadows than illumination. Six cells lined the corridor, three on either side, yet slightly offset so the doorways were staggered.

"Javier?" Her voice seemed to shout in the oppressive silence.

A transparent panel allowed them to see into the first cell, but the interior was dark and a half-wall obscured the back corner. Her proximity hadn't triggered the lock, so she pressed her hand against the rectangular plate to the right of the door.

"No such luck," she said quietly. "This one must require specific DNA, not just Setti."

"If anyone with Setti blood could trigger the mechanism, the prisoners could let themselves out," the *Nac O'te* warrior pointed out.

"Blast it."

Rhys didn't have to tell him twice. The *Nac O'te* raised a small handgun and sent a stream of concentrated energy into the scanner. The lock crackled and hissed and the door slid open. Adara lit the interior of the cell with a spontaneous burst of light as the *Nac O'te* turned his attention to the cell across the hall.

"You've been working with Nyx." Rhys smiled at her. "I hadn't realized he'd begun your training."

"It kept my mind off other things."

The *Nac O'te* had opened the next two cells by the time they cleared the first two.

*Can Javier conceal his presence? Why is he hiding from us?* Rhys moved toward the cell on the left while the *Nac O'te* covered him.

*Would you trust anyone if you'd lived your life like this?*

The cell door behind them banged open and a blur of movement arced across the corridor, colliding with the *Nac O'te*. His weapon went skidding across the cement floor. Adara lunged for the gun as she called out a warning to Rhys.

Rhys turned and deflected the second captive's blows, jerking him out into the hallway. Adara steadied the weapon with both hands, unsure who to target. The *Nac O'te* flipped the first captive onto his stomach and dragged his arms to the small of his back. Obviously the *Nac O'te* were just as comfortable in hand to hand combat as they were using pulse weapons.

"Which one is Javier?" Rhys asked as he secured his captive.

"It's hard to say," she admitted. They looked very much alike, unkempt filthy hair, bushy beards, and hostile amber eyes. Though both were tall and broad shouldered, they each were painfully thin.

She tried approached the one kneeling in front of Rhys. He bared his teeth and growled. The other one's response was even more violent. He went wild in the *Nac O'te's* arms, kicking and twisting as he snarled like an animal.

Pity and fear made Adara's mouth dry. Had they come too late? *Why won't you speak to me?*

*You're his Setti whore!*

Unprepared for his fury, she gasped and took a step backward. The two captives were too close together. She couldn't tell which one had sent her the hateful thought.

"Let's get them out of here," Rhys suggested. He looked at the *Nac O'te* warrior and added, "As soon as they're secured at Headquarters, I want you to return with the others and blow this place back to the Setti dimension."

\* \* \*

Awareness jolted Noretta to full wakefulness. She'd been lazing on her side in a containment cell that had no hope of containing her. Two more hybrids had just been brought through the shields. She'd been ready to return to her father when the first hybrid strolled into her cell. What was a Guardian spawn doing with Setti hybrids? It was just curious enough to keep her around.

She opened the ridiculous comic book to conceal her blank expression and scanned the building with her mind. The new hybrids were both male, but she wasn't familiar with the rhythm of their energy. Two of Garret's pets perhaps? She had so wanted to see his project before she sucked out his life, but the Terran strike team had beaten her to it.

No matter. She already knew more than she had ever hoped to learn. Everyone believed all of the Supreme Midox's offspring had perished in the uprising following his murder. Now she knew there was at least one left.

Who would have thought she'd find a descendant of the Supreme Midox playing whore to a Guardian spawn?

## Chapter Eight

"Have they gone completely feral or are they just pissed off?" Adara crossed her arms over her breasts and stared at the split screen monitor displaying the Phylehans.

"You tell me." Rhys stepped up behind her and wrapped his arms around her waist. "Is Javier still shutting you out?"

"He's trying to, but as soon as you separated them I was able to identify the source of his emotions." She pointed to the man on the right, the one who was prowling the cell in a ceaseless triangular pattern. "That's Javier. The other one must be Kamn."

"I'll sedate them and have them cleaned up. They're stinking up the entire level."

She knew their odor was a legitimate problem. The short time it had taken for the Phylehans to be transported out of the lab had left her nauseous. Still the comment annoyed her.

"Let me try talking to Kamn first."

"Why Kamn?"

"I get the feeling his behavior is in support of Javier. I don't think he wants us to be able to tell them apart."

"All right, but not in the same room. You've risked quite enough for one night."

They walked down the stairs to the control room, both of them too exhausted from the rescue to squander their energy. She didn't care if Rhys heard the conversation, but she asked the guards to wait in the corridor. They only left their posts after Rhys nodded for them to go.

"This one?" Rhys pointed to Kamn.

"Yes."

