



Dalila's Choice

By

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Dedication

For David, he would have loved this story.

Prologue

Earth, 2346 post apocalypse

Two millennia after the Great War, civilization still teetered perilously close to the edge of destruction. Most of those who had survived the nuclear and biologic disasters fell during the subsequent centuries of pillaging, plagues, and famine. Human and animal populations had not recovered from the devastation. Along with so many deaths, much of mankind's accomplishments had been lost.

In the first of Earth's darkest hours, the warriors, strongest of all the males, seized every viable space-craft, escaping from the doomed planet with their mates.

The ever dwindling numbers of humans left behind were largely sterile. As the years passed, those rare men, still capable of viable sperm production, fathered only female offspring. There had been no reports of a male birth in more than century.

Some women toiled to carve out a meager agrigarian existence, some formed nomadic tribes, and others roamed the land alone or in loose groups where the only law was survival.

One small band of females, known as the Society of Belle Amity, quietly worked, protecting and advancing the knowledge of mankind.

Even now the skies stayed dark much of time, the winds fierce, and the temperatures bitterly cold. Though conditions on most of Earth remained harsh, through rigorous training and ruthless discipline, the sisters of Belle Amity progressed and even prospered. Their giant hydroponic conservatories, powered by harnessing the wind, yielded an oxygen-rich atmosphere for the compound, in addition to growing nutrient-dense produce. Their clever scientists synthesized what they could neither cultivate nor manufacture.

Except for sperm.

Their bank of frozen semen declined steadily. This critical shortage forced them to first restrict allocation to only those members of the collective, who had high breeding scores. And then they were forced to limit impregnation to proven breeders.

When the last men on the planet died, the sperm supply continued to fall with no hope of replenishment. With less than a dozen specimens remaining, the sisters of Belle Amity faced their own extinction.

Having run out of options, they planned a hazardous gambit, seeking the warriors, who'd abandoned Earth two millennia earlier, in a last desperate bid to re-supply the sperm bank.

The twelve-year intergalactic trip meant a risky transition into stasis, and an even more risky reanimation procedure, for the pilot. This hazardous feat was in addition to all the dangers inherent in any space flight. Despite the long odds for success, and the many challenges to be overcome, the sisters of Belle Amity proceeded. With the survival of their kind on the line, they carefully honed their most elegant weapon, Dalila Theron, for this critical mission.

Artificially conceived, fostered by the sisterhood, trained in weapons, self-defense, and hastily instructed in the secret art of mind control, the disciple, Dalila accepted her sacred quest. She was launched into space with instructions to invade and conquer the warriors of Enyo by any means necessary.

Enyo, 2386 post exodus

Since leaving the dying planet of Earth for the verdant tropical lushness of Enyo, the warriors had not grown soft. They continued to build on their strengths, developing a race of super-men. They'd made great technological advances and raised their collective standard of living to new heights.

Only one problem resisted their researchers' efforts. The men of Enyo continued to produce male sperm--almost exclusively. Each year since their arrival on Enyo, the number of women born declined. After two millennia of predominately male births, the gender imbalance had grown critical.

Extensive exploration of their new galaxy yielded no human life forms. Intergalactic travel remained extremely hazardous. In their most recent effort to increase the number of female births, the council of elders, who governed Enyo, had instituted a mandatory testing of all unchosen men.

Now, only those warriors producing significant quantities of X gametes were eligible to be chosen as a mate by a breeding woman.

The men ineligible for breeding grew restless and unruly. Children of either sex had become a pampered and indulged rarity. The few women, capable of reproduction, were worshipped and closely guarded.

The ineligible males burned off their aggression by participating in war games, by playing extreme sports, and by indulging their carnal appetites with the ladies of light.

The ladies of light were unreal women, designed to a man's fantasies. They existed only for the life of a single session in a holo-arcade unit. A man was free to indulge the holo-world of sensual delights during his free time as long as no other patrons waited and his work credit balance remained positive.

In practice, the waiting lines for the pleasure units were long. And the warriors were always limited to one fifteen minute session.

* * * *

The timer immediately grated on Kelvar's frayed nerves as he slipped into a sanitized but still warm pleasure unit. Passing his access card quickly over the scanner, he waited impatiently for the transaction approved message so he could begin his session.

As usual he told himself to select a standard model, eliminating the time spent programming a custom lady of the light. But, when the first menu flashed, his fingers selected customized woman. Rapidly, he toggled through the selection screens until she was complete. Small, slim, dark hair, dark eyes, and his. There were less than five minutes left on the merciless clock, when she spoke.

"What's your pleasure, warrior?"

"I want to watch you climax," he said.

The level of his arousal made his voice rougher than usual. But, the lady of light didn't complain. Moving sensuously, she allowed her head to loll back, exposing her throat and thrusting her breasts forward. Delicately, she plucked at the harden tips before slipping her slender fingers into her slit.

"Widen your legs," he growled at her. And she complied.

Her dusky pink folds glistened with the evidence of her excitement. He glanced

resentfully at the session timer before releasing his cock. Less than one minute left.

"Suck my cock," he ordered.

Immediately, the light creature abandoned her quest for personal fulfillment and swallowed his erect shaft. Her artificial mouth suckled him for the remaining seconds. The fragments of light, which formed the lady turned off in relays. Until the last sparkle winked, leaving his shaft spurting into the too frequently sanitized air.

While the door slid open, he tucked his semi-hard cock into his uniform. Waiting his turn, Dexon, his twin brother, grinned at him.

"Your session has timed out. Please clear the unit for sanitation for the safety of other patrons," the computerized voice was low and sultry--audio sex.

He finished adjusting his uniform. "Ready to head out after this?"

Dexon sketched a salute. "Yes sir." Then dropped his exaggerated pose of respect. "I'm looking forward to getting away from the city and anything to do with work. My last tour was one long torture session."

Pulling a face of mock sympathy, Kelvar pretended to commiserate with him. "You sky jocks do suffer. What happened? Did your aviator shades get scratched?"

"Thanks for being so understanding. At least, we sky jocks aren't complete space cadets," his twin quipped.

Then Dexon disappeared into the recently cleaned pleasure unit before he had a chance to retaliate. He settled comfortably against an idle shooter game to wait. His neck and shoulders relaxed. The power of the muscular body, he took for granted, held loosely at the moment. The lady of the light already dismissed from his thoughts.

Mentally, he ticked off a vacation checklist. The hovercraft had been serviced and waited for them at the west side airfield. Their island was uninhabited, but had everything a man could want. Abundant fish and game, wild fruit, and vegetables, fresh water, and a sandy beach front. Their own piece of paradise and their application for ownership had been approved. He and Dexon had been studying the building plans for years. The tools and materials had been dropped off a week ago--he'd gotten proof of delivery.

For the first time in half a decade, they each had three months of leave that coincided. There would never be a better time to build their beach house. Hell, maybe someday they'd add a private pleasure unit. The holo-simulators were expensive, but they were both due for promotions. In a few years, who knew what might happen. Anything was possible.

Chapter One

Belle Amity Compound, Earth 2346 post apocalypse

"Wait child, I would speak to you before you depart," Mother Marian called.

The petite elder hurried toward Dalila, with her deep blue cloak flapping like restless wings behind her.

Standing on the narrow ladder, which led into the passenger compartment, only Dalila's head was still visible. She reversed direction, climbing to the outer deck, and then jumping lightly to the ground.

Mother Marian never spoke idly, so Dalila was eager to hear her words of wisdom.

When Dalila drew close she was shocked by the leader's appearance. Dark shadows rimmed her pale blue eyes. Smudges marred the normally pristine white collar of her long dress. Her familiar lined face seemed to have grown thinner in just the few days since she'd seen the holy woman.

Mother Marion headed the team of scientists, synthesizers, and magic-wielders, who had been working around the clock to ready her ship for the journey.

As Dalila bowed before the collective's leader, she made the sign of the Goddess over her head, muttering a ritual blessing. Then the diminutive holy woman tugged her impatiently away from the vessel, which was already humming with an excitement that matched Dalila's own.

She found a warm smile for the elder. "What is it, mother?"

"I fear for your safety, my child."

Dalila's smile faded. But, she spoke lightly. "I understand the hazards of space travel, Mother. Indeed, isn't that why I was chosen? I am unfit for breeding and therefore expendable."

Mother Marian peered up at her, fixing her with piercing blue eyes. The power of her gaze had not been dimmed by age. "You understand nothing, disciple. The stasis process is far from perfect. Our most recent tests have only a forty percent successful reanimation rate."

"May the Goddess smile upon this mission," Dalila murmured, doing her best to hide the fear that the holy woman's word had fueled.

"Nothing more I can do about the craft. Listen well, my child. For I have scant time to teach you about the ways of warriors."

"The old ones, who abandoned Earth?"

"Yes. Now, hold your questions and open your mind or you will arrive on Enyo as empty headed as the newest babe."

Mother Marian muttered under her breath. "Then precious little good will you be at expressing warrior semen."

Dalila was so shocked, she was certain she'd misunderstood. But a glance at the holy woman's face convinced her that she'd heard correctly. A wild mixture of dread, fear, and excitement increased her tension.

She'd known she was on a sacred quest to gather the precious seeds of life for the sisterhood. But, this was the first anyone had mentioned harvesting sperm from warriors.

The men who'd fled ancient Earth were legendary figures of evil and aggression. Warriors only respected brute strength. The rumors of life on their new planet were tales used to frighten naughty children.

With a wrenching effort of will, she forced her mind to calm, listening intently to Mother Marian's instructions.

"Some of the warrior factions of old Earth were blindly aggressive, this much is true. But there were also intelligent men who were both strong and honorable. Without the male scientists contributions we would not have a spacecraft to launch. The sisterhood has merely refined previous designs, adding features, and downsizing the craft." The holy woman paced as she spoke. Moving so rapidly that her feet no longer connected with the ground.

