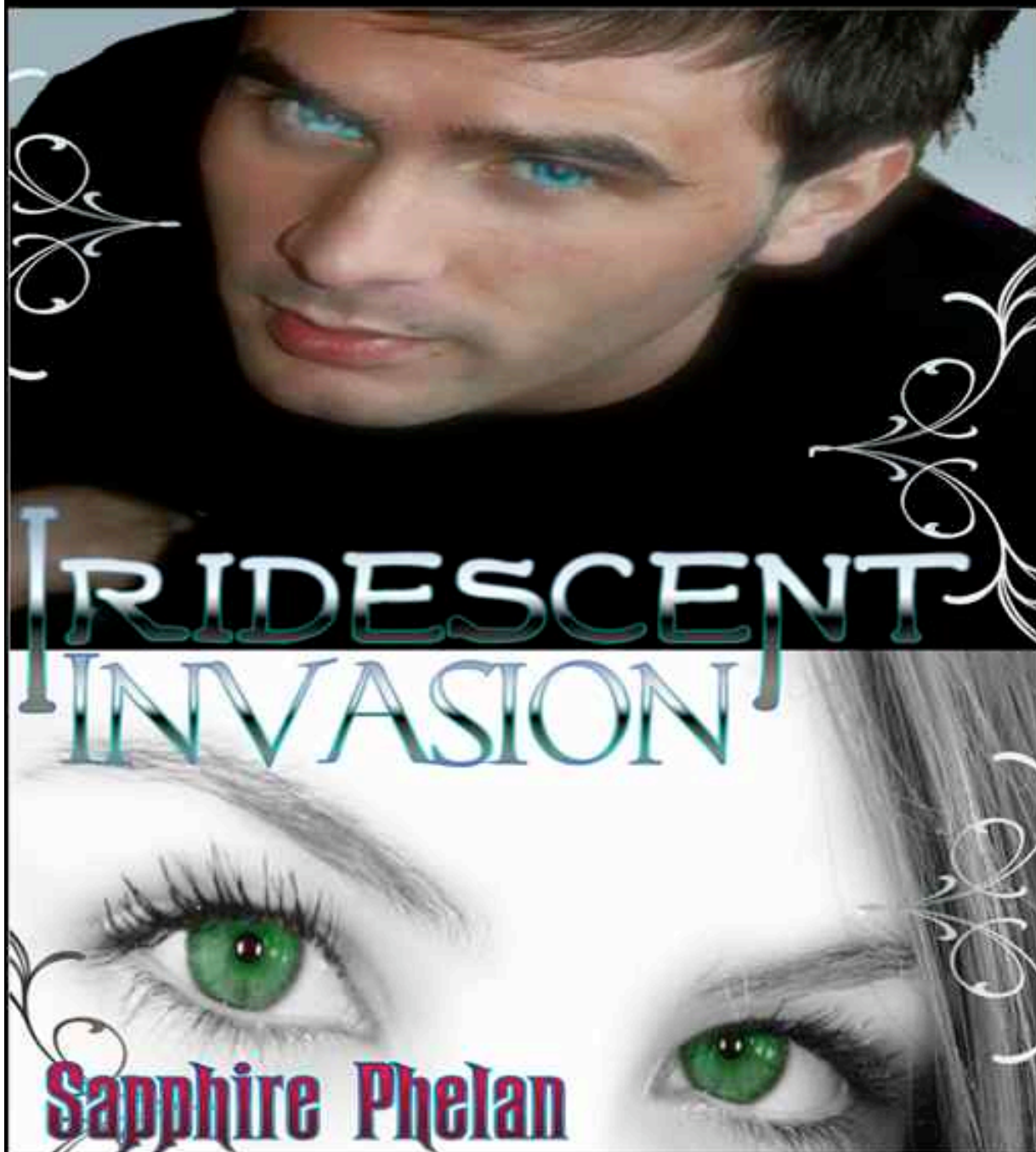


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# **IRIDESCENT INVASION**

by

Sapphire Phelan

## **IRIDESCENT INVASION**

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## **Iridescent Invasion**

A fiery ball streaked toward the mountains, hitting the ground hard and sending up an iridescent light that exploded, brightening the night sky in a rainbow shower of blue, red, green, amethyst, and orange colors. No one saw it, except a lonely coyote that paused in its hunting and stared at the spectacle for a moment. It whimpered and, frightened, quit hunting and turned tail, making for its den in a small hillside.

The light dissipated and the desert night held nothing more unusual.

\* \* \* \*

Kasee Adair climbed out of her parked car, taking care not to trip. Unaccustomed to wearing high heels, she felt like she towered on chopsticks as she wobbled slightly. She picked her way and entered the glass office building where her real estate agent resided with ten other businesses. Dressing up to the nines seemed only appropriate when signing the papers for ownership of one's first home, even if that meant donning torture devices on her feet.

An hour and half later she regretted wearing the shoes. Seated behind the driver's wheel in her car, she slipped them off and wiggled her relieved toes, feeling a few blisters that had developed on the bottoms of her sore feet. Then she toed into the ratty pair of tennis shoes she usually wore. The high heels got tossed into a jam-packed box piled on top of other packed boxes in the back seat.

She started the car and drove out into the traffic, empty except for a couple of cars. Another reason she made a decision to settle in Coyote Bluff, Arizona. A rustic town, quiet, hardly any crime to speak of occurred there, except for the occasional troublemaking teenager or the occasional bar fight in the only bar in town. Even the dry heat of the desert felt wonderful after living for thirty-eight years in the hot, muggy climate of Virginia.

After divorcing her husband, she had taken back her maiden name, quit her job, and headed off to Coyote Bluff, ready to begin a new life as a mystery author. From now on, she felt nothing in her life could go wrong.

Groceries and cleaning things needed, she stopped at a supermarket nearby and picked up what she could manage on for a few days. Then she headed out to her new home, determined to be settled in by early evening. Almost missing her turnoff on the highway, she swung the Toyota onto the off ramp and sped out of town. The town grew smaller and smaller in her rearview mirror, until as if she had said the magic word, *abracadabra*, it vanished from sight.

Stretches of cacti dotted the landscape, as did ghost flowers, poppies, sagebrush, and datura. Tumbleweeds rolled among everything, giving her quite a show. A jackrabbit caught her eye as it burst from behind a cactus, a cloud of dust rising up as it sped away. Except for it, the only other denizen of the area she saw was a red-tailed hawk circling lazily in the cloudless blue sky.

Trepidation from all the desolation surrounding her filled her, bringing home just how alone she would be out here. Back in Virginia she had friends and relatives. Here, she had nothing, just herself. Okay, there was her house. She had never owned anything by herself. Before when she owned something it had been jointly with her husband.

