



Kats & Dawgs

LEADER OF
THE PACK

Tamara Nightshade

Kats & Dawgs
Leader of the Pack
By
Tamara Nightshade
Triskelion Publishing
www.triskelionpublishing.net

Triskelion Publishing
15327 W. Becker Lane
Surprise, AZ 85379

Copyright 2006 Tamara Nightshade

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including photocopying, recording or by any information retrieval and storage system without permission of the publisher except, where permitted by law.

ISBN 1-933874-12-0

Publisher's Note. This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, and places and incidents are a product of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to a person or persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales is purely coincidental.

Prologue

Teague squinted at the monitor then rotated away to glance over the seven other forty inch, liquid holographic monitors that filled one room in the Street Magius headquarters. He scratched his head and looked down where the operative called Jammer monitored the activity in "The Game." Teague waited a moment then leaned his lanky form on the edge of the long counter. One hand rubbed across his face, absently scratching at the new beard. He'd been in Mexico for ten days and no where near a razor. This morning he trimmed it up, but he still wasn't sure he'd keep it.

"What is he doing?"

Jammer looked up from his monitors to where Teague pointed. "I don't know."

"The Game" was a massive training simulator that Street Magius operatives used regularly. The training op contained three standard city blocks, loaded with holographic and physical images. Inside, Street Magius could create any real-time threat for their agents to practice in.

Teague leaned over the keyboard and zeroed in on the only occupant of "The Game." Urban was in the process of locating a hostage and disabling a bomb known as a *Mind Tickler*. The young, talented, and impossibly headstrong agent maneuvered through an alley seeking entry into an underground club. Urban keyed a lockset on the side of a door and then slid a card down a grid next to the lock. Teague tapped the screen and stood up as the focus clicked in on the keystroke Urban made.

"He's cheating!"

Glaring at Jammer, Teague stood up. "No shit." He heard the other man snicker softly and resisted the urge to smack him in the back of the head. With one hand, he typed in a code and slid his own keycard through it waiting for the green light. Once the card was ready, Teague headed for the door that slid open as soon as he hit the pressure pad in the floor.

He jogged down to the entrance of "The Game" and programmed it for his access. While he waited for the computer to reconfigure, Teague went to one of the armory stalls and picked a small revolver styled blaster. Triggering the safety off and hitting the highest charged, he practically licked his chops when the entrance shimmered in front of him. The last thing Teague heard before stepping into the city scene was Jammer's announcement over the main intercom at Street Magius that a battle was about to take place.

Teague only shook his head and then turned his concentration on the city. Not such a great section of town with the streetlights shot out and strung out crystal addicts huddled in the entrance of alleyways. The street was wet and Teague couldn't quite place the smell, somewhere between urine and blood. He moved quickly ignoring the gangsters that tried to engage him and headed across the street where he'd seen Urban last.

That kid would be the death of him or if Darkwind ever got hold of him, well that just wouldn't be very pretty.

His boots made no sound as he walked down the littered sidewalk. The light hazy and gray from the smoke churning through factories a block away made Teague commend his affinity for details. This looked exactly like the section of town that Urban would find when he ran the operation for real. He'd seen worse places that was certain.

"Hey pal, gotta light."

The vagrant Dawg reached out for him and Teague dodged slipping past a very old pick-pocketing scheme. Any other time, he might play along, but right now he had one thing on his mind and that was to knock the snot out of Urban.

Neon signs hissed and blinked as he made his way down into the red light district of the neighborhood. Several ladies of the night approached running their hands down his chest and pressing their ample cleavage against him. He wasn't entertained and smacked one away when she grabbed hold of his crotch and murmured her approval.

The club was up ahead and Teague figured that since Urban tricked the system to gain access, the computer would've deployed guards at the entrance now. Sure enough, two beefy sonic football players stood outside the entrance. Teague grinned, he hadn't done this in quite some time. Raising his hands he held the grin and approached casually.

The guards straightened slightly but didn't appear alerted. "Sorry, no entrance tonight."

Teague continued to smile. An exhaust fan blasted him with hot air as he walked by ruffling his long, worn leather duster. The coat was old and battered, but it was loose fitting and concealed a multitude of sins. Right now, it hid two of the Flurry Flash grenades in the sleeve cuffs. They resembled small pieces of crystal so if anyone searched him they'd assume he was into rocks.

Teague moved to a ninety-degree angle of the two guards. The grenades caused a frozen blast that silently froze anyone within a twenty-meter radius in their tracks for ninety minutes. Teague itched to test the little guys out and this seemed as good a time as any.

"What do you mean, no entrance?" He kept the grin plastered on his face and calculated the distance between him and the two guards. "I heard there's a hell of a game down there tonight."

"You heard wrong." The guard folded his arms and showed off impressive biceps. "Now blow. You don't want to mess with us."

"That's true. I don't." In one fluid motion, Teague used his thumbs to release the two grenades from their casings and send them straight at the guards. Just for good measure, he kicked himself back a few steps as the grenades "popped" and a mini ice storm filled the air. Teague smiled watching snowflakes blow down the alley. The two guards caught in a field of ice looking like bizarre ice sculptures.

He walked passed them and glanced back over his shoulder, "Thanks guys." Making a mental note to order more of the grenades, Teague continued down to the entrance. The door had a pulse lock attached to it. He could use the keycard just as Urban had to trip the lock or, he glanced at his watch to check the time, he could simply bypass the thing himself.

Dialing the frequency setting on his watch, he pressed a button and sent a beam straight at the lock. Tilting his head, he listened carefully memorizing the digital code the lock sent out. Then, he reached up to the keypad, tapped the code out precisely, and stood back as the back door slid open.

Moving into the narrow doorway, Teague had only a second to react as the floor dropped and he swung his body forward to catch hold of the stair railings running two floors down at a ninety-degree angle. He roared the railings down. Sliding hard and fast to the floor below until he dropped into a crouch on the dusty floor.

Teague straightened slowly and flicked the dial on his watch to activate his shield. Dim light in the storage area didn't bother him, his acute vision adjusted to any situation. By the look of things, Urban headed toward the main office. He could see the other man's footprints in the light dusting of dirt over the gray floor.

He took three steps down the corridor when four men came at him out of the darkness. Teague sidestepped the first two. He saw the other pair struggling for their blasters and Teague bit the inside of his jaw. Gunfire would attract a whole hell of a lot of attention. Teague did the only thing he could, he lowered his shoulder and plowed into both men at a dead run.

Teague slammed the heel of his hand into one man's nose as they landed in a thud on the ground. His shoulder hit the floor hard and he winced as the sharp bite of pain flashed. Blood dripped down his hand as the man with his nose smashed went limp. The other man caught hold of his hair and yanked hard. Ignoring the sting in his shoulder, Teague looked up in time to see the other two running at him.

One reached down and received a lovely parting gift of Teague's foot in his balls. The other was wise enough to hesitate but it didn't do any good. Both booted feet hit the man hard enough in the knees to hear a loud pop while the guy holding his hair tried to work his fingers around Teague's throat. Twisting hard, Teague slammed his elbow into the man's throat and waited for the gurgling sound.

Rolling off the bodies, Teague checked his watch and drew his blaster. He rotated his shoulder and waited for the grinding and pop. He rotated his neck and figured it was about time to catch up with Urban.

A door whispered shut and Teague moved carefully in that direction. He knelt down beside the door and triggered the mechanism to open. Five quick burst from a pulse rifle greeted him, but from Teague's low position, they fired over his head. Teague clicked off three quick shots hitting Urban square in the chest.

Teague stood as Urban stared at him dumbfounded. "Wh—whaa?" Urban teetered back on his heels as Teague stepped up to him.

Swiping his card through the key lock on the nearest wall, Teague ordered, "End simulation." Then he swiveled to face Urban and used his index finger to poke him in the shoulder. "You are grounded." It was enough to knock Urban off balance and he fell backward like block of Bonded Force crete.

Urban coughed, stunned and unable to even wiggle. His lips moved as Teague put a foot on his chest. "Not a word, Urban. Don't say a goddamn word."

A musical blip indicated a message from the control panel. Teague kept his foot on Urban as the message came overhead.

"Teague, Chancellor Lucan is holding for you on your private line."

