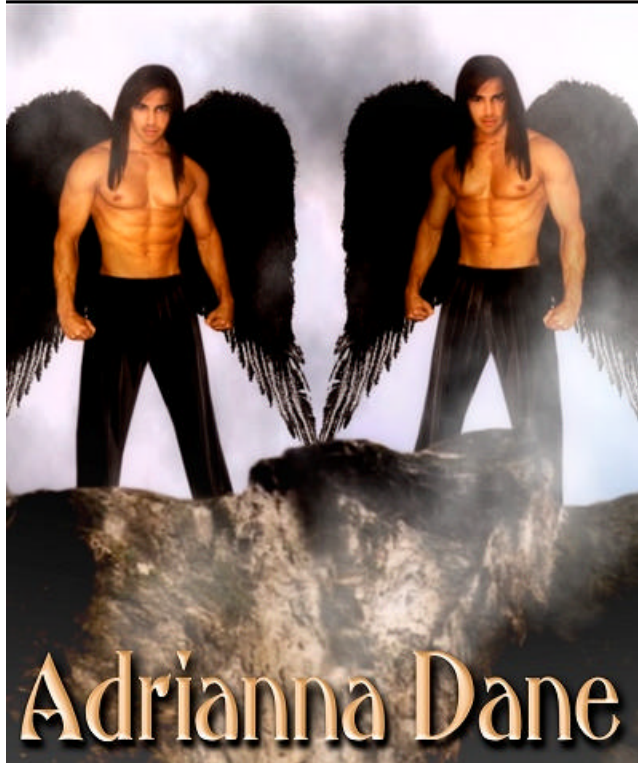


# Wings of Salvation



Adrianna Dane

## WINGS OF SALVATION

...His mouth tasted her lips, her chin, hesitated over her eyelids, his breath fluttering against her flesh. His strong hands fitted at her narrow waist, fingers kneading her hips, her juices dripping from her channel. She felt his wings unfurl around her, brushing against her arms, shielding and protecting.

And she felt Andras behind her, his lips on her buttocks, sucking and nipping. His arms had circled around and his hands, slick with oil, kneaded her damp thighs. Then his hands were beneath her as he slid his fingers through her cream, coating them with her arousal. She felt his finger at her anus, sliding inside. Her breath caught at the exquisite sensation as he stretched her, preparing her with her juices. And his body oils. Their combined scents drove her deeper into the cloud of desire pressing all around her.

Dario lifted her up. His finger circled her hard bud again and again as Andras prepared her puckered hole. He would fuck her there and she wanted him to do it. Just as much as she wanted Dario to fill her vagina.

She saw a light ahead of her and she reached for it, running as fast as she could. They waited for her, only her. She was between them, a part of them, flying with them. Free.

Dario peeled her fingers from around his cock and she felt the broad tip pressing between her lips.

*Yes! she wanted to scream. Now. Fill me now.*

And then he was inside her and she was screaming with pleasure as her sheath enveloped him, her tender walls expanding to take all of him, to blend with him. His wings were surrounding them, enclosing them, keeping them safe. And she didn't think she had ever known such bliss...

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# WINGS OF SALVATION

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BY

ADRIANNA DANE

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WINGS OF SALVATION  
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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*For twins everywhere...who may look identical, but are uniquely different in many ways. May you always be treated as the special individuals you truly are.*

# CHAPTER 1

Andras walked into the sleazy bar on the dark side of Antebbe. He wore a brown, hooded cloak that served to disguise his identity and shroud his ebony wings, the very conspicuous feature proclaiming that he was one of the winged sons of Lura and Nathan. There were times when the notoriety of his and his brother's births was definitely not a good thing. Entering this place, on this mission, was one of them.

He and Dario had flipped a coin piece to decide who would respond to the Moneylender's note and the urgency that seemed to radiate from it. Dario was the level-headed one, the first-born by all of ten minutes and probably would have been



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the logical one to keep the meeting if it had been held at any other place.

But then Andras was the risk taker, the daring no-fear adventurer who tackled chancy endeavors no right-minded Vrotian should, and this sort of place might just demand some of his more lucrative skills. And so they had flipped the coin piece and Andras had won, or lost, depending on how one looked at it. But then who had ever assumed Andras was right-minded?

*::Well, have you learned anything yet?::*

Andras sighed. Another thing about he and his brother being twins was the telepathic communication. Again, sometimes good, sometimes bad. He had to admit it had gotten him out of more than one difficult situation over the last twenty-seven years.

*::No, Dario, now leave me alone and focus on keeping our parents occupied.::*

*::They're fine. Right now they're engaged in conversation with our grandmother.::*

Andras narrowed his gaze and searched the darkened interior of the bar. He spotted Marius at a back table, piles of gold coin pieces stacked before the moneylender. Using coins for trade was rather a newer method of barter on Vrotia. But the city populations had grown and the old ways were fast becoming obsolete. It was only within the last fifteen or twenty years that this new exchange had been created. And the dark side had taken to the exchange with rapidity. Andras reached down to the pouch tied to his leather belt. He had a

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feeling that whatever Marius had for sale was not going to be cheap. His hunger for coin was well known.

“One,” he said to the barkeep and then tossed a coin onto the polished wood surface of the bar.

The heavily tattooed tender handed him an amber bottle and swiped up the coin piece. Andras tipped the bottle and let the cool liquid slide down his throat.

*::Andras! Get going. Find out what that note meant and get back here.::*

The voice of demanding reason inside his head. No matter where he went, his brother always had a way of reeling him back in. It would be rude to block him out, particularly right now. But there were times when distance played a part in the clarity of their twin communication. He could not refuse the demands of the other side of their nature. Particularly, since his brother was the older by ten minutes. Age did have its advantages, even when gauged in minutes, and Dario never hesitated to remind him of who was the older of the two.

Slowly, Andras sauntered over to the moneylender. It wouldn't do to appear too eager for the information. The price would certainly go up.

Greasy blond hair, thickened waist, bulbous stomach, and small, beady eyes which summed up the potential value of everything and everyone around him. He sat counting his coins, chewing on an overcooked piece of unidentifiable meat, slobbering down drink from a bottle. He wiped the back of his stained hand across his pudgy, wet mouth.

A lean-faced woman with short, purple corkscrewed hair

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sat next to him, pressing herself against the sleazy Marius, licking at his ear, her hand inching across his wide, flabby thigh, toward where Andras assumed was a penis resting somewhere among all those folds of fat. Her outfit skimpy, barely covering her more than generously endowed frame, she was obviously a whoreplayer. She wore a red studded collar around her neck with a chain attached, and Andras saw the end of it looped around Marius's fat wrist. Obviously, she belonged to him, the color of the collar indicating she was paid up for the night.

Andras watched as Marius turned and kissed the whoreplayer, and she rubbed her body against his massive one. It made Andras's stomach twist at the wanton scene displayed before him. At once the earthy smells in the bar assaulted him, stale ale, body sweat, and purchased sex. He definitely wanted to get this over with and get out.

"Marius," he greeted as he slammed his ale bottle on the table. The stacks of gold pieces rocked threateningly under the assault.

That got Marius's attention. He shot around and glared up at Andras. Then apparently thought better of saying something as Andras pushed back the hood of his cloak revealing his identity. The towering muscular height as well as the telltale shoulder-length blue-black hair that matched the color of his wings, and the molasses-rich eyes with raptor intensity obviously had Marius thinking twice before he chose to speak. Instead, grumbling under his breath, he swept a hand outward indicating the other side of the table, pointing to the vacant

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chair.

“Have a seat. You’re late.” He slid the loop at the end of the silver chain from his wrist and glanced at the woman sitting next to him. “Get me another drink. Give us a dance before you come back.” He held up one glittering coin and flashed it before her. “If I like it, this is yours.”

Andras saw her eyes gleam with avarice as she reached out to snatch up the coin. Marius’s fist closed over it, and she darted a sly glance at him.

“The dance. On the bar. You know what I want. If I’m happy with it and how you perform for the rest of the time I’ve paid for, you get the gold piece.”

Andras studied her as she surveyed Marius with hard, fluorescent green eyes. Probably she was trying to decide exactly how far she could push him and still keep the deal lucrative for herself. Finally she nodded and slid from behind the table.

“I’ll signal when you can come back. Watch for it. I have things to discuss with my friend here. Private negotiations.”

Andras knew that’s exactly what it would be. A negotiation. He just wondered how expensive it was going to get and whether it was worth it. In their search for Flaire, there had been more dead ends than he cared to remember.

The woman sauntered away, swinging her hips, brushing against Andras as she went. Her sickeningly sweet scent wafted over him as she moved past.

He looked at Marius, who leered at him. “I don’t think she’s your type, featherboy. The owner here owed me a favor.

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He acquired her recently from the black market. He owns her contract for the next two years, and believe me, she'll work that plump little ass off before he's through with her. He offered me first choice for one evening. She's still fresh and it will pay his current debt to me."

Yes, Andras knew about the black market that in recent years thrived beneath the city. Most inhabitants of Vrotia did, but the organizers were slippery as snake oil and difficult to pinpoint for arrest. A majority of the goods came from other planets. The site of the sales constantly fluctuated in order to remain thriving and keep one step ahead of enforcement.

"You're apparently enjoying her company this evening." Andras leaned forward, one hand clasping the dagger at his waist beneath the table. "Now why am I here?"

Marius studied him for a long time, then pressed his hands together over his bulging stomach. "I have information you might find of interest."

"What information?"

Marius remained silent for a long time as he looked beyond Andras and slowly licked his lips. Andras was not going to make the mistake of turning around to see what had caught his attention. The look was not one of wariness, but of lust. Andras assumed the whoreplayer had begun her dance.

"Marius. Your attention to this matter. What do you have?"

The moneylender turned his gaze back to Andras. "You've been looking for a woman. A winged woman according to the word in the back alleys."

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Andras stiffened and his chest tightened. It had been almost two years since Flaire had disappeared. Both he and Dario had searched high and low. It was the calling of the ancient wild nature that had finally taken her from them. It's what happened to winged women if their mate could not be located by the high priestess of the Justynian Order. It had practically killed him and his brother to watch her deteriorate so rapidly, and then one day she had just disappeared. They had always thought there would be more time. And then there had been none.

He leaned forward. "What do you know?"

"I know that a wild one was captured not long ago near the jungle borders. One with an unusual coloring of white blond hair. And flight wings of ivory and orange-gold, like flame-tipped primaries. Are you interested?"

Andras's fingers tightened on his dagger. Whatever he did next would be important. He had to maintain self-control. He thought of Dario and eased his fingers from the handle. His gaze narrowed. "What do you know, Marius?"

"How much is it worth to you?"

There was only one woman on the planet he knew of with the strange primary wing markings Marius spoke of. So sweet with the palest beauty either of them had ever encountered. What would she be like after all this time in the wild?

"Depends on the information that you have for me."

"What if I told you she was caged below and set for sale tomorrow night? What if I could give you the location of the sale?"