He made several adjustments and the image of Kamn moved to the main display window on the viewscreen. "Go ahead. He can hear you and see you, if he chooses to look up at the monitor."

"Kamn, I know Javier told you about me and I'm hoping by now you realize we mean you no harm."

He swung toward the monitor, his golden eyes gleaming in his grimy face. "I'm still in a fucking cage."

"As soon as we're certain you are no danger to yourself or anyone else, you'll be released," Rhys said without stepping into view.

"Who said that?" Kamn wanted to know. "The guy with the gun or the guy with the glowing blue eyes?"

"What's wrong with Javier?" Adara asked, ignoring Kamn's question. He would be fully briefed as soon as Rhys decided he was trustworthy.

"You should know. You did it to him." He crossed the cell with two long strides and glared at her image. "Didn't you realize screwing with his mind would trigger his instincts? Don't you read your reports?"

"I'm not a handler. I don't know what you're talking about."

"Well, you sure as hell aren't a lab rat, so what does that leave?"

"How do I help Javier? If I caused this, even inadvertently, I want to do whatever I can to ease his suffering."

Kamn laughed and pushed a filthy strand of hair out of his eyes. "He'll be glad to hear it. There's only one thing that will 'ease his suffering.' He needs to fuck you until his sanity returns."

Rhys moved her away from the viewscreen and stepped in front of the transmitter. "That's not going to happen. Convince him to clean himself up and I'll arrange for a woman who can take care of his needs."

The neglected condition of Kamn's face couldn't conceal the savage beauty of his glistening eyes. "Why was your mate mind-fucking a lab rat?" When Rhys didn't reply he continued, "Javier needs more than a woman, he needs *your* woman. The symptoms

are caused by a chemical imbalance in his body and her body provides what his lacks. It's hormones and pheromones and a bunch of other stuff I can't pronounce. I don't pretend to understand the specifics, but it's more complicated than just having sex. "

"If I... get him through this, does it end here or will this urgency return?"

"It doesn't matter," Rhys insisted. "You're not fucking him!"

"Answer the question." Adara kept her gaze fixed on Kamn.

"Before your kind started playing with our genetics these sorts of bondings were permanent. But it wouldn't do to have a sexual predator permanently bond with his victims, now would it? Usually the female is more affected than the male. Only you instigated this bond and we weren't engineered to mix with other Setti hybrids. We're not the ones who are supposed to lose control."

Adara tried to push Rhys out of the way. He wouldn't budge. The best she could do was squeeze in next to him. "Javier doesn't understand any of this. Why do you know more than he does?"

"It's a long story."

"If I lock Javier in the showers for an hour, is he aware enough to clean himself up?" Rhys asked.

"He should be, but why do you need him clean if you're not going to keep him alive?"

"I said nothing about killing him. I'm just not going to let him fuck my woman."

"If he doesn't join his body with the female who instigated the bond, within a few days he will be dead."

\* \* \*

"I didn't intentionally instigate this bond. I didn't intentionally link with him. I was just --"

Rhys pulled her into his arms and cut off her protests with a frustrated kiss. "I'm not blaming you. In all fairness, this began before you and I were together. If anything, I'm the intruder."

"We can't let him die."



He looked into her tear-bright eyes and ignored the tightening in his gut. It might well kill him to watch another man touching her, but he would support her every step of the way.

"We won't let him die, but you are mine. There will never be any mistake about that."

She pressed her lips together and let out a long, shuddering breath. "You want to be here when they bring him to me?"

"I don't trust him, Adara. You're not going through this alone."

For a long moment she just stared up at him in stunned silence, then a smile parted her lips. "I'll probably be in a lot more danger with both of you in the same room. He's determined to claim me as his mate. Kamn said the frenzy will ease a bit each time he comes, but he will be aggressive and single-minded until he gains control over his instinct."

"If he hurts you, really hurts you, his life is forfeit."

After a lingering kiss and warm waves of reassurance, Rhys left Adara standing in the middle of the guest bedroom. This was an obligation, a necessity. She'd reached out from the darkness of her insecurity and found Javier waiting to comfort her. Now he needed her and she couldn't desert him. This had nothing to do with her feelings for Rhys.

"This is medicinal," she muttered with a smile, hoping to alleviate the mounting tension.

The door flew open and a man stood framed in the threshold, a towel wrapped around his lean hips. Though clean and damp, his tawny hair was in desperate need of trimming. His jaw was now smooth, revealing a face both arresting and tragic. Harsh, hollow cheeks drew attention to his sensual mouth and thick lashed eyes. In the softer light of the bedroom his gaze shone, more gold than brown.