Chapter One

She so hated political gatherings. Decorations, loud, piped in music—what the fuck was that? Country? Her dad was such a shit kicker. The throngs of eager party members waited for his announcement like canines sniffing around raw meat. The thrill of a crowd, their excitement over seeing the Chancellor of the Lucan clan, bored the hell out of Aisha Lucan. She sensed the buzz in the air as she tried making her way to the third row and her seat on the edge of the aisle. Several Dawgs stopped her to sniff and greet her.

Aisha was used to it now. She'd been the Chancellor's daughter for twenty-four years and only because it felt like her parents groomed her from birth. But she usually got of these gigs. Her older brother, Bayron was dad's heir anyway. She strutted past a long mirror taking a good look at her reflection.

Oh yeah girl, you're looking some hot tonight! She knew those jeans would hug her ass the moment she'd seen them in the window at a hot new store called Tango Freak. Forking out some serious cash for the gemstone studded denim was worth it when it made the boys howl.

Her long, wavy mink hair looked sexier than ever. She made her salon appointment as soon as her dad announced this freak show free for all. Aisha tapped a long violet blue tinged nail on the mirror as she checked her lipgloss.

"Haaaaoooo, honey, bring those tits over here." The red and black babydoll tank she wore was painted on with a low v that showed enough of her milk chocolate globes to get the attention of some of Bayron's buddies.

She swung her head, grinning as her hair swung in a wild cloud around her face. "Come talk to me, pups, when you're house broken."

The one called Flav grabbed his crotch and massaged his balls. "Babe, I'm a champion stud."

"More like a champion dud!" A Latina shoved her way through the Dawgs followed by three other chicks. "Go find a fire hydrant or something." Her name was Elena and she was one tough ass bitch. Five foot seven of lean mean warrior Dawg and tonight, she was dressed for a party. Black leather pants, with three inch heeled boots were her standard wardrobe. Tonight she dressed it up a bit with a bustier that pushed her ample boobs up to her chin.

"Well, it's about fuckin' time. I told you bitches to get here early."

"Teequa changed clothes six times."

Aisha glanced over at Teequa a blonde-streaked bitch with canines and claws that could tear open a man in under five seconds. "Hey, you said we were out trolling. I wanted to look good."

"Bayron isn't here." Aisha's amber eyes skimmed over the crowd. "Sorry sweetie. No big brother for you to lust over."

"I don't lust over him."

Cayenne had hair the color of burnt cherries. She wore a black tank that revealed her tattoo of an attack Dawg leaping from its position on the front of her tits. She had a spiked collar on with her all black look, right down to eyeliner and nail polish. "Nah, Tee doesn't lust she just wants to play with his balls."

"Oh shut the hell up." Tee flicked a spike in Cayenne's collar. "At least I've found a toy I want to play with."

Aisha frowned and twisted the gold wire in her ear. "Okay this shit is grossing me out. I don't even like thinking about my brother having balls let alone you wanted to play with them."

"Fine, fine, I won't tell you about licking them first."

"Oh gawd..." Aisha walked into the crowd. She was glad her bitches showed up. It didn't matter that she felt incredibly exposed at these events. There was always someone who didn't like people in charge and her dad had been the leader of the Dawgs since before she was born.

She raised her head slightly and sniffed. What was that? A flutter of nerves felt more like a cave full of bats on their exit as she scanned the crowd. The hall could hold five thousand easily, but Aisha knew there was probably eight inside.

The introductions began and her father, Chancellor Micha Lucan, took the large stage and she waited for him to be followed by her big brother. She heard Tee behind her smack her lips, "Mmm-hmmm, girlfriend that's what I'm talking about."

Aisha sniffed again. "There's Kats here."

"You're shitting me?" Three women lifted their noses in the air.

Then she realized what her ol' man was up to. Trying to end a three hundred year old Breed war in one night? That was nuts. Dawgs, a shapeshifting wolf clan composed of five separate families had hunted Birds for more than one century. The Lucan family led the Dawgs for more than eighty years now but there was an election coming soon and Micha Lucan had something up his sleeve. Using his only daughter as a promo op to persuade the Breeds to unify wasn't just silly, it was downright dangerous.

The Kats were a mystery to most. Cool and aloof, they found their way into Manhattan and took over the upper east and most of the west side leaving the Bronx and what used to be called Greenwich to the Dawgs in a land deal that shook up the entire shapeshifting world. The Kats used their wiles to get what they wanted and usually could be counted on for treachery.

Her father said it was an important move because it would align the Dawgs with a powerful man that could align them in a powerful bid for alignment with the Kats. Micha Lucan wanted that destiny for her daughter. The power and prestige of the Kats together with Dawgs seemed outrageous but it was something her father had worked on for years. Aisha knew he dreamed of that legacy for his only daughter. It seemed she was destined for a course decided upon long ago and with the death of her mother two years ago, Aisha's importance in her father's plan only grew. What dad didn't realize is she couldn't care less.

There was no love lost between Aisha and the Kats. But, she loved her dad and would do anything for him. But this party of his, was a bad idea.

The Kats had a lot of real estate on the Upper East Side. She knew what her dad was thinking and why Bayron went along with it. He wanted to be named second in command. She didn't need prestige. She pushed her attention toward her father and his speech. "Come on, let's get closer."

At first, Aisha thought the setting on the room's artificial environment was haywire. A shiver raced up her spine and settled in the base of her neck as if chilly air blew across her bare

skin. It rippled over her entire body and Aisha's pulse sped up. She knew it, the presence, as well as she knew the back of her hand. She turned her head and scanned the room, trying to appear casual even though every nerve in her body twisted in knots.

She didn't see him, not at first, but God, she could feel him.

Carson Teague was in the building.

She could feel him and it brought back memories that both stung and excited. Those bats in her stomach made a mass exodus and she held her breath. Aisha turned as the group broke out in applause over a comment her father made. She twisted in her chair pasting a toothy smile on her face as a chick behind her recognized her and waved her hand trying to get her attention. Aisha nodded in acknowledgement as her eyes searched for the source of the wild pitch in her stomach that made her want to hurl. It felt like she'd been out all night at a drunk dance club.

Then she saw him leaning against the exit at the rear of the hall. Aisha could only stare as the air in her lungs turned to sand and her throat dried. His tall, lean form appeared casually relaxed, but she knew better. Carson never relaxed, not completely. Dressed in black, including a tight t-shirt that showed off one of his tats, he looked good. Too damn good for her. For a second, she thought about walking out. She could wait for the party to disband and her father headed over to the formal dinner planned in his honor. Then she wouldn't have to see Teague.

They had a history. A not too good one. Like any Kat and Dawg, when paths were crossed things were bound to get hairy. She'd met up with Teague when she was fifteen and feeling her wild thunder. Her pals trotted into Kat territory one night. Just a bunch of pups out to chew on things and cause trouble, well they found it with Teague and his group.

The Kats murmured a few pleasantries typical of Kats trying to lure the pups into a fight. Because they were kids, they were young and stupid. She'd gotten into a full on brawl with two of them managing to sink her teeth into one and have him scamper off like the pussy he was. But the other one. The big one they called Teague. She snapped at him and he swung his big claw at her slicing cleanly into her mid-section. If it hadn't been for her friends guarding her back and keeping the Kats at bay—who knows?

That encounter stayed with her much too long. She'd seen Teague at a distance three years later. The big Kat had come into a neutral hangout. She'd forgotten how big he was. Six four easy and damn, he must be an easy two hundred and eighty pounds with all that muscle crammed into those tight black clothes. He had black hair and pale brown eyes with the I don't care what the fuck you think look in them. Aisha knew right then and there she wanted to fuck that big Kat. And that was strictly forbidden according to the Code.

Kats and Dawgs fight. They don't fuck.

Her palms slicked with sweat as she remembered the heat that pooled in her stomach at the sight of him before. The memory was so real, it took a moment to realize the same sensations burning through her system now. She should've been over it by now. Six years later, the memory still made her hot.

Sharp eyes, the color of leaves going gold in the fall, fixed on her. Carson Teague inclined his head slowly at her. Aisha licked her lips and swung away. Damn it.

And damn him.

"Get over it," Cayenne growled in her ear. "You could have any Dawg in here and you're drooling over a freakin feline."

She didn't need this. Not now, certainly not here. "What the fuck is he doing here?" Why would he even be here? He wasn't, didn't-God she couldn't even think straight just seeing him. Why couldn't she just put it away? A teenager's wet dreams weren't anything to get hot and bothered over when you were twenty-four.