She frowned. She could have remained back in Virginia, kept her job and still write mysteries. Bought and owned a house there, too. It was one thing to dream of doing something, but another thing to go ahead and do it, especially when the reality of it smacked you hard in the face like a sledgehammer.

Her grip tightened on the steering wheel as resolution filled her.

*Kasee, there's nothing back in Virginia for you. Shove those stupid fears away and try to make the best of your new life!*

She pulled into a circular driveway and halted in front of a large, dark blue rancher with a red-tiled roof and a small cement stoop. A tiny rock garden with a rose bush and other flowering plants fronted it. In the backyard, yuccas and more cacti grew, along with a little patch of grass in an obvious attempt by the former owners to try and grow a lawn. Farther in the background towered the mountains, grasping at the sky like fingers.

It looked peaceful and she had to admit, surrounded by so much beauty, that she could grow to love this place quite well.

It took her most of the morning to move her stuff in and unpack it, putting it all away. Fully furnished, the house came complete with Southwestern rugs and furniture, since the former owner hadn't wanted them.

Everything done, she crashed on the large cocoa couch in the living room and closed her eyes for a second. Then realizing she had had nothing to eat since breakfast, she sprang off and headed into the kitchen, making a quick lunch of a

turkey sandwich, chips, and a soda. She stashed the leftover soda can and paper plate in the trash, stored the bag of chips in one of the cabinets over the kitchen counter, and felt ready to take on her next task.

The rest of the afternoon she spent setting up her computer in the extra bedroom she decided to use as her office, installing Microsoft Word. By the time she finished, a quick glance through the window revealed that the day had faded into early evening and she got up and went outside to lock up her car.

As she stood by the car, she heard a sound. Hardly loud at all, a mere whisper actually. She turned to where it had emanated from. In the fading light of the day's sun a coyote stood about ten feet from her, silent and staring at her. If she hadn't known it was real, she would have sworn it was a statue, as not one muscle twitched.

"Well, hello," she called out in a quiet voice. "You're a pretty little guy. Or are you a girl?"

Neither of its ears cocked toward the sound of her voice, nor did it move. Not even aggression showed; its tail hung down.

Was it normal for a wild animal to be that near and not be scared off?

Bothered by the animal's actions or, rather, non-actions, Kasee wondered if it had rabies. At least that's what they claim if a wild animal acted strange, right? She crept away from the car and toward the house. She paused as the coyote padded a couple feet nearer, then stopped. She noticed the color of its eyes then. Changing, they shifted from one color to another. Red, blue, gold, green, purple, so many variations, and each one would metamorphose to the next color in a second. Like a rainbow gone wild.

Mouth dry with fear, she tiptoed to her front door, one eye on the coyote. It stilled, but she sensed it tracking her every move. Its eyes caught the last of the fading sun as it dipped down. They shone like multifaceted jewels.

She darted inside and slammed the door shut behind her, locking it. Leaning back against it, she chided and laughed at herself. Then she saw the iridescent eyes of the animal in her mind's eye again, and she quit laughing.

After making sure that the back door was locked too, she flipped on the outside porch light and peeked out through the front room window to see if the coyote still waited out there. She didn't see it. Broom in hand, she unlocked the door and thrust her head out. The coyote had vanished.

Had she imagined the whole thing? Perhaps being all alone out here for the first time had played tricks with her mind. Deciding that going to bed early might be prudent, she took a quick shower, slipped on a nightgown, and crawled into bed. She fell to sleep.

Nightmares came, the coyote starring in them, stalking her. Iridescent colors shimmered all around them. A male voice whispered her name and she stopped,

the colors blinding her for a minute. The unknown voice came again, its whisper erotic and intoxicating, and sounding like he stood right next to her. She shivered, not even sure if that was due to fear or lust; maybe a combination of both.

\* \* \* \*

Bright sunlight shone through her bedroom window, some of it filtering through the pretty purple curtains. Kasee awoke and sat up in bed, stretching her muscles. She rose and padded to the window, and stared out at the dawn as it painted the sky like a canvas, with red, gold, and orange. The sun already blazed hot in the blue sky, cloudless as the day before.

Once she had dressed and breakfasted, she decided to check out the surrounding area outside and make doubly sure that she only imagined the animal and its weird actions last night.

The coyote was nowhere to be seen. She did see other animals: a couple of mule deer grazing in the distance, a jackrabbit hopping along, and a ponderous tortoise. Nothing looked out of the ordinary. Everything, animals included, appeared normal.

It felt wrong, though, like a painting not hung right on a wall, even though to all appearances the painting looked right. Everything seemed too . . . fake? Was that the word she searched for?

Her intuition had never failed her before. The one time she ignored it had cost her twenty years of hell with her ex-husband.

Feeling a twinge at the back of her head, she whipped around and saw the golden eagle perched on a Saguaro. It narrowed its eyes at her. She lowered her glance from the bird and caught a wild burro standing by the cactus, still as a statue. Next to the ass's front left hoof, a lone prairie dog sat up on its haunches, unafraid of both the burro and the winged predator. What further unnerved her were their eyes. In all three pairs, rainbow colors moved like shifting sands.

Just like the coyote's last night.

Chills ran up her spine.

Keeping her movements slow and steady, she backed away, her eyes trained on the animals, until she reached the safety of her back door.

Further unnerved, she saw that the eagle, donkey, and prairie dog followed her and that ten more creatures had joined them. All stayed about ten feet away, watching her. Her shaking hands fumbled with the door, but she managed to get it open after a few seconds and she rushed inside, slamming it shut and locking it behind her.

Her heart beating fast, she ran over to the sink and poured herself a glass of water for her dry mouth. With a shaking hand, she tried to take a sip and failed as

water splashed down her front. She tried again, but once again most of it didn't make into her mouth as water dribbled down her chin and chest. Giving up, she set the glass down and sagged, gripping the edge of the counter.

Minutes later she walked on trembling legs and entered the living room. She peeped through the window at the growing audience in her front yard, her hand clutching the golden drapery with a tight, sweaty fist. Predator and prey stood side by side, united and staring at the house, not moving. Though she made sure not to be seen looking out her window, Kasee sensed that they knew she stood there. By ten o'clock, she knew she had to get to her car and away from there. Something felt wrong here and she needed help. Expert help.

Car keys in hand, purse slung over her shoulder, she eased the front door open and slipped out to stand on the stoop. Not stopping to count how many animals and birds filled the yard, she left the stoop, avoiding them, and inched her way to the driver's side of the car. She unlocked the door and opened it, jumping in and pushing down the lock.

She doubted that would keep them out if they wanted to get her.

Surrounded by the living mass of furred and feathered bodies, their eyes glowed like car headlights switched on. Only a rainbow of colors swirled in each and every one, and not the bright white of a halogen.

For a moment she stared, transfixed like a deer caught in them.