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“How much?” he bit out.

Marius looked at him appraisingly. Probably trying to sum up how much it was worth to him.

“Forty gold pieces. Up front. Forty more if it’s the female you seek. I trust you for the second half. And that you’ll do an honest deal.” He leaned forward. “Another thing. No enforcement. You go. You get the girl. That’s it. Or the deal’s off. Your oath.” His gaze narrowed to sly slits. “Or I might just buy her myself and have you watch as I have her throat slit—after I’ve made good use of her.”

It was an effort. More than he thought he had ever exerted in his life. But Andras managed to control his emotions. With deliberate action he opened the pouch at his waist, pulled out the exact number of coins the greedy lender required, and tossed them onto the table. It was important that he occupy his hands because it wouldn’t take much for him to fasten them around the bastard’s thick neck and slowly squeeze the life out of him. His fingers flexed beneath the table as he watched Marius take his time counting the bribe out.

“Excellent,” he said as he grinned from ear to ear. “I will send word tomorrow, an hour before the sale begins. Be ready. I won’t divulge the location until then. And remember, no enforcement.”

Andras stood up. He couldn’t stand to be in the company of this man any longer. “If this is some kind of game, I’ll be back, and you won’t enjoy a second meeting.”

Marius looked up at him. “I’ve heard about your reputation, birdman. I’m only relaying what I know. That’s

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what I do. If the information is valuable to you, then I make my money. I don't sell valueless drabble. I have a reputation to uphold."

Andras pivoted away, unable to look at the gluttonous, greedy pig for another second, and stalked away.

As he walked past the bar, he heard the jeers of the other occupants, the hoots of encouragement, and applause. He glanced up to see the whoreplayer undulating her hips as she danced on the bar. Her legs splayed, her fingers buried deep in her pussy. Her eyes were closed as she pumped her fingers in and out of her wet cunt. She was naked, having divested herself of her minuscule clothing, and only left wearing a pair of shiny, high-heeled purple boots, the red collar, and the length of silver chain she now drew up between her legs, fitting it snugly between her pussy lips. He looked into her eyes as she gazed across the crowd toward Marius's table. They were dead, greedy eyes, contrary to the sounds of mewling pleasure she was making as she performed before this lust-packed audience.

He inwardly shuddered at the thought of paying for the company of such a female in a place like this. It bothered him even more that desperation for many required females to rent their bodies out to the dredges of Vrotia, like males of Marius's ilk, simply to stay alive. Such was sadly the growing black nature of the criminal underbelly of any of the cities on Vrotia.

Andras turned away, closing his eyes. In his mind he saw the woman they had hunted for since the day she left. Her



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beauty, her innocence. Her gentleness. He cringed at the thought of where she had been, where she could end up if they didn't get to her in time, and he stalked toward the door. He had to get out of here. Once outside, he breathed in the fresh, night air.

*::What did you find out?::* his brother's voice bit into his anxious thoughts.

He took a deep, cleansing breath. *::He says he has word of Flaire.::*

A long silence settled within his mind. Andras pulled up the hood to hide his features and started walking, his hand pressed close around the handle of the dagger sheathed at his side.

*::How?::*

*::It's not good. The woman he described could be none other than her. If it is, she's been captured and is in the slave black market, set for auction tomorrow night. We won't have much time.::*

Flaire. Their beautiful friend. The girl they had both fallen in love with but knew they could never have. They had both fought their feelings, understanding that there was a mate for her somewhere else. That the high priestess would find him eventually as was the mating tradition on Vrotia.

But it had never happened. Slowly, she'd regressed to her wild nature as others had been swallowed before her. Until one day, she had simply disappeared, fleeing into the jungles on the other side of the planet, beyond the Rava Ocean. They had never stopped looking in all that time, frantic to find her,

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to try to help her in some way.

Before they could succeed in their vow, they had to rescue her from the slave market. And then they had to find a way to rescue her from her ingrained nature. It had never been done before. How they thought they would succeed was something he refused to think about right now.

## CHAPTER 2

Flaire curled into a tight ball in a corner of the cage, her fingers gripping the cold iron bars. Her heart thundered loudly in her ears like the hooves pounding against the ground of a herd of gigantic, gray phantabeasts across the plains.

Her long, tangled hair shielded her naked body only slightly from the wingless two-leggeds that hovered around her prison. She would have shielded herself with her wings, except they were braced against her back, leather straps wound tightly around her body, keeping her from extending. Let alone there was not a breeze in the stillness of the enclosure that could assist with lift off. Frantically she looked around for a way to escape. She had beaten herself against the

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bars when they'd first thrust her into the cage until Torrie had finally taken control, calming her.

*::They will come, Flaire. You must be patient,::* she encouraged Flaire in twin-speak.

Torrie tried to calm her as she always did. She was the composed one, the sane one. The wild nature of their ancestors had never touched her as it had Flaire.

*::We will die in here.*" Her fingers gripped the bars tighter, pressing her full breasts to the cold steel. The chain clattered against the hard floor of the enclosure. *::Eyes. All looking at me.::*

*"Hold fast, Flaire. We are in the city. They must find us.::*

*::They have forgotten us, Torrie. They never wanted us. They are not meant for us. Not now.::*

*::You don't know that. They are different. They will not let this thing happen. They will not let us be sold. It's why we were coming back here in the first place.::*

*::It's what you wanted. We were safer in the jungle.::* Flaire flinched as she felt the cut of the whip against her buttocks. Her wings tried impotently to unfurl around her body in an effort to shield her flesh. The whip cut at the soles of her feet and she drew them closer—as close as the ankle chains would allow.

The evil two-legged with the long, lethal instrument of pain resembling a snake shouted something at her, but she didn't understand the words. She had been in the wild too long. Her throat and her brain no longer processed civilized communication in the same way.

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But she could understand Torrie, her sister. Only Torrie was able to reach inside her, to understand her. Their language was unlike any other and it was one Flaire still understood. Just barely. Because Torrie wouldn't let her forget.

The whip cut into her bared flesh again and the pain seared through her.

*::Forget them, Flaire. Remember. You need to remember. Try harder.::*

How could she remember when the pain clutched and bled her skin, blinding her? She would fly up to the top of this cage out of their reach if it weren't for the manacles anchoring her to the floor, the straps imprisoning her wings. They kept her securely within the reach of her tormentor.

Torrie was her only link left with humanity. As the wildness inched through and claimed Flaire, Torrie had remained untouched. But then Torrie had never really lived in the outside world. She had never taken that first breath of Vrotian atmosphere. It was Flaire's body that had absorbed her soul before she'd been given mortal life. Her twin, her other half, always with her. *Within her*. Always sane. Ethereal, like the clouds in the sky. Beautiful like the round disks of the brilliant suns warming her from the inside.

No one knew Torrie, no one would ever know her. Only Flaire.

*::It will be all right, darling sister. They can't take our souls from us. They will never separate us.::*

Maybe not their souls, but their shared flesh was another matter.

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She heard a sound, a creak, a clang and she slid her gaze to the other side of the cage. A large, dark, mean-looking two-legged stepped into the cage, a long pole in his hand. She eyed it warily. Something glowed like a burning orange ember at the end. He lunged and jabbed it to her thigh. Sparks shot out and she screamed in agony as a lightning bolt of pain passed through her body.

She rolled over and lifted her thighs to her chest, yanking painfully at the chains, winding her arms around her aching legs tightly.

The act exposed her bare pussy to the watchers and she heard their murmurs, and edges of excitement tinged the sound, making her shudder.

She tried to roll to her side again, but the tip of the lethal pole touched her arm and numbing shock sped through her muscles. The arm fell useless to her side. The tears of agony dripped down her face.

The same two-legged had done this before. He wanted her vulnerable and fully exposed. Chirps that begged for leniency escaped her lips, unintelligible because she was long past the ability to speak coherently in the civilized language—one he would understand.

Suddenly she swung to her knees, rage filling her as she tried to crawl toward him, to use her long taloned fingernails to rip him apart. But he was quicker. Two blasts from the pole had her arched on her back, semi-conscious. Through blurred vision, she saw him nod to the crowd of spectators. Using the pole, he spread her legs. Her breasts and pussy totally

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exposed, her wings strapped against her back, she lay there unable to fight. She turned her gaze away from the nightmare of her imprisonment, trying desperately to distance her mind from her body.

*“Remember,”* Torrie whispered to her heart, tight sobs behind her words. *“Remember.”*

Flaire closed her eyes and tried to think back to a time before she had become the primal, captive creature she was now. She saw them, male twins, as they were two years ago. Tall and beautiful, their black primaries shining in the sunlight as the three of them soared over the plains. So free, so wild, yet in another way from the primal wildness that took over the single mature females who never found their true mates.

She remembered laughing, catching the wind with her tongue, tasting the freedom, the happiness. Dario and Andras would each clasp one of her hands as they dipped and shot up, the tips of their wings flirting.

Her two protectors since they were mere babes. She had felt so gifted by their friendship. So protected by the maleness. So loved.

Yet when she matured she knew it was wrong. They were each destined for other things. Greater things. They were meant for a far more powerful mate than someone like her. And what she needed—what she and Torrie needed—they could not give.

She had tried to separate herself from them, to give them the space they needed to find their own mates. Always knowing that Dymetra would never summon her. Her destiny

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had been determined long ago. And destroyed.

Each day the savage nature claimed more and more of her. Torrie had tried to call her back, to convince her there was another way, and because of it, she had taken longer than many to succumb to the wild calling her. Andras and Dario had tried many times to hold her back, to remind her, to convince her to hold on a little longer. They thought there was a chance, but she knew better. And in the end she was certain if she fled to the jungles they would let her go and eventually find mates who would satisfy them.

Seeing the pain in their eyes as they watched her change had been the final straw. She wanted them to forget her. She knew Dymetra would never find her mate and it was beyond hope. And she knew why. The answer had come to her in a dream—a vision revealed to her by their god, Vu. That was her last conscious, human act. She had to hide herself from the men she and her sister loved. They were destined to achieve great things for their planet. Flaire's destiny had been destroyed on the day she was born into the world without her sister.

She turned away from the memory, stuffing it deep once again, pushing the memories back to Torrie. They were her sister's remembrances, her dreams. She was the keeper of memory between them. The wildness pushed her on and on, deeper into the jungle where she lived among the other wild creatures. She did as they did, lived as they lived, was accepted as one of them. And fucked when the urge came upon her wild self. There were others there similar to herself,



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with a human half side. Yet different. They colonized in the deepest jungle, away from civilization, and kept to themselves. It was survival at its most basic level.

Torrie had tried to stop her from mating with one of the half-creatures that first time. But Flaire knew, as long as she remained a virgin, they would both hold out the hope of returning to the city and to the men they both loved. It had to end. She only prayed that with that act, a way would open for Andras and Dario to find mates that were right for them. She had to believe that would happen.

For a long time after that Torrie remained silent, allowed the wild to swallow her almost completely, insulating Flaire from her longings, her pain, her past.