"Who cares? What's wrong with Valen over there anyway?" She nodded her head at the gorgeous blonde god of a Dawg. Valen was every girl's wet dream. Gold blonde hair curled around his ears, sparkling blue eyes and built like a goddamn train. "You could have him if you just wiggle that ass of yours passed him."

"My ass doesn't wiggle."

Tee leaned across them. "I've seen it wiggle, Sis. Mostly around the big grumpy Kat you keep sniffing."

"Shut up!"

Tee slapped at her, "You shut up!" Tee looked over her shoulder in both directions. "Besides, he moved. But there's one big piece of chocolate honey back there now."

Elena scooted around and so did Cayenne. "Ooh, honey. That's nice." They nearly said it at the same time and Aisha looked just because-well, just because.

Wow, he was big. Gorgeous. Sculpted face, close cropped hair and light green eyes. He had black jeans on and a shirt that hung open under his jacket showing off a massive chest. Aisha wasn't dead for sure. She could get into that. She tilted her head slightly. Interesting...

"He smells like a Kat."

The girls sniffed. Then frowned.

"Awww, damn!"

"That's such a shame."

Cayenne didn't seem so turned off, she crooked her finger at him. "Here kitty! I've got some cream for you to lick up!" She said it loud enough that most of the crowd heard her.

"Oh my gawd!"

"You didn't just say that!"

"What?" Cayenne looked insulted. "Hey your dad wanted us all to be friends tonight. I'm willing to offer up my cream."

Her father leaned forward just as a colored fog blew out over the stage. Aisha wondered when they'd added that special effect. In an instant, she realized something was terribly wrong.

Aisha pushed back out of her seat as her father gasped and wheezed on stage. "Dad?" She didn't have time to move before the explosion of a sub-concussion fireball went off. Thrown back into her chair by the thunderous blast, Aisha's scream was lost. Horror slashed through her as the bright green bursts her father square in the chest.

Chaos burst through the hall wreaking havoc as people scrambled over each other trying to get to the exits. Aisha's only thought was her father. She shoved her way into the mass exodus fighting the current. People coughed and gagged in the fog. Aisha's body smashed between two men while a woman dropped to her knees retching. Her throat burned and tears stung her eyes.

"Dad! Oh God! Dad!" Aisha nearly reached the stage when a strong arm clamped on her wrist.

"There isn't anything you can do."

Acid rose in her throat, tears burned her eyes at the words. She knew he spoke the truth. She knew it and still, "I have to help him."

Carson Teague shook his head. She heard some little alarm beeping on his watch, and he dialed the face and a shimmering gold light appeared around them. "There's a poisonous spell in here. We need to leave. Now."

Ribbons of fear tangled around her nerves, her skin went icy. Her eyes shifting around the room while people screamed and clawed for the exit. "I have to help my father. And Bayron."

"There isn't anything you can do for your father and your brother isn't anywhere around," his voice sounded harsh in her ears. His eyes flickered, glowing gold. God, why would she notice this now?

A flash of metal caught her eye behind him and Aisha nearly strangled on a scream. It was the gunman, strolling out of the building as if he were at some sort of picnic. "He's there! Oh God! Somebody stop that maniac!" Aisha growled low in her throat, recognizing the man. He was Bird.

Carson swung around. "Jeezus! Get these bitches out of here!" In the blink of an eye, he'd pushed away from her and skirted the crowd chasing the man in question. Aisha saw the shimmering gold field still around her and wondered momentarily what it might be. Then she was nearly tackled by three huge dudes or her legs just finally gave out on her. They scooped her up and carried her out. Aisha saw they had her friends too, each of them biting and snapping to get free.

Teague took one last look back at the pasty, shocked face of Aisha and shoved it out of his mind. Every cell in his body turned on the greasy-haired man exiting the building with the rifle. He was tempted to pull out his own gun and take a chance. Her pack seemed caught up in the assassination while others rushed to protect Aisha. Too late, his Kats had her. Teague pushed through the crowd keeping his eyes trained on the assassin. "Shemar! You got them?" he shouted over his communicator.

"Locked up tight, Teague."

"Send Jammer and Urban, their looking for Birds."

Outside, Teague dodged people bent over retching while others screamed tearfully over what they'd seen. He scanned the perimeter, then clicked on the subtracer on his left wrist. Triggering it for Bird residue, he found his quarry moving at a good clip several meters away.

Sirens shattered the night while the whirl of mobile police hovers filled the perimeter. Teague knew they'd net off the area as soon as they got position. He didn't need to be here then. It was bad enough reliving the smoking image of his longtime rival on the ground with a face full of Ecoparvo his lungs.

Teague broke into a run, shutting down all thought but the target ahead. It was fuckin' cold in New York tonight and Teague knew the sweat running down his temples would freeze before it hit the five o'clock shadow on his face. His blip turned down a quiet street leading

into an old business district. He'd probably ditch the rifle and continue on his way. Teague dialed down the setting on his gun to Bird. The gun would fire hollowed out energy blasts filled with a substance made from the cuticles of his nails. Kat scratches were deadly to Birds. If the blast didn't kill the bastard, his added ingredient would.

He heard the jingle of old-styled chain link fence and Teague's booted feet skidded to a stop. He reached under his coat and came out with an automatic ion pistol. He needed only a millisecond to click off a clean shot at the fuck and he planned on getting it. Caution held him back as he came around the corner and found the fence. Locked with a flimsy chain, and on closer examination, already snapped, Teague didn't think they made this type of fencing any longer. He slipped by the fence and into the alley.

Picking his way through the trash as quietly as possible, Teague ignored the stench of old trash and urine. The wind swirled around the ally kicking up debris like autumn leaves. His eyes narrowed, examining a trash bin shoved against a wall. Good place to dump a stolen Street spell. He shifted his weight and leaned across the dumpster to peer inside.

The gust of wind triggered him into action a millisecond too late. Teague twisted his body as a pipe slammed into the back of his knees. He fell forward against the dumpster but managed to keep hold of his pistol. Teague dodged the next blow, pushing his body into some old boxes. He rolled to the side as the assailant smashed the pipe hard against his hand that held the gun. Sharp stinging pain went through his fingers and palm. His finger caught the trigger and he ended up firing three shots in the air.

It was enough to make his guy hesitate. The pipe clattered to the cement and he heard footsteps racing down the alley. Enough for Teague to push his feet to the ground and bow his body back into position. Remote patrol lights hit the block and Teague knew it wouldn't be long now. If they got there first, he'd never catch the guy. That wasn't happening because Teague fully intended to kill the bastard.

It wasn't for Micha. He knew that, he couldn't stand the old man. Teague ran down the alley ignoring the lights, the sirens, and the obstacles in his path. Micha didn't deserve this kind of death, no one did. Not when there was a chance for peace between the Dawgs and Kats. That's what Micha had hoped for. Now, it didn't look like it was going to happen. The Dawgs would blame the Kats and the Kats would retaliate.

He inhaled and blew out the breath as a trained runner would. He saw a shadow ahead and he brought the gun up. The pain in his hand was nothing. Everything faded away as his target tried to shimmy though the fence at the other end of the alley.

Teague didn't hesitate. He fired twice, heard the scream then watched as his target fell to the ground in a heap. He'd taken two steps toward the assassin before realizing it was just a fledgling. A goddamn kid sent to do the Bird dirty work.

"Hold it right there!" Teague could tell by the first warning, the patrol was still a half block away. Rolling the assassin over, Teague clicked on his remote scanner and ran it over the man. The information would transmit automatically back to Street Magius. No sign of the virus on him. Teague narrowed his eyes and considered patting the young man down for any other indications of Bird involvement on him. He bent down and spread the kid's jacket open to search the pockets. Bird's seemed to be more careful these days, the pockets were empty and Teague gave up. Nothing of any consequence here and Teague knew it was time to go.

The first blast hit the back of a building and bright blue light splashed over the scene. Teague's head swung around searching for the source of the fire. He found the Dawg sled hovering a hundred yards away at the beginning of the alley.

Blam!

Blam!

Blam!

Teague's body hit high gear before the second shot. He ran full out straight for the probe and fired. The probe exploded into a wild array of sparks as his second shot connected. Dawg sleds traveled in trios. The next shots destroyed the dumpster. It exploded just as Teague ran passed. The force threw his body into the air. Two more blasts ricocheted off the fence and one of them hit Teague in the shoulder.