He kicked the door shut behind him and crossed to stand before her. Adara held perfectly still, heart hammering in her breast. Was he still angry or had desire burned

away every emotion but lust? He sniffed her hair, then smelled her breath. She remained still, unsure how to react to his odd behavior. He crouched before her and grasped her hips, pressing his face into the juncture of her thighs.

She tried to push him away, to get some space between his mouth and her mound. His fingers bit into her hips and the heat of his breath sank through her pants.

"I can still smell his scent on you." He spoke so softly she almost didn't hear.

"I had no idea what our meld would do to you. I'm sorry."

He sprang to his feet and tangled his fingers in the back of her hair. "You're sorry you reached out to me or you're sorry he found out about us?"

Should she play along? Would he sense her dishonesty if she feigned a response? She didn't want to make him angry. "There is no us. I didn't intentionally form this bond. Kamn said there's no other way to free you from the burning."

"You'll sacrifice your body for me? You'll spread your thighs and hold really still while I work off the effects?" He leaned in, his mouth brushing hers as he said, "I'm touched."

"Act like an asshole and I'll leave you here to rot," she whispered sweetly.

"You will, will you?" His arm wrapped around her waist jerking her against him as he took command of her lips. He forced her mouth open then froze. Her arms were trapped at her sides and her breasts flattened against his chest, but he just held her, breathing in her scent and absorbing her body heat.

His heart beat so forcefully she could feel the steady rhythm through her clothes. The unmistakable ridge of his cock throbbed against her belly. She waited for the thrust of his tongue or the firm squeeze of his fingers. He clung to her, tense and shaking.

*I was alone and disheartened, and you comforted me.* He wouldn't separate their mouths, so she sent her thoughts into his mind. *Now you need me. I'm not afraid.*

Hunger, savage and consuming, surged across their link. *You should be terrified. I haven't felt my animal self this strongly in years.* His tongue swept into her mouth and his hand cupped her ass. She returned his kiss, allowing his knee to part her thighs.

*If you take my mouth first, you'll have more control.*

Her suggestion sent him into a wild flurry of motion. He pushed her back and attacked her clothes, tugging and tearing until she stood before him naked. His eyes burned and his chest heaved as he paused to look at her. Their link still pulsed with demanding need. His pride alone kept him from forcing her to her knees and mounting her like a beast in the field.

She didn't touch him or hurry him, knowing he was holding on by a thread. Instead she watched his body's reaction to her nudity. Color deepened across his cheekbones and his nostrils flared. His hands clenched and unclenched as his feverish gaze moved over her form. Long and arched, his cock bobbed with each deep breath, and a drop of fluid beaded on the tip.

Kneeling in front of him, she extended her tongue and swirled it across the head of his cock. He growled low in his throat, his head dropping back on his shoulders. Feminine power unfurled within her, making her bold. She wet her lips and sucked him inside her mouth, touching him with nothing but her mouth.

He made a sound part snarl, part cry and grabbed her hair with both hands. Drawing her toward him as he thrust into her wet heat, he hit the back of her mouth then reversed direction. She sucked as he pulled out and swirled her tongue as he thrust in, exhilarated by his vigor. His strokes gained momentum. She placed one hand on his thigh and cupped his balls with the other.

Faster and faster he pumped. She pulled gently on his sac while she caressed him with her tongue. He smelled of soap and a faint musk that made her nipples tingle and heat cascade from her chest to her core. Tilting her head back, she allowed him to thrust deeper. His thighs flexed and his abs rippled as he neared completion.

His musk grew stronger. The heat inside her built each time she inhaled. The beast within him surged. She felt his control snap as primal emotions eclipsed all rational thought. He pulled out of her mouth, still holding tightly to her hair.

"Wait. You need to finish. You need --" Dragging her head down, he bent her over and moved behind her. "Javier, wait. We can get through this if you let me help you."

He kicked her legs apart and dropped to his knees. She braced herself for the brutal thrust of his cock, knowing she couldn't avoid it. His hand tightened in her hair and tears filled her eyes. He didn't know what he was doing.

An infuriated cry tore from Javier as he was dragged off her. Adara blinked the tears out of her eyes and crawled farther away. Rhys held Javier's arms behind his back with one arm locked through his elbows. Rhys' other arm was wrapped around his neck.

"Don't hurt him." Her mouth was so dry she could hardly speak.

"I said if he hurt you, he was dead."

"He lost control. He wasn't going to hurt me."

"That's not what it looked like to me." Javier slammed his head back into Rhys' shoulder as the taller man twisted to avoid the blow.

"If I can make him come, he'll calm down. Can you hold him for me?"

"You want me to hold him while you finish sucking his cock?" Rhys eyes began to glow. "I didn't keep him from raping you so we can rape him."

"He's a weapon on overload. If we don't vent his sexual energy it will destroy him." She got to her feet and approached the men, her legs shaking beneath her. "Is it rape, when it's the only thing that will save his life?"