Until a few weeks ago. If she hadn't tried to come back to civilization, she wouldn't be here now. Yet she couldn't blame her sister. It was the memories Torrie unleashed that pulled her out of the jungle in search of a past that no longer could be hers. Forced onward by dreams she shouldn't have. She needed to see them. Just watch them from a distance. If Torrie hadn't brought forth the memories, she might have been able to ignore the yearning.

She pushed the past away and found the strength to turn onto her side, her wings pressed beneath her, and she heaved a heavy sigh. For now, her tormentors left her alone. She had apparently performed adequately. She closed her eyes and inwardly wept. She felt Torrie's arms hugging her close.

*::They will come,::* she crooned as she stroked her.

If only Flaire believed there was anything that could save her from her fate. A fate worse than death.

## CHAPTER 3

Dario always thought of himself as a man of peace, always remaining cool-headed even in the worst situation. Everything he had known about himself flew out of his head the minute he saw the man use the whip on Flaire.

He felt the blinding rage surge up like a monster to grip his throat, to squeeze his heart. Felt the blast of an uncontrollable wildfire speed through his veins as his fingers curled around the blade sheathed at his waist, gripping the leather-covered handle of the deadly dagger tightly.

*::Control it, brother.::* Andras voice came at him, strident and firm. *::Now is not the time. He will be dead before we leave this place. No matter how much we want it right this*

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*minute, we must wait until the time is right. Flaire's life depends on it.:*

Dario's fingers eased from the grip as he sucked in a deep breath and released it slowly, trying to leash his anger. He looked around at the other attendees at this cruel auction dealing in fragile human flesh. Saw their sadistic gazes filled with lust as they studied the inhabitants of the cage with an eye toward acquisition. The pock-marked man, smelling of sweat and stale wine standing beside him, licked his thick lips as he stroked the bag of coins tied to his belt.

"She will be mine," he said in a scratchy voice. "I'll have no problem in taming the raptor out of her."

He spoke to no one in particular. Dario didn't think he could respond if he wanted to. His throat was tight with suppressed fury. If he had turned his attention to the ugly mongrel next to him, he probably would have slit his throat on principal alone.

The cloying stench of this place, the smell of rising lust and drink, of unwashed bodies almost overwhelmed him. He fixed his gaze on the woman curled defensively on the floor of the cage. Streaks of blood littered her flesh. Her long, beautiful hair was knotted and clung in clumped strands to her naked skin.

He and Andras had known and they had let this happen, thinking the natural ways of their people could not be changed. On one hand they wanted her mate to be found so that she would live a happy, fulfilled life; yet on the other, they had both wanted her for themselves, even knowing that

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wasn't the way of their kind.

The winged women were destined for mates of other worlds. Just like his mother and father. His father had been an Earth man. To marry one of their own breed meant there would be no progeny from that line. It had been the curse of their people for thousands of years. No matter how much the brothers had wanted Flaire, had loved her, they would not force that upon her. She deserved a full existence.

For him and his brother it was a different matter. They posed a perplexing problem to the usual mating practices on Vrotia. Although the high priestess always interceded as matchmaker for the winged females, there had been no winged males born on Vrotia in a thousand years, and so far she had been unable to located suitable mates for either of them. All three of them had awaited word from the high priestess.

But neither of the brothers had ever envisioned a moment such as this. Not this horror. If they had known, they never would have let it go to these lengths. One of them would have taken her for his mate, no matter what tradition dictated. If there was still a chance to release her from the wild nature, they would do everything that was in their power. If there were no progeny from the mating, so be it. But the real question was whether they could alter the wild regression that had overtaken her, that was the lot of their unmatched women. No one had ever tried what they had in mind. Then again, there had been no winged males to test the boundaries of natural law.

But first they had to get her away from this place to

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somewhere safe.

Wearing the hooded cloaks that masked their identities, they had each come fully prepared to fight their way out. Secretly, they had gone to the alchemist in Antebbe and obtained what they needed. He provided them with very specific directions. The powder was sewn into a temporary arm lining of the cloaks. When they arrived, they would cut the seam and allow the explosive to sift along the borders of the room as they circled from either side. Then all it would take was a match to set the fireworks off, gaining them time to get to the cage and release Flaire.

Stopped at the door, they were checked for anything larger than the usual hand weapons. Swords and contraband automatic weaponry were left at the door to be claimed later. With this lot, it was unlikely they'd have the crowd they sought if they tried to disarm them completely. Self-preservation was a right of every lawless rebel who entered an auction such as this. But any more firepower than required for simple self-defense was banned. Entering and moving in opposite directions, they had surreptitiously slit the sleeves of their garments and spread the powder slowly rounding their way to the front of the room. The goal was to make the crowd flee for the exit at the back, again, self-preservation first and foremost the driving catalyst. They had to move slowly making their way toward the front, as close to the cage as possible before setting match to powder. A larger amount of the powder would be spread at the front causing the closest to the cage to retreat quickly.

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Not a man nor woman in this place lived within the law. There were outlaws and slavetraders, whoremasters and pirates among the lot. All here to bid on a prized winged woman. The exact time of the auction was apparently not made known until just before the event to circumvent enforcement authorities. Those that found out about it waited off-planet, making it less likely that their presence would be detected by those hunting them on the planet surface.

By the time anyone in enforcement discovered the location, the auction would be over and those in attendance long gone, along with the merchandise. Luckily for them, on this occasion, Marius liked his money enough to barter with them, or they never would have known and Flaire would have been out of their reach forever. Dario shuddered to think of that possibility and the horrors she would have been subjected to.

Usually the unmated winged women who had turned to their wild side buried themselves deep in the jungle and were never seen again. How Flaire had managed to be captured when they had looked for her since her disappearance was something they couldn't fathom. Once turned to her wild side, she was apparently considered fair game to these unsavory men, treated no more than an animal like any other captured by cruel poachers in the jungle.

Dario had finally managed to weave his way toward the front of the gathering, his sleeve now empty of powder. He looked to the other side of the room and saw his brother had also reached the front and waited there. He now stood near the

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door of the cage. Dario's attention was diverted as a tall, thin, scar-faced man moved before the cage and stepped onto a makeshift, raised platform, with a gavel in his hand. The auction was about to commence.

Dario's attention turned to the man with the whip who had stepped outside the cage. He slung back a bottle of wine, wiped the back of a hand across his mouth and belched. The torturer then selected a bullwhip from the array of torture implements resting on an iron stand, turned and walked back inside the cage, his passive gaze focused on Flaire, a cruel bend to his thin lips. Dario noted that he hadn't locked the door behind him. Good. These bastards were far too sure of themselves.

He turned his gaze to Andras and they both nodded. Dario pulled the packet of matches from his pocket. Andras was the better swordfighter, more adept in hand-to-hand confrontation, and he would be the one to enter the cage. Dario would overpower the auctioneer and handle anyone outside the cage who might stick around to offer resistance. They were both fast on their feet and had, on more than one occasion handled quite a handful of inept fighters easily between them. In this type of situation, he doubted there would be much resistance. These rogues liked their own skin and weren't about to stay around if it looked like there would be trouble. There wasn't enough reward in it for them to chance injury.

One look, the touch of flame to powder, and the perimeter of the room exploded into shooting fireworks, throwing everyone into chaos.

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*Boom.*

*Boom.*

*Boom.*

A shower of sparks arced up and outward, singeing the crowd. That's all it took before people began screaming and running, shoving to be the first to reach the exits as fast as they could. Dario made note of a door behind the cage that apparently led to escape. It was the closest to the cage. He then rushed the auctioneer who had pulled out a dagger. Before he could even take a breath, Dario swiftly disarmed him from behind and wrapped a solid arm around his throat, cutting off the auctioneer's oxygen supply. He then pressed the blade of his dagger to the man's rapidly beating jugular.

"Make a move and your blood is going to be covering this floor and this breath will be your last," he growled.

The auctioneer stilled beneath his hand and Dario shoved him toward the open cage door. He glanced up and saw that Andras had things well in hand, two men lay dead outside the open door and he was advancing on the man inside who wielded the whip as defense against his attack.

Andras moved quickly, whirling away from the slash of the snapping weapon. Finally angling close enough, he jabbed forward and buried the blade of his dagger in the man's throat. His eyes widened as he dropped the whip, frantically flailing upward, trying to pull the blade from its fleshy bed. The sharp edge of the dagger sliced through the palms of his hands. More blood poured onto the ground as he strangled on his last breath and the edge of the long, deadly dagger.



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Andras yanked his blade free and wiped the edge on the corpse's clothing. He reached down, shuffled through his pockets for the keys to the chains shackling Flaire's ankles, and yanked out a jangling ring. After looking around, nodding to Dario, he sprinted toward Flaire who was now crouched against the back of the cage, wild fear evident in her eyes.

Dario shoved the quivering auctioneer forward.

"Move," he said from between clenched teeth, "or you'll join your friend. Do you understand?"

The auctioneer nodded his head frantically. Dario dragged him along. He glanced around and saw the place had quickly emptied of its potential bidders, and he strode over to Andras, the auctioneer in tow.

Flaire cringed away as Andras unlocked the manacles around her ankles. Dario growled when he saw that her wings were clamped tightly to her body. He saw his brother about to cut the leather bindings, saw the determination in her wide gaze.

"Stop," he screamed at his brother, as much as he hated to give the order. "She's going to flee if you cut them loose now. She doesn't recognize us. She's too frightened."

Andras yanked off his cloak and quickly wrapped it around her, covering her nakedness. Her gaze widened when she saw his black wings. She blinked rapidly, paled, and then folded to the ground.

Dario used the discarded chains to lock them onto the auctioneer. That should hold him nicely for a while.

Andras scooped Flaire up into his arms and carried her to

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Dario. Dario pushed off his own cloak and his wings unfurled.

He accepted Flaire into his embrace.

“Get her to the aerie. I’ll meet you there after I’ve finished here and spoken with Dymetra. And I’ll make certain no one follows you.” He looked down at the woman now enfolded in Dario’s arms. Dario saw the pain and anger and knew his own expression probably was not much better. “The wounds will need attention. You are more skilled in that than I. Be gentle with her.”

Dario gazed down at her as he carefully cradled her close against his body. “I’ll take care of her until you arrive. Be alert and don’t get yourself maimed.”

“Get going before they all realize what’s happened.”

Dario quickly left, found the door he had marked earlier, and ran out into the black night. He ran until he was beyond the city, spread his wings as a blast of wind rushed behind him and quickly took to the sky. He trusted his brother to take care of matters on the ground. His priority must be to care for this woman in his arms. She was quiet for the moment, but what would happen when they reached the aerie?

He would need to be certain she couldn’t fly away, not before they had tried everything to bring her out of her wild state. It didn’t set well with him knowing he would have to imprison her, but he had no choice. And they had no idea if they could even be successful.

## CHAPTER 4

*::They have come, as I said.::* Torrie's voice trilled triumphantly inside Flaire's mind.