Breaking free of the spell, her shaky hand shoved the key into the ignition and turned the engine over. The car roared to life and she followed the circular driveway to the road.

That's when all the creatures came to life. Noises filled the air as they rushed en masse at the car. Fear snaking up her nerves, Kasee gunned the engine and the car leaped, its wheels squealing. Multiple sounds of bodies thudded against the car as the noise of the animals grew louder. The wheels found purchase on the road and she zoomed down it, heading for Coyote Bluff. In the rearview mirror, her glance caught what remained of the creatures. Silent, they had stilled, staring in her direction. The bodies of the dead ones lined the driveway.

Shaking hands on the steering wheel and eyes on the road, she drove to town, faster than when she had left it yesterday morning. She slowed down, though, when she spied the sheriff's office in a white adobe building.

She parked her car between a patrol car and a large brown pickup truck. Still shaken, she shut off the car and sat there for a few minutes, her forehead against the steering wheel. Eventually her trembling limbs soothed enough for her to make an effort to get out of the car.

Climbing out of the Toyota, she trembled, and then moved, walking on wobbly legs to the sheriff's office. Just as she touched the doorknob the door swung open. A tall man with short, raven-black hair and azure eyes met her at the door, his hand



held out. In the other hand, a cup of coffee nestled, steam rising from it. The coffee perfumed the air with a fragrant odor, something that she would have enjoyed breathing in, loving coffee, but her weird experience had her too unnerved.

“Hello, I’m Sheriff Drake Whiting,” he said with a cool smile. “You were speeding there pretty fast.”

She blushed. “I’m sorry, Sheriff. I don’t do that normally. I’m more shaken up than you can imagine.”

“What’s wrong?”

The shaking became worse and she knew that her legs would crumble under her any minute. Tears welled up in her eyes and her lips trembled. With a hand on the small of her back, the sheriff guided her to a chair facing a desk.

“Here, sit down,” he said in a more gentle tone.

She melted into the seat. The sheriff filled a Dixie cup with some cold water from a nearby water fountain and handed it to her. Her nervous hands cradled it. She stared down at it.

“Okay, tell me what’s wrong.”

She looked up and her gaze caught his eyes, concern in them. She knew that disbelief battled with fear in her own green ones. Her nervous fingers fiddled with the cup, spilling some of the water. She flushed, embarrassed.

His hand reached out and took the cup away from her, setting it on the desk. Then he crouched down by her chair, his hands covering hers. She stared into his eyes, confused, but taking comfort from his gentle touch.

“Is it your husband,” he asked in a gentle tone, “or your boyfriend? Did he threaten you?”

She withdrew her hands from his. “No, nothing like that. I’m divorced, and I doubt my ex-husband would care enough to threaten me. No, it’s—”

She broke off. How could she tell him about what she had seen and heard? He would think she was some loony woman. Hell, maybe she *was* loony.

A deep breath and everything rushed out, as she began from the beginning, starting with the coyote and ending with her fleeing to get help. Her body sagged in the chair. Telling someone had eased some of the trembling fear in her. Not most of it, but a tiny bit.

She gave a small smile. “I’ll take that water now, Sheriff Whiting.”

He handed her the cup and she tossed the entire contents down her throat. She wished it had been something stronger as she crushed the cup in her fist.

Her hand unfurled. The crushed cup dropped to the floor.

Again, she saw the iridescent eyes. Chills raced along her nerves and the shaking returned as she cried, her fists pressed against her lips.

“Oh God, oh God!”

He folded her into his arms, patted her back, and soothed her with sounds of comfort. A scent, like that of aftershave lotion, rose from his skin and she breathed it in.

She pulled away and wiped at the tears with the backs of her hands.

"I'm sorry, Sheriff," she said with a sniff. "I'm not usually like this."

He patted her shoulder. "It's all right, Mrs.—?"

"Kasee Adair. Adair's my maiden name. I took it back after my divorce. Kasee is spelled with a double e, instead of a y."

He smiled, and stood up. Just then, a tall, gangling man and a short woman with tight graying curls walked in. The woman was a little on the plump side, while the man looked crumpled, both the uniform and his skin. A small blond mustache dusted the man's upper lip.

Both noticed her.

Sheriff Whiting introduced them. "This is Tim Powers, my deputy, and Lisa King, who takes care of the office."

Looking more cop-like, he spoke to his people. "I'm taking my patrol car and going to follow Ms. Adair back to her place to check it out. It seems she's having some problems."

He gave out the address where she lived, just in case. Kasee would have given out her phone number, but the phone company wouldn't be installing the phone for another week. This further enforced to her how really alone living by herself out there in the desert could be, with no method of communication to contact the world if problems came up.

Tim frowned. "I could do that, Sheriff."

"No, just stay here. If there are any problems, I'll radio you for backup."

He helped Kasee out of the seat and followed as she retraced her steps back out the door.

Each climbed into their vehicles, started the engines and moved away from the curb. In minutes, they both roared down the highway, heading for her place.

Giving a glance at her rearview mirror she saw the patrol car behind her. She thought the sheriff was good-looking. Oh, not in the sexy movie star kind of way, but more in a rugged, Indiana Jones way. Real. Yeah, he had a real nice body, tall and muscular. She remembered also that his eyes had been a deep, dark blue. She had always liked blue eyes, too.

In spite of all the terror happening to her in the past couple days, she now had something else to think about other than iridescent eyes.

She gave another quick glance at the rearview mirror and sighed.

*Yeah, right, and you think you're his kind of woman?*

Directing her eyes to the road ahead, she tucked away all thoughts about the sheriff and began to wonder what they both might encounter at the house instead.

When both cars finally reached the circular driveway, she drove in and parked in front of the house. Sheriff Whiting pulled in behind her and cut his engine off.

Kasee stepped out and swept an amazed stare. Not a single animal or bird, dead or alive, littered the driveway or front yard. The area seemed peaceful and quiet, as if what had happened to her had been some mad dream.

No doubt what Sheriff Whiting would think about her. Loony, really loony.

She turned as she heard the crunch of boots behind her.

"Well, Ms. Adair, where's all those animals and birds you mentioned?" Drake Whiting asked.

"They were here! I swear, I even ran some over, so there should be bodies of dead ones littering the driveway!"

His eyes narrowed, darting all over the driveway and the front yard.

"Nothing here now."

"I'm sorry, Sheriff Whiting, it looks like you followed me all the way out here for nothing." She felt hot with embarrassment. "But I know I didn't dream it all."

"I don't think you're . . . imagining things, Ms. Adair," he said, as if trying to appease her. "Before I head back to town, I'll check out your house and make sure everything's okay in there."

He walked her up to the front door. She unlocked and flung it open. He entered first, cautious, and checked out the house. Finding nothing, he waved her inside.