"There is more, so much more, that you should know, but our time is short. Do not underestimate the men you seek. They were never the clumsy ogres of myth. It's been more than two millennia since an Earth woman had congress with a Warrior. They may have learned a thing or two. Trust your instincts. They, along with your training, are your best weapons."

"Yes, Mother," Dalila said, wishing there was time for even a few of the thousands of questions crowding her thoughts.

The elder beckoned her closer. She bowed, leaning nearer, and then the holy woman's gnarled hands smoothed Dalila's temples, forcing her eyes closed. A kaleidoscope of images poured from Mother Marion into Dalila's mind, etching whole new banks of data faster than she could process any of it. The rate kept increasing until her conscious mind shut down-- unable to handle the information overload.

Her last coherent awareness was stunned disbelief at the image of a woman pleasuring a man's sexual organs with her mouth.

Entering orbit of Enyo, 2358 post apocalypse

Dalila roused from her artificially induced state of suspended animation, to her great relief, she felt no different than if she'd had a restful night's sleep.

Since she'd been facing an honorable, but dull, life of service as a sentry for the Belle Amity compound, she'd been both thrilled and terrified to be chosen to make the perilous journey to Enyo. Carrying out the critical mission for the sisterhood was a high honor.

Now, actually in orbit around the beautiful planet, she was as excited as a child before feast days. Studying the green and white orb, which was currently projected on her viewing screen, she was awed by its beauty and eager to discover its secrets. After completing her mission, Goddess willing, and with a bit of luck, there would be time for her to explore the lush new world. Enyo was so very different from the barren expanses of Earth, where only the shelter of the compound provided a safe haven.

Switching to an alternate view, which showed the thermal heat patterns indicative of population density. She noted Enyo had only a few areas showing either signs of industrialization or human habitation. There was only one probable urban center. Most of the planet remained virgin territory.

She began charting a course for the outskirts of the densest population center, reasoning that it would contain the government officials she needed to meet in order to establish a working relationship and open negotiations. Landing slightly away from the urban center would give her a chance to do some reconnaissance before actual contact with the dangerous men of Enyo.

By all accounts, warriors were not friendly or even peaceful. Mother Marian had held different views and she was indisputably wise. Still, none of the sisters had any recent knowledge of the patriarchal civilization and much could change over a few millennia.

Dalila vowed to keep an open mind and watch her back.

Straightening her spine, she reminded herself that she was disciple of the Belle Amity Sisterhood with much to offer another culture. Surely, even if the warriors of Enyo were aggressive they would be intelligent enough to value the collective's gifts.

"Artificial satellite approaching on our present course collision will occur in five minutes," the ship's computer announced in its calm mechanical voice.

"Correct course to widen gap," she replied and smiled to herself at the confirmation she'd just received of intelligent life on the planet below. No doubt, she would soon be contacted to identify herself.

A ship-killing blast hit her small craft without warning.

So much for dealing with reasonable, rational, and intelligent men. Before she'd even picked herself up off the deck, the computer began droning on about system failures.

Alarms sounded, small electric fires sprang to life. There was hissing, sparking, and more smoke than was good for an oxygen breather made the cabin atmosphere increasingly hazardous.

Wielding a fire suppressor one-handed, Dalila frantically over-rode the course she'd plotted earlier, heading for the least populous area of the planet she could find.

Hastily, she strapped herself into her pilot's seat as the ship entered Enyo's atmosphere. For a few moments, the shuttle tumbled wildly. She tried to correct the orientation with a light touch on the sluggish thruster engines.

With each attempt at halting the dangerous spinning, her tension increased until her hand trembled on the thruster control lever and sweat rolled down her spine.

When she'd finally managed to right the craft, a sigh of relief escaped.

Without the reinforced base deflecting the extreme heat of entry the ship would've disintegrated prior to touch down. Even with the heat shields on, the outer skin reached dangerous temperatures.

The heat passed the structure's tolerance level, setting off new alarms as the small vessel hurtled toward the planet's surface with frightening speed.

The damaged thrusters slowed the craft marginally. Then they refused to respond no matter how she coaxed or pushed them. Dropping through the atmosphere at a stomach knotting velocity, the shuttle splashed down.

The liquid pressing against the shuttle's viewers, confirmed the wet entry.

Dalila told herself a water landing was best considering the freefall descent. But, no amount of rationalizing could erase her fear of the sea. There was no telling how far she was from land. The height of the waves eliminated any view of the surrounding area.

The ship's computer chanted, "Fatal error, immediate system restore required." The warning sounded over and over again.

The artificial intelligence unit no longer responded to any command. She hoped the computer's sub-systems weren't tracking her requests because they'd moved to priority only functions to deal with the extensive damage. Scanning through her internal database for more information on Enyo, she found little in the way of reliable intelligence on the terrain, or anything else, beyond the planet's suitability for human habitat.

Apparently, the warriors never bothered to write home. Dryly, she made a mental note to update the computer's file for transmission to the collective at the first opportunity, having already ascertained the planet boasted at least one sea and a hostile population. Considering that the warriors shot first and asked questions later, she prudently assumed the last couple of

millennia had not civilized the legendary aggressors.

She would worry about dealing with angry men later. Right now her first priority was to move the ship to land. She had every confidence in the sisterhood's technology. But, she'd never been near a large body of water before, let alone in one. All the malevolent, unpredictable wetness made her edgy. Very, very edgy.

Full out panic was only a heartbeat away.

Gently she coaxed the shuttle's manual override controls to lift her craft out of the water. A move which should at least enable her to take bearings. The sky was already darkening, whether from the storm or approaching nightfall she couldn't tell. Either way, she needed to find safe harbor.

The shuttle jerked and hovered for a few seconds before sinking back into the waves. She'd had a glimpse of something that looked like a solid mass. But, she couldn't be sure of anything she'd seen.

Vainly, she tried to restart the craft. The waves tossed the shuttle more violently, and the steering mechanism responded only sullenly. A dark shape loomed ahead. The ship's power controls refused to answer to greater pressure. Still, she pitted her full body weight hard to port urging the craft to turn in an effort to avoid the rocky outcrop.

Another wave slapped the small ship sideways. Her viewer was distorted by a blooming starburst crack. She depressed the pressure seal immediately. But, seawater had already trickled in, shorting out even the manual command modules.

More crackles, sparks and hisses warned of expanding disaster.

Anger infused her, had she come all this way only to have her mission scrubbed by an inconvenient rock? No, by the Goddess and all her handmaidens!

Death by drowning might be an improvement over suffocating in the cabin. Outside there was at least a chance of survival.

Consigning her soul to the Goddess with a quick prayer, she gathered her gear bag, and then depressed the emergency exit launcher.

Once out of the craft, she saw land but the shoreline was a daunting distance from her current position. Desperation prodded her to try. Quickly, she mapped a mental course to solid ground. The seat was a floatation device so all she had to do was hang on and steer herself toward shore. Surely, Goddess willing, the waves would carry her there. They'd better. She didn't know how to swim.

The pilot's seat hit the water with horrifying force. Immediately, plunging her deep into the roiling sea. Instinctively, Dalila held her breath. Cold panic gripped her hard for a few paralyzing seconds.

Then her clumsy fingers struggled to undo the safety harness. A few bubbles of expelled air escaped from her lips. Soon, she would have to breathe. As the last fastener released, she looked toward the surface. It seemed a light year away. She tried to recall emergency landing instructions, which might be of some use. But, she couldn't think of anything except the desperate need for oxygen.

With her lungs already starving for air, she scissored her legs frantically. The upward progress was agonizingly slow, but miraculously she was moving toward the surface. She broke free of the water and gasped in a deep breath of life-giving oxygen. The ejection seat bobbed to the surface a few feet away. She lunged for it.

Instantly plummeting herself back beneath the murky depths. Again, she kicked fiercely, regaining the surface. But somehow she'd gotten turned around. The waves undulated all

around her, moving her against her will no matter how hard she kicked. Periodically, the incoming tide doused her, causing too many painful inhalations of saltwater. Much more worrisome, each new watery buffeting robbed her of strength she couldn't afford to lose.

Her naïve plan to allow the waves to carry her to safety while she clung to the shuttle seat had failed to allow for several important factors. The seat and her gear bag were gone and she worked desperately just to keep her nose above water--roughly half of the time. There was no way for her to ascertain if she was moving in the right direction.

Her teeth chattered and she couldn't make them stop

While her mind scrambled for a way to safety, another rogue wave hit from behind, pulling her under the briny water.

Disoriented, she kicked and twisted, trying to find the surface. Her lungs burned. Escaping tiny bubbles warned her that she was running out of time.

Suddenly, something propelled her in what seemed like the wrong direction. She was too weak to put up more than a token fight against the inexorable force.

To her amazement, she breeched the surface, gasping in deep gulps of delicious air.

Before she had a chance to get her bearings, an iron band grasped her neck. When she tucked her chin to examine the rescue gear, the 'hook' turned out to be a brawny, deeply tanned, and intricately tattooed arm.

Since orbiting Enyo, she'd been battered, bruised, shot at, and nearly drowned. Despite all that, the overwhelming feeling of safety in this warrior's unyielding grip dangerously weakened her defenses.

Right now all she wanted to do was sleep, trusting him to take care of her. It was completely insane to trust a warrior. Though, when she viewed her precarious situation, she had no choice.

Enyo, 2386 post exodus

Kelvar swam for shore towing the miniature invader. She had ceased struggling, which worried him. Wishing he could examine her to reassure himself she was alive, he pushed himself harder against the heavy storm driven swells.

His initial assessment for injuries had been rapid, yet his hands still retained the feel of slight curves so different from his own hard planes. So unforgettable. So tempting.