His body fell like a stone and bounced along the cement. The force dragged him into the trash and slammed him up against a building. Teague grit his teeth and pushed his body into the shadows. The stinging pain in his shoulder and the ache in the rest of his muscles was nothing compared to the trouble involved if they arrested him. Teague knew he had no choice but to fade.

Inhaling deeply, he concentrated allowing the inner Feline imaging to flow over him. It stung as the Kat receptors took hold and made your stomach roll but it was something he developed a taste for. He watched the Dawg sleds hover and descend on the dead Bird. The sirens cut off as the two land cruisers squealed to the end of the alley. There wasn't a scanner on this or any other planet that could recognize and assimilate his cloak. Teague kept to the shadows and exited the alley as the patrol hurried to check the fallen man. With the rifle residue all over him, Teague had no doubt they cops would identify the dead kid as Chancellor Micha Lucan's assassin.

He'd make his way well outside the perimeter of the auditorium and summon the cruiser to take him back to his hotel. He'd clean up, check in with Street Magius and then go back to the auditorium late tonight when things settled down.

A strange, unreal fog covered her vision as the Kats fitted her with vanilla scented oxygen designed to calm the nerves as well as keep her from passing out. Aisha inhaled slowly. She glanced around realizing that she and her friends were packed into the back of a Kat skid. Her skin felt icy, but she knew she hadn't come in contact with the poisonous spell.

She wasn't going to cry. Aisha eyes were red with tears and she knew she didn't want to see. Not really. But she was going to get out of this skid.

Aisha pulled the oxygen mask off her face and slid to her feet. Her knees threatened to buckle and she took hold of a car door to steady herself. "I'm going back."

"Ms. Lucan, that isn't a good idea." The big dude Cayenne had been hot for stepped forward. "We don't know what this was all about. You could be a target."

"They got their target. If they wanted me, they could've hit me easily enough." Aisha blinked as the fog of shock began to lift. In its place came nausea that squeezed and rolled her stomach into an oily black mess. Bile rose in her throat and she swallowed hard. The Chancellor's daughter did not puke her lungs out in public. "What do you think the Dawgs are going to do when they figure out Kats were behind this."

The skid driver turned, "Kats didn't do this, sweetheart." He started for the skid which looked like a tricked out stretch limo. Aisha fought for control while the Kats, Dawg Patrol, and God knew who else flooded the meeting ground.

"What's your name, Kat?" She slid up to the caramel haired Kat and nearly poked him in the neck with her long nails. "Did you catch him?" The voice didn't sound like hers and the words held a bitter acidity. The young man looked at her stunned and she slammed her palm into his shoulder. "I heard something on the radio. Did they catch him?"

The man swallowed, "They have a body."

"A body?"

Where was Bayron? Oh God, not him too! She'd lost enough today. Had he been caught up in the melee with the Kats? She needed him. Much too much, she realized with crystalline clarity and it wasn't a pretty thought. She couldn't lose him. Not now. If she lost him, Aisha's eyes flooded with hot tears. They stung her eyes like acid.

She pushed backward and would've fallen over if it wasn't for Elena that caught hold of her. "Hold it together girl, we're getting out of here," she whispered.

"A young male, unidentified as of yet. Blaster burns illuminated his clothes."

Aisha turned around and clutched at Tee for support. "Bayron, he wasn't around when this started. Was he?"

Elena winked at Cayenne. "Now."

"Awww, hell! Let me out she's gonna barf." Tee kicked at the locked door panel. "Come on damnit. You don't want this on your nice leather, do you?"

Cayenne made exaggerated gacking noises and Aisha caught on. "Ewww, get her away from me."

The locks lifted on the skid. The girls scampered out, claws bared ready for action. But the Kats were busy watching as the two escort vehicles moved into place. Only the driver noticed they weren't helping a sick friend. Aisha ignored the night, the sounds of traffic, everything. She leaped onto the hood of a parked AUV and barked orders, "Find Carson Teague. Bring him back to the Den."

Cayenne and Elena howled in agreement while Tee took on the kitty distraction maneuver. The three women sprung off into the night while Tee whined in a sexy voice, "Anyone got anything to drink? I'm dying of thirst."

A man's muscled arm passed her the water bottle, "Here you go, babe."

Tee grinned seductively as she rubbed the sweaty bottle over her throat and her exposed cleavage. "Thanks honey, you're sweet for a Kat."

The man stepped up closer and put his arms around her waist. He jerked her back against him so she could feel the length of his muscle and hard on he had for her. "That's because I'm no Kat."

"Bayron?" Teequa nearly soaked her jeans, she was wet instantly at this hound's touch.

A big paw clamped over her mouth. Tee inhaled out of reflex sucking in the sweet, pungent herb. Her head swam. Her eyes rolled back into her skull and her entire body went lax as she lost consciousness.

The big man hoisted her like she weighed nothing and carried her off to the Underground subway entrance taking Teequa off radar for any normal tracking device.

"Damn, it's fucking cold down here." Elena blew warm air into her palms to get some feeling back into them.

"I thought you were tough."

"I am tough. But I think we're on a wild goose chase trolling around Manhattan." Elena glared at Cayenne. "You pick Aisha up yet?"

"Nope. Just the last location." Cayenne stopped in front of an all night directory. She plugged in her Dawgdisc and scanned the area. "86th and Lexington. What the hell were they doing up there? She was showing up in the dumpy old hotel in Greenwich like fifteen minutes before."

"Teague's got a cruiser, they're fast." Elena jumped up and down to keep warm standing in front of the directory. "I say we head back to the Den. Everyone's probably all warm and toasty now. And we're the ones out here freezing." She glanced around at the bright lines and signs lining the street. Steam rose from the grates carrying an odd scent with it.

Cayenne twisted her mouth, thinking. "Yeah you're probably right. Tee's been real quiet too."

"Maybe she found Bayron and dragged him off into the woods."

Cayenne hissed, "Shit your sick. His dad just got whacked." She turned and stopped off for the nearest public transport depot.

"Hey all that drama arouses people..."

"Sick."

Elena stopped after her and howled when her heel caught in a grate. "God damn, piss. I paid three hundred dollars for these things. I'm not going to have it torn off by some freakin' piece of shit grate."

Cayenne turned. "Oh for pete's sake, if you weren't so heavy footed." She walked back to Elena and bent down on one knee to grab hold of her friend by the ankle.

"I *am not* heavy footed."

"You so are!" Tugging on the boot, she wiggled it trying to free Elena's stubborn heel. "Sound like a damn herd coming through."

Elena jerked her foot and shoved at Cayenne. "Lying bitch."

Cayenne rocked back onto her other knee and laughed, "Ask anyone, Club-foot."

"Fuck you! Are you just going to be a wise ass or do I need to shove my other boot in your face."

That made Cayenne laugh harder. "Neat trick if I thought you could do it."

"You ladies look like you could use some assistance." The voice was a rumbling purr and it came attached to the totally fine black man they'd seen earlier at the assembly. Before they could react, he bent wrapping one tree trunk of an arm around Elena's ass while his other hand engulfed Cayenne's paw over the boot. "Here we go." He tugged and the boot came free.

"Thanks," Elena couldn't help but press her ass against the muscled arm. "I thought I was going to have to leave it."

Cayenne drooled as the big dude straightened. He had to be at least six five of hot, hot male. "Glad you came by." He offered his hand to pull her up while one arm remained around Elena's waist. Cayenne accepted it and felt the rough skin of his palm close over her hand once more. "Can we buy you a drink or something?"

He shook his head. "Not tonight."

There was a small shuffling noise behind him. Both Elena and Cayenne turned to find three other men forming a semi-circle around them. Man the hot honey factory must've exploded. Three perfect specimens and they were supposed to be out on a job.

"Too bad," Elena looked over the guys. "We could show your friends a good time."

Elena gasped as the pin prick went into her side. Cayenne realized too late and tried to jerk her hand away from the Kat's extending claws.

"Tonight we need you ladies for other things..." Shemar caught Elena as she fell leaving Cayenne in the capable hands of Jammer.

Aisha found a locator directory on the corner of 7th and Christopher. If her dad had invited those Kats to the event tonight, he would've logged them to allow them entrance into what used to be called Greenwich Village. She searched local hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs for any matches. She almost given up when the directory returned a hotel near the one Aisha was on her way to. There was a nightclub located halfway between the two hotels.