Kasee felt like hiding. She had brought an officer of the law out here because she saw some animals acting out of the norm. Instead, nothing at all. Not even a gopher dancing a jig.

"Since I got you out here for nothing, the least I could do is offer you some coffee or tea." A thought came to her as her own hunger pangs hit her. "Did you have lunch yet?"

Sheriff Whiting shook his head. "Actually, I hadn't. My deputy and Lisa had taken their lunch first. That's what they were coming back from."

Kasee broke out in a smile. "Then the least I can do is feed you. I can make us some sandwiches. Is tuna salad all right? We can have potato chips and soda with that. How's that sound?"

"Sure, sounds fine to me, Ms. Adair."

"Call me Kasee."

"And I'm Drake," he said with a grin that suddenly made him appear boyish.

Her own smile growing wider, Kasee ushered him toward the couch and then headed into the kitchen to make their lunch.

She whipped up the tuna salad quickly, spread it on slices of wheat bread, and put the sandwiches on a couple of blue plastic plates, along with a handful of potato chips. After filling two glasses to the brim with soda, she arranged

everything on a tray. About to head back into the living room, something caught her eye through the small window above the sink and she turned her full gaze on it.

Something pressed against the glass, peering in at her with an intense look. The tray with its contents slipped from her grasp and fell to the floor with a loud crash. Soda splashed against her shoes and the bottom of her jeans legs, while the tuna salad and potato chips decorated the blue and white linoleum floor.

“What happened?” Drake yelled as he bolted into the kitchen.

Silent, she pointed at the window with a shaking finger, her eyes wide with fear.

The face of a large golden eagle stared in at them. Something else seemed to be looking out of the bird’s eyes, which appeared round and unblinking, not one color, but a multitude of many, assorted ones. Iridescent, exactly like the other creatures’ earlier, and exactly like the coyote’s last night, further proof that she hadn’t imagined anything.

Kasee spoke, her voice trembling. “I said there were animals and birds this morning. They all had that same dead stare.” She choked off, wrapping her arms around her body. Fear tied a big knot in her stomach.

That’s what seemed wrong with the eyes of all the animals and birds. Dead stare, like the stare of a zombie. Or a puppet, controlled by something else. She felt sick to her stomach and tightened the hold on her body.

Drake drew down the blinds at the window, blocking them from the eagle’s sight. “There,” he said, “now we can’t see the eagle and it can’t see us.” He stepped over to the back door and grasped the doorknob.

“What are you doing?” she asked with a frantic voice.

His glance caught hers. “I’m going to scare off that bird.”

“Wait, I mean, that’s a big bird. An eagle, for God’s sake! And you saw those eyes. I know you did! Eagles don’t have eyes with colors that keep changing.”

He shrugged. “Yeah, I know. But I have to do something.” He gave an engaging grin and patted his holstered gun. “Besides, I have a gun. I don’t think I’ll have to use it on the bird, though. Seeing me approach will scare it off naturally. It’s just a bird, weird eyes or not.” He yanked the door open and stepped outside, the door closing shut behind him.

Kasee stood by the door, pressed against it, and waited for his return. Her heart thumped in her chest, erratic with fear. Then she realized, that even with a loaded gun, Sheriff Whiting was out there alone. If something happened to him—

She flung the door open and stepped outside.

Drake stood a few feet away from the eagle. Pressed flat against the window, its large wings were spread out wide on either side. It looked odd like that, like some strange decoration. At the crunch of Drake’s boots it dropped to the ground and whipped around, facing him. Its eyes stared, unblinking, rainbow colors like a pair of crazy kaleidoscopes: a dead stare. Like the eagle itself wasn’t there. Kasee saw

something else inside those eyes, controlling it. Whatever, whoever did the controlling, didn't know much about how an eagle would act with humans. Unless, of course, the puppeteer didn't really care one way or another.

The knot of fear in her stomach grew larger.

Drake flapped his hands at it. "Shoo, shoo! Get!"

It sat there, unmoving, and just regarded them with that stare.

Drake took a few steps forward, repeating the same shooing movements and sounds.

The eagle still didn't respond. Not even one feather moved.

Drake backstepped a bit.

"Damn! The bird should have flown off, frightened by this close contact to a human. It just isn't . . . normal."

"You think so?"

Drake took his gun and pointed it at a nearby cactus. He fired. The bullet left a hole in the spiny plant. But it didn't do much good, for the eagle remained still, staring at the both of them.

Damn creepy.

He replaced the gun in its holster and motioned her to follow him back inside. He closed the door behind them, locking it.

"This way," he whispered.

They moved through the house silently, leaving through the front door. Drake opened the door on the driver's side of his patrol car and slipped in. Key in the ignition, he turned the engine over.

Nothing.

He tried again.

The same thing: nothing.

Drake climbed out and shut the door softly. His glance caught Kasee's. "Do you have the key to your car on you?"

"No, but I can get it. It's on a small table just inside, by the front door."

She ran inside and grabbed the set of keys off the table. At her car, she handed them over to Drake, the ignition key separated from the rest. He stuck it in the ignition and tried to roll over the engine, but just like with his, the same thing happened to her car. Nothing.

A warm breeze whistled between them, lifting up a lock of her hair. They bolted for the front door, got indoors, and slammed the door behind them, locking it.

Both ended back in the kitchen. Kasee dropped into out of the chairs at the kitchen table.

Radio in hand, Drake pushed the call button. Nothing but static answered. He tried again. Static.

Anger blazed in his eyes. “That’s it! Car engines suddenly dead, my damn radio making nothing but static, and eagles acting out of the ordinary!”

Drawing his gun out of its holster, he opened the back door and stepped outside, motioning Kasee to remain inside.

She pressed against the door and wondered what was happening outside with Drake. Wondered how her world could turn upside down in twenty-four hours.

A knock came at the door.

“Kasee, it’s me. Let me in.”

She opened the door a crack and saw Drake, his gun back in its holster. He pushed past her. She shut and locked the door behind him.

His eyes further unnerved her. Fear colored them. She also noticed that his tanned skin had bleached out to the white of a ghost.

“There are more of them out there.”

His hands caught her shoulders and the fingers dug into the flesh, hurting her.

“Their eyes! Oh God! Every eye is shifting like some fucking rainbow.”

The knot in her stomach tightened, hurting her even more than his fingers digging into her shoulders.

Drake kept trying his radio most of the day, but never reached anything but the familiar static. Finally, because they never had lunch and it was fast approaching evening, Kasee made some toasted cheese sandwiches and chicken noodle soup. Though neither felt hungry, they made an effort to eat something.

The dinner eaten and dishes washed and dried, they both went into the living room, where Kasee turned on the television. White static filled the screen. She clicked the TV back off.

Drake stood at the window. He didn’t attempt to lift up the curtain and look out, just kept his face toward it. Kasee touched him on the shoulder.