She had to survive.

In the normal course of events, the tropical storm would not have presented a problem. But, a nasty weather front had blown in from the south, swelling the waves and whipping the winds to near hurricane force.

When he'd spotted the tiny small craft with its outer skin glowing from heat of entry, he'd been angry with the thoughtless abuse of a one-of-kind space ship, or a damn fine replica. The vessel was sleek and elegant. A rare and exquisite example of millennia old technology.

His assumption, that such beauty had been carelessly abused by an irresponsible youngling, had rankled against his sense of justice. The current crop of young ones had been so indulged from birth that they had no respect for possessions or rules. Still, on Enyo even spoiled children were precious. He hadn't hesitated to swim to the brat's rescue.

A wave crashed over them and he felt her cough more than heard it. It was a watery sound. At least, she still lived. But, the weakness of her response terrified him.

He needed to clear her lungs of seawater. The only way to accomplish that was to get her to land. As he fought to keep her head above water, new and unfamiliar feelings assaulted him.

He was much too aware of soft breasts pressing against the underside of his forearm. The

small mounds radiated heat, igniting hungers unlike any he'd ever experienced.

While towing the woman to safety, he speculated about her. Her craft, her clothes, and her gender all argued that she was an extra-terrestrial.

Against all odds, she'd arrived from another galaxy and fallen into his arms.

Would he be allowed to keep her? He shoved the negative thoughts away, knowing the probable loss would devastate him.

Only the possible extent of her injuries kept his breeding urge in check.

The strength of his desire for her was almost uncontrollable. This was his first close encounter with a woman and although she was nothing like the women of Enyo, the attraction was instant and compelling. Even stronger was a fierce need to protect her.

The knowledge that he might not be able to guard her, burned inside his veins.

It was impossible to enter Enyo's sector without detection. The council would know of her ship's arrival. Might know of her. Had she responded to their warnings? Too many questions hammered at him--most with answers he knew that he wouldn't like.

His muscles strained against the storm-tossed waves. If not for the danger to her then he would have relished the challenge.

By the Gods, he had found her. He would save her. He wanted her.

She was his.

Her rejection of him as mate was the only way he would release his claim on her.

Even then, he would demand an extended period of time to convince her of his suitability. The strength of his attachment to her had been damn near instant, undeniable, and more than a little frightening.

Already, he contemplated acts of treason and high crimes against his government with more consideration for the odds of success than for any loyalty to his people. A harshly honest and welcome realization.

For the past five years, the breeding urge had grown, unrelieved, and that unmet need added undeniable strength to the bond still forming between him and the woman.

Kelvar was forced to acknowledge the wisdom of laws strictly proscribing all interactions with women for the first time. With a ratio of thousands of breeding age men to one fertile female--any contact was incendiary. He'd always believed he was strong enough to handle any temptation--he'd been wrong.

How would his twin handle exposure to the woman?

His toes brushed sand, interrupting his speculation. He pulled harder for the last few yards. Finally, he found firm footing and swung her into his arms. While climbing toward the smooth beach, he glanced around, automatically taking note of their position. The storm had swept them off course. He recognized the sheltered cove, which was more than a mile from the isolated beach house Dexon and he had built on this remote island.

Selfishly, he rejoiced in the privacy even as he laid her carefully on the sand, positioning her arms at her sides, and turning her head to facilitate expelling the saltwater from her lungs. He placed his hands firmly on her upper back and pressed on her in the steady rhythm of relaxed breathing, willing her to absorb some of his life force. As much as she needed. When she stopped heaving up watery bile that told him she hadn't eaten recently, he cleansed her mouth with his fingers.

She sucked on him like a babe. The sensation shot straight to his cock, stiffening it into painful readiness. Reluctantly, he eased away from the unsuspected delights of her mouth, carrying her further inland away from the wind and saltwater spray. This time a slender arm

curled around his neck and she snuggled into the shelter of his body, deepening his protective urges, and at the same time, stoking his need to mate.

Carrying her was like lifting a small pile of dry sticks. Yet, she was nothing like a stick. True, she was little and light. But, she was supple, and curved with breath-stealing softness. Every aspect of her rich with feminine charms he longed to explore in detail and at leisure. She was so finely made, so perfect, that she deserved a skillful lover. He cursed his lack of education in the pleasure arts. He'd heard things but, who knew how reliable such talk was?

On Enyo only men with high breeding scores were taught the secrets of pleasing women. He and Dexon both produced eighty percent Y chromosome sperm. Like the vast majority of the planet's men. Therefore, they had no chance of becoming breeders. Unfortunately, lack of opportunity, didn't lessen desire.

Holding the woman inflamed this primal hunger. A constant need always present in breeding age males. Until encountering this small alien, he'd prided himself on his ability to control his mating urge as he controlled everything else that might interfere with acting according to the warrior's code.

Now, he burned to strip off her strange garments and spend himself in her soft body.

A rapidly swelling bruise, frighteningly close to her vulnerable temple, her shivers from shock, and most of all the trusting way she snuggled into his chest kept him from violating the fragile trust she'd extended.

After reaching the crude shelter of some long ago deposited driftwood, he set her down. Her breathing was still too fast and shallow. He frowned and ground his back teeth together as he examined her for broken bones or any sign of internal injury. Slowly, he ran his hands over every part of her tight little form. She was all softness, finely honed muscles, and elegant bones.

Assured that she suffered from no serious injury, he forced his hands away from her tempting curves. Rocking back on his heels to study her face.

Dark eyes glittered at him from between thick-lashed, barely open lids. For a space of time he lost himself as he stared at her with helpless wonder.

She sat up in a quick smooth movement, snapping the strange spell, which drained his will. "Is this Enyo?"

Her voice was as low and as sweetly feminine as the rest of her. Though, her accent was strange and it took him a few seconds to understand her question.

"Yes, Enyo," he said in the rough guttural speech of his world.

She blinked, and then nodded. Indicating herself with a graceful gesture toward her breasts she spoke again, slowly and distinctly, in her seductive melodic voice. "Dalila Theron, disciple of Belle Amity Sisterhood and the pilot of the luckless shuttle craft."

Scanning the sea before she turned her attention back to him, she sapped his strength and scorched his bones with the intensity of her scrutiny.

Kelvar tasted her name, Dalila, savoring the sound, and then grunted to signal he'd understood her. "Kelvar Virlo, warrior."

He held proclamations of devotion in abeyance--as was proper until she indicated her acceptance of him as her mate.

"Did you find him?" Dexon called, interrupting the sexual tension and giving Kelvar a few face-saving seconds of warning before his twin invaded their intimate conversation.

Dalila scooted behind him at the sound of his twin's approach, positioning herself between him and the driftwood logs. She wrapped her arms around her knees, making herself as small as possible.

His heart lifted with pride. Not an official declaration of her preference. A good sign though. A very good sign.

* * * *

Instantly, Dexon spied the small person hidden behind his brother. Crouching down to show a less threatening presence, he tried to project reassurance. How big and rough they must seem to something so small and fine. Peering around his brother's stalwart torso he scanned the alien's heart-shaped face, large eyes, smooth skin, and telltale swell of hip and breast.

"Gods be praised, it's a woman," Dexon huffed. His expression stretching into what must look like a caricature of surprise.

"Dalila," Kelvar growled, correcting him.

Ignoring his brother's bristling attitude, Dexon repeated her name, softening his pitch as much as possible. "Dalila, Dalila, Dalila delightful Dalila."

"My younger brother, Dexon." Kelvar said with a strong and wholly unnecessary emphasis on the word younger.

Dexon grinned at her, his most charming boyish smile, flashing the dimple on one cheek.

"His identical twin brother. Though after birth we became different. A small heart defect slowed my development until it was corrected. Of course, I'm much more fun," he explained, doing his best to keep his tone gentle and his posture welcoming.

Cautiously, the woman emerged from behind his brother. He simply stared at her in wonder for several seconds.

Then he remembered to ask Kelvar if he'd handled the protocol. "Did you report her?"

Kelvar shifted, moving more fully in front of her. "Not yet."

Logically, Dexon knew there'd been no opportunity. However, a lapse of this magnitude was so unlike his rigid twin that he couldn't hide his shock.

"You have to! It is mandatory to report any unattended woman immediately. Any contact with an unclaimed woman is forbidden," Dexon spoke urgently in a pitch intended only for his brother's ears.

Stunningly, Kelvar grunted in disagreement. "She's not of Enyo. Our laws don't apply."

Dexon shook his head sadly, knowing he wasn't getting through to his twin. "She is a woman. The edicts are clear. You're risking your life by not reporting this breeder."

While the women in question watched him warily, she kept one hand glued to Kelvar's wrist. Whether the gesture was for comfort or support he couldn't tell. Either way, it was obvious she was already forming a bond with his brother.

As he looked into her dark eyes, he felt the force of her siren's call. For the moment, his foolish concerns about legality were swept aside by the power of her attraction. He reasoned that she hadn't officially chosen his brother for mate. If she had then Kelvar would be a great deal less tense. There was still hope for him.

A slim hope. However, a warrior could dream. Even in birth, Kelvar had been first. The precedent held with each milestone. Kelvar smiled, walked, and talked first. Throughout school Kelvar got the best grades, the highest scores, the most wins.

However, they'd failed the breeder testing equally. Along with thousands of Enyo's finest young warriors. The number of men, sharing their lot hadn't diminished the aching need to mate.

"Do you want to choose one of us to breed with?" he asked impulsively.

"You mean mating--as in sexual intercourse?" she asked, her pretty voice rising higher in unflattering amazement.

“How else would we breed?” he asked, genuinely puzzled.

Chapter Two

Enyo, Day one, after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

Dexon's question reverberated inside Dalila's mind as she stared at the warriors fascinated by their big, muscular, hair-dusted, and tattooed bodies. So different from hers.