She waited till the light changed and cars drove off. It was an old hotel with dingy ivory walls and marble floors. She smiled wondering how haggard her appearance was at this point. Aisha put her hands on the lobby desk and waited for the concierge to glance up. His eyes widened. She watched recollection dawn and then leaned back slightly. "An old friend of mine is registered here and I'd like to surprise him. Is there any way we can send up dinner for two, a bottle of your best Cabernet up to Teague's room?"

The clerk nodded and Aisha noticed her hands shook as she keyed up the reservation list. "Miss Lucan, I have to tell you, I admire you so much."

"Thank you, I can't tell you how much I appreciate this."

The woman's hands flew across the keys. "Here it is, Teague is room five eighteen." She glanced up and Aisha gave her a bright smile.

"Thanks." Even if Teague wasn't in the room, it'd give her a chance to search it and find out exactly what the Kat's were up to tonight. If he was involved, Aisha would take a whole lot of pleasure in gutting that Kat and stringing him up on a wire fence.

Aisha continued to smile, but her lips turned upward quizzically. What was that? Hotel security was mind bending these days. They didn't give out information on any one at any time. Yet this woman volunteered it simply because she was the Chancellor's daughter. She knew the news of her father's assassination would liter the digital universe shortly. Every Bird, Kat, Wolf and Mutant would figure out a plan to nominate their own for the spotlight. So it really didn't matter who she was, she shouldn't have Carson's room number. It wasn't the first time this had happened and in recent years, she'd accepted her uncanny ability to convince people a gift rather than a curse. She started slowly for the elevator half expecting the clerk and the other employees roaming the lobby to call her back.

She keyed the elevator and stepped inside. She sank against the wall. The elevator rose smoothly to soft romantic music and Aisha had a moment to figure out why she was here. What was she going to say to him? You want to sit around and talk about who killed my father and kidnapped my brother.

Aisha swiped a hand over her forehead and then pinched the bridge of her nose. She needed a drink of something hard that would make that oily substance in her stomach twist and curl. The elevator doors slid open and Aisha stepped out into the hallway. The same dull elegance greeted her here. It was a shame that the quiet beauty was lost on her. She loved pretty things, trinkets, but right now, nothing seemed beautiful to her.

Her heels sank into the plush carpet as she continued down the hall to his room. What if he wasn't there? What if that Kat was wrong and it was Teague dead in an alley somewhere? Fear drove her and she reached five-eighteen in a matter of seconds. She practically pounded on the door and was tempted to scratch and claw her way in if necessary. Sagging against the hotel door as the last remnants of inner strength bled out of her, Aisha begged for him to be inside. "Teague, please. Open up. I need to see you." She needed so much more that she couldn't begin to explain. It'd taken her six years to learn to speak to him normally when they ran into each other. Mostly just biting insults shouted over a crowd. Now, she just needed him to help her make sense of this madness.

The door opened and Aisha stared. A damp towel hung around his neck catching drops of water from his wet hair. She watched him wipe the side of his face with the towel letting her eyes trail over the huge muscled body. He was all beef, hard and carved like a god out of mythology. His chest was naked. A gold chain hung around his neck and a tattoo that looked like Kat scratches decorated one massive bicep. She saw a wicked looking bruise on his hand and a strange colored abrasion on his shoulder. His eyes went to slits.

"Not expecting me?" she rushed in to wrap her arms around his waist. "I think you better start explaining before I call for the Patrol."

"Really?" He disengaged her and closed the door. He wore low-riding pants of an organic material that revealed a myriad of bruising on his hipbone. "Why is that?"

"It's kind of suspicious. You didn't come back. I always thought you'd come back."

He looked like he'd been in some kind of battle. Aisha glanced sharply around the room feeling her world tilt and blur. Before she could blink, Teague had a hold of her moving her to the balcony. He opened the door and propelled her outside. "Breathe slowly." He kept one hand on the curve of her back and the other scooped up a small liter basket. He pushed it into her hand. "Use it if you need to."

She nodded as the bell sounded. Drawing in another cool breath, she fought the urge to vomit. "I don't need a barf bag. I need to know who killed my dad and where is my brother?"

He looked at her. "Okay."

She watched him turn away. Nausea rampaged and she turned her head gagging. Teague returned holding her hair back and when she'd purged whatever remained in her stomach, he took the waste away and then gave her his towel. "Come inside, Aisha and sit down."

Her body moved as if she had lead in her limbs, but she managed to follow him back inside and find a chair. She sank into it and ran the towel over her face and throat. "You

killed him." It wasn't a question. She knew the answer but she wanted to hear him say it. "The Bird with the weapon."

"Yes." He went to the bar, unlocked the cabinet, and took out a bottle of tequila. Aisha watched as he poured two fingers worth in a glass and knocked it back. "Does that surprise you?"

She shook her head, "No, not really."

"Good."

She nodded, folding her fingers together. She didn't understand. Even trying to comprehend this day made her head split until all Aisha could do was clutch at it. "Thank you." He poured another shot of tequila and drank that seeming to ignore her. "Can I have one?"

Golden eyes clashed with hers appearing intrigued. "You want tequila? Isn't that a bit below your standard?"

"You don't think I can drink it?"

He didn't waste any time pouring her a shot. He handed it to her with a smile. "This will either make you puke again or settle you down."

She raised the glass to her lips and poured it inside her mouth. She swallowed and tasted the liquid fire as it slid down her throat. She coughed. "Nice." She held up her glass and he refilled it. She swallowed that one like a pro and managed only a small choke. After the second shot, Aisha drifted into a soothing buzz. She discovered it made all the hideous images swirling around her head fade just enough so she could concentrate slightly.

"Why are you here?"

"Why do you think?" She reached for the tequila and he didn't stop her. "I came to talk about old times, have dinner with a friend and all that jazz."

Carson tossed the towel on another chair and reached for a shirt. She watched him slip on the shirt and found herself memorizing the raw lines of muscles and the spider web of scars on his back and shoulders. "You should go home. You don't need to be here right now, you need to rest," he commented slowly.

"Rest is the last thing I need." She contemplated another shot of tequila. "I need to know why this happened. Who was responsible?"

Carson casually zipped up the shirt. He walked over to the food and wheeled it over between them. Then he looked at her directly. "I'm sorry for this."

Something burned down deep inside her and she wasn't sure if it sprang from bitter, old memories or the assassination. "Are you sure? Seems like you've hated my father a long time, Teague."

He picked up his tray and sat across from her. "Is that what you think?"

"No, it is what I know." She pulled her own tray toward her and stared at the food. It looked like wax to her now. The idea of food repulsed her.

"You don't know much then." Teague stabbed at a piece of rare meat. "I stopped hating your father years ago."

"Yeah, our two breeds are just buddies." Her hand shook as she picked up the fork. "You didn't want peace. None of your kind does."

He waved his fork at her. "That's right. We were like father and son." Teague looked down at his food. "Then it must be when you and your little puppy friends came sniffing into

my neighborhood." He cleared his throat and looked her in the eye. "In case you hadn't noticed, somebody wants your family dead. They got your father to keep this deal from going down. Your brother's missing – may be involved..."

"That's crap and you know it." She pushed the food away. "Bayron adored my dad. More than anything he wanted to be like him. Why were you there tonight? Because of this peace between breeds assembly? Come on, you and I both know better than that."

"Your father called me." He chewed slowly before stabbing at another piece of meat. "He said he had something for me. Something important."

"So you came?"

Teague nodded. Simple as that, her father needed him and he'd come. Aisha considered it allowing the mixed up jumble of emotions to tumble in her mind like stones. Suspicion curled around and twisted her spine.

He saw it in her eyes. Suspicion. Fear and something darker more intense that he couldn't quite place. Teague pushed the food aside as well and felt a brief flash of temper. "I didn't kill your father if that's what you're thinking. Give me credit for having some kind of brain. If I was going to do that, I'd have cornered him alone. Not in a room full of Dawgs."

There was remorse and a splash of anger. She pinched the bridge of her nose and glanced away. "I don't know what to think." She finally gave in and reached for the bottle of vodka. "My father is assassinated, you appear mysteriously, and—" She shook her head, "Your group pulls us out of there like we're being kidnapped."

Teague swallowed, "And you ought to be grateful, someone is taking out prominent pups, and in case you didn't notice, you'd be next in line. Right along with your pals."

Aisha frowned. Spit lodged in her throat like a rolled up piece of barbed wire. "I told my girls to bolt."

"Shit." He hadn't expected it to hit him that hard. Now, he knew what Micha Lucan wanted to talk to him about. He wanted to bury the hatchet all right. Right in Teague's skull and then, knowing Micha, he'd gloat if he noticed the slightest bit of emotion from Teague. "We've got to get out of here. Find your girls and get them to a safe house."