“I’m sorry—”

He whirled around. “I feel so helpless! Here I am, this badge pinned to my shirt, and I can’t do a fucking thing, not even get our vehicles working so I can get you out of here! Some damn sheriff I am!”

He threw himself into the nearby chair that faced the couch.

“It’s all right, Drake,” said Kasee in a quiet voice. “I’m going to bed and try and get some sleep. Maybe tomorrow morning things will look better or one of the vehicles will start.”

She broke off as he seemed oblivious to her. Hurt by it and frightened, she turned and ran to her bedroom.

What hurt further was he didn’t even appear to notice her leaving.

\* \* \* \*

Kasee woke up as something or someone seemed to be shaking her. A man's voice penetrated her sleeping brain. Sitting up, the glow from her bedside lamp revealed Drake as he stood by the bed. She brushed some hair out of her face.

"I'm going outside to check the vehicles," he stated.

She blinked the sleep out of her eyes. "What?"

"I thought I heard something around the vehicles and that worries me. Come, I want you to lock the door behind me when I step outside and to let me back in."

He threw her a robe, which she kept hung on a hook on the back of her door, and left the bedroom without waiting for her.

"Wonderful," she muttered, as she drew on the robe over her nightgown. "And I thought he had a great bod."

On bare feet, she ambled down the hallway and watched as he slipped outside, his gun cocked and ready. She locked the door behind him and waited.

It seemed like forever, but she knew it had to be no more than a few minutes when the knock came.

"Yes?" she whispered.

"Kasee, it is me."

Unlocking, she opened the door and his shadowed form slipped past her. She pushed the door shut and relocked it.

"Everything okay?" she asked.

She couldn't see much more than the outline of his body in the dark living room.

"Everything is fine." His voice floated out of the dark like a disembodied spirit.

For a moment, her hair rose up on the back of her neck. She clicked on the lamp that stood on the end table near her. The soft glow lit up Drake and she noticed him staring at her, an indefinable look in his eyes. His hand reached out and touched her face, the caress soft like a feather. She shivered, but a heat began to flicker inside her.

His touch had an effect on her. He didn't seem like the jerk he had been earlier, either. More like the nicer sheriff he had been before they had gotten to her place.

Drake edged closer. His arms encircled her body and drew her to him. His heat penetrated hers and the tiny flicker blazed into something bigger, like a forest fire out of control.

Whoa. Did she think nice, how about sexier?

"Kasee," he said, his gentle voice erotic in its cadence.

His hands slipped one arm under her knees and the other around her back, then lifted her up and carried her from the living room and down the darkened hallway that led to her bedroom. She thought for a second that maybe she should protest, but that thought flew from her mind as the heat inside her grew even hotter with passion. Once there, he nudged the door open with his foot. He laid her on the bed

and stripped off her robe and nightgown. She didn't protest. Just as quick, he divested his own clothing and boots off, dropping them in a pile on the floor.

In the lamp's glow, she saw his nude body. Muscular, without an ounce of fat; he looked like he worked out.

*And I thought he was superb with his uniform on.*

He sat beside her on the bed, his weight pressing the mattress down. She shifted closer to him and ran her fingers through the mat of thick, black hair on his muscular chest. It arched down to his stomach, and from there, continued to the thatch of dark pubic hair, from which his thick cock jutted up, hard and magnificent. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. She almost wanted to reach over and give its tip a kiss.

Lust pooled between her thighs, causing a pleasant ache she hadn't known for quite a while. He trailed butterfly kisses across her left breast, molding his lips around the nipple, licking and nipping. Kasee moaned and arched her back, giving him easier purchase to suckle it. The nipple hardened into a tight little bead, causing another ache to join the first pool of heat between her thighs. She rubbed her thighs together, seeking relief. Instead, the rubbing made the fire inside her hotter.

His lips left her breast and traveled up her neck, stopping to suckle at the pulse there, and then moved up until they met her parted lips. His tongue entered, its tip skimming along the walls of her mouth, until it met her own tongue in an erotic dance.

Pressed onto her back, Kasee enjoyed the feel of him as his heat covered hers. She parted her legs and felt his hand dipped beneath her pubic mound, searching for the damp folds of her cleft. A single finger inserted, he began to fuck her in a parody of what she wanted his cock to do. A second one joined the first, and both plundered her moist depths. She moaned, and he absorbed it, swallowing it whole. Her cries grew more frantic as his thumb found her sensitive nub, stroking with slow, purposeful movements. He never broke off the kiss, but swallowed each screaming moan.

"Please, Drake," she begged as his lips drew away.

She arched against the flat of his palm.

He whispered into her ear, his breath hot and blowing like a soft breeze. "Yes."

Taking her lips with his again, he stretched his body over hers, rising up on his arms. Her legs parted wide, he positioned the head of his cock at her wet folds, the juices of her pleasure slicking him. A groan erupted from him as he eased himself into her.

Eyes closed, she felt the hardness of his cock as it filled her. She clenched her pubic muscles and heard with satisfied pleasure the moan he released.



The light from the lamp formed a halo around his head and her eyes feasted on high cheekbones rough with a five o'clock shadow, sensual lips, a hawk nose and square jaw. Passion created taut lines in his face, his eyes clenched shut.

"You feel so good, warm and wet," he said in a raspy voice. "All mine. His head dipped and he nipped her bottom lip with his teeth. "I love you."

She pressed the flat of her palms against his chest and stilled.

"What did you say?"

His eyes opened. "I love you, Kasee. Forever. Flesh to flesh, heart to heart. You are mine."

It should have frightened her, especially as they had only just met each other earlier that day. Why, she realized, she had allowed him to penetrate her without a condom on his penis even. But his words just inflamed her all the more. Not logical, but she found she didn't care, as she wanted him to stay connected to her. Her fingers felt along his back, finding and cupping his tight ass. One finger inched into the crack there, skimming the hole.

"Make me soar," she said with a husky whisper. "Take me as high as you can."

His nostrils flared and his eyes darkened. With a fluid movement of his hips, he thrust in deeper, then with slow deliberation, withdrew. Like a nuclear reaction, his thrusts grew faster and harder, the sensations she felt spiraling out of control. Her hips moved to meet his, aching to keep his hardness inside her.

Sweaty flesh, their cries and moans, and the perfume of sex filled the air, joining the sounds of slapping flesh. Eye to eye, neither of them seemed to want to miss what the other felt.

Just when she thought she could take no more, the explosion came. A light flashed and she closed her eyes as every nerve in her body tingled, her consciousness seeming to transcend to another, ethereal plane of existence. There was no time to recover when Drake drove into her one last time and held himself above her, his face taut with his release as a primal cry burst from his throat, filling her with his come.