*::Have to flee. Must get away.::* Her own instinct screamed even louder, as Flaire tried to break the chains that bound her tightly to the ground. *::Free. Must be free.::*

The commotion and loud sounds around her frightened her worse than the torturous whip flaying her body.

*::Be calm. Be silent, sister. He comes to save you—to free us. Do not fight him.::*

Flaire wanted to comprehend what her sister was saying, but the wild instinct fought against rationality. Torrie continued to call to her in a soothing voice and finally she

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gained some control, her whole body quaking with fear.

The sparks of sound haloed, intensified as bodies merged in panic all around her. The sounds of fear and anger compounded to her magnified hearing. Her fingers clutched tightly to the unmoving bars, the chains rattled around her ankles, the leather straps hot, tight, and binding.

Her wings fought for escape of their own accord, the leather bands imprisoning them, cutting into her chest, her midriff, as the wings fought valiantly to unfurl. The metal circles around her ankles tore at her skin as she struggled to free herself.

The manacles were released and she was lifted away. Without warning something heavy was wrapped around her, covering her, imprisoning her.

*::Do not fight them.::* Torrie's words inside her head. Flaire tried to respond, to ignore the merging colors, the muted sounds running one into the other. Blasts of light from the shadows, the bars that would not give. Her heart pounding inside her chest. *::Close your eyes, Flaire. Go inward. Come to me.::*

Her lashes fluttered downward as she reached for Torrie. Her sister enfolded her, pulling her against her breast, her strong, warm arms wrapping tightly around her.

Even as she was lifted into strong, male arms.

She tried to tear herself away from Torrie as she panicked. She heard the murmur of voices, but couldn't make out the words.

It was the scent that was familiar. The male aroma that was

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branded deep into her memory. It smelled of protection, of calm, of caring. Of gentleness. It was that which loosened her limbs allowing her to accept the comfort.

*::You see. I told you. Let them help us.::* Torrie would not let her go, would not let her escape.

Torrie released small bubbles of memory. There were lingering images of a time long ago. Before the jungle and the simple desire to survive and to hide. The elemental acceptance of companionship without higher needs. The fusion of body warmth in the cool nights, the hunt for food to live, the climax of lust for the simple exaltation of wild survival.

The smell of this man—these men—was something more in a time long ago. There had been the wealth of shared ideas, of quiet touch, of plans and adventures.

And then the memory was gone, the bubbles bursting and the images faded away as they took flight and she was in the sky once again. Yet not under her own power. Torrie clung tighter to her, not allowing her to re-surface, to struggle for freedom. Her voice soothed her into silence.

It was good to feel the sky once again, to be free of that wicked cage and her tormentors. But what now? Would she exchange one cage for another? One tormentor for another captor?

## CHAPTER 5

Andras dropped to the ground, his wings collapsing against his back. Glancing up at the sky, he noted the primary sun was quickly descending toward the horizon. He wanted to reach the aerie before the secondary sun had fully set.

He strode quickly toward the entrance to his parents' house. Entering through the main doorway, he moved down the tiled hallway and headed toward the garden at the rear of the house. That was the place where he could usually find his mother at this time of day and he urgently needed to talk with her now. As he stepped outside, he saw her sitting on a bench near the fountain. Her white-blond hair was still long and vibrant. Its color reminded him of Flaire.

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But the primary wings were different. His mother's wings were a pure white and Flaire's were warm ivory dipped with flame. With passion. He had to turn his mind to the matter at hand.

"Mother." He caught her delicate hands and whisked a quick kiss of greeting across the backs and then released them. "I must ask your help. It is urgent."

He saw the twinkle of amusement in his mother's gentle eyes. "Urgent? What scrape have you and your brother gotten yourselves into this time?"

He paced before her. "It's not like that. This is important."

She reached out, grabbed one of his hands and pulled him down next to her on the stone bench. Her expression had changed to one of alarm. "Is Dario hurt?"

"No," he quickly reassured her. "Nothing like that." He sucked in a deep breath. "We have found Flaire, Lyddia and Cassius's daughter. Dario is with her now."

Her expression again altered to one of surprise. "Your friend? The one who was taken by her wild blood? But how? Lyddia has been heartbroken since her disappearance."

He nodded. He really didn't want to worry her with the whole story of where and how. "She is safe. He's taken her to the summer aerie."

"But how is that possible? The high priestess never found her mate and she took to the jungle, didn't she? No one comes back from there."

"The point is that we did find her and now we need to help her. I would ask that you intercede to arrange a meeting with

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Dymetra. There has to be a way. I must meet with her today.”

It was believed that in many of the cases where the mate was not revealed, that the star-destined mate had been prematurely killed in some fashion and thus those females were lost. Such had been assumed to be the case with Flaire, although they had found in recent years that other things factored into the matings. It was a process that was never simple and easily defined.

“This is important, Mother. Please. Will you send word to her? Dario and I are agreed that we would approach the High Priestess first before we decided what action to take. We won’t lose Flaire to the jungles again. We will find a way to protect her.”

His mother looked at him, worry etched in her expression. She reached out to clutch his hands. “My son, I will do what I can. If you had been any other, if she had been any other...”

He squeezed her hands. “I know, Mother. One of us would have mated with her before now. But we always knew she was meant for another chosen by Vu.”

“But you both love her. Did you think I didn’t know that?” she asked softly.

He looked away from her. “But we knew it wasn’t destined. Or Dymetra would have told us. We would have known which of us she was meant for. Yet that never happened. There must be a way to save her.”

“I will go to Dymetra right now and request the meeting.”

“I’ll accompany you and wait outside the Temple. It will save time.”



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His mother shook her head. “No. Males are not allowed inside the Temple or even on the sacred grounds, you know that. If she agrees to the meeting, I will bring her back here. You will wait at the house. Do you understand?”

He huffed a frustrated sigh. “Very well.”

His mother rose to her feet. “Your father is in the sunhouse tending to some new seedlings. Join him there. It’s been a while since you last visited. I will return as quickly as I can.” She reached up to place a kiss on his cheek and then turned to glide out of the garden.

Waiting was not exactly Andras’s strong point, but in this situation he didn’t have a choice. Maybe a talk with his father would help settle him. He wondered how Dario was managing with Flaire. Had they made it to the aerie in the Vergosian mountains yet? The distance was too far for the two of them to communicate telepathically with any surety, particularly if they were otherwise focused. And Dario’s attention would be with Flaire now.

No one had ever discovered that they could connect telepathically. It had always been their secret and had come in handy on more than one occasion. But it had never seemed quite as important as over the last few days.

Dario had a way with injuries. As much as Andras wanted to be there, he knew Dario was the better of them to deal with the cuts and bruises Flaire had sustained. It was best he leave Flaire in his hands for now while he attempted to find some solution for Flaire, other than caging her for the rest of her life. That would be no better than allowing her to return to the

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jungle.

If willpower alone could change things, then Dario and Andras and their desire for Flaire's protection and happiness should go a long way to securing her return. If only Vu would listen to their pleas and save her.

## CHAPTER 6

She was no less a captive now than she had been in the cage. Flaire struggled against the bonds that shackled her to the bed.

*::He's trying to help us, Flaire. Stop fighting him. He has unbanded your wings. That should say something.::*

*::It's no better than before. He has bound me here. I am still not free.::*

*::If you hadn't tried to fly away, he wouldn't have done it.::*

In one part of her brain Flaire knew her sister was right. But the instinct for self-preservation kept her fighting to find a way back to the jungle where she could hide away from

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civilization.

She glared up as he came back, carrying a bowl and cloth. She tried to flinch away, to distance herself as far from his reach as possible, but her range of motion was limited.

There was something about his touch, about his scent. It was familiar. At least he did not wield a whip like the other two-legged creature had to make her perform as he wanted.

*::Let him bind the wounds, Flaire. You don't want them to get infected. You should be thankful; at least his touch is not harsh.::*

His hands were on her leg, applying something to the slashes made by the whip. His touch was indeed gentle as he probed the extent of the wounds inflicted on her body. The problem was that she liked his touch too much. His hands were warm as he stroked over her damaged skin. They sent tingles up her leg and into her pussy. It made her want to clench her legs together, but with her legs bound to the posts of the bed, she couldn't do as she wished.

She glared at him as he tended to her, wanted him to touch her clitoris, the way he was stroking her legs. It wouldn't take much for her to reach an orgasm. If she were in the jungle it wouldn't be difficult to find someone with which to ease her lust. There were males of other half-species who would gladly fuck her and give her what she needed.

But something about this man was different. She didn't know why—she couldn't remember. Torrie was very stingy about allowing access to much of their shared memories. Her head hurt and it had done so since she had been captured and

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returned to civilization. Things were simpler on the other side of the Rava Ocean, so much more basic. Just being here made her seek to understand the words he spoke and want to respond as an equal. To make him understand.

His hand was now on her thigh, applying the cream and then bandaging the cuts. She shook her head, trying to clear it. Trying to remember.

There had been another male, and she wondered where he'd gone. He was the one who had freed her, but then he'd given her to this one. They were males with wings. Like her. There were no other males she knew of who had wings. Where did they come from? She had known the answer once. Torrie would only tell her they had been known to her once, a long time ago. They were duplicates of each other, yet they were not. In their eyes she saw differences. Torrie would not tell her how, or where she knew them. Her sister could be like that. Stubborn and mysterious. What would it have been like to have a sister in the truest sense and not just housed in one body as twin souls?

Where they brothers? Something told her they were. And there was something special about them. Something important.

The man finished and then carefully covered her with the sheet before he left her. She wanted to tell him to stay.

Yet she was relieved when he left. Emotions warred inside her.

She looked around the room. She knew they were high in the mountains on one of the cliffs. If one did not have wings as they did, she doubted they would be able to reach this place

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on foot very easily. Apparently, she was safe enough from the men who captured her in the jungle or the ones in that caged place.

She closed her eyes and leaned back. This bed was soft, not like the nest she had made for herself in the tall, ancient trees of the jungle. It wooed her to rest. She knew she should stay awake, but she couldn't help herself.

She had been given little food and water when she was captured and caged, probably to keep her weak and unable to maintain the strength to fight for her freedom. This man had fed her. She wanted to refuse, but was too hungry to do so. She would need her strength. Grudgingly, she accepted the bits of vegetables he offered her.

She felt the bonds lashing her to the bed. At least they were not chains. Given time, she might actually be able to work herself free. Her wounds attended, her hunger quelled, she was having trouble keeping her eyes open. She'd been allowed little sleep while in the hands of her previous captors. She should stay alert, but for some reason she felt safe here. And that was dangerous.

The man watched out the oval window carved into the rock face, staring at the blue sky. He probably was seeking the other male. She admired his finely groomed black flight wings, thick and strong against his naked, muscled back. His narrow hips were clothed in black leather that fit snugly over his rounded buttocks. Her gaze traveled downward over tight thighs, defined calves encased in high black leather boots.