"My *girls* can handle themselves."

Silence flowed into the room much like blood from an open wound. The wound was his. A long, jagged cut that never healed and each time he saw Aisha it only made it worse. "I'm sorry about your dad." He poured another shot of tequila and swallowed it in one gulp. "Really." The tequila singed his throat and he decided he needed another. The rate he was going he'd need the whole bottle before the night was over.

Aisha held her glass out for him. "Do you think someone is out to kill us all off?" she drank the tequila, inhaling sharply from the liquid fire. It could burn a hole through you just as she'd done to him. She knew her girls could take care of themselves but the idea made her hackles rise.

"I don't know how to answer that."

"Why would anyone want to kill me? I'm not important."

"Yeah? Think about it, hmm...with your brother missing, right now, you're Pack Leader." He could already tell he didn't have enough tequila in his room. He tried not to look

at her. "That makes you a hot prospect and me in serious trouble if we're found here." Teague straightened slightly in his chair. He raised a hand to rub it through his short, dark brown hair. "So who wants you dead?"

She wiped a finger at her nose and sniffed. "Besides you and your cats? I don't know. I really don't."

Teague pulled on a dark blue shirt made of a new lightweight body armor fabric. "Okay, we need to get to your girls and get you all safe." Aisha could help notice the ripple and flex of his muscles. If she was a Kat, she would've purred.

"I sent them out to find you." She slid out her lockon device and put the bud in behind her ear. "I will call them off, send them home."

"That's bizarre." She tapped a few buttons. "Must be in a dead spot."

He could see it in her eyes. The amber intensity rimming her pupils and it worried him. Aisha Lucan was a force to be reckoned with when she set her mind to something. Learning who murdered her father might fall in that category. Teague knew he couldn't let her do that. Not with any kind of conscience. Especially when he already had a nasty idea on who was behind the whole thing. "Aisha," he reconsidered for a moment closing his mouth then deciding it was pertinent, "your father planning to change of policy probably wasn't popular among some of the older Dawgs."

"What do you mean?"

"Something that might irritate someone enough—"

"To kill him?" Aisha immediately jumped on that and Teague held up a hand to halt the attack.

"I mean something that the political community wouldn't like. Was he doing negotiating with the Birds over some appropriations? Anything like that?"

She stiffened and then a damn good job concealing it. "I don't know what you mean."

Teague scratched the back of his damp hair. His eyes raked over the polished perfection of Aisha Lucan. Even in tense, stressful situations she still maintained that look of wild sex. "You know, if you want to bullshit that's fine. I don't have time anyway." His lips twisted into a scowl. "With your brother's antics over the years, everyone's assumed you've been groomed for this for the last ten years and don't think I don't know it. Your father wanted you to run next term."

Her lips pressed into a thin line. "Yes, he did."

"So did the party." She nodded. "Anyone in a hurry to make that happen?"

"You've got a sick mind, Teague."

"So I've been told."

"You don't think it was some fanatic that killed my father?" He could see in her eyes that she didn't mean the words as a question. He watched her reach for the tequila and pour another shot. She knocked it back and pressed the repeat on her lockon. It was starting to worry her that she couldn't get through.

"No, I think it was planned for a long time." Reaching across the table, he poured himself another shot. He looked at the silver liquid in the glass. He drew in a deep breath and lifted the glass. "They won't be able to track the Bird that did this or figure out how he died."

"You're that good?"

A smirk rolled over his lips. He knew the answer. Did he want to share it with her? His head angled slightly. All the Intel Street Magius had now, every piece of it pointed in a direction he didn't want to accept. He barely wanted to consider it, but looking at her now, it all made sense. Now, what did he do with it? His eyes slid over her, watching as she shifted the shot glass around in her hands. Did it change who she was? Who she'd always been to him?

He raised his head. "I'm that good."

She swallowed and inclined her head. Her wavy mink hair fell in front of those dark amber eyes. "Are we at some sort of impasse?"

"I don't know. You claim not to have any knowledge of your father's recent negotiations."

"What are you some broken disc?" She swallowed the tequila. "My father invited your crowd. I'm sure he told you something."

"He asked me to attend. That's all."

"Since when do you do as he asked?"

"He said you'd be there."

Aisha shook back her hair, "Since when do I matter to you." She leveled eyes that flash with blue flame on him.

"Let's go."

"What's the matter, Teague, can't handle fights from the past?"

Teague got to his feet and walked the couple of steps to Aisha. "Come on, Aisha. I'm taking you back to your Den. With any luck, your girls are waiting there for you." He reached down and pulled her to her feet bringing her up against his chest. She stared at him with eyes that glassed over with grief. She licked her lips and Teague's muscles tightened. His fingers gripped the sinew in her upper arm tightly.

By rights, she shouldn't have this kind of power over him. Not anymore, not after so many years. They'd never been together, not in the real sense. But their fight had been intense. She'd bitten into him, drew blood. From her reactions to him now, it looked like Aisha was allergic to Kat scratches. He could remember back to the battle that hot afternoon as the first time he'd met her and she'd stolen his breath as quickly as she captured his heart.

"Let me go."

The air in his lungs shuddered out of him as her other hand reached to shove against his chest.

His other hand slid up her hip and he realized the mistake. "I don't think I can." Every scar on his bone weary body, all the bruise and scrapes from tonight could heal if he spent just one night with her. He knew that. His body ached, his cock rubbed hard against the fabric of his jeans wanting to be free. His head pounded like a bass between his eyes and blood rushed through his veins like a hurricane. She was his only weakness and he could sense that she probably knew that.

"Teague?"

"I have to get you out of here."

Chapter Two

Mason Herron stepped off his private transport flanked by several of his top aides. He sniffed slightly, perturbed by the recent turn of events. Young Mr. Harris made a grievous error by killing the Chancellor. Of course, it'd gotten him killed as well. Still, he hadn't expected a Kat to be in attendance. Made things a bit messy.

The air was chilly. Nearly cold. But Herron was warm enough in his three thousand dollar jacket. He listened as the aides recounted the night's events to him. They ushered him to a waiting Hummer limousine. "Where's the body of our exuberant young man?"

"City morgue. Police took him away after securing the scene."

Herron's lips tilted into an uncharacteristic smile. He picked up a copy of the evening's paper and began thumbing through the pages. "Is that so? Interesting. And the Chancellor?"

"Oh he's dead."

Herron gritted his teeth together, "Yes, I assumed that. Was there anything left at the scene that could link back to the Birds." Herron sniffed again, he wouldn't like that much. No, not much at all.

"He released the spell we've been working on."

Adjusting in his seat, Herron tapped into the mobile link for the Birds. Within seconds, he had three local attachments of six agents each on the look out for the vicious felines prowling the night. The orders were to restrain, with deadly force, if needed. He sent a clean up squad to remove all traces of the spell in hopes that fatalities would fall under the Bird flu.

"Where is Aisha Lucan?" He never intended playing this card in his hand. Then he snapped his fingers and clucked his tongue. An old habit, but it saved him from smacking someone in the back of the head.

He knew who the Kat was. It was plain as the nose on his face. Herron scratched his jaw then turned a mild gaze on his assistants. "Did any of you, by chance, check to see if Teague was in town."

His aides appeared mildly confused. Finally, Carlotta spoke up, "No, General. We didn't see a connection."

"You didn't see a connection?" Herron ran his hands through his hair. Exasperation smacked him in the face but still he remained patient. "You didn't *see* a connection?" He smiled. "How am I surrounded by imbeciles? Don't you people read *The Prowl*? Carson Teague has had the hots for Aisha Lucan for, Christ, I don't know years! Ever since that rabid dawg bit him. He's an outcast in society among his own kind."

Carlotta frowned, "Are you saying Carson Teague is a Street Magius agent?"

Herron sighed. His eyes dulled. He had a feeling, a very nasty feeling that Carson Teague was more than the mild mannered doctor he pretended to be. And he found it terribly odd that wherever Aisha Lucan was, Teague was sure to follow. His eyes slid away from his aides. He had no proof, but when he did, it would give him the perfect excuse to kill him.

"Take me to our post. Then locate Carson Teague."

"Very well, General."

"Get in."

Aisha examined the kitty cruiser with distaste. "You're kidding."