"Artificial insemination--that is the way it's always done," she said with less confidence than she would've made the same pronouncement a few seconds earlier. A half-remembered image came back to her of two men embracing a single woman. A dream fragment? Or part of the strange knowledge transfer from Mother Marian? She had no way of knowing.

Dexon continued without any inroads in his certainty.

"Not here. On Enyo a fertile woman is worshipped. Pleasuring his mate is a warrior's highest aspiration. However, nothing will happen unless you choose to mate with one of us. You could have any one of a thousand approved breeders." Dexon grinned at her ruefully.

Mate with one of them!

She should be repelled. But, the flutters deep in her belly felt more like excitement.

There was no denying that the men were beguiling--as lush and alien as their planet. But, she wasn't going to be distracted by their primeval charms. She had a sacred mission to accomplish and it didn't involve dallying with these two.

Ignoring Dexon's considerable appeal, as well as the more formidable presence of his brother, she planted her fists firmly on her hips and stretched herself as tall as possible. "Are you both completely crazy?"

She didn't expect an answer. Though, the men stiffened noticeably. She spouted the curriculum she'd been taught--the things every member of the collective knew as a babe. "That's messy and inefficient and unsanitary and just plain uncivilized."

Kelvar crossed his arms, drawing her attention back to all those rippling muscles. "We find our laws and customs very civilized."

His words were uttered in what she already thought of as his usual gruff manner, his face expressionless. And yet, she heard hurt under the harsh statement.

Realizing how thoughtless her comments had sounded, her cheeks warmed. She chastised herself. Now, she would have to apologize. And she hated to apologize. But, she needed their cooperation desperately and offending them was not the way to go about enlisting their help.

"I spoke without thought, please excuse my bad manners." She got out the necessary words without stumbling.

The twins grunted, presumably signaling an acceptance of her apology and distracting her with their deep gravelly voices.

Their sound was rough and guttural, and no matter how she tried to steel herself against it, listening to them made an unfamiliar and unwelcome itch of desire simmer in her system.

No one had prepared her for the sheer temptation of warriors. They were large and intimidating and overwhelming. But, they were indisputably male, strong, clean, and oh-so virile. Something about their hard bodies made her want to rub against them like the affection

starved kitten she'd seen in holographic stories.

Giving herself a mental shake, she told them the truth. "It's very kind of you both to offer. But, I'm not eligible for breeding. That's one of the primary reasons I was chosen for this mission. I'm expendable."

She looked away, unwilling for them to see the pain that piece of honesty caused her. Knowing, even as she averted her gaze she was being silly. Surely, anyone, even a lusty warrior, knew from a single glance that she was slim of hip and small of breast.

Unfit.

"Breeding is the highest form of pleasure," Dexon said in sensuous drawl that was even more unfairly seductive. But then his bronze skin seemed to darken over his sharp cheek bones. "Or so I've heard, of course I've never been chosen."

Instantly, her heart softened toward him. She knew how it felt to be passed over.

To distract him from the pain, and to learn more about their culture, she probed with a soft question. "Why 'of course'?"

"Because we mate for life. If I'd been chosen by a breeder then I would be with my woman." He stopped for a moment, and she sensed there was more.

Dexon looked at Kelvar, who nodded curtly, before continuing the explanation. "However, that's not the only reason. Kelvar and I produce Y chromosome gametes. Only men with significant percentages of X chromosome sperm production are eligible for inclusion in the selection pool."

Bitterness and much pain lay just under his words of admission.

She shook her head, unable to accept that such perfect specimens were excluded from breeding. She must have misunderstood some part of what he'd said.

Setting aside the improbable conclusion that they were unfit--like her. She grasped at one of the hopeful things he'd said. "Did I understand you correctly--the women of Enyo get to choose their mates?"

"Yes, that is our custom. Is that not the way of it on Earth?" Dexon asked.

Careful now, she warned herself. Last time she spoke without thinking and nearly alienated her only potential sperm donors. This time she started slowly, keeping her voice low and gentle.

"It is said that was the way of things pre-apocalypse. In fact," she smiled at Kelvar and then at Dexon, inviting them to share the joke with her. "The sisters say the old-style coupling fed the aggression of--."

She'd been on the point of saying warriors, which was what the elders of Belle Amity had always said. Obviously, that wouldn't do, given the present company. "The weak-minded," she amended, pleased with her tactful editing of common Earth wisdom.

A fast glance at their scowling faces made her turn away from the men, daunted by their growing disappointment. An urge to soothe their savage natures with caresses bloomed. She rejected the strangely appealing idea with regret.

She was a disciple of Belle Amity, a pilot, an explorer, and a woman with a critically important mission. Somehow, she had to repair her ship, gather sperm, and then make the long trip home to Earth. There was no time for alien breeding rituals. She owed the sisterhood her loyalty. If there was any possible way to accomplish her goal then she had to try.

Curiosity, and something more she wasn't ready to examine, made her scour her memory banks for any data she could find on the ancient mating rituals. She came up empty.

So there were some things the sisters of Belle Amity didn't know. Or, at least things she

couldn't recall at will, much of the knowledge transferred was only accessible if a genuine need triggered it. This realization was small comfort, especially now, when she was alone with two of Enyo's finest male specimens. Too much knowledge could be dangerous for a disciple. But, a little understanding of their customs wouldn't hurt.

The men stared at her. Rather than cowering from them, her small breasts tingled. The tips hardened and grew so sensitive that even her soft undershirt chafed with each breath she took. The secret place between her legs grew wetter, readying itself for breeding. The unfamiliar feelings, which she recognized as sexual desire, made her edgy and uncomfortable. Uneasily, she looked toward the sea, wishing she had the means to escape these strange and disturbing men.

Movement caught her eye. She glanced toward the water and saw her shuttlecraft bobbing toward shore.

Instantly, all thoughts of the breeding and warriors were shoved to the back of her mind.

"My ship!" Dalila rose, and then stumbled clumsily toward the water on legs still too weak to run. She'd taken no more than three steps when Kelvar scooped her into his arms, holding her securely against his hard body.

For a few seconds, she struggled futilely against his iron grip. And then she gave up, inhaling his addictive man's scent--allowing herself to take comfort from her capturer.

* * *

Following the direction of Dalila's eyes, Dexon saw the antique craft bump against the rocky edge of the cove. Still infused with the need to impress her, to make her happy, he sketched a rough plan while running toward the ship.

If he could nudge it in the right direction the waves would wedge it against the rocks. Once that was accomplished, salvage would be simple. The ship should stay in place long enough to gather rope and the hovercraft, which he would use to tow the smaller vessel to safety.

He didn't pause to explain his plan, knowing his brother would understand what he was attempting and would assist him as much as possible.

When he neared the craft, he paused, waiting for the tide's assistance. Glancing back, he watched his brother run with the woman wrapped around his chest. Kelvar moved as easily as if she weighed nothing. Already, the couple neared his position.

Dexon rubbed at his chest where a pang of envy and loneliness pinched him.

It was all too easy for him to imagine becoming the odd man out when his brother bonded with Dalila.

Wouldn't you do the same, if she honored you? His conscience whispered. However, his heart denied the charge.

He'd always loved more freely than Kelvar. Mate or no, he would still hold fast to the bond he already shared with his twin. His more inclusive style gave him an additional incentive to impress Dalila.

It would be better for all three of them if she chose him, he reasoned self-righteously. Aware that he had not yet touched her, his honesty forced him to admit that he would likely feel much more possessive if he were the warrior holding the woman intimately against him.

As he watched, his brother helped the woman into their ship.

Then the tide surged and all speculation ceased as he pitted himself against gravity and the elements. Suddenly, the ship shifted, wedging in between craggy boulders, secure for now. Dexon basked in the glow of success.

"Can you hold her?" Kelvar's gravelly voice over rode the crashing waves to thunder in

his ear.

He yelled back. "Yes." Straining to keep the craft steady, suddenly humiliatingly aware that it was only with his brother's greater strength that the ship had moved. On his own he would've lost the battle.

While Dexon struggled to balance the vessel, Kelvar waded to shore, and then quickly linked the two ships together with strong line.

Dexon couldn't see Dalila inside the hovercraft. However, he felt her eyes on them. Spurred on by an audience, he strained against the weight of the craft.

It was hard to keep his footing on the treacherous rocks that lined this part of the cove. He preened anyway, aware that the difficulty factor made him look even more impressive. Deliberately he swelled his biceps while he fought to maintain the craft's balance long enough for his twin to finish securing the tow line.

"Hold on another moment and I'll drag her free," Kelvar roared.

Dexon didn't answer, needing all of his energy to maintain his position. His muscles screamed with outrage at the strain and began to tremble in protest. Grimly he locked his frame and held fast.

Then something bumped his back. One foot lost its tenuous hold on the rocks. Off-balance now, his remaining leg twisted. Something in his inner thigh snapped. The other foot slipped. And then he fell.

Sucking in a last breath, he cursed his clumsiness as the water swirled over his head. Before he could get out of the way, the ship moved. The outer skin creaked ominously, sliding from the makeshift berth, pinning him between the vessel and rocky seabed. When he pushed to free himself a groin muscle rebelled, tearing a silent scream from his lips.

* * * *

Horried, Dalila watched as Dexon disappeared beneath the chopping waves. Her second attempt at controlling a warrior's mind and already she'd caused a disaster. Guilt weighed heavily on her shoulders, bowing her spine.

Seconds later, Kelvar jumped into the craft maneuvering it forward at a smooth rate.

"Guest pilot on board, do you copy?" he growled.

She straightened at his rough question, and then realized he'd been speaking to the ship's computer, not her.

"Copy Kelvar, guest pilot authorized," a mechanical voice agreed.