He leaned forward, placing his hands on the sill of the

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window, and she admired his ropy biceps, his skin smooth, warm, and glowing. She couldn't help wondering what kind of bed partner he would be. One didn't need words to fuck. And she would definitely like to fuck the man standing at the window. Her lashes finally fluttered downward and an exhausted sleep claimed her.

## CHAPTER 7

From the sunhouse Andras saw Dymetra and his mother come over the knoll. He said a hurried good-bye to his father and strode outside to meet them. He hoped Dymetra had something positive to tell him that would help Flaire.

He greeted them formally as they approached the outer perimeter of the garden. Surprisingly, the high priestess had changed little over the years, no real evidence of her exact age in anything about her. She approached with the same firm step she had always walked—head high, expression serene, back straight.

Yet Andras knew she had been high priestess when his mother met his father, and even before that, for his



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grandparents. She continued on as though the passing of time held no meaning. And maybe it didn't in the Temple of Vu. No man ever crossed the boundaries of the temple, the ceremonies held inside were secret, only known to the women, never discussed in front of the males of the planet.

It was difficult for him to accept the fact that Flaire's future lay in another's hands. He had always remained in charge of his own destiny, and whatever presented, he chose the path he walked. But it was not the same for the females.

There was this wildling side that forced a mating upon them. Those who rebelled or lacked a proper mate, were fated to lose their civilized nature and regress to the raptor savageness of their ancestors. Was it the way Vu secured the continued existence of their race?

So far, neither Andras nor Dario had been cursed with the same yearnings, so it didn't appear to be the bird line of blood in and of itself that drove the cravings. Although the Vrotian physicians had spent lifetimes trying to determine the exact nature of the regression, no remedy had been discovered in order to combat its effects. The change was elusive and not meant to be altered by human hands.

But in this instance he and his brother had vowed that if they found Flaire they would not fail her in this. There had to be a way.

"Greetings, High Priestess," he bowed before Dymetra in deference to her position.

"Andras. Your mother has indicated your need to speak with me is urgent. I have set aside my meditations to

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accompany her here to meet with you.”

“I am honored that you have agreed, Priestess. It is an extremely pressing matter.”

“Why don’t we go into the house before we continue?” his mother suggested.

The high priestess nodded. Andras tried to remain calm even though the vital demand inside him felt like little moonbugs crawling beneath his skin seeking escape. He wanted the knowledge, the answers that would save Flaire, and he wanted to be gone.

But he also knew the priestess would give him the information he needed in her own good time and she couldn’t be rushed. That was the way it had always been. His mother had tried to instill patience in him on many occasions over the years. It never quite worked with him. Dario got the larger helping of that gift.

His mother led them into the tranquility room. This was the room in the house for meditation and solitude and was soundproofed.

She indicated they should sit on the earthy-toned, oversized cushions scattered around the floor. Then she walked over to the altar and lit the candles. Kneeling, she bowed her head.

Andras silently watched her and waited. How many times as a child had he observed her as she sought the guidance of Vu in discussions that transpired in this sanctum? The salon tended to make him uncomfortable. It was a bit too quiet for his taste. And he’d never been one to enjoy remaining still for

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long in one place.

Dario was the philosopher, and he would come in here for hours at a time. Sometimes by himself and sometimes with their mother. Andras preferred to be outside with his father, working in the fields, or assisting in the experimental field house at the outer perimeter of their lands.

It amused him to remember how as a child, Flaire had trailed them both around. She had never been quite the typical female in the things that interested her. For a long time they had both treated her like a younger sister. Her mother and theirs had been close friends and knew each other since childhood. Their parents planned harvestings and the annual celebrations together as the estates shared boundaries and access to water.

It wasn't until Flaire started to mature that Andras and his twin became truly aware of Flaire as female. How beautiful she was, how fully developed she had become. He and Dario had talked about it one night when they snuck out to a tavern and had a few too many bottles of ale. They had both noticed the changes in her and were afraid their own male instincts might overwhelm them and they would hurt her. It was that night they had made a pact between brothers to always safeguard Flaire.

They did not have the same restrictions as the females and had lost their virginity long ago. It was rare for the brothers to be required to pay for a night of companionship, but on that night, for the first time, they shared a woman between them.

It had given the brothers a taste for something forbidden,

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for something shared. After that night there were many more of commingled pleasure, and a certain basic understanding of primal need had developed between the brothers.

## CHAPTER 8

Dario stood and watched Flaire as she slept. There was pure exhaustion in every line of her slender body. He hated tying her to the bed, but she'd left him little choice. They couldn't lose her again, and until Andras came back after meeting with Dymetra, it wasn't clear what direction they should take.

It hurt too much to think of her flying off into the dangerous jungles again. Of possibly being caught once more. This time they might not be able to find her in time and she'd be lost forever. If only Dymetra could locate her proper mate, maybe there was a chance of bringing her back, of settling that hormonal imbalance that drove the winged females to the

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savage side of their natures.

No matter what it cost him and Andras to give her up, they would do it. Hadn't they pacted long ago to stand back and see Flaire mated to her chosen male? And to protect her until that time came. He leaned against the windowsill, pressed his forehead against the ledge, his hand surrounding his raging cock that was barely contained by his tight pants. He closed his eyes, drawn back to that time before she disappeared. Just before. There had been so much desperation in her that afternoon. And all he had thought of was getting away from her before he did something stupid and broke every law of their society.

\* \* \*

*He had been hunting that day just prior to the beginning of the harvesting season and discovered her in a secluded glen at the base of the Vergosian mountains. She was sprawled on the ground, her beautiful wings drooped as though so much spilled sunlight all around her. He'd thought she was hurt, dropped to the ground, and ran across the clearing to kneel beside her. Her bow and quiver of arrows lay discarded at the other side of the clearing.*

*He turned her over and was shocked to see the blood on her face and the dark patches covering the front of her forest green hunting outfit.*

*"Where are you hurt, Flaire? Tell me so I can help you."*

*The trill of heartbroken sobs caused an ache in his chest. The tears left deep rivers of pink through the drying blood.*

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*Her hands rose up to clutch at his shirt.*

*“Help me, Dario. Please. I can’t stand it any more.”*

*Carefully he levered her up and against his chest. “Where are you hurt?” he asked again as he stroked the side of her face, pushing back the pale wisps of hair that had escaped her long braid.*

*“It’s not me,” she whispered. Then she uncurled a blood-covered hand and pointed a finger toward a mound near the edge of the clearing. “I killed it.”*

*Dario squinted his eyes and could just make out the mangled shape of a small brown treeclimber. “Wasn’t that what you were out doing today? Hunting?”*

*She shook her head. “I killed it with my hands and tore it apart with my teeth.” Again, she clutched at his shirtfront. “It’s taking me over, Dario. I can’t stop it. Help me.”*

*His feathers shook with fear for her and they arced out and around to shroud her, offering little protection from the savageness in her blood. Now he knew what terrified her. The wild nature of her ancestors was asserting its grip on her. And there was no way he could help her.*

*“Dymetra...”*

*“No. She can’t help me now.” Then Flaire had looked up at him from beneath the shadows of his wings, something akin to hope glowed in her eyes. “You could, Dario. You could help me. Fuck me. Please. It only has to be this once. I know that would stop it.”*

*His cock flared to life, hard and insistent against the press of his pants. It took every ounce of willpower to stop from*

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*doing exactly what she asked. But if he took her, it couldn't be just once. It would be over and over again. He wanted her too much. He would not be able to let her go. And her destiny belonged with another chosen for her by Vu. Revealed by Dymetra.*

*"No. You can't imagine how much I would like nothing better. But I am not the chosen one. The only thing it would do is defile you for the one you are meant to be with."*

*More tears poured down her cheeks, rivulets of suffering that dripped onto his hand. The pain inside him had never been as great as it was at that moment.*

*Suddenly, she appeared to gain control of herself and she sat up, carefully pulling out of his arms and crawling a short distance away. His wings settled into place against his back. His arms had never felt so empty.*

*"Flaire—"*

*She held up a blood-streaked hand. "No. I understand. I'm sorry I asked. I was overcome for a moment. You're right, of course." He saw a certain bleak resolution come into her eyes. "I have to go."*

*Before he could stop her she caught a breeze and was airborne, her wings were carrying her away from him. He looked down at his hand and the wet evidence of her pain. He brought it up to his mouth and licked the sorrow of her tears from his flesh. He felt every bit of her agony as though it were his own.*

*He would have sacrificed anything to do as she asked and to know it would save her. He looked up into the sky to the*



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*path she had fled.*

*How he had wanted to be the mate she needed. Everything would have been so much simpler.*

\* \* \*

What if he had taken what she offered? Would she still have flown out of their lives?

The heel of his hand rubbed against the painful erection pressing for release. He unbuttoned the fly and his prick popped out, bobbing for attention, the tip slick with pre-cum, skin stretched tight pushing the foreskin back, and the knobbed head exposed and leaking. With one hand he reached around to the *celeus mundus* tucked near the posterior left deltoid muscle at the back of his shoulder. Often referred to as the preenal glands, it was one of the exterior glandular pockets which gathered secreted oils used mainly for feather preening by those of his kind. Of course, it could also be used for other things, as he and Andras had quickly discovered. In recent years, manufactured oils were often used for the preening process. But there were still many who preferred the natural method provided by the preenal glands.

With two fingers, he pressed just above the gland and then slid his fingers inside to scoop up some of the accumulated body oil. There was a musky essence to it that also heightened arousal of a partner, the scent unique to each individual.

It wasn't preening he planned to use it for right now, but something far more needy. If he was going to be alone with Flaire for much longer, he had to get some control. He slid the

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foreskin back, spreading the lubrication liberally across his stretched skin. His hand fisted around the slick, hard length, gliding up and down.

It wouldn't take much. He had wanted her for as long as he could remember. The self-control he maintained had been just as rigid and rock solid as his cock was right now.

Hot, wanting flesh beneath his hand, brought to painful attention by the presence of a female that could never belong to him in the intimate and committed way he would like.

Up and down, his body reminded him acutely of his wanting. Of the desire to bury his searing prick inside her sweet, wet channel.

In his mind he saw them—the three of them. Touch, stroking, loving.

Fucking.

His eyes snapped open as he shot his hot semen into his hand, his whole body shuddering with the orgasm.

The three of them.

It could never be. She was not like the others. And she was not for them. He slammed the door down on those taboo images.

Quickly, he cleaned himself up and refastened his pants.

Something caused him to stiffen. A sense of being watched. Slowly he turned toward the bed and paused in shock.

Flaire's eyes were wide open and she was staring at him, her eyes dark pools of desire, her lips parted. Beneath the thin sheet he could see the outline of her tight, budding nipples.

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The sheet dented at her pussy, the evidence of arousal plain on the damp material that covered her.

Andras needed to get here and fast before what little self-control he'd been able to exert so far completely shattered.

## CHAPTER 9

Andras's mother left the room shortly after her meditation. Dymetra had thought it best for them to converse alone. She now sipped from the cup that the house servant, Kimi, had brought in. It was a fragrant, special blend of tea made from the herbs grown here on the estate. She set the cup down on the table and looked over at Andras.