"Unless you want to walk back to your den in those heels, get in." Teague climbed into the driver's side and started the engine. It wasn't a petroleum based engine, she could tell by the hum. It was ionic.

Aisha climbed into the half car, half tank, half hover vehicle. She couldn't go back to the hotel. She needed to do something, put an end to this terrorism.

All the rumors of conspiracies and breed invasions were enough to make the sane go completely nuts. She had to know what her father was up to. And to do that, like it or not, she needed Carson.

She buckled herself into the flying spaceship and tried not to think about the man next to her. She needed to appeal to his secret agent side. "My father left you something. I'm sure of it."

"What?" Carson steered the hulking machine into the light traffic. "And don't you think the Dawg Patrol or someone else would've found it by now?"

"I think he left it for you as a safety valve. We should go back to the meeting hall."

Teague glanced at her. "No, Aisha. I'm taking you back to the Den and you're not going to indulge your repressed sense of adventure trying to solve your father's murder."

"I'm not a kid, Carson."

"You're acting like it."

"Fuck you." Fear, rage and something else whipped at her like a hot summer wind. It hurt and she hated him treating her like a small puppy.

"Yeah, when we have time."

"You don't want to know why my father was murdered?"

He shook his dark head. "It isn't my call."

"Who the hell are you, Carson Teague?"

He laughed and it was a very harsh, grating tone. "You don't want to know."

"Probably not." But she wasn't beyond using anything in her capability to make sure those behind her father's death were punished. And if need be...

Aisha closed her eyes and focused every cell in her brain on Teague. There had to be a way to reach him. She'd do it, whatever the cost. Her father deserved that much. Her clan had the ability to lure out information. To manipulate prey.

Anger ripped through her with the fury of a branding iron. With it came the utter blackness of sadness and raging despair. She wanted to scream, to beat things into the ground, to kill someone just as callously as her father died. She needed a release.

"Stop the car, Teague."

"What?"

"You heard me, stop the car."

"I don't think so."

Aisha concentrated. A wild, raging need smashed her hard in the chest and vibrated through her body. She hadn't expected that. Not even tapping into him had she expected such raw, painful need. Control slipped through her fingertips and she found herself scrambling to keep the wolf contained.

Grief clutched at her heart draining every ounce of feeling from her. She couldn't begin to comprehend the loss yet. She didn't want to think about what he'd said—that she could be Leader now. Caught in a rainstorm of doubt and despair, she needed something to hang onto. Aisha closed her eyes for a moment wiping the images away. She inhaled slowly. She wanted only one thing. For as long as she could remember, the only thing she wanted was Carson Teague.

The one thing she could never have.

Aisha blinked and imagined for the thousandth time what it'd be like for his cock to be deep inside her. She licked her lips and swallowed. God, she wanted him.

Only him.

Just once.

If only she could have him just one time. Then she would know and she could forget all about her weird fascination with Kats. If her delusions were simply smoke and wishful thinking, she could find a way passed it all and go off with a Dawg.

Give in to me. Please. Just once.

She didn't need anything, not comfort, and passion was really overrated. But a good hard fuck to burn off steam, well she could really get into that. All she had to do was show him, guide him. Aisha concentrated a moment.

His mind was harder to get inside of than she expected. She never tried getting into a Kat's head before. He was very strong, but there seemed like there were barricades in the way. Aisha struggled to gain a foothold as the damn burst in a violent burst of images and emotions. He kept his emotions so tightly buried away. Aisha gasped at the images speeding around her, she wanted to soothe. She tried to comfort the storm inside him, if only for a short while.

The cruiser shuddered then hovered on the road. Teague checked the instrumentation panel looking for a defect. Nothing. He tapped the accelerator and no response. Luckily, it was late enough there wasn't much traffic along the back roads. He started a system check leaning over the gearshift and froze when Aisha's tongue licked around the edge of his ear.

"You want this." The whisper was soft as gossamer as it tickled across his brain and wedged hard against all his memories of Aisha.

He managed to pull the cruiser off onto the shoulder and disengage the engine before she had her hands on his fly. She had quick, agile fingers and they freed his suddenly hard shaft from the organic cotton in seconds. Teague sucked in air, fighting for control only to discover he had none.

His thoughts weren't his. Her fingers wrapped around his cock like a ring and slid slowly up to his pulsing head. This was wrong. In some fuzzy center of his mind, he knew that. His eyes shuttered as he recognized the source. Aisha. She was allergic, he could tell that for sure now. Interesting concept, a Dawg with Kat fever. The last thing she needed was to fuck him and complicate matters. He shook his head, steadying the nearly drunk effects sloshing through his brain. He hadn't drank that much.

She was stronger than he ever expected. She already knew how to guide her prey. The girl might be young but she was impressive.

His mind reacted sluggishly. He barely comprehended what she was up to as she shimmied out of those ass hugging jeans and shoved them off her bare feet. Her hands were on his chest digging into his muscles. Teague couldn't move. The next thing he realized, she had his cock again and rubbed the tip of his head between her thumb and forefinger. Teague's teeth clenched. Time didn't change anything, the moment she touched him he was hard. Just like when she'd bit him, after the fight he needed to change back into human form and go whack off several times to get over the eroticism of being bit.

She climbed over the top of him and straddled him in the driver's seat. Aisha impaled herself, digging her hands into his shoulders. She was sweet, tight and oh so, ready. Her pussy swallowed him and covered his cock with her sticky warm essence. Air hissed out of his lungs as he fought a desperate battle for control. "Aisha, stop. Not like this. You don't want this." It took every ounce of willpower to force the words out. "This is fucking nuts."

With one hand, he pulled her left hand out of his hair and shoved it down on his chest. She started to grind her hips, and Teague bit his jaw hard enough to draw blood. She was everything he'd ever wanted, and all he could never have. Why fight this? He'd dreamed about for years. Fantasy was often a poor imitation of reality.

Not in this case.

Teague shuddered as she moved in a slow, deep rocking motion. His eyes nearly rolled back into his head. His hands gripped her hips and he stared into her eyes. It was all there. The pain, the disbelief, the loss all mixed into a passionate brew. Her eyes were nearly glassy and he knew he couldn't let this happen. Not like this.

Somehow, he managed the presence of mind to grab hold of the chain hanging around his neck and yank it off. He wanted this. Not like this though, he wanted more than a quick fuck in the front seat. He got his other hand off her waist and hooked a finger around the chain of the Street Magius pendant.

Every Street Magius agent wore them. Communication usage was their primary function, but Teague reconfigured his to analyze DNA in a matter of seconds. He managed to get the pendant over Aisha's head and watched it fall in the cleft between her gorgeous breasts. He wanted to squeeze them, taste them but when the chain glowed neon green, all thought of that seeped out of his foggy brain.

With his forefinger, he tapped the center of octagon shaped crystal. He heard the blip and spoke as calmly as possible. "Teague here." His voice cracked slightly and he cleared his throat as communications answered.

"Teague?" It was Drifter's voice. "Everything all right?"

"Fine." He tried not to sound clipped, but God, she was driving him insane as she rocked slowly back against the steering panel. "Confirm whereabouts of Aisha Lucan's bitches."

Aisha started to speak and he held up his forefinger in warning. He felt it the instant she lost her hold on him. She struggled, but Teague wrapped one arm around her waist and locked her in place. "Don't move."

"What's that Teague?"

"Nothing," his tone was a warning to Aisha. "Continue analysis."

"Analysis confirmed. Aisha Lucan, current Leader of the Pack." There was a pause. "Her bodyguards aren't registering in the vicinity. "Anything else, Teague?"

"No, we're done." Teague touched the pendant and the communication was lost.

Aisha's eyes lost their glassy expression and became sharply vicious. "What the hell was that?"

Anger and desire fused together in a web that blanketed him and made his entire body twitch with need. He glared at her. "It's called leveling the playing field."

"What are you talking about?"

Heat built between them. Teague wasn't sure if it was a product of the fury inside him or the fact that he managed to stay granite hard still buried deep inside Aisha's heat. His throat turned to ash. He sucked in a harsh breath. "I know what you can do, Aisha. I know you can manipulate. But you forget that Kat's can hypnotize too. And I'm not going to let you do something you'll regret for the rest of your life."

"What did you do?" She struggled to get off his lap and he took hold of her with both hands.

"I'm blocking your ability, Aisha."

"How?"

She shifted and he nearly groaned aloud. "We'll get into that later." He clenched her upper arms so hard she winced. "Look at me, now."