Rhys glanced off into the shadows. "Should I have let him..."

"I'm glad you're here," she insisted. "I thought I could control him, but I can't."

Focusing entirely on what she must do, she reached between her thighs and coated her fingers with cream. Javier needed the chemicals her body was secreting as badly as he needed to release his excess energy. She rubbed her slick fingers over his cock, then scooped out more cream, continuing the process until his entire shaft was wet with her essence.

Javier continued to struggle, but his thrashing grew less violent. She didn't look at Rhys, unable to bear the hurt she knew she would find in his expression. Closing her fingers around Javier's rod, she worked his flesh with strong, steady motions.

Isolation closed in and she pressed her lips together. Her link with Javier had blinked out as his emotions turned feral and Rhys was shielding his mind from her. Javier's cock throbbed against her fingers and she fought back tears.

*This isn't your fault.* Rhys' mind voice was barely discernable, but tenderness accompanied the thought. She absorbed the warmth with joyful abandon, needing the reassurance desperately.

She continued to stroke Javier, relaxed enough to appreciate the sight of his strong, young body, straining with the final stages of desire. He rocked into her hand, his eyes squeezed shut. Stepping to the side, she tried to aim his cock toward her discarded clothes.

*He's ruled by instinct right now, my love. He needs his scent on you.* She met Rhys' gaze. His eyes had darkened, shimmering with sapphire light. *I've wanted to rub my cum into your skin and I'm not in the grip of a mating frenzy.* A sexy smile curved his lips. *You'd have to be male to understand.*

Javier shuddered and his seed spurted out in pearly jets. Adara gasped when the first warm splash hit her belly. Was cum always so hot? Javier shook his head and blinked, then lifted his face as he recognized his scent. His gaze still gleamed with animalistic intensity as he leered at her splattered skin.

*Rub it into your nipples and around your clit.*

Were these also things Rhys had wanted to do or was he scanning Javier's mind? She sensed nothing from Javier except boiling lust, but she trusted Rhys with every fiber of her being. After smoothing the milky substance over her nipples, she parted her folds and coated her clit.

With a menacing growl, Javier sank to his knees. *Must taste you. Now!*

## Chapter Nine

Rhys watched Adara coat her pussy with Javier's cum and wanted to howl. She was his woman, his... his what? Their relationship had barely begun. They'd spent one night in each other's arms before Javier's crisis intruded on their budding intimacy.

Going slack within his arms, Javier sank to his knees and Adara moved closer. She stroked Javier's hair as he buried his face between her breasts. "Let go of his arms. He's not going to hurt me." She passed Javier's emotions to him for just a moment so Rhys could see that the intensity had subsided a bit. The Phylehan ached for her, craved a physical joining, but his awareness had returned.

Winding cords of energy around Javier's arms and chest, Rhys loosened his hold. If Javier so much as growled, Rhys would yank the cords and jerk him away from Adara. Javier cupped her breasts and suckled her nipples, doubtlessly tasting himself on her skin. The thought sent a hot jolt of desire deep into Rhys' abdomen.

Adara pressed Javier to her breasts, but her gaze locked with Rhys. *Why don't you do more than watch?* she asked with a welcoming smile.

Rhys banished his clothes with an impatient thought and moved around behind her. Javier shifted his arms to circle her waist and Rhys slipped his hands in between the other two. Squeezing and lifting the soft mounds, he caressed her breasts without covering her nipples. Javier drew on one crest and then the other, while she squirmed against Rhys.

*If I'm to be part of this, sweetheart, I want to feel everything. Allow me into the meld.*

She stiffened, her head shaking subtly. *I'm not sure that's wise. Javier might lose control again.*

*Then open yourself completely. Let me feel what you feel.*

Like rays of the sun streaming in through a window, sensations found their way into Rhys' mind. A warm mouth sucked firmly on a turgid nipple and tingles ricocheted through his chest. She insulated his mind from Javier's, but Rhys could sense her hesitant response to the other man's longing.

*There's no reason to hold back. We all understand the necessity of this joining. Why not abandon yourself to the pleasure?*

*Because I don't know him. I don't love him. He needs me and the sensations are pleasant, but only with you have I truly --*

Rhys turned her head far to the side, angling her head so he could press his mouth over hers. *I'm here with you. We will share this adventure together. Don't think. Surrender to the moment. For this one night be just as wicked as you've ever dared to imagine.* Her vulnerability made him all the more determined that she would find pleasure in this exchange, which meant he must accept it without hesitation.

As he kissed her deeply, he stroked the back of Javier's head, luxuriating in the softness of the Phylehan's hair. Rhys relaxed and Adara pressed into Javier's mouth.