Both remained still as the climax slowly burned itself out and a pleasant lassitude settled over them. Still joined, Drake rolled to the side, turning Kasee so they faced each other. Pulling the covers over their bodies, he gathered her close and held her. He closed his eyes, but not before she thought the color of his blue eyes had changed. But he drifted off to sleep before she could ask and not wanting to wake him, she switched the lamp off. Her gaze focused on his face, she watched as shifting shadows made a black and white harlequin out of it.

Finally, she, too, fell asleep.

\* \* \* \*

The mattress jiggled and through the vestiges of sleep in barely opened eyes, Kasee noticed Drake's darkened form stealing away. The light came on in the bathroom. Not even bothering to draw on her discarded robe lying crumpled on the floor, she clicked on the lamp and slipped out of bed to investigate.

She stood in the frame of the doorway and caught him staring at his reflection in the mirror of the medicine cabinet that hung over the sink. His hand traced his face as if he couldn't believe in its reality. She couldn't see his eyes, though, and she moved to stand just inside the bathroom.

"Anything wrong?" she asked, reaching out a hand to touch his back.

He whirled around. Kasee thought for a moment that his eyes reflected the light like faceted jewels.

"Drake?"

He took a step forward. "Yes?"

"I asked is there anything wrong?"

"No, nothing is wrong." He laughed.

The laugh sounded rusty, as if he wasn't use to doing it.

"Did you know that the light from the bedroom forms a soft glow around your lovely body?" His voice held erotic promise in it.

Her amused glance caught the jutting hardness between his thighs. "I see that turns you on, as you're rising to the occasion."

"Turn. . .on?"

"Oh, come on, quit playing around! You know you want me."

His gaze looked down at his swollen erection. He raised his head, a wicked smile on his lips and his eyes gleaming with lust. His hands grabbed her at the shoulders and he drew her to him. Her body pressed against his, she felt his cock searching the softness between her thighs, as if it knew it belonged there. Like she belonged to him.

He swept her up in his arms and carried her back to bed, placing her down on the mattress and joining her.

Flesh rubbing flesh, sensations sparking from his body to hers, as once again, Kasee discovered the odor, taste, and sight of him.

He thrust into her moistness like a wild thing, his possession hard and fast, the male in him seeking the heart of what made her female—his female.

His eyes locked onto hers, as if he needed to know that what he felt also mirrored in hers, too.

"I love you, Drake," she panted, her hands stroking his back.

She bit his shoulder, delighting in the exotic flavor of his skin. With a laugh, she gave him a 'come hither' look as her tongue skimmed her lips, wetting them.

A smile flitted across his lips as he took command of hers, his tongue shoving itself into her mouth and finding hers.

She knew then that nothing mattered but him—not even the terror that awaited them outside. She just clasped him so tight that she heard his heart thudding. Besides passion, the sound brought comfort. She had never felt both before.

Again she came, with him finding his own shuddering release not long after. Her eyes stared into his and noticed the change in them. No longer blue, they shifted in a rainbow pattern.

Iridescent. Like the animals and the eagle.

Oh, God.

The fear of the past couple days returned and she struggled, trying to fling him off of her.

“Let me go!” she screamed. “Get off of me.”

But he held her down and began to thrust again. Unable to deny the heat flaring up between them, her hips moved with his and when he came, she cried out her own release. Afterwards, shame filled her that he could do that to her.

The taut lines on his face softened and his body sagged onto hers. His breathing gentled.

“Who are you?” asked Kasee. “Just what the hell are you?”

He lifted his head and cocking it to one side, stared down into her eyes.

“I am Drake?”

“No, you’re not. Your eyes betrayed you. What did you do to the real Drake?”

“He is here. Still inside. This is his body. I took it.” A finger touched her lips with a gentle caress. “To be with you. Forever.”

“Get off me.”

He rolled off her and over to the edge of the bed, surging off of the mattress. He stood and stared down at her, and then he smiled. It came slow, as if he had never done it before. It lit up his entire face. The colors in his eyes changed, rotating from red to blue to green to gold to purple. They repeated like that, over and over.

“What are you?” she asked again.

She sat up and covered herself with a blanket.

“I am from not here, not this world. I come from far away. There.”

He pointed up toward the ceiling.

“What?”

“Another world, galaxies away.”

“From outer space?” She blinked. “Why did you come here? To fuck me personally?”

He shook his head. “No. I come with others of my kind.” His face drew closer. “To take over your world. Your forms.”

Her mouth suddenly dry, she dropped the blanket and climbed off the bed. She rifled in her closet and took out a pair of jeans and a T-shirt. She dressed, keeping her eyes trained on him.

“An invasion! You’re going to take us over, like pod people or something. Right?”

Frown lines formed on his forehead. “Pod people? I do not understand.”

“Like you did to Drake’s body, take it over. You sound like a parasite.”

“At first, I was like my kind. I agreed to take this world. Then I saw you and wanted.” He shook his head again. “Now, I no longer want to take over your world. But I still want you.”

He took a few steps around the bed, his hand reaching out to her.

Kasee held up her hands as if warding him off. Her eyes widened as she saw that his organ had hardened again, rising from the nest of pubic hair like a snake from a basket.

“Where are the others?”

He paused, the rainbow glow dimming in his eyes.

“They were here last night. Today, too. But, I have not seen or felt them since I joined with the eagle.”

He maneuvered the last few feet around the bed. His hands cupped her shoulders as he peered into her face.

“I think they go to the habitation of humans.” His eyes reflected luminescence. “To take over.”

“Oh, God, no,” she said. “The town.”

She got him to put on Drake’s clothes. Then, after grabbing her car keys, she led him outside into the night. A quick glance discovered the full moon, white as a magnolia petal and shining. It hovered in the ebony night, surrounded by the occasional brilliance of a star. Even with the moonlight, darkness blanketed the road toward town, revealing nothing. The heat of the day had cooled down and felt comfortable.

Kasee glanced at the alien-possessed Drake. “Will my car start?”

“Yes. No problem.”

She got in and turned the engine over. The Toyota roared to life, eerie-sounding in the still desert night. He climbed in on the passenger’s side and she had to seatbelt him in. Then she drove off, the car’s wheels following the circular drive to the road. After turning left and zooming down the highway, she peered at her passenger. He sat still, stiff, his eyes staring straight ahead. As if he sensed her eyes on him, his head rotated. Luminous eyes reflected and brightened up the dark interior of the car like a pair of flashlights switched on, except these flashlights illuminated in many different colors. A shiver rippled up her spine. Just as quick, heat replaced it. The heat of attraction.

*Oh, God, I want him. But that's not Drake. That's it. It's because it's Drake's body. I'm not attracted to something inhuman, something that is part of a horrible invasion of Earth.*

*Quit lying, Kasee, you never felt any attraction for Drake Whiting, other than as an attractive man.*

No, she never felt that instant heat of passion for the human sheriff, not unlike the alien that inhabited his body.