"Now, tell me why you have summoned me here." Hands folded together in her lap, she waited, reminding Andras of a teacher from his secondary school. That seemed so long ago now. Pleasantries and formalities had finally been completed. He need wait no longer.

"We have found Flaire, daughter of Lyddia and Cassius."

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For the first time since he had known Dymetra, a surprised expression crossed her face. "She is here?"

"Not in the house. My brother is with her. They are in the aerie at the summit of the Vergosian cliffs."

"That's never occurred before. Once they are banished to the jungles, they never return. We have heard of some that appear on other planets on occasion, but never to return to our city."

He saw it in her eyes, the knowledge that others had been captured and sold by the poachers. He narrowed his gaze. How could his people let this happen to their own kind? It was unthinkable. He vowed then and there that the first thing they would do was put a stop to the black markets that ran beneath the city. Just as soon as Flaire's future was secured.

He straightened and looked her square in the eyes. "I want to know what has been revealed to you about her mate. Dario and I will not send her back to the jungle. We are going to help her one way or the other. But we will protect her."

A strange look passed across her face, a look almost of bleak acceptance. "If only I had been able to see a mate for her, but the messages, they were never right. I could never interpret their meaning."

Andras leaned forward. "What do you mean? What did you see?"

"It was always as though you and your brother were the wall stopping her future from being revealed."

"I don't understand."

She picked up the ceramic cup and took another sip before

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answering him. "I would see her standing there, but then you and your brother would be there, always blocking any other from being revealed to me. I assumed it was because you and your brother were so close to her while growing up, always acting as her protectors. But there was more."

"Yes? Go on."

"A shadow, almost a mirror image of Flaire stood just behind her. It was illusive, like smoke. First it was there and then the wisp dissolved into silver smoke that curled around her. It was like she consumed it and it would disappear. I've never seen anything like that before with any of the visions. None of it made sense. Try as I might, it was always the same. I meditated on the meaning more than I have ever done before and still nothing." She raised her hands helplessly. "I could not help her."

Andras was silent for a long time and then he knew. He should have known—he and Dario should have both known—right from the beginning.

"If my brother and I were from another planet as is the usual custom, what would you have thought the vision meant?" If he was right, he knew what they had to do. It was all so clear now.

He saw the dawning of sudden comprehension enter Dymetra's eyes. "It has never happened before."

"Our birth, my brother and I, has never happened before." That was the problem and had been so right from the beginning. No one knew what to do about the brothers.

"She will choose between you, you realize that. The

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revelations I receive must be accepted by the female. Even when a mate is revealed, if the female is not receptive to the mating, it can still cause the regression. You realize this?"

There was that ache in his heart, knowing it must be so. He nodded. In his heart he knew Flaire would accept one of them. It would be just a question of which of them she chose. "If it means her happiness, I would accept that. And I know Dario will as well. We both love her enough to sacrifice whatever it takes for her sanity."

"I don't know why I didn't see this before. Why I didn't understand."

"Because it has never happened before. She is special and has always remained special to us."

Dymetra nodded. "Which is why neither of you have mated. Nor have I received visions of either of your mates. You would never have been receptive to another. I had assumed it would be the same for you as the winged females. And maybe it was to some extent. Before I will see the future for the one that is left, one of you must mate with Flaire. She must choose which of you she will have. Until that is accomplished the other's destiny will never be revealed."

"It will be so."

"It may be too late if she has crossed over. I know the jungle nature. She is not the woman you once knew. She would not be a virgin after all this time in the wild."

"Neither are we, High Priestess."

Another first as he watched the red blush rise up into her cheeks. Then she looked away. "As you say." She rose from

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her seat. "I have no more information to give you. The rest is up to you."

He stood quickly, towering over her. "The rest is up to Flaire."

"May your choices bring you happiness. Once the decision has been made send for me again and we will see what Vu may reveal."

He escorted her from the house and walked with her up to the knoll.

"I will travel the rest of the way alone. Well wishes go with you, Andras."

"Health be with you, High Priestess."

He stayed and watched as she moved away in the direction of the temple. So much was explained. Finally, she disappeared from view and he turned away. There was no time to waste. He had to get to the aerie as quickly as possible. All three of their futures lay in the balance.

All of these years they had gone on with the understanding that another male would claim Flaire and she was meant for neither of them. Now that was all changed. One of them would come away with the priceless prize of Flaire's heart. The other must seek another to share his life. But knowing that they both loved her equally, how could one of them ever find happiness with another mate?

He walked to the top of the knoll and spread his wings. He felt the breeze and took off with a running start. Lifting from the ground, he soared into the sky, a strong wind carrying him upward.

Which of them would have their heart's desire and which would end in despair?



## CHAPTER 10

Dario paced outside the entrance to the aerie. He couldn't be in the same room with her any longer. Flaire's arousal permeated the whole chamber. Her primal song for mating drove him crazy with need as the trilling notes vibrated through his body. His self-control was in tatters. Where was his brother?

He couldn't go back in there. Not now. He could masturbate a thousand times and it would never be enough. No matter how many loose women he and his brother lay with, it would never appease the yearning for the woman inside the aerie. That was something he was finally coming to terms with. He had failed to face the truth for so long.

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It's why he'd never searched for a life mate, because he knew he wanted no one but Flaire by his side, in his bed. Was he destined to remain alone forever because of this unquenchable desire for her?

He saw a dark speck in the distance and narrowed his gaze.

Finally. Now this torment could end.

"What took so long?" he asked Andras as he landed and his wings folded against his back.

"You know what it is like. The formalities and the meditations take forever. But they must be followed. We were lucky that Dymetra met with me so quickly."

"What did she say? Anything to help us?"

Andras nodded slowly. "It will help Flaire and at least one of us."

"What do you mean?"

Andras sighed and by the look in his eyes, Dario knew it wasn't going to be good.

His brother walked over to a flat rock and dropped down, stretching out his long legs. Dario joined him and waited.

"Dymetra never understood the visions she had of Flaire's mate."

"Why not? What was the problem?"

Andras looked over at Dario. "Her mate is one of us."

Dario's heart thundered in his chest. Somehow he knew this moment was coming. "Which one?"

Andras shook his head. "I don't know. She doesn't know. Flaire must choose. Dymetra saw both of us in the vision. She does not know which of us is for Flaire."

## *WINGS OF SALVATION*

All the air left Dario's lungs in a huge rush. Like he was falling from the sky and there was no way to halt the descent. "We should have known all along," he said in a low voice. "It would never have come to this if we'd just allowed ourselves to see the truth, beyond all the old traditions."

Andras reached out and placed a hand on Dario's forearm. Dario felt the bracing strength of his brother. He looked over at him. Everything in their world was about to change. "If it is you she chooses, it will change nothing between us. You are my brother and I will also treat Flaire as...your mate."

Andras nodded. "It is the same for me. I only want her happiness. There will never be acrimony between us. This I swear."

They were of one mind, but then it had always been so. Even with the differences between them, there had never been room for jealousy. Now would not be the time for that to change. Neither of them wanted anything but Flaire's safety and happiness. Yet they both knew that once Flaire chose one of them, something subtle would alter in the relationship. They would all feel it and must find a way to live with it.

Another high-pitched keening came from inside the aerie and Dario rose to his feet. "It's time. She's in desperate need. I couldn't stay inside with her any longer. I don't know if she is capable of telling us which she will choose, but I guess we must try."

Andras rose to his feet. "Dymetra said it might be too late. She's never known of a reversion of the wildling nature once it has overtaken them."

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Dario straightened his shoulders. “There is always a first time. In our lives there have been quite a few firsts. I think it’s time for another.”

They turned together and walked toward the entrance of the aerie, alike minds with one goal. Freeing Flaire from her savage nature and discovering which of them would stay and which would leave.

## CHAPTER 11

The primal lust had overtaken her and Flaire couldn't fight it. Until she received release, the desires would not lessen. Where was the man? Didn't he hear her mating call? Watching him, seeing his huge cock, primed for release...she knew he wanted to fuck as much as she now needed it. Why had he left her? His scent still lingered in the chamber.

She refused to listen to Torrie, who tried to reason with her. She was past that; the wild nature now controlled her. She pumped her hips, frustrated with the inability to touch herself, to obtain any level of relief. Her thighs were coated with her juices as her pussy flooded again and again. She could smell her own scent clinging to the air, a sure indication she was

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primed for fucking. The need was so bad that her insides felt like they were twisted into knots. Her stiff clit throbbed for attention, her cunt lips were puffy, her inner labia engorged and painful. Her nipples felt like sharp needles pierced through their center. So sensitive, each nerve reaching, begging for attention.

She slitted her lids as she heard footsteps approaching. Two figures, almost blending into one, wavering back and forth. They said something, but she couldn't make out the words. She twisted in her bonds, thrust her hips, keened again. Pleading for attention. Offering them her most beautiful song.

*::It's time, Flaire. They want you to choose.::* Torrie spoke to her softly in their twin language.

*::What do I do? I no longer speak their words. I don't care which one fucks me.::*

*::It is not a choice you must make. We must have them both. It was always meant to be this way. From before-life. You have always belonged to them both. As I have. You must make them understand this. It can only come from you.::*

Torrie released memory and the bubbles filled with images floated above Flaire. She needed only to reach for them. Her inner gaze hunted them, hurried to catch them before they evaporated. Reaching down deep inside to the almost forgotten language of the Vrotian people, desperately she searched for the words she needed to make these men understand. She fought past the excruciatingly painful need for pleasure, to feel them inside her, back to the time when she knew they had been meant for her in the before-birth, where

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she and her sister were two separate beings still nestled inside the womb of their mother.

She had fought the truth. It seemed like forever. But not this time. This time she must make them understand what she needed above all else. She could no longer remain blinded to her destiny.

The words. She felt them forming, hard, lacking the musical quality of her song.

“B-both.” The word came out guttural and sounded strange to her ears. She saw a look of confusion on their faces. She reached further, knowing they apparently needed more.

“N-need b-both.” She fought against the ties binding her to the bed. She didn’t feel the pain of the lacerations from the whip. Only the ache of longing sliced right through to her heart at this moment.

“I. Need.” She reached for more words. Their names. Another bubble released from Torrie’s outstretched hand. “Dario.” She saw a look of pain in the other’s eyes. “A-andras. B-both. N-need both.” The last word ended on a scream as she arched against the bond, the bed, screaming their names.

“Dario!”

“Andras!”

Over and over again. How did she make them understand?

Finally, she felt the bed shift and they were beside her. One to either side. They were naked and she felt the heat of their flesh. She heaved a sigh of relief. They had understood.

The ties were cut and her limbs were free. Dario knelt between her legs, he cupped her face and his lips nuzzled at

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her lips. She opened her mouth and the pleasure of his tongue curling around her own was pure ecstasy.

But there was more.