Javier sank lower, taking Adara with him. Seeing the Phylehan's intent, Rhys urged Adara to turn around before she settled herself astride Javier's face. She looked a bit overwhelmed as she made the quick adjustment. Javier lay down on his back and Adara knelt above him, her pussy directly over his mouth. Parting her folds with his thumbs, Javier drove his tongue deep into her core. Adara whimpered and reached out for Rhys as Javier devoured her creamy slit.

For a long moment, Rhys watched her face, savoring each sensation. Hot urgency pulsed through desire, but fear tainted the stronger emotions. She was still afraid to enjoy the feelings triggered by Javier's mouth.

*Come for me,* Rhys whispered in her mind. *Let me feel you tremble as he makes you come.*

She focused on her pussy and an image flickered to life within Rhys' mind. He not only felt her pleasure, he saw Javier's lips close around her clit and send her over the edge with the first firm pull. Rhys squeezed her nipples, echoing the deep, pulses

contracting her core. Had she sent the vision intentionally or was it just a result of her concentration?

"More," Javier murmured, his tongue lapping at the fresh rush of cream.

Rhys brushed her hair back from her face, amazed by the beauty of her passion. She rocked her hips, her eyes bright, lips parted. Javier sucked on her folds and circled her clit. Rhys began to tremble as the erotic vision took its toll.

She grasped his aching cock and guided it to her mouth. Shocked by the heat of her silken lips, Rhys pinched off the shared images. He wanted this to last more than a millisecond and he was already teetering on the brink of release. She sucked on the head of his cock until he took her face between his hands and pushed to the back of her mouth. Grasping his hips, she steadied herself as he began to move.

As she passed sensations between them, their movements synchronized. Javier thrust his tongue into her cunt, Rhys slid his cock against her tongue, and Adara undulated. Lost in the pleasure erupting around her, she surrendered to the dance.

Rhys tilted her head back and thrust deep into her mouth as he released his seed. She licked and swallowed, her nails digging into his hips. Javier sucked on her clit, making her shudder violently.

*Move out of the way.*

Dazed from his staggering orgasm, Rhys hardly recognized Javier's husky voice. Adara released his cock at exactly the same time as the growling command, so Rhys suspected she had heard Javier too.

He stepped aside and Javier lifted Adara off his face, shifting her forward, still on her hands and knees. In one agile motion, Javier rose and twisted, landing on his knees directly behind her. He forced her head down as he thrust his cock into her waiting pussy.

*Don't stop him, Adara gasped. He's not hurting me.*

Rhys had to look away. Javier pounded into her, his hands grasping her shoulders, holding her in the submissive position. She wasn't making a sound and he couldn't sense her.



*Don't block yourself off from me. Please.*

Hesitantly, she opened, letting him glimpse the tempest raging inside her. Pure unadulterated lust crashed upon her and Rhys knew it was a fraction of what Javier was feeling. She came in a hard burst of sensation and Javier went right on fucking her.

Rhys combated the brutality the only way he knew how. He saturated Adara with tenderness, soothing her spirit and strengthening her body. She arched into Javier's thrusts and tossed her head, passing on the emotional stability to Javier.

\* \* \*

"We can't leave him like this." Adara sighed as Rhys massaged her tense shoulders with his soapy hands. Javier had fucked her three times. Each time the aggression decreased and his guilt increased until he wouldn't meet her gaze. Damn the Setti and their experiments.

"He said the frenzy left him," Rhys said. "You've done enough."

She turned around and wrapped her arms around his lean waist. Needing a few minutes to themselves, they had left Javier in the guest bedroom and escaped into the adjoining bathroom for a long hot shower. "He's not out of his mind any more, but he's where I was before I met you. The Setti have warped his concept of intimacy to the point..."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to make love with him. You and me, slowly, and passionately. I don't want him to leave here remembering the emotions that controlled the past few hours."

Rhys curved his index finger beneath her chin and raised her face until she looked into his eyes. "Is that all there is to this? Are you sure you aren't --"

"Sharing my body with Javier has brought my feelings for you into crystal clear focus." She pushed onto her tiptoes so she could kiss his mouth. "There is no comparison. I love you, Rhys. I feel compassion for Javier. I want him to live an emotionally healthy, sexually fulfilled life, despite what the Setti did to him."

He returned her kiss and caressed her bottom before he replied, "Then let's show him the difference between fucking and making love."

Javier sat in the bed, his back propped against a mountain of pillows. A sheet covered him to the waist and his feline gaze followed their progress as they emerged from the bathroom.

With a white towel in stark contrast to his swarthy complexion, Rhys sat in the chair facing the bed and waited for Adara to set the stage. She had donned a terrycloth robe, the sleeves of which trailed below her fingertips.