"Take the helm and hold her steady," he ordered.

This time he was talking to her.

Then he was gone. She was alone in the hovercraft. Free to escape. But, to where? She doubted this ship was equipped for intergalactic travel. At least it didn't have a drive system she recognized. She could go to the urban area. But, what point was there in finding more warriors when she'd already endangered the first two she'd met?

The twins looked like the pictures she'd seen of warriors. But, pictures had done nothing to prepare her for their impact.

Both men were huge, rough, and intimidating. Worse, Kelvar hadn't fully succumbed to her first attempt to control his mind. What would happen if she tried again? She could only exercise control over one man at a time and she needed to get much smarter about that fast--if the warriors survived her first mistakes.

What surprised her about Kelvar wasn't his strength. It was the gentleness and respect she'd felt in his touch when he'd examined her. She owed him her life. While Dexon had tried

his best to make her feel welcome, and then he'd risked his safety to do her bidding by securing her broken craft. Tears welled in her eyes and threatened to spill. Her ship wasn't worth their lives.

Leaning forward, she stared at the spot where his brother had vanished. Long minutes passed with no sign of either man. She prayed the Goddess would keep them safe.

But, no matter how hard she stared at the roiling, uncooperative water, nothing happened. Both men remained hidden in its depths. Remembering the panic and disorientation she'd felt underwater, she shuddered.

Though, Kelvar had seemed at home in the wetness. How long could a warrior go without air? Surely not very long. She'd taken a dozen or more shallow breaths since he'd vanished--his brother had been in the sea even longer.

Fear for the men, anger at her stupid arrogance, and guilt for endangering the mighty warriors swirled inside her until she wanted to scream.

Kelvar's head emerged from the sea. His mouth was moving but, she couldn't hear him over the sound of surf. A brawny arm appeared and flung forward.

With a quick prayer that she'd understood him correctly, and another for deciphering the unfamiliar console, she switched to manual controls and eased the craft forward a few careful paces. She was rewarded by the emergence of Kelvar, supporting his brother.

Setting the ship back to autopilot, she climbed out of the craft, and ran to the warriors. She'd nearly killed them. She shivered with the realization. Now the Goddess had granted her a chance to atone for her mistakes.

Nursing was one thing she knew how to do well. The sisters of Belle Amity were uniformly excellent at the healing arts. Even a lowly disciple, such as herself, was equipped to deal with nearly any medical crisis.

"Don't try to push him through that small door," she commanded firmly.

Holding his eyes, she willed Kelvar's obedience. Already her promise not to try to control the men was forgotten.

He paused, meeting her gaze. "There are diagnostics and healing modules aboard."

She continued using her voice and eyes to compel him. Even though he resisted.

"He could have internal injuries or cracked ribs. It's too dangerous to jostle him."

After long seconds, the warrior grunted what sounded like an agreement.

"I need him laid flat," she explained with a great deal more calm authority than she felt.

His muscles visibly rippled with the strain of carrying his twin. But, he changed course and strode toward the rough shelter of the logs where he'd first brought her. Obediently, setting Dexon on the sand.

She gave Kelvar a rapid assessment to assure herself that he hadn't sustained serious injury, noting a nasty cut that welled across the back of his hand.

Impatiently, he tugged her toward Dexon. "Never mind my scratch. Fix him."

For once she agreed with his orders. She turned her attention to his brother. He'd suffered numerous abrasions and contusions. Thank the Goddess, his breathing was steady, his heart rate strong and regular.

If she laid her hands on him, anywhere she touched, his cells would be infused with healing energy. This ability had been hers since birth. One which the sisterhood's teaching and discipline had honed into something almost miraculous. More importantly, their methods had given her the skills to use her gift to repair physical damage.

Memories of the small band of women she'd left behind, tugged at her heart, threatening

to overwhelm her with homesickness. She shoved the longing away and focused on the urgent task in front of her.

After a thorough visual examination, no obvious injury jumped out at her. Despite Dexon's good respiration and heart rate, he remained much too pale and still.

Starting with his head she began her manual examination by spearing her fingers into the thick black curls covering his scalp, feeling for lumps, or worse a depression. At the same time, she willed him to a deeper and more restful level of sleep, she continued her exploration, touching his face lightly. She paused to assess, pleased with his improved color.

Then she let her hands travel further down his body. His chest was broad, hard, and defined where hers was soft and giving. She allowed her fingers to explore and linger though there was no injury, disease, or even a blemish on the rigid torso. Skimming over narrow hips, she touched the hem of his sarong. Hesitating for a beat, she hurried on, moving lightly over his reproductive parts. She'd intended to move rapidly through this sensitive area. But, the pain radiating from high on his right inner thigh halted her.

Cautiously, she moved the small garment aside. Giving thanks to the Goddess that a sturdy under layer covered his breeding equipment. In other circumstances, curiosity would have tempted her to investigate. But, the need to find and repair his injuries overrode all other considerations. She probed gently, seeking the problem, and then found the strained muscle--deep in his powerful thigh.

The surrounding skin was hot and already swelling--the abused abductor spasming.

Using both hands, to cover as much of the damaged tissue as possible she touched him. Lightly at first, and then more firmly as the underlying muscles calmed in response. Moving higher up his leg, she brushed the bottom of his testicles. They tightened immediately, making her breath catch in fear. Then as she watched, his penis swelled and hardened, expanding to more than double its original daunting size.

"He looks better," Kelvar said dryly.

She didn't know him well enough to guess if he was being sarcastic. If it hadn't been for his scowling presence, the lack of a suitable receptacle, and her own insecurity about application of semen collection theory, she might have tried to express some of his sperm.

But, she reassured herself, the holy woman had stressed consent was an important factor, explaining that men were most cooperative with the required procedures. From now on she would keep containers with her at all times then she would be prepared for the next opportunity.

She leaned back on her heels, addressing Kelvar coolly. "I've eased the worst of his pain, the tissue can heal now. But, it was a serious muscle strain. He should stay off that leg as much as possible and just rest for a few days. If you have any ice that would help."

"Your ship is inoperable. You will nurse him," he insisted in that gravelly voice that pulled at her feminine core even when he was acting like a complete warrior.

She didn't bother arguing.

Grabbing his left hand none too gently, she examined the cut.

He waited stoically while she disinfected the wound and then pressed the edges together. Almost instantly, a seam of fresh skin formed. He jerked back his hand.

Irritated by his reaction to her healing gift, she bristled at him. "I had no intention of running off."

Where would she go?

* * * *

Kelvar backed further away, surprised at her bitter words. The witch was insulted.

There'd been no sanction intended in his demand. Though, he didn't trust her. Maybe he was as hard for her to understand as she was for him.

Whenever she spoke, even to snap at him, he got lost in the music of her voice and the invitation in her eyes. He wanted to explore her, pleasure her, and cherish her as she deserved.

He knew she wanted to leave, he could read her intentions well, even if he had trouble understanding her speech. Leaving her in his craft had been a calculated risk. He'd had little choice since she lacked the needed strength to rescue Dexon. But he hadn't been certain that she wouldn't take off.

The vessel she'd arrived in was badly damaged. Part of its problems had been caused by the entry speed and subsequent rock collision. More troubling were the unmistakable signs of a blaster hit. She'd been shot out of the sky. Even a man drugged by lust had to ask why she'd failed to identify herself and why she'd ignored the orders to maintain orbit.

There was no doubt the orders had been given. They were automatic and mandatory. Every time he'd returned from being off-world he'd been challenged. So had every other pilot he knew. Past time for her to answer a few questions.

"Where do you come from?"

She didn't bother to turn toward him when she answered. "Earth."

"Impossible, humans were all but extinct when ours ancestors left the planet a couple of millennia ago."

"A few survived and even prospered," she said stiffly.

Setting aside the improbability of her claim for now he continued with his interrogation. "Why did you come to Enyo?"

"Could I have something to drink?"

Basic decency and the warrior's code, which mandated caring for younglings and women, compelled him to fetch a container of cold water. He got some for himself while he was at the replicator. After handing her the drink, he took a long pull from his before seating himself, and then waiting a few moments more for her answer.

Finally, he repeated his question, very slowly. "Why are you here?"

Her expression announced that she had intended playing games with him. But then at the last minute she seemed to change her mind.

"I came to gather sperm."

For the second time in the past hour, she'd surprised him. But, a brief reflection erased much of his initial enthusiastic response to her admission. Gathering sperm didn't necessarily equate to breeding. He waited patiently for her to expand on her mission.

"I need sperm, a lot of sperm, to take home to Earth," she explained with a sigh.

"Why not get sperm from the men on your own planet?" he asked dryly.

"There aren't any."

"No men?"

"You are right, there are no men left on Earth. The last one died a decade past," she said with what he took to be a touch of exasperation.

The irony struck him as almost funny. "But, there are women?"

"Lots of them. For now," she said darkly.

He took some time to consider what she had told him. A lack of men as a problem was a new concept. "What about cloning?"

"The initial results were promising, for a few generations. Then the basic cell structures began to deteriorate."

She aimed a glance at him as if she were evaluating his biologic integrity.

He ignored the insult while a dozen follow up questions buzzed in his mind, and he longed for the fluidity of speech that came so easily to some men, like his brother. "The cell breakdowns came from the original host or from clones?"

She shrugged. "Either or both. It could have been a storage problem. But, we had used the same cryogenic tanks for the sperm specimens, which remained potent. Though, only the female gametes were viable. The storage system may have been a factor or perhaps cellular integrity is impossible to maintain over time. All I know is that when I left Earth the problem had not been solved."

"Enyo has the opposite problem," he said, still trying to wrap his head around everything she had told him.

Earth women had survived without men. He tried and failed to imagine a female society. His world must be equally strange to her.