As Dario pulled her up into his arms, Andras knelt behind her and she felt two pairs of arms enclose her. Hands on her wings, petting and soothing, fierce, hot lips trailing the naked skin between her wings had her shuddering and fluttering, her song clear and bright as a crystal bell.

They were saying words, but she didn't understand them, didn't need them. Not right now. All she could do was feel. She wrapped a hand around Dario's erection, so thick, so hot, like a dagger. She wanted it piercing her. She wanted him deep, as deep as he could go.

His mouth tasted her lips, her chin, hesitated over her eyelids, his breath fluttering against her flesh. His strong hands fitted at her narrow waist, fingers kneading her hips, her juices dripping from her channel. She felt his wings unfurl around her, brushing against her arms, shielding and protecting.

And she felt Andras behind her, his lips on her buttocks, sucking and nipping. His arms had circled around and his hands, slick with oil, kneaded her damp thighs. Then his hands were beneath her as he slid his fingers through her cream, coating them with her arousal. She felt his finger at her anus, sliding inside. Her breath caught at the exquisite sensation as he stretched her, preparing her with her juices. And his body oils. Their combined scents drove her deeper into the cloud of desire pressing all around her.



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Dario lifted her up. His finger circled her hard bud again and again as Andras prepared her puckered hole. He would fuck her there and she wanted him to do it. Just as much as she wanted Dario to fill her vagina.

She saw a light ahead of her and she reached for it, running as fast as she could. They waited for her, only her. She was between them, a part of them, flying with them. Free.

Dario peeled her fingers from around his cock and she felt the broad tip pressing between her lips.

*Yes!* she wanted to scream. *Now. Fill me now.*

And then he was inside her and she was screaming with pleasure as her sheath enveloped him, her tender walls expanding to take all of him, to blend with him. His wings were surrounding them, enclosing them, keeping them safe. And she didn't think she had ever known such bliss.

Until she felt Andras penetrate her other, smaller orifice. He pushed in slowly and she climaxed, arching and undulating between them.

They didn't let her falter as they pierced her between them. Held her, protected her from falling. Dario claimed her scream and swallowed it, making it his own. Andras possessed her neck with his mouth, his tongue, his teeth.

And then, as though they were one, they began to move in synchronization. Entering and exiting, swirling and sending her soaring again and again. There was no ground. Spirits combined, souls merged, hearts entwined as bodies opened and devoured one another. Branding, embracing, creating.

Dario yelled as his semen spurted inside her, filling and

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spilling into her womb.

Andras echoed not long after, his cum flooding her rectum. And the knowledge of being mated with them both sent her over the edge one last time. Flying free. Freer than she had ever been in her life before. She could not imagine a moment more perfect than this.

## CHAPTER 12

Andras shelled another pod and popped the small round citrini into his mouth as he contemplated his brother and Flaire curled together in the bed. The scent of their passion still perfumed the air of the chamber. He still couldn't believe what had taken place the night before. And he couldn't take his eyes off of Flaire.

How could this have happened? How were they going to explain it to their parents and to the High Priestess? He'd woken up early, even after an almost totally sleepless night of passion, and had flown out to try to clear his head and forage for some food. It wasn't supposed to happen this way.

He popped more of the sweet citrini into his mouth.

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At least according to Dymetra.

Yet, when he really considered, how could it have been any other way? He turned and watched the primary sun begin its ascent into the sky. A beautiful, clear day, not a cloud in sight. He wanted to spread his wings and catch the wind, to yell with happiness.

He wasn't giving her up, no matter what the priestess said. And he doubted Dario felt any differently, from the way he was wrapped possessively around Flaire right now. They just would have to decide how they would approach their parents and the priestess when the time came.

He felt moist lips caress his neck and he couldn't help smiling. He hadn't heard her cross the room.

One of her flame-tipped wings curled around to stroke at the bulge hidden beneath his pants. She reached around to unbutton his fly and clasp his thick cock.

"Inside me," she whispered in his ear as she circled around him and climbed onto his lap.

"Insatiable," he growled as he wound his hands into her hair and cupped her head.

"For you," she responded as she rubbed her wet pussy against his erection. Her fingers slid through his long hair as she nipped at his full lower lip.

He looked into her eyes and found them to be clearer than yesterday, no longer quite as wild as they had been. In fact, she looked serene.

Turning his head slightly, he saw Dario was awake, stretched out on the bed, one hand supported his cheek as he

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watched them. A bemused smile was on his face and with his other hand he stroked his morning erection.

“She’s ours,” he said.

Andras turned back to her and saw her smile. “Yours.” Then she looked at Dario. “And yours.” She sighed contentedly. “Both mine. Belong to both.” She lifted up and Andras found himself fully sheathed inside her slippery channel. “Yes. Both.”

Her vocabulary was still rather limited, but just like his cock, it was growing with each second they were together.

“Yes,” he said as he lifted her up and eased her back down.

“Ahhh,” she purred.

Then Dario walked across the room and was kneeling behind her, stroking the bare, sensitive skin between her wings. She arched and shivered, cooing pleasurably. It was a sound he didn’t think either he or Dario would ever grow tired of hearing. She was so perfect. So right for them. Why had they never seen it before?

He saw Dario reach over and pluck up a single succulent citrini pod. He had a devilish grin on his face. Andras saw him reach over his shoulder. His fingers glistened with oil when they became visible again. The pod was held lightly between his fingers as he coated it with the oil. He traced the end of it over her thigh, across her full breast and circled her dusky nipple. Her throaty laughter trilled out, filling the room with playfulness.

Andras drew oil and his fingers played with her nipples, leaving them wet and glistening. He could smell Dario’s scent

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on her. And his own. They had made love long into the night, both of them coating her copiously with their body oils, marking her with their combined scents.

She gasped, her walls tightening around his shaft. Her eyes became heavy lidded and her sigh was more moan.

“Sexy.”

Andras glanced over her shoulder. Now he understood. Interesting things one could do with a little green vegetable. Half the oiled pod had disappeared into her puckered opening, the end still clasped between Dario’s slick, shiny fingers. His expression was heavy and intent as he watched the pod disappear, the tight, pink flesh opening and narrowing as he fucked her anus.

A whoosh of breath and Andras felt her spasm, her climax pulsing through her, and then she began to ride him in earnest. It wasn’t long before he was orgasming, filling her with his seed.

Dario leaned back and sat on the floor, his back against the wall as he looked up at them. Andras wrapped his arms around Flaire and she collapsed against his chest, nestling her head into the crook of his neck. Andras reached over and grabbed another citrini pod. Slicing it open, he held it up in front of Flaire’s lips.

“Open,” he said as he tilted it.

She smiled and parted her lips. He shucked the tiny vegetables and they dropped neatly into her waiting mouth. He leaned down and captured her lips with his own, tasting fresh, sweet citrini and searing, sensual Flaire. A most delicious

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morning snack.

His semi-erect cock was still warmly tucked inside her slick vagina and it didn't look like she was planning on moving any time in the near future, which was fine with him.

"We're going to have to do some explaining when we go back," Dario said as he reached up for a pod and snapped it in two.

"That's what I was thinking, " Andras answered as he fed Flaire more citrini.

"It's never been done before," Dario said as he watched Flaire lick her lips.

"Is there anything about us that's been done before? We're males born to a winged woman, we're twins, and we've got wings."

Andras shrugged. "I guess we get to make our own rules."

"I guess we'll have to."

## CHAPTER 13

By Flaire's estimation she had been at the aerie for a week. A week of loving, intimate exploration and discovery, and becoming reacquainted with the two men who were now her mates. Her mind was much clearer and she could actually put thoughts together and voice them in a halfway understandable manner.

Andras and Dario had gone out hunting. They didn't want her to join them—not just yet. It was too soon after her return from the jungle. Nor did they want to take a chance on her recapture.

She remembered so little of her captivity. But the scars would never allow her to forget completely. The injuries had



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healed well with Dario's help, but they would always be a reminder of the nightmare experience. If they hadn't found her and saved her, only Vu knows what would have become of her.

Torrie had been rather silent over the last few days, lingering quietly in the background. She seemed to finally be content. Flaire could feel the expansive happiness that radiated inside her.

They had reached a point where it was time for her to tell her mates about Torrie. She had never shared the secret of her sister and her twin souls with anyone. There were reasons she hadn't told Andras and Dario before, but now that she had mated with them, there could be no secrets among them. She just wondered how they would take it. Would they think her insane? Have her banished back to the jungle?

She didn't think she could stand it if they sent her away. Not now.

Today she was dressed in a short white robe tied with a belt. Dario had gone out earlier in the week to forage for clothing for her. He found a few things, at least enough to keep her clothed for the time being.

The suns felt warm on her face. How she wished she could have flown with them. Like they had done before. Before the wildness had consumed her. She spread her wings, allowing the wind to fluff and wend through them. They needed a good cleaning. The fresh breeze felt good.

It was wonderful to be civilized again. When she had taken it upon herself to leave before she could be banished, she

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never thought to see her family and friends again. It was pure, unexpected joy to be with Andras and Dario, and seemed more like a dream than reality.

She rose to her feet as she saw them in the distance. Coming home. To her. It was time.

“How long does it take to acquire dinner?” she couldn’t help teasing them as they landed on the cliff perch.

“Dario kept chasing them away,” Andras grumbled. “Some hunter.”

She couldn’t help laughing. Her memory had cleared and she remembered how much of a peacemaker Dario had always been, very careful about when and what he hunted. They were so different, yet the same, in so many ways.

“Come inside. Maybe an appetizer before dinner?”

She turned to glance at them over her shoulder and saw the gleam in their eyes as they quickly followed her into the aerie. They tossed the bags containing the food onto the table and then trailed after her to the bed. They lifted her onto the surface and “helped” her to remove her clothing. And then she helped them.

She loved touching them; every inch of their hard bodies pleased her. Every breath reminded her of how lucky she was. She would never take even one moment for granted. Having lived in the jungles, she cherished each second in their company and the renewed clarity of her life.

And she loved the taste of them. They lifted her and lay her on the bed, spreading her out like a delectable meal. Andras slid her legs apart, and she knew he would already find

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her wet. She gasped as she felt his tongue penetrate her vagina, then exit and flick over her clitoris. She arched, pressing herself closer.

She turned her head to look at Dario. He played with her nipples, stroking and tugging.

“Come to me, Dario. Let me taste you.”

He needed no second invitation as he carefully straddled her, his thick cock hard and jutting. She reached up to curl her fingers around him, carefully pressing back the foreskin, and he sighed.

He looked down at her as she was just about to enclose his cock with her mouth.

“Wait.”

She looked up at him questioningly, licking her lips as she stroked over the silk-hard length. Just then Andras pressed deep with his tongue and she cried out.

Dario lifted her slightly. “Spread your wings. I want to see them. I want to touch them.”

The flame and ivory of her wings fanned across the bed, lifting and curling. Dario’s molasses-dark eyes grew darker yet, turning almost to rich, black pools that she could drown in. The pupils were dilated wider than she had ever seen them. He reached out to touch a flame tipped primary reverently.