"You've been curious about our motivation from the beginning," she said as she rolled up the sleeves on the robe. "It might help if you knew a bit more about us. Rhys is the son of a Guardian and a Terran."

"I've heard of the Guardians. Isn't Earth also referred to as Terra?"

"Yes. I was unaware of my Setti grandfather until I was kidnapped and given to Rhys. They wanted us to breed. We chose to escape instead."

He was silent for a moment as he tried to comprehend all she was leaving unsaid. "How could you be unaware of your grandfather's origins?"

"My biological father was a Setti shifter. He took on the appearance of my mother's husband and came to her bed. If my brother hadn't developed unusual abilities, we might not have realized these attacks had taken place." She sighed and sat down on the edge of the bed. "This is only one form of deception Setti hybrids have used to quietly infiltrate populations."

Understanding flashed in his gaze. "You think this is what the Setti were going to do with me? I never would have agreed to it."

"Your transformation isn't complete."

"But Kamn's is. He has already been on his first mission," Rhys interjected. "He is aware of all of this."

"The breeding program. He used his skills to seduce Beth, then they relocated him." Javier shook his head, obviously disgusted by the realization.

"Beth likely has no memory of his seduction," Adara said. "That's common as well. But you're the first generation of hybrids who have been manipulated into participation. My father knew exactly what he was doing."

"Your father was a descendant of the Supreme Midox. You don't know how many other hybrids have been coerced or manipulated." Rhys stood and moved to the foot of the bed, leaning his shoulder against the tall bedpost.

"Why are you telling me all this?" Javier's eyes gleamed with resentment.

"Information is power. The more you know the less likely you are to be deceived."

"Then you need to know I'm one of many. Garret had lab rats from countless dimensions with all sorts of abilities. He called it Project Prism. When we were at the main complex we could sense hundreds, maybe thousands of others like us."

Adara looked at Rhys. "Have you heard of Project Prism?" He shook his head.

Rhys didn't comment, so Javier went on, "From what I could gather there was some sort of shake up in the consortium and Garret was determined to find himself in a place of power once the dust settled. Project Prism was his ticket to success."

"Garret is dead, so who took over the project?" Rhys sounded doubtful.

"I only know what I'm able to overhear or strip out of the minds of the handlers."

"The same handlers who suddenly stopped feeding you," Rhys mused, rubbing the bridge of his nose. "Where was Garret's base of operation? Where is this main complex?"

"We were always sedated when we were moved from one lab to another. I'm reasonably sure the main complex is on Earth. Garret was a secretive son of a bitch. He didn't want to share his glory with anyone else."

Rhys crossed his arms over his chest. "Reasonably sure isn't a whole lot to go on, but I'll see what I can find out."

Raking his hair with his fingers, Javier cleared his throat. "I want to thank you both for tonight. I understand it wasn't natural for either of you."

"Which is why we're still here." Adara reached back and found Rhys' hand pulling him to her side. "We want to spend the rest of the night exploring sensations

and emotions that *are* natural. The compulsion is gone. I don't want you to leave here with only the memory of what the Setti forced us to do."

"It's extremely generous, but it's not necessary."

"If Adara wants you to experience the difference between fucking and making love, you might as well accept it. She can be extremely stubborn." Javier started to object again, but Adara unfastened her robe and Rhys slipped it from her shoulders. With a gentle smile bowing her lips and warmth shining in her eyes, she tugged the sheet down along Javier's naked body.

## Chapter Ten

With a guttural cry, Noretta withdrew her slender appendage from the guard's ass and let him slump to the floor beside his companions. She hadn't killed this one. Death was only amusing when she had time to savor the agony. She took a moment to reinforce the shields surrounding her cell, keeping her actions from the Guardian spawn and his whore. Suppressing all traces of her Setti nature, she smoothed her hair back from her face and straightened her uniform. The fuckfest was still in full swing. It was time to make her move.

She grabbed the living guard by the arm and dragged him out of her cell, carefully closing the shield behind her. It might have been wise to leave him mobile until she'd opened Kamn's cage, but she'd needed the energy. Once she made contact with Kamn, there was no telling when she'd be able to feed again.

"Hello?" she called out, making her voice sound tentative and unsteady. "I thought they brought someone else in last night. Are you still down here?"

"Who wants to know?"

She hid her smile before she dragged the guard in front of Kamn's doorway. "They're raiding the labs. Where did they find you?"

Kamn's gaze narrowed and he moved closer to the force field. "Who are you?"

"One of Project Prism's lab rats. Aren't you?" She licked her lips and looked around as if she expected someone to come careening down the hallway. "The queen has someone upstairs right now. Can't you sense the sexual frenzy?"

"The queen? Who are you talking about?"

"I don't know her name, but I know her energy pattern. The woman who's fucking your friend is a direct descendant of the Supreme Midox."