There were still women on Enyo. Though, the exact number remained a carefully guarded secret. In the city women were rarely seen, and then always cloaked, hooded, and heavily guarded. The only warriors who were allowed interaction with a woman were their chosen and bonded mates and medical personnel. And even then contact was only incurred if critically needed.

If he reported Dalila, he would instantly lose her. She would choose her man from a pre-screened pool of female sperm producers. Leaving Enyo would not be one of her options.

Then Dexon stirred, grimacing with pain.

Immediately, Dalila moved to his side, soothing his injured twin with her voice and her hands. Jealousy gnawed deep in his belly. Though he knew, his twin was unconscious. Even if Dexon had been awake, her touch would have been sweet torture.

Predictably, his brother responded to her. His shaft hardened to breeding readiness. She watched its expansion with unmistakable interest.

Kelvar longed to tell her he had one exactly like that.

"Does it hurt him?" she asked. Her dark eyes large and liquid with misplaced empathy.

Kelvar grunted. His own cock twitched to full attention.

She touched his brother's erection. Tentatively at first, then more firmly, wrapping her fingers around his shaft.

"There is no injury for me to heal," she murmured in her strange musical voice. Her small soft hands stroking Dexon.

The effect of her caresses swelled him further until the glistening head of his erection poked out of the sarong's inner pouch. She leaned closer, and then licked the bead of pre-cum from his sensitive tip.

Kelvar's sarong tented. His cock partially out of a pouch not built to contain his erect equipment. If only she would brush aside the flap....

But, Dalila didn't glance at him, focusing exclusively on Dexon's now fully aroused erection. Her hands continued to stroke and explore.

It took every bit of control Kelvar possessed to keep from tearing off his sarong and demanding equal treatment. Or better. He could easily imagine peeling away her clothing and learning every bit of her small body with his eyes, his hands, and his mouth. A lifetime of celibacy happily ended as he filled her every orifice with his seed.

But, he was bound by law and honor not to touch her without her clear consent.

Worse, she'd obviously chosen his brother.

Shamed to be watching their breeding play, and yet unable to force himself to leave. He grasped his own erection, ready to relieve the intolerable ache in the usual way.

"Wait," she said.

Or had she really spoken at all? For an extended moment, he worried that he'd only imagined he'd heard her tell him to wait.

While he watched and obediently waited, she rubbed his brother's shaft efficiently with long sure strokes that he felt deep in his core. Half-crazed with hope and lust, he skinned off his garment and leaned back. Watching and waiting and hoping.

As he stared at her hands around Dexon's shaft, he grew even harder and longer with a potent mix of passion, need, and envy. When his twin finally climaxed. His own cock jerked and his balls tightened.

Chapter Three

Enyo, Day one after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

Dalila gazed at the bounty spurting from Dexon's still erect penis, giddy with her success and stunned by the extravagance. So much life-giving sperm spilled carelessly on his torso. She licked a few drops from her hand. The liquid beads were sweet and salty and tingled with life. A heady aphrodisiac.

Two powerful and beautiful men and they were aroused by her! The fresh victory of his climax emboldened her to dream of mating fully with the warriors.

The thought of having to leave this sensual paradise without ever knowing the ultimate pleasure Dexon had spoken of earlier made her feel lost and empty. Without thinking about it she wrapped her arms around her knees, rocking herself for comfort.

Then she forced herself to uncurl. There was no way she could leave yet. Her ship was damaged. Dexon would need healing for several more days. To say nothing of their need to mate. The least she could do for the brothers was to relieve the ache of desire. She owed that much to the men, who'd saved her life and rescued her vessel.

Dexon rested comfortably, but Kelvar's waited. His anticipation a palpable presence in the confined space of their makeshift shelter.

Gathering her courage, she rotated toward him. Then stared at the intimidating maleness of his reproductive equipment as she knelt between his splayed thighs.

Somehow, his being conscious made this an entirely different experience. He'd stripped off the small garment and was gloriously nude. His penis and testicles were fully exposed.

Experimentally, she touched his strong thighs and immediately sensed the hunger in him. And more. He was afraid. Of her.

His vulnerability, carefully hidden behind his gruff manner, was revealed by her touch. Amazingly, he felt as uncertain as she did. His emotions were stripped bare--completely open to her. She excused the invasion of privacy as information she needed to soothe his hunger.

His yearning to mate, his pain at being classed as ineligible, shocked her and echoed her own secret longings, flooding her with an urge to comfort.

And more. An urge to breed with him. In all honesty, she couldn't pretend her compulsion was anything more noble than lust.

Kelvar's first touch had sparked long suppressed desires. With each contact, she burned a little hotter. Now, she wasn't sure she could control the raging fire of need.

Vainly, she wished that she had the broad hips and generous breasts of a breeder. How primitive and glorious to take him inside her body, and then to grow and swell with his child.

Ignoring the problem of her unsuitability for the moment, her conscience nagged, asking the inconvenient question, *what about Dexon?* Hadn't she felt compelled to ease his need only minutes before? What did that say about her? How could she yearn for two men? How could two men want her? And yet, at least physically, clearly they did.

Desire washed through her thick and heady. The musky nearness of Kelvar's aroused genitalia would have shaken any Earth woman with a heartbeat. She was no exception. The

closeness, the heat, the intoxicating scent of him threatened to sweep away everything, other than the need to give him pleasure.

She started slowly, meeting his gaze. And then she did the scariest thing she'd ever done.

She let him see her vulnerability.

He touched her face tenderly. She brushed his lips, tasting the sweetness, the heat, and the fear of rejection on his mouth. Amazingly, he seemed as unschooled and unsure as she.

Letting her hands explore, she learned his body. Memorizing his responses, lingering to repeat any caress that elicited a low groan. Finally, leaning closer, just short of touching his thighs with her breasts, she caressed his hard penis lightly.

His size, form, texture, and scent were all entrancing. Most of all, the contrast of the baby fine skin stretched tautly over the rigid titanium hardness fascinated her. The musky maleness that smelled like nothing else drew her closer like the scent of delicious food drew a starving woman.

He shuddered under her gentle caress. She let go instantly, scooting away from him. Heat flooding her face, mortified that she'd done something wrong. Plainly, just because he was aroused didn't mean he wanted her help.

Turning her back to him, she hurried away from the crude shelter.

Tears of humiliation filled her eyes as she ran. She never cried and she hated the show of weakness, especially now.

She'd gone only a few paces into the night when he caught her, wrapping his arms around her and drawing her hard against the inferno of his aroused body.

"I want you, little breeder," he crooned to her in his deep gravelly-rough voice.

The sound sparkled along her taut nerves, soothing her fears and warming the moisture pooling in her secret place.

Kelvar, the mighty warrior, wanted her. She would've gone down on her knees immediately. But, he held her tight.

"Tell me you want me, Dalila."

She only hesitated for a single beat, intoxicated by his closeness, his heat, his scent, and her own aching need. "I want you."

Trembling and unsure what would happen next, she held her breath.

But, he only lifted her hair up and away from her neck. Then his lips covered the sensitive skin at her nape, nibbling with exquisite slowness to the side of her neck where it joined her shoulder.

This time, Dalila shuddered with arousal.

A deep masculine chuckle rumbled against her skin, making her weak with desire.

Magically, his big hands found the hidden fastenings of her survival suit. Soon the garment was tossed aside.

She shivered harder with unbearable tension. Though covered in only a thin knit undershirt and panties, she burned from her head to her toes. Her skin felt too small. Her breasts grew heavier. Her nipples tightened and pouted, begging for his touch. Her legs trembled with the effort it took to keep them together.

Tenderly, he tugged her undershirt over her head, and then flung it in the same direction as the survival suit had gone.

She felt alternately shy and bold as he turned her in his arms, his gaze locked on her meager curves.

She waited in agony for his rejection.

Instead, he caressed her sensitive breasts reverently. She pressed into his rough hands, eager for even greater closeness.

"Beautiful," he breathed, his words teasing her.

And then his lips fastened over one tightened peak, sending a jolt of sensation straight to her feminine core. Fresh moisture released, slicking already slippery folds and dampening her thin panties.

A minute earlier, she would have sworn that she couldn't get any tenser. She'd been wrong. She coiled tighter and then tighter still. Needing something more and not even sure exactly what it was she sought so desperately. But, she was absolutely certain that his erection should be inside her body when he expelled his precious seed.

She appreciated the incredible sensations he evoked by suckling on her breasts. But she needed him inside her now. Impatiently, she skinned off her panties and wrapped one thigh around his narrow hips, opening herself for his possession.

Groaning in her ear, he breathed faster--almost panting. All the while his hard penis bumped enticingly against her swollen and eager folds. Fisting him, she positioned him at her entrance, and then pressed closer. But, she didn't have the right angle to impale herself on him.

She whimpered in frustration.

With another guttural cry, the mighty warrior lifted her, aligning his erection with her center. She twined both legs around him. Conquering his hardness with her softness.

Still, they were barely connected.

Her pelvis tilted in an ancient invitation.

He grasped her hips holding her immobile.

And then he pushed into her.

She screamed. He caught the explosion of sound with his mouth. His tongue invading her, exploring her, drugging her, and marking her as his. Lost in his kiss, the steady progress of his implacable erection met her hymen, stretching, and then tearing though the fragile barrier of innocence as he claimed her in the oldest, most primitive, way possible.

The power and intimacy of his possession was both intolerable, and necessary in a way she'd never imagined. Her inner tension coiled still more unbearably tighter until she exploded in an ecstasy of light and joy.

Kelvar savored the exquisite friction, and then there was a sudden tightening at the base of his spine. His climax hit him with scant warning and the force of a stun blast. The power rocked him, forcing him to lock his knees to keep from tumbling both of them to the sand. His rough hands cupped the soft globes of her bottom and his erection was encased in the wet velvet heat of her. Feminine muscles massaged his shaft, milking his seed. But not erasing his hunger for this small breeder.