“So beautiful,” he murmured.

She embraced his rigid length with both hands and drew him into her mouth. She curled her tongue beneath the ridge of the flared head, slid it along the slit, tasting his special tang, and sucked him deeper.

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Andras's tongue played with her labia lips, sliding along her tender slit, circling over her clit. And she felt herself flying high as only these brothers could do for her. And then suddenly she burst free, pulsing against Andras's mouth as he sucked her cream.

Dario exploded in her mouth and she swallowed his cum, licking him clean before she would allow him to leave her. She drew back her wings as he dropped down beside her.

Andras rose over her and she felt the tip of his cock at her entrance. He eased himself inside her, building to a slow rhythm, pumping in and out until he flooded her womb with his semen.

"My loves," she murmured as she stroked his hair. "I never imagined."

Andras carefully pulled from inside her and dropped to her side. She turned toward Dario and rested her head on his broad chest. His arms arced around her, pulling her close. She felt Andras spoon himself behind her, a hand braced at her abdomen, another cupping her full breast, fingers playing with her budded nipple. She would never feel as loved or protected as she did at this moment.

*"It is done now,"* Torrie's soul whispered inside her head. *"Everything is as it should be. At last."*

*"I need to tell them about you,"* Flaire answered. *"They must understand."*

*"All in good time. For now, we are content."*

That was something Flaire could not dispute. She felt the love surrounding her, filling her as she dozed sandwiched in cozy warmth between them.

## CHAPTER 14

She shook her wings to remove any excess moisture that might linger as she walked from beneath the falls and stepped toward the bank where Andras and Dario lay in the sun. The light filtering through the trees provided a halo effect around them.

They were so beautiful. She picked up the short white tunic and put it on. Then she sauntered over to them. Today was the first day after four weeks in the aerie that she had left the sanctum and soared with her mates. The exhilaration in being able to once more take to the air was wonderful. Even more so because Andras and Dario flanked her as they wove through the clouds with the wind beneath their wings.

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The brothers had come and gone during the last three weeks and she knew they were up to something. Every night they came back totally exhausted and refused to reveal what they were doing. They weren't hunting because they never brought back food. So it was something else.

They watched her through slitted eyes as she gracefully dropped to the ground between them, her legs crossed. She brushed her wet hair away from her face and began to comb it with the shell comb Dario had fashioned for her.

"Are you going to tell me what you've been doing these last weeks while you've made me wait at the cliff aerie? I think I've been very patient."

Dario slowly sat up, the muscles of his chest rippling bronze beneath the light. His dark nipples were beaded tightly and she so wanted a taste. His hair draped over his shoulders in shimmering dark waves and she could just see the hint of his glossy ebony wings. Her fingers itched to touch him, her pussy dripped her juices.

Quickly she turned her gaze away and gazed up at the lace of green branches above their heads. There were no knots in her hair now after days of working her way through the nest of matted hair after her experiences. It was now sleek and glossy, and looked like crystal clear water beneath the sunlight. She finished with the comb and then pocketed it.

"There should be no secrets between us," she murmured, knowing that she still kept her own. Still afraid of what they would think of her if she told them about Torrie.

"We've been preparing." The answer came from Andras,

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who sat to her right. She turned her head to meet his dark, intent gaze.

“What do you mean?”

“We’ve met with our parents,” Dario said. “Yours and ours. Of course, our mother knew because Andras went to her to set up the meeting with Dymetra. We didn’t think it was right to shock your parents in particular with not only your return, but our mating.”

She looked down, plucking at the grass. “I should have been there.”

Dario leaned forward and linked his fingers through hers. The strength and protectiveness conveyed in that touch helped to brace her. “They took it well. They were shocked, of course. No one has ever come back from the jungle. But they were willing to listen.”

“They were all rather taken aback by the knowledge of our unusual mating. And it will take some time for them to get used to the idea. But Dario and I were firm with them. Nothing will tear us apart. Not even Dymetra or Vu, himself.”

She looked at Andras and reached out to cup his jaw. “This is going to make everything so difficult, isn’t it?”

He leaned forward and clasped her other hand and his expression hardened. “Nothing will separate us ever again, love. Nothing.”

“They finally agreed,” Dario said. “The surprise is that they have deeded us a stretch of land that straddles both estates. Work has already begun on building our home.”

Tears spurted, she couldn’t help it. “Will your parents

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blame me for ruining your lives, your chances at a lucrative mating from a good line from another planet? One that is expected?"

Their grip on her hands tightened. "No, Flaire. Never. They know the will of Vu has been revealed. They know that we belong together." Dario captured her gaze. "I think in some ways they have known it as long as we have. They, like us, didn't think it could be our destiny and so ignored all the signs, just as Dymetra did."

Her heart thundered in her chest. "I knew it as well."

"How?" Andras asked.

"When?" Dario wanted to know.

She took a deep breath. Now was the time. "I think I have always known it. You may not understand this and I never revealed this to anyone else." She hesitated.

"Go on," Dario encouraged her. "Remember what you said. No secrets."

Yes, it was time. "I don't know how to begin. Inside me," she touched her chest. "There are two souls. We were meant to be born into the world twin sisters, but something happened. I can't explain it. Somehow her tiny body was absorbed into mine and her life resides within me."

"How do you know this?" Andras asked.

Flaire bit her lip. They were going to think she was insane. "She speaks to me. We have our own language. Even in the jungle she was always there, trying to keep me from losing myself entirely. She kept our memories safe. All this time. Maybe she's the reason I was able to come back from the



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edge. Or maybe it was both her and you that brought me back. I don't know. But she always knew that we, or I, was destined to be with no other than you. Dymetra was never going to find my mate, because my destiny was right here on Vrotia."

Dario leaned forward, pulling her toward him. "Why did you never tell us? So much pain and torment could have been avoided."

She looked up at him. "Would you really have believed me? That I have a twin sister but her soul, her energy, resided inside me? It sounds insane even to me."

She saw Dario look across at Andras and unbelievably she didn't see disgust and disbelief. It was something else. Andras moved closer. "It isn't insane, but I believe only another twin such as Dario and I, would believe such a thing. You realize Dario and I can communicate telepathically."

Her gaze widened. "You can?" She looked from one to the other.

"You aren't insane, Flaire. There seems to be a certain communication unique to our kind. I don't mean the winged society, but in being twins. Do you know her name?"

"Her name is Torrie. She told me you would come for me. That you would free me. Free us."

"She was right." Andras looked over at Dario. "That's who Dymetra saw in the vision."

"What do you mean?" Flaire asked.

He looked at her. "In her vision she saw a shadow lingering close behind you. Almost a mirror of your image, she said, yet elusive. Smoke that swirled around you and

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which you absorbed. It must have been Torrie. She didn't understand it. It didn't make sense to her. And, therefore, she never revealed the vision. So much time wasted." His expressive eyes, when he looked at her were so gentle, so understanding, it took her breath away. "You will tell us about her one day. Let us know her as you have known her. She is a part of you and thus of us."

Flaire shook her head, her heart was so full she found the words difficult. No one else could ever have understood, but these men knew the very soul of her. And accepted. "I thought that my—that our destiny was destroyed because Torrie only resided inside me. And, therefore, I was destined to be with neither of you. I never realized—" She caught the sob before it emerged.

"So many signs that we all ignored," Dario murmured. "If only we had tried less to conceal our true feelings. We would all have been destined to remain alone forever. Never to have our chosen mate. Never to know true happiness."

She leaned up and threw herself into his arms. She felt Andras close in behind her, wrapping his wings protectively around them all, securing them within their own secluded nest. She twisted around and leaned up to kiss him. "There is more," she whispered. She hoped this latest secret would bring them as much joy as it did her.

"What?" he looked down at her questioningly.

Dario's hands were at the belt to her tunic, releasing it. He drew the material off her shoulders. She felt his lips at the nape of her neck. Andras's hands reached to stroke her

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breasts. She hissed with pleasure. They were so sensitive, particularly right now.

“It’s time to go back. I must be there. I know it’s a little late to perform the Fertility Rite, but I must go to the temple to give thanks and to ask Vu to bless our mating. And I must prepare our home.”

Andras eased her back against Dario and spread her legs. His long fingers circled over her clitoris, slid through the wetness between her puffy lips. It seemed these days she was always ready for them.

Andras lifted her hips and slid his thick penis inside her and she sighed with pleasure. She looked up into his eyes when he was fully seated within her channel, Dario’s hands possessively fondling her nipples.

“I’m with child, my loves.” She felt the air still within their cocoon.

“You’re certain?” She felt Dario’s moist, warm whisper against the curve of her shoulder. Andras stilled inside her.

“Yes. Torrie says this one will be a girl, but the next—” She smiled.

“We are so blessed,” Dario said. “You are our life, Flaire. And you will always be protected with our love.”

Andras began to move inside her and the pleasure filled her. She wrapped her arms around his waist, just as Dario wrapped his arms around her.

“You are my life, my loves, my destiny,” she said as her twin souls rose toward the skies. And then she was flying free. She saw her sister and the smile on her face as the souls

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separated and then merged together. “My salvation!” she cried out, tears of pure and utter bliss spilling down her cheeks.

Each moment in their arms would forever be more perfect than the last.

This was their destiny.

## ADRIANNA DANE

Theresa Gallup uses the pen names of Tess Maynard and Adrianna Dane. Theresa has been writing since the age of 10. A legal secretary for 30 years, she is currently working on another erotic romance, as well as a full-length romantic mystery/suspense. She has been married for 30 years and has three grown children (a daughter and twin sons), and is a new grandmother.

Writing as Tess Maynard, her first published short story appeared in the ezine, *The Whispering Forest*, in January of 2004. Writing as Adrianna Dane, where adding sensual heat to romance is her motto, *Esmerelda's Secret* was her first foray into the erotic romance genre.

Having traveled and lived from the East Coast to the West Coast, Theresa receives inspiration for her stories from a variety of sources, including music and poetry, and her tastes are eclectic.

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***Don't miss Fertility Rite, by Adrianna Dane,  
available at [AmberHeat.com](http://AmberHeat.com)!***

*Lura, a winged female who resides on the planet Vrotia, is about to commence the Fertility Rite, a sacred ritual all winged Vrotian females must perform or chance complete reversion to the primitive nature of the wild huntress. Vu, the Vrotian God of Fertility, has finally revealed to the High Priestess of the Justynian Order the identity of Lura's mate and at last the Rite may begin.*

*Nathan Callendar, an Earthling, is destined to fill the role of Lura's mate. Lura must travel to Earth, seduce Nathan beneath an eclipsed moon, and convince him to return with her to Vrotia. She has only seventy-two hours before she must return to Vrotia—with or without Nathan.*

*Without Nathan's help, Lura will be doomed to succumb to a predatory existence that has lain dormant within her until now. But will he see her only as an unnatural winged alien from another planet and deny her? Or will he allow himself to love the woman destined by Vu to be a part of his future?*

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