Color bled from his face and he grabbed the wall for support, his eyes wide and disbelieving. "You have to be wrong. I saw her... I told her about..."

"We have to get out of here. A Setti queen can expel fertilized eggs and keep right on going. They'll come for you next."

Kamn shook his head. "She isn't a Setti queen."

"If you say so." Putting on a great show of heaving the guard's shoulders off the floor, she reached the scanner with his palm and opened Kamn's cell. "Come or stay, it's up to you. But I'm out of here."

\* \* \*

Adara lowered herself onto Rhys cock, savoring the fullness and the heat. Javier pressed in close behind her, kneeling on the bed. They'd kissed and caressed, nibbled and licked, until all three of them were breathless and aching. Rhys lay on his back with his hands folded behind his head, a sexy smile curving his lips.

"Are you sure about this?" Javier whispered the question in her ear as his hands cupped her breasts.

"She's had some really wicked fantasies, my friend," Rhys said, "I think she's making the most of the situation."

Javier chuckled and went to work on her nipples. They'd already given her two orgasms. Her body rebounded with remarkable speed. Rhys slipped his hand in between their bodies and rubbed her clit in time to the firm tug of Javier's fingers. Her core fluttered and wept. For the rest of her life she would share her body and soul with Rhys alone. Tonight they would live the fantasy.

"Lean forward, sweetheart. We can't give you what you want until you do." Rhys kept his hand in place as she pressed herself against his chest. The gentle swirl of his finger did nothing to distract her from what Javier was doing.

Taking Rhys' face between her hands, she kissed him deeply, stroking his tongue with hers. She poured her heart into the kiss, revealed the depth of her affection for him and a pang of guilt pierced her heart.

*Guilt has no place here.* He took control of the kiss, sucking her lower lip into his mouth, then releasing it so he could look into her eyes. *You suggested this for Javier, but we both know you need it too. You must abandon yourself completely to passion at least once so you will be content with tenderness. You are safe in my arms. Nothing will ever change that.*

Javier moved her hair away from the nape of her neck and kissed his way down her spine. She concentrated on Rhys, the taste of his mouth, the fullness of his cock inside her. Reaching her bottom, Javier explored one round cheek and then the other. He squeezed her flesh and stroked her skin, his teeth lightly grazing.

She felt him draw her bottom cheeks apart and trace her crack with his fingertips. A warm gush of lube preceded the teasing touch of his fingers. He circled her anus, applied more lube, then pushed inside. His finger slid easily and she tightened her inner muscles.

"You like that." It wasn't a question. Javier pumped in and out, rotating his wrist to create a screwing effect. Rhys held her still, while his finger kept up the teasing orbit of her clit.

Tearing her mouth away from Rhys', she gasped for air. "I need to move!"

"Not until my cock is inside you," Javier told her.

She twisted both hands in Rhys' long hair and lowered her head to his shoulder. The position made Javier growl. More warm lube and then the wide head of his cock pushed against her.

"Relax," Rhys cautioned.

Pressure, her body stretched and stretched as his shaft drove into her passage. She trembled and pushed back, as pain curled up her spine. Javier pulled back just a little, allowing some of the lube to reposition. The stinging eased, leaving only the breath stealing fullness.

"Almost there," Javier said and she released her pent up breath.

Rhys pulled her face away from his shoulder and reclaimed her mouth. Javier withdrew until just the tip of his cock remained inside her, then filled her again. The

second time made her gasp, but there was no pain. Javier's third stroke was stronger and faster.

Caressing her face and her breasts as well as her clit, Rhys waited for her to accept Javier's penetration before he began to move. Adara was amazed by his patience and selflessness. Tightening her inner muscles, she followed Javier's next stroke. As the Phylehan pulled nearly out, she raised her hips, dragging her pussy up along Rhys' shaft. Rhys groaned and bucked into her as she thrust back down.

She found a gentle circular motion that gave them all what they needed. Sensations swirled around her, passed through her, and burst from her. Javier thrust faster, going to one knee to find the best angle. Tossing her hair out of her eyes, she clenched and trembled, desperate to come, yet never wanting it to end.

Her orgasm burst suddenly, taking both men with her. The firm contractions of her cunt milked Rhys' cock, while her ass demanded Javier's release. She shook and shuddered, oblivious to everything but the blinding pleasure.

Rhys guided her down to his chest, pressing her against his thundering heartbeat. Javier discreetly withdrew, grabbing the robe Adara had worn earlier.

"I will never forget either of you."

Refusing to release Rhys, Adara pulled him to a sitting position and wrapped her legs around his waist. "You're not getting away that easily. There are many options available to you as long as you don't squander your abilities. The Resistance needs you too badly."