Her eyes lifted, bright and dangerous. "Let me go."

"Do you want to stop now or do you want to really find out what fucking me is like? No games, no tricks. Just us." He had to give her the option. It killed him, but he had to know she wanted him. Even if it was just some experiment on her part. Every cell in his body screamed in agony for release. Her hot pussy clenching seductively around his cock and her soft skin touching his made it easy to take what she'd offered freely and to hell with her motive.

She shook her head. Confusion ran over her face as plain as the surprise at being caught up in her little mind trap. "I don't know what you're talking about."

"No?" His eyes narrowed sharply. He hit a button on the side of his chair. The driver's side snapped backward and Aisha landed sprawled across his chest. The motion slammed him deeper inside her and Teague nearly lost his mind. Their faces were inches apart. He could feel her breath against his face. "Know what I'm talking about now, sweetheart?" He let his beard drag across her cheek. "Say it, Aisha. Tell me to stop."

"I can't. Oh God, I can't." Her hands tangled in his thick, crisp hair. She wanted more. She wanted all. He was at least ten inches long and as thick and hard as fence pole. She wanted to fuck him until her entire body melted. She felt her pussy tense into a coil of pure need. There was so much here. An unfulfilled past, an unknown future, so if all she had was here and now Aisha planned to take every moment.

He rolled them into the rear of the cruiser and cushioned her until she was on the floor. Kneeling over her, he tore her baby doll open from the slit in the front to her bare breasts. In seconds, he stripped off his armor shirt.

She didn't want to think about the scars on his body. He released the snap on his pants and shoved them down off his hips. She'd imagined this a hundred times as a teenager. It

was white hot fever that raged inside her. She couldn't even count how many nights she'd spent with a vibrator pulsing between her legs anymore.

He knelt between her thighs and she welcomed him, angling her hips to accept him. He plunged into her hard and fast, using his forearms as traction. He stared at her with hard eyes. She could still feel the anger and she used it. Locking her legs around his hips, she helped create a new rhythm. Her arms went around his neck and she panted in his ear trying to keep up.

It was wild torment. Each stroke, each movement created a hunger, a craving so dark Aisha didn't care if she ever saw the light again. His hands went to the sides of her face, trapping her and forcing her to face the thunder in his eyes. "Give me your mouth," his voice was rough, nearly hoarse with the strain. He lowered his mouth closer to hers. "Now." His eyes clenched shut and he whispered against her mouth, "For God's sake, Aisha. At least pretend this might be real."

His words tore her heart open wide. Everything she'd tried to do to him. All the hurt from ten years ago. It all vanished when she let herself look into his eyes. She wanted him more than anything to love her, just a little bit.

The pain and the passion made her want him even more. She tried to look away, but he wouldn't let her. His hands gentled at the side of her face. She bucked against him. The air was raw with the scent of sex and sweat. He brushed her hair aside and stilled. He watched her carefully. "You like it hard." He let his mouth moved across her cheek. The scrape of his beard made her skin shiver with reaction. His tongue gently bathed her cheek, with a rough scratchiness. "Nothing like fucking a kitty with a long tail." His mouth pressed against her jaw and she felt his hot breath against her skin.

A choked laughter came out her lungs. She took hold of his face. "Kiss me, Carson." His beard felt remarkably good against her hands and skin. "Let me suck on that tongue of yours." She found his mouth and instantly he enveloped her in a kiss that rocked her soul. His lips were firm, sensually tempting, and too seductive. If possible, her entire body raged in heat. Boiled. Mouths became hungry, devoured each other in a heady sensation. She could never get enough of this. She'd waited too long. And it was too sweet. She never wanted this to end. Her life meant more to her now than it ever had.

At first, Aisha thought it was a wild reaction to their mating. A bright green light fell over them. Aisha squinted at the invasiveness. Something was wrong. A blinking red light filled the entire cruiser followed by a soft buzzing. An explosion rocked the cruiser and their bodies rolled practically onto the roof. Screaming, Aisha managed to catch hold of Carson's shoulders and they tumbled in a tangle of naked limbs. "What's happening?" Her brain struggled to keep up while her body still shook with need.

"Shit!" Teague scrambled to his knees. His eyes dulled, hard as stone as he glanced over her and Aisha felt oddly cold at the experience. "Full shields. Evasive maneuvers." She heard the roar of engines coming online and a hum that she could only assume were shields. Something slammed them hard, sending her sprawling into his arms. "Block external scans." Suddenly, he wasn't the wild lover anymore. This man was someone she didn't know.

As Teague helped her to her feet, Aisha's mouth clamped shut when an explosion outside nearly made her ears explode. "Are you okay?"

Her entire body shook, freezing cold of fear laced with the invisible longing. Something she wanted for what seemed like her entire life, ripped from her so abruptly. "What is that?" She continued to shake as Carson passed her a jumpsuit to wear.

The cruiser shimmied and burst to life surging upward and flattening Aisha into the ground. She wiggled into the jumpsuit and pulled herself to her feet while Carson somehow slid easily into his clothes and moved up to the driver's compartment. Red warning lights blinked inside the cruiser as the windows turned opaque and she could see at least four vehicles surrounding them.

"Hang on!"

Aisha crawled into the passenger seat and buckled the restraints. Carson tapped a few buttons and the cruiser shot forward with the force of an ion stun cannon. The street scene gave way to tree-lined view as Aisha realized they were in the air. "Oh my God!"

"Identify vehicles." Carson ordered the onboard computer while his fingers busily maneuvered the air cruiser in and out of the trees. Aisha's stomach bobbed and danced but she managed to hold on.

"Vehicles are three class Bird Assault Sedans and one Dawg Stunner."

At the same instant, a message came across the communications board, "Cruiser, you are ordered to cease maneuvers and set down immediately."

Teague cocked his head and grinned, "Like shit." He looked at her. "Does that answer your question?"

"I can't believe this. What is a Bird doing harassing a civilian vehicle?"

Teague laughed and Aisha found the tone in his voice vaguely disturbing. "That's what they do best, sweetheart. Now my guess is they're after me. But if they know you're with me, we could be in some serious shit here."

"What? Why?"

He accelerated into a thick group of trees. "That's the million dollar question, isn't it?" Aisha several pulse blast ricochet off the trees. "Strap yourself in, sweetheart. This is about to get interesting."

She tugged the heavy harness across the front of her chest and felt it conform and snap into place automatically. "You do this a lot?"

"Not so much anymore." He winked, "Getting too old for it, you know?"

Oxygen vaporized out of her lungs as the car, no, make that ship, dove into the sky before spinning and diving into the forest. If he was too old for this, she was positively prehistoric. Her bones went rigid, her blood froze and she was sure her heart stopped. "Jesus, Teague! Are you trying to kill us?"

"Cruiser, you are ordered to set down immediately or we will be forced to fire on you. If you are injured or killed in the action, we will not take responsibility," the Bird ship announced before blast of red crackled Teague's vehicle.

"Tell them not to try and kill us and I won't have to." She watched him twist dials, punch buttons, and turn the yoke-styled steering wheel hard left. She watched as three-dimensional heads up display appeared near the dashboard. It showed her Den location and at least a half dozen Bird operatives entering the front entrance. "Hmm...Guess that answers a few questions."

"What are they doing?" Aisha had never been more grateful in her life that a harness held her strapped to her seat. Limbs from huge trees scraped along the side of the cruiser. Her fingers curled around the armrests so tight she thought she could see her veins. "Carson, are you crashing into trees on purpose?"

"No, honey. But since the alternative is to turn and face the sedans, I'm for any suggestions." Carson spun the cruiser around so hard that Aisha's head nearly slammed against the seat and the windshield.

Several blimps appeared on screen and Carson adjusted several instruments on the cruiser's panel. Aisha couldn't begin to guess what most of the panel did but she recognized the targeting display. "You're going to fire at them?"

"Not exactly."

"Then why are you turning around?"

Carson flashed a grin. "The computer did an analysis of the sedan's armor. These boys are still using the old screen. We're going to ram them."

"What?" Aisha tightened her restraint. "Are you trying to kill us?"

Stay tuned for the next episode and find out what happens to Aisha, Cayenne, Elena and Tee in "The Scratching Post"

Your vote counts!

Who do you want to see Aisha and her pals with? It's your chance to mate up some Kats & Dawgs. Send your email to: Triskelionbooks@yahoo.com

Voting ends June 1st so don't forget to tell your side of this "tail"