Pride and pleasure warred for first place in his heart as he cuddled her precious curves against him.

Dalila had chosen him.

His cock, which had never completely softened, was fast hardening back to full strength. She squirmed against him, dragging a groan of erotic pleasure from deep inside.

But now that she was his mate, her health and happiness were his responsibility.

Carefully, he lifted her away from his enthusiastic erection, setting her on her feet. Keeping a steady hand on her hip.

Her maiden's blood mixed with his seed, staining his thigh with sweet victory.

She had chosen him.

This exquisite breeder, small but more beautifully made than he had ever imagined chose him. A woman of uncommon courage, and teaming with mysteries that he would never understand, chose him. A woman, who could've had any warrior on Enyo, chose him.

He exulted in his good fortune even while he worried about the price the Gods would demand for this wondrous gift. Pushing the depressing thought aside, he enjoyed the simple pleasure of watching Dalila step into her panties.

An involuntary frown creased his brow as her luscious mound disappeared under the material. The fabric was thin enough to show a shadow of the silky vee of her feminine curls, reassuring him in some unfathomable way of their connection. The undershirt followed, screening the breasts he'd claimed as his private property. Forced to acknowledge the need for some clothing, he swallowed his rising frustration.

Still sulking, he skinned on his sarong. Unfortunately, she didn't object or even take notice. When she turned toward him, she met his eyes for a short second before dropping her lashes. The lips he longed to taste tried to smile. It was not convincing.

"I'm not sure what to say," she murmured.

As he watched, even her attempt at a smile stopped. His heart, so joyous a moment earlier, lodged in his throat, making him even less articulate than usual. Old defenses rose to protect him from the hurt he imagined was coming. He crossed his arms over his chest, further shielding himself from pain.

Though she cleared her throat, her voice was low and thick when she spoke. "That was...amazing. But, it changes nothing."

Arguments welled in his head, but he kept his lips clamped tightly shut. Afraid if he opened them all that would emerge would be a weakling's howl of loss.

"The mission is more important than what I want. I have to collect sperm and return with it to Earth."

"That may not be permitted." The words grated from his lips in a voice as cold and rough as he felt.

Stepping into her strange one-piece garment, she fastened the front before responding.

"It's not a matter that requires your permission," she said stiffly.

He forced her to look at him by catching her chin and holding it steady. "It matters if your ship is shot out of the sky."

"They already tried that," she said coolly.

Her disregard for her own safety ignited his temper. But, he kept his voice even. "And it worked. You're lucky to be alive--your ship is incapable of intergalactic flight."

She whirled on him, eyes flashing with anger. Unwillingly, he admired her courage. There were damn few full-grown warriors who would have the nerve to challenge him directly.

"You don't know that."

"I do know that. If your thrusters weren't functional enough to slow your decent then they are definitely incapable of launching you off-planet. Let alone making the long trip home and braking for your re-entry through Earth's atmosphere. A suicidal flight attempt would accomplish nothing for your people."

It was a long speech for him. But necessary, he had to make her see how hopeless her idea of leaving Enyo was in order to protect her.

She straightened her back and folded her arms across her chest in what was surely an unconscious imitation of his own stance.

"You could replicate replacement parts to repair my vessel."

"No."

He did not bother explaining all the reasons why that would not work.

Instead, he moved, putting needed space between them. His patience was too frayed to stay within touching distance. Instead of educating her about the inherent limits on a personal use replicator, he turned and walked away.

The evening was growing cooler and he wanted something other than a sarong to wear. Though, a few minutes ago, he'd been overheated while naked. To be honest, he wanted clothes more for a shield against the memory of intimacy than for warmth.

A few hours alone with a woman and he'd already made a complete fool out of himself. He'd never asked her why she hadn't heeded the automatic warnings when she'd entered Enyo's air space nor had he asked what she meant by sperm collection. The unhappy thought that he was her first donor, and that she would leave Enyo carrying his child at the first opportunity she had, did nothing to lighten his mood.

He'd been as naïve as babe, believing that she had chosen him as her life partner because she mated with him. Galactically stupid. She was from Earth there was no reason for her to abide by Enyo's customs or even to be aware of them.

Except that she was stuck here and would have to learn to live according to the code of honor that ruled them all.

Kelvar walked for hours along the beach, scowling at the beautiful day dawning. When the sun began to warm the sand, he headed back. Still taking his time. Still beating himself up for not realizing that making Dalila tell him she wanted him did not translate to a commitment. Not for her. And why should it?

When he got back to the makeshift log shelter. Dexon was awake. He sat with his uninjured leg cocked casually. A grin of greeting softening his harsh features.

Kelvar tried to look at his brother the way Dalila would. Compared to her they were huge and rough. Even their speech was full of grunts, which conveyed much to another warrior but must sound crude and illiterate to the small breeder.

As soon as they'd pounded shoulders in the ritual greeting, Dexon spoke. "Did you report rescuing Dalila?"

"Didn't need to. There was a message waiting from the council. *New female life form detected in your sector. No contact is permitted. A representative will adjudicate the case within twenty-four hours.*"

"What time was it received?"

Kelvar scowled. "Within two minutes of her landing."

"Guess we're both dead men," Dexon said evenly.

He didn't bother to respond. What was there to say? The law was sharply clear on the subject of any unsanctioned contact with a woman.

It was forbidden.

The only exceptions to the no contact rule were when it was required to save a woman's life, or to prevent harm to a woman in imminent danger, or best of all, an unclaimed woman chose a man as her bonded mate.

To his shame, that was exactly what Kelvar had hoped for. Hell, he'd believed that was what had happened. Now, too late, he realized that even if Dalila had chosen him, he never would have enjoyed happiness purchased with his brother's life. How could he have forgotten the price attached to Dalila's charms for even a single heartbeat?

To hide his guilt, he spoke more gruffly than usual. "Where is she?"
"In her ship."

"Good," he snarled at the brother he loved much better than he loved himself.

Then regret for snapping at him softened his tone, holding out a hand he helped his twin rise. "Come. Let us go back to the house. Maybe we can salvage something of this day. I'll rig up a chair for you so we can both do a little fishing."

* * * *

"Sure," Dexon answered.

He allowed Kelvar to help him into the ship, wondering what had happened to hone his brother's temper. His leg still ached. However, the pain was far less severe than he'd expected.

There was only one thing he was sure of, Dalila hadn't chosen Kelvar. If she had then his brother would have been in a much better mood.

Ignoring the inner voice growling that Kelvar had touched her, Dexon thought hard about the problem of the woman. So far as he knew, the contact either of them had with her had been necessary to rescue her. Convincing her to choose one of them for her mate, without touching her presented a challenge. However, nothing was impossible for an Enyo warrior.

His one concern, that he and Kelvar would be sanctioned for not reporting Dalila had been nullified.

The council knew she was here--had known before either of them. What he couldn't understand was why his brother didn't seem to feel the same sense of relief. Possible answers to the mystery of Kelvar's bad mood gnawed at him.

Dexon studied Kelvar while he was plowing through the pre-flight check list meticulously tending to each item. Kelvar was a stickler for rules, much more so than he was. This made the flaunting of the reporting law even more incomprehensible. Finally, he mentally shrugged, accepting that there were things he would never understand about his twin.

"Earth craft, we will commence towing you to our dwelling within the next few moments. Secure yourself, copy?"

Earth craft? What had become of Dalila?

Something had definitely happened. Dexon would have given his next ten work credits to know what. However, a glance at Kelvar's scowl was enough to keep him from asking.

Long moments passed with no response from the other vessel.

Dexon cut a quick look at Kelvar to see what he would do.

A stream of profanity, which would have made a pay master blush, erupted from his twin. When the air cleared, he cut the engines to a slow idle, unfastened his harness, and then slammed out of the craft.

Recognizing his brother's explosive frustration level, Dexon waited anxiously for an interminable space of time, worried that Kelvar would either lash out at Dalila in anger or breed with her. Either way, there were no mitigating circumstances to soften the no contact rule.

Finally, his twin re-entered the craft, marginally calmer. Kelvar seated himself, and then began a new pre-flight check.

Unable to stand the suspense, Dexon blurted, "What happened with Dalila?"

Continuing his careful routine, Kelvar didn't answer immediately. However, he seemed calmer and Dexon breathed a sigh of relief.

"Her craft isn't equipped to receive our broadcast band. Now we have the answer as to why she didn't respond to the satellite's warnings when she first entered Enyo's air. She never heard them. The warning shot was supposed to be across her bow. But you know how tricky

that is. Two different crafts, traveling at different rates of speed. Even firing programs make mistakes.”

During the lengthy speech his twin's voice grated, still rougher than usual.

Dexon worried more about what his brother wasn't saying. However, he judged it best not to push for answers, feeling he would be happier not knowing if the rule had been violated.

There'd been a time when he always knew what Kelvar was feeling. He missed the special bond, and longed for the lost connection with his twin almost as much as he yearned for the woman. Even her name tasted sweet on his tongue. If she chose one of them, no matter which one she selected, he would lose what was left of the relationship with his brother.

It was a high price to satisfy lust.

However, he felt more for the woman than the driving need to reproduce. Desire burned inside him all the time. An unmet physical need as basic as those for air, water, or food. Of course, the hunger flared when she was near.

However, there was more. He wanted to protect her from harm. He wanted to know her. Her past, her feelings, her dreams. He cared for her.

Did Kelvar feel the same? The thought gnawed at him. Not knowing the answer--being unable to read his twin, saddened him. Maybe it was best for some things to remain private. He wasn't anxious for his brother to know how much he yearned for Dalila's gentle caresses.