He nodded and glanced toward the door. "Right now I just need to think... let all this sink in."

"The room across the hall is also a guest room," Rhys said. "You're welcome to stay there tonight. We'll discuss possible placements in the morning."

Javier's expression grew distant, then concerned. "Did you have Kamn moved to another facility?"



"Why do you ask?" Before he could answer Rhys eased Adara off his lap and swung his legs over the side of the bed, reaching for one of the discarded towels. "The whole house has gone dark. Something's wrong."

"You can't sense anyone?" Adara asked.

"Not beyond this room."

Rhys conjured clothing for himself and tossed the other discarded robe to Adara. "We don't know what's down there. Can you materialize in the stairwell?"

"Once I've been somewhere, I do fine. I just can't teleport blind."

"Well, I can't teleport at all," Javier admitted.

"Take my hand," Rhys said.

"I'd rather take hers," he said with the hint of a smile.

"Not if you'd like to survive beyond the initial flash. Adara is still learning."

Adara waited until the men flashed out and followed their psychic trail. She might be a novice, but her brother, Nyx, was a good teacher. She had learned much in the short time they had been working together.

They materialized in the stairwell and paused to scan and listen. She felt nothing and silence greeted her ears. Rhys crept down the corridor, hands loose at his sides. There should have been a guard outside the girl's doorway. Adara didn't know where they'd put Kamn.

"Damn it," Rhys muttered when he found the control room empty and all the viewscreens jammed. They ran to Kamn's containment unit and found one of the guards. Rhys deactivated the energy barrier and rushed inside. "He's alive, barely."

"But where the hell is Kamn?" Javier turned and hurried from the room. The hybrid's unit was open, but a visible barrier blocked the doorway. The other three guards lay sprawled on the floor.

It took Rhys a few minutes to find the correct frequency to disable the shield.

"This doesn't make sense," Adara knelt next to one of the guards, examining his emaciated features. "He's been drained. Why would Kamn leave with a Setti hybrid?"

"She built up her strength before she approached him," Rhys said. "Obviously she didn't want him to realize what she is." He looked at Javier. "Why would Midox Genaudi's agent want Kamn?"

"Project Prism," he stressed. "Genaudi had been looking for a way to cut Garret out of the picture since Garret's experiments started working. Kamn is a proven prototype. And he's on his way to the enemy."

After stabilizing the only surviving guard, they returned to the control room and Rhys reviewed the surveillance feed. The hybrid treated them to a smug smile before she jammed the signal.

"My father can probably tell us how she did it, but that's not nearly as important as where she's gone." Rhys deactivated the vidscreen and looked at Javier. "Can you contact Kamn telepathically?"

"I've tried. He's either sedated or out of range."

Pushing his chair back from the control consol, Rhys stood and led the others toward the stairs. "I'll summon our allies. We can hope Garret was nothing but an ambitious upstart, but that's not the Setti way. If he had labs on Earth, it's almost guaranteed there are labs in other dimensions."

"I don't think so. This was Garret's baby." The burning hatred in Javier's gaze belied his calm demeanor.

Rhys didn't argue. They emerged from the pantry and crossed the kitchen before he spoke again. "It will take a couple hours for everyone to assemble. Take that time to write down every detail you can think of regarding Project Prism. Even the most insignificant fact could be important, so leave nothing out. I'll have clothes delivered to your room."

As Javier headed toward the room Rhys indicated, Adara followed him up the final flight of stairs. "I can't help feeling like this is my fault. She was content with her pretence until I took her the tray."

Rhys slipped his arm around her shoulders and pulled her against his side. “I sensed her deception as well. The Setti are evil. No one is to blame for their actions but the Setti.”

“But why was she pretending? She couldn’t have known we would bring Kamn here. We didn’t know ourselves.”

“She was gathering information and when she had something significant to report, she left.”

“Killing three people in the process.”

He stopped at the top of the stairs and turned her to face him. “This is war, Adara. You can never let yourself forget that fact. We are fighting for our lives and our future.”

Wrapping her arms around his neck, she pressed into his warmth. “Our future together?”

He claimed her mouth in a kiss both firm and tender. *You know the answer, my love. Whatever the future brings, we will face it together.*

## **Aubrey Ross**

Aubrey Ross writes an eclectic assortment of erotic fiction. From power struggles between futuristic clans, to adventurous Mystic Keepers, her stories are filled with passion and imagination. Some of her recent awards include an EPPIE finalist, two Passionate Plume finalists, and a CAPA Nomination from the Romance Studio.

With a pampered cat curled on the corner of her desk, Aubrey dreams of fascinating words and larger than life adventures -- and wouldn't have it any other way! Visit her website at: <http://www.aubreyross.com> Join Aubrey's Newsletter group at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Anything-but-Ordinary/>.