*Great, I'm falling for a parasitical ET, she thought.*

"Yes," he replied in a quiet tone. "I know."

Shocked that he knew her thoughts, she set her gaze back on the road ahead and avoided any more eye contact with him. She could feel his regard on her, and all the while she kept her gaze on the road.

\* \* \* \*

Kasee drove at 50 mph, when suddenly she had to jam her foot on the brake. The car slid slightly to the side and she almost hit an abandoned patrol car, its driver's door ajar, and its headlights banishing the darkness on the bit of road it sat on. It had been abandoned only a few feet away from town.

No one stood by it or nearby. Chills sent freezing fingers along her nerves. This did not look good. Not good at all. Obviously something had happened to Sheriff Whiting's deputy, Tim Powers.

She got out of the car and walked over to the patrol car. Her shoe hit something small. It skittered under the car. She bent over and picked up another of the small metal things and in the glare of her car's headlights saw that it was the shell of a bullet. The deputy had been firing shots off at something.

Drake the alien spoke up, scaring her. "They now have a human. And maybe more by now." He stood next to her.

"Come on, let's get back in the car," she said, heading back to the Toyota.

She climbed in the driver's side while he got in the opposite side. This time he belted himself in without any help from her.

Hands gripping the steering wheel, Kasee closed her eyes and took a couple of breaths, trying to calm herself.

A hand touched her shoulder. "Do not worry, I am with you. We will stop them."

Her eyes searched his. The colors swirled and glowed, reminding her of a kaleidoscope she had played with as a child.

"I know how to," he said.

It sounded like a promise.

She started the car again and drove it around the other vehicle, returning back onto the pavement.

Her thoughts flitted through her mind. When she was a child, she thought that monsters were real. They haunted her nights and brought on nightmares. Then she grew older and replaced them with human monsters. Like child molesters, murderers, and serial killers. Monsters that really populated the Earth, that one knew how to fight. The other types of her childhood wedged in a forgotten part of her mind where they belonged, in movies, books, and dreamscapes. Imagination. Not reality.

Until now. Except she never dreamed that she would be attracted to a monster, that she allowed it to make love to her

Surely she couldn't be the kind of woman to want something evil? Even if that something had given her the most mind-blowing sex that she ever had.

His hand caressed her jean-covered thigh, sending a shiver of pleasure inside her.

"Good, it feels good. Yes? We feel good together." His voice sounded like dark chocolate, sensual, and definitely not fat-free.

They arrived in town and discovered it dark as the night. Streetlights, the lights of homes, everything that banished the darkness no longer seemed to be operating. In Coyote Bluff, the night now ruled.

Kasee's foot slammed on the brake.

The twin beams of her headlights lit up a crowd of people, animals and birds. All stood there, silent and staring with eyes of shifting colors. Red, blue, green, gold, and purple, glowing like shining lamps switched on, the only lights still glowing in the darkened town.

"Stay here, Kasee."

The Drake alien got out of the car and faced the others. He picked his way over to the crowd and halted right in front of them.

Keeping the car windows rolled up as she didn't trust any of the aliens, she couldn't hear what was being said. She recognized the deputy, Tim Powers, as he left the crowd and joined Drake. They talked; at least she assumed they did, maybe by telepathy. Their mouths remained closed. Powers' head turned and looked her way every once in a while. She huddled deeper into her seat and avoided his eyes.

Then he merged back into the crowd. Colors of all kinds rose like a fog bank over the crowd, brightening and then dulling down.

"What's going on?" she muttered to herself, sitting up and peering through the windshield.

A strange glow of iridescent colors in an octopus-like shape, long tendrils waving, rose over Drake. It blanketed over the crowd's colorful fog and expanded, growing larger and larger, until it masked all of the fog and them from her sight. A

high-pitched sound ripped through the air. Kasee covered her ears as it penetrated the car. The sound pitched higher, almost ultrasonic, except she could still hear it.

Agonized voices joined the sound, rising higher and higher. Glass in nearby windows shattered, showering the sidewalks, the street, and inside the buildings. Realizing what was happening, Kasee leaped from the car, barely in time as the glass in the front and back windows and all four side windows shattered into tiny pieces, spraying everywhere. She lay on the ground, tiny pieces of glass in her hair and peppering both her clothing and skin.

Suddenly, with a high-pitched whine, the colors broke apart and dissipated like ghosts vanishing.

The townspeople and animals milled around, looking confused. Kasee stood up, dusted, and picked off the glass as best as she could. She noticed a coyote standing next to an old woman, while a collie lay next to a jackrabbit. It hadn't sunk in yet that predator and prey hovered next to each other.

Suddenly, the jackrabbit quivered, its twitching nose testing the air. Its eyes widened with fear as it saw both the dog and the coyote near it. With a thrust of its hind legs it hopped away. The coyote yipped and loped off after it. Bit by bit, wild animals ran off into the night and headed back to the desert, leaving only the humans and a few pets.

Her glance caught Tim Powers kneeling over a still, dark form in the street.

"No." The word came out in a whispered hiss.

She raced over.

Drake lay on the ground, his eyes closed, silent and frighteningly still. Kasee dropped to her knees by him.

"What happened?" asked Tim as he looked at her, sounding lost and scared. "Why's Sheriff Whiting on the ground?"

"The last thing I remembered were a bunch of animals in the middle of the road as I drove to your place, then the next thing, I'm here in town and the sheriff's on the ground." His voice rose. "Just what the hell happened tonight?"

"Hush," she admonished.

She placed a hand over Drake's heart. She touched his lips and found them cold as ice, but a slight breath issued from between them.

Alive. Barely. Did the alien remain inside, or was it just Drake only?

"Drake," she entreated. "Open your eyes and look at me."

His eyelids fluttered open. Drake's blue didn't peek out, but the swirling rainbow colors of the alien. He lifted up a hand and touched her cheek, brushing away a miniscule sliver of glass. Then the hand remained there, cupping her cheek.

"Kasee." Her name came out like a benediction.

His fingers left her cheek and drifted down her throat, pausing at where her breasts jutted.

"The others are gone. They will not bother this world again."

"Where did they go?" she pressed.

"There." A single finger pointed up.

She frowned. "But you're still here."

A weak smile formed on his lips. "Yes. I can not leave."

Her frown deepened, then disappeared as she realized why.

"You are staying because of me. That's it, isn't it?"

She shook her head, the ends of her hair whipping his face. "You can't use Drake's body. It's his."

The smile became wry. "I know. I just wanted a few more minutes with you before I dissipate."

"Dissipate?"

"Without a body, I can not survive in your atmosphere."

He drew her head down. His lips captured hers. The kiss deepened, as if he wanted a memory of her flavor to remember. Then he put her away from him. His eyes glistened with tears.

"Now, I go . . . happy. I love you, my Kasee."

A glowing shape of multifaceted colors rose from Drake's body and swirled up into the sky. One tendril stroked her face in a final caress, erotic in its simplicity. Then, like a ghost, it faded away until nothing remained of it.

Kasee stood up and dimly noticed that Drake sat up. He managed to stand up, though his legs wobbled.

"Kasee Adair?"

He sounded confused and lost as he looked at her.

"Sheriff Whiting? It's really you this time—right?" Tim Powers knelt by Drake.

"Yes, it's me, Tim." Drake sounded weary.

He looked at Kasee, a question in his eyes.

She shook her head as tears welled up in her eyes.

"I'm sorry, but I can't stay to explain anything. Not right now."

She backstepped to her car. Luckily, the glass that shattered in her windows mostly went outwards and not into her car. She brushed what little there was out, climbed in and drove away.

\* \* \* \*

A week later Kasee packed all her belongings to move back to Virginia. As she did so, she caught pieces of the news on the television. No one yet understood exactly what had happened in Coyote Bluff. The news reporter thought maybe a mass self-hypnosis was the reason, that the whole town imagined itself to be the brunt of the beginning of an invasion from outer space.



“Personally,” said the reporter with a wide grin, “I think the whole town went on some all-night binge, but don’t quote me.”

Kasee shut off the television and snorted. “Binge, huh? Maybe some alien ought to take over your body.”

She picked up a box jam-packed with some things, and then put it back down as she felt dizzy for a moment. She sat down on the couch, puzzled. Since nothing else happened, she stood up, but sat back down again when the dizziness returned in full force. Reclining on the couch full length, she closed her eyes until it went away. The dizziness gone, she found she could continue with packing up her car.

Kasee just hoped she hadn’t picked up some virus or something. After all, what else could it be?

\* \* \* \*

Five months later in Richmond, Virginia, Kasee walked by the Children’s Farm in Maymont Park. Alone. Instead of the typical hot, muggy weather of summer, the day felt comfortable, like autumn weather. Hands over her rounded stomach, she stared as a boy and girl chased each other through the park, their parents close behind them.

She sniffed, fighting the tears. Her baby wouldn’t have a father, just a mother. She sat on a bench nearby.

“May I join you?” The deep male voice seemed familiar to her.

Someone thumped beside her on the bench. She turned her head and her gaze found a pair of iridescent eyes.

The eyes belonged to Drake Whiting.

She gasped.

His hand covered her mouth, stopping the gasp.

“It is me, Kasee.”

She frowned as the hand drew away. “What—?”

His lips captured hers. Gentle at first, the kiss deepened as his tongue slipped inside her mouth and traced erotic intent, meeting her tongue and dueling with it.

The alien.

He stopped kissing her, reluctantly, and withdrew.

“How did you survive?” Kasee asked. “Why are you using Drake Whiting’s body again?”

“I inserted myself into a carcass of a dog that had ceased to function. Later I discovered that Drake Whiting had passed away. His essence inside this shell had gone, leaving it empty.” He averted his gaze from her, settling on the two children as they laughed and played on some swings. “He was shot while stopping a robbery at the bank in his town. They could not save him at the hospital.” His eyes

found hers, his hand reaching up to caress her face. "Since it no longer held intelligence, I knew mine could inhabit it."

He lifted up the T-shirt he wore and pointed to where his skin covered the heart. "I healed the hole from the bullet here, healing the organ inside so it could beat again." His eyes caught hers. "To beat for you again, Kasee. Forever."

Her fingers traced his lips. They felt as familiar to her as her own. Soft and yet hard, just like she remembered how his penis could get.

"What is your name? What did they call you back from where you came from?"

He smiled as he caressed her face. "Your vocal cords could not even begin to know how to interpret it. That part of my life is no more, dissipated. Call me Michael. I chose it out of a baby name book in a store. Michael Tanner. Now I am a new person, a new life. A Michael Tanner life. Is that not right?"

"Yes," she agreed in a soft voice. "Michael?"

"Mmmmmmm. . .yes?" His lips brushed hers and then he drew back.

"I'm pregnant."

"I know. I can feel the life growing inside you. I know it is because of me. It called to me, enabling me to find you."

He edged closer, his lips barely touching hers.

"We were different, you and I, two separate beings. Together, we created a new life form and assimilated the best of both our worlds into it. I love you."

His lips captured hers and he pressed her down to the bench, kissing her.

A fire began to rage inside her, desiring his touch and kisses. Still a tiny little fear flickered among the love and desire for him. Just then the baby kicked inside her womb and she realized the aliens did get what they wanted.

The invasion had just begun, thanks to her love for this being from another world.

THE END

## About the Author

### Sapphire Phelan

Sapphire Phelan (pen name of author Pamela K. Kinney) loved making up stories, whether in lieu of an assignment for class or for play time on the playground. She loved to scare the others kids into believing that the shed next door to the school playground actually had a ghost haunting it, or convinced her nephews that a dragon really lived in her closet. She never felt alone growing up as her imagination kept her entertained.

Stories she's had published are the sci-fi flash fiction, "They Really Exist", a science fiction story, "Sins of the Father", "Death of the Apostrophe" in the print version in *Thirteen* magazine and "The House on Green Street" in *Cyber Pulp's Halloween Anthology 3.0*. Also a fantasy poem, "Christmas Dance" is online at the Christmas in Virginia website, "Abuse", a werewolf horror story online at Pretty-Scary.Net, along with "Plagued" in *Travel Guide Through the Haunted Mid-Atlantic Region* anthology, and a chapbook of four ghostly tales, *Beyond the Four Walls* by Naked Snake Press. Under the pseudonym Sapphire Phelan, she has "Crimson Promise" by Lady Aibell Press, "Wedded Magic" by LoveYouDivine.Com and "Jack", erotic horror in the first issue of *Sinister Tales Magazine*.

Upcoming under Pamela K. Kinney are "Donating" in *Inhuman* magazine, "Werewolf for Hire" online with ScienceFictionFantasyHorror.com, two dark fantasy romances with *Beyond the Blackened Mirror: Tales of Dark Romance* anthology, "Azathoth Is Here" in *Cthulhu Express* anthology, "Dark Eyes" in *Parasitic Sands* anthology, "Game of Hell" in Speculative Fiction's Centre's 2006 anthology, *HORIZONS*, and under the pseudonym Sapphire Phelan, the erotic fantasy, "Soul Seduction" in *Forbidden Love: Bad Boys* journal by Under the Moon.

To keep up what has been accepted and what is out, whether as Sapphire Phelan or Pamela K. Kinney, you can find out more at her website: <http://FantasticDreams.50megs.com>, or her MySpace site, <http://www.myspace.com/SapphirePhelan>.

Our authors love to hear from their readers!

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