It wasn't shame or guilt that made him unwilling to share, rather it was his fear that his twin would concede Dalila if he understood how much Dexon wanted her. He'd rather die than win the woman because of his brother's pity.

The bite of his safety harness jerked him back to reality as Kelvar brought the ship to a bumpy landing. Fumbling with his restraints, Dexon spoke without meeting his brother's eyes. "I'll see if she's all right."

Kelvar grunted a gruff reminder not to touch her.

A reminder Dexon didn't need. Knowing his brother meant well, he kept any objection to being treated like a youngling to himself, merely nodding his assent before he climbed out of the hovercraft.

The passenger hatch on the smaller vessel was already open.

She emerged slowly, her compelling eyes scanning the area. Immediately, he wanted to reassure her that the island held no menaces to her and if any arrived he would die to keep her safe from them.

The strength of his feelings shocked him. Did Kelvar feel the same when he looked at Dalila? In his heart, Dexon knew he did. A forewarning of tragedy rippled through him.

Then he met her eyes. She was smiling. Warmth radiated from her, chasing away everything except the yearning to be close to her. Perhaps, she was a witch, enchanting him with her magic. He'd heard tell of such creatures. Even if she were casting a spell to bewitch him. He didn't care.

Convincing her to choose him was the only thing that mattered.

He swaggered toward her, grinning. Wanting to captivate her the way she did him. Abruptly, his injured leg spasmed, causing him to stumble. He bit back a cry of pain.

Dalila scampered out of her ship and then ran full tilt toward him. Her pretty eyes wide with anxiety and her brow creased with concern.

Soon her small hands were all over him, soothing the injured muscles, inciting his arousal, and erasing every doubt.

So much for the no contact rule, he thought with a remarkable lack of regret while Dalila

found the protesting muscle and eased the hurt. He started to put weight on it. However, small hands combined with an implacable will, held him fast.

"Help me get him to a sleeping couch," she said. The words were addressed to someone else. His brother, of course. Kelvar the strong. Kelvar the brave. Kelvar the chosen.

Dexon leaned on his brother's strength, accepting his fate. Grateful for the gift of Dalila's smile.

After his twin helped him onto the roomy bed, Dalila climbed up beside him, placing both small hands on his injured groin. Heat seeped into him from her touch. His shaft stirred to life and no matter how he tried to control his body's reaction to her, nothing worked.

Helpless to leash his excitement, he glanced at Kelvar, seeking help. However, his twin's cock had sprung to full attention too.

Dexon closed his eyes. Letting go of inhibition, he allowed himself to enjoy the pleasure of the moment, to respond to her touch without guilt.

"Better?" Dalila asked

There was nothing in her tone to indicate she'd even noticed his new problem. He studied her face, seeking a sign of her reaction to his arousal.

"I could donate sperm for your cause," he offered hopefully.

She didn't say anything. However, her smile dazzled him. She leaned closer, capturing his face with her soft hands, and then she brushed even softer lips across his.

The only kisses he'd ever experienced had been dream kisses. And his dreams hadn't come close to the sensation of a real woman touching his mouth with hers.

Eagerly, he nuzzled back, softening his lips and hoping for more. He reached to enfold her slim frame in his embrace, but she backed away. Still holding his face, she stared into his eyes. Wordlessly, asking him questions he didn't understand.

Turning away from him, toward his brother, she spoke. "Will you join us?"

* * * *

Dalila held Kelvar's gaze, holding her breath, terrified he would reject her offer. Forcing herself to smile, hoping the expression passed for seductive invitation. For endless seconds, she waited for him to either accept her invitation or shatter her dreams.

Asking him to join her and his brother had been an impulsive decision. Yet even now, shaking with the heady blend of fear and arousal, she couldn't regret her choice.

Something changed inside her. The rules she'd live by her whole life no longer applied. If her ship could be repaired, if she could find a way back to the sisterhood, she would do everything possible to complete her mission.

But, right this minute there was nothing she could do to solve the sisterhood's problems.

She was an alien in this strange world where there were no rules governing non-breeders and aroused warriors. Her old Earth classification, as an unfit to reproduce woman, didn't apply here on Enyo where every fertile female was worshipped.

As appealing as warrior adoration was, there was something she wanted more--to mend the growing rift between the brothers. Her arrival had widened the gap between the men. She aimed to change that.

There was one more, very private, reason for her invitation. Kelvar and Dexon both needed her in a way no one else ever had. And that need aroused her in a way that nothing else would have done.

She wanted Kelvar. And she wanted Dexon. Differently, but with an equal depth of feeling. Dexon was irresistible--smoother, more comfortable with his feelings. He allowed her

to see how much he needed her. Kelvar hid his feelings from her, maybe even from himself. But, he still needed her as much as his twin did. Perhaps more.

Her gift of healing physical injuries had eased Dexon's pain, possibly the deeper touching of lovemaking would heal Kelvar's emotional scars.

He stood his ground, scowling at her.

Dalila held out her arms to him, swallowing her fear of rejection. Then she added a single word.

"Please?"

Holding her breath, she waited for his answer.

Chapter Four

Enyo, Day two after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

With a low growl of fierce hunger, Kelvar skinned off his pants, and then pressed himself into Dalila's embrace, covering her face with stunningly tender kisses.

Sandwiched between the two men, she realized Dexon had shed his clothes too. Because, she felt the power of twin erections pressing into her. One aligned with the seam of her bottom. The other insistent against her belly.

An overwhelming sensation of incredible safety and the tender feeling of being cherished enfolded her. Along with the emotional warmth there were two pairs of strong legs, tangling with hers, two pairs of powerful arms wrapping around her, and two pairs of hands caressing her through the thin knit of her underclothes.

Surrounded by their strength, she inhaled their scent--a drugging blend of clean male, fresh sweat, and musky arousal.

Dexon nibbled on the sensitive juncture of neck and shoulder while someone's hand slipped inside her panties, teasing the needy place between her legs. Kelvar pushed her top up, baring her sensitive breasts. And then taunting her with light circling caresses, missing her rigid nipples with maddening precision.

She whimpered a protest, arching into his hands. In a cruel response, his rough fingers left her, and then were replaced by a wicked mouth, suckling on her tortured peaks, sending shudders of urgent desire straight to her feminine core.

Mewling sounds of need escaped her lips.

Dexon kneaded the globes of her bottom into liquid bliss. "Do you like that, Dalila?"

Pressing her buttocks into him, she whimpered, "Yes."

Kelvar nibbled on her turgid nipples, making her cry out with sweet pain. "Too hard?"

She captured his head, trying to tug him back to her aching breasts. "Yes, no--maybe a little. Oh, please don't stop."

Nuzzling her with his beard roughened face, he chuckled. The deep gravelly sound melted her last layer of inhibitions.

Somehow, when she wasn't paying attention, her panties disappeared. As she became more and more aroused, she smelled her own sweet musky essence, adding to her excitement. Both men were fully erect--their hard penises teased her but neither one of them moved to fill her empty core.

Her slippery essence coated Dexon's rough fingers, which had slipped into her feminine folds from behind, coaxing delightful sensations from her charged body while he explored her secrets at a leisurely pace. One calculated to drive her insane with desire.

She wriggled and whimpered. While tension coiled tighter deep in her belly, threatening to detonate without either man inside her empty center.

A long finger penetrated her feminine core. Dexon groaned when she clamped down on his invasion. The first hint that at least one twin was as desperate as she felt.

Too soon, he withdrew, trailing the evidence of her readiness upward to her back

passage. The sensation was startling erotic.

"Do you want this? Do you want me inside you?" His voice was raw with need.

She arched her bottom toward him. "Yes, but, please hurry."

Kelvar released a well-loved nipple. "There is no need to hurry, little breeder. We have all the time in the world. Dexon and I are going to fuck you every way men can fuck a woman and we're going to keep doing it until you tell us to stop."

Perhaps, he meant his plain words as a warning, but all they did was arouse her even more, and despite his assurance that there was no rush, he grasped himself, and then brushed the slit between her legs with the silken head of his erection. Making her explode in a glorious crisis of light and rapture.

Both men growled their approval. Dexon bit her neck while Kelvar claimed her mouth in another drugging kiss.

While she shimmied in ecstasy, the finger teasing her back passage was replaced by the slippery head of Dexon's hard shaft. Her tightly puckered anus softened, inviting him further, deeper. Gently, his erection breeched her rear orifice. The sensation of unbelievable pressure blended into a sensual thrill as never before stimulated pleasure receptors tingled to life.

At the same time, Kelvar's erection nudged against her feminine entrance. Shudders of helpless excitement shook her smaller body as the dual assault continued deeper into both openings, coaxing unbelievable ecstasy from trembling flesh, not yet fully recovered from her first shattering orgasm.

In a slow dance of seduction, both massive penises edged patiently, but, inexorably deeper, into her, filling her beyond her wildest flights of imagination.

Suddenly, even as much as she wanted to, she wasn't at all sure she could handle both of them at the same time. Though, her hymen had been eliminated last night, she felt the same kind of painful stretching sensation as the men pushed deeper still. She felt as if she were going to be split in half and her feminine muscles rebelled, tensing.

Their erections were huge. She teetered between pain and pleasure.

As they pushed deeper still, it hurt. And it felt unbelievably erotic. And most of all, it felt incredibly right.

Her second climax started deep within as her feminine muscles clenched rhythmically around Kelvar's stone-hard penis. He continued, stretching her feminine sheath to the point of sweet pain on every powerful stroke. The tightening of every fiber of her being spiraled inward, centering on her bottom.

Dexon stretched her tender anal opening past all bearable pain. And beyond, into an unsuspected sensual melting of her last fragment of resistance. Excitement sparkled through every cell, winding her more tightly until her she literally saw stars and bucked against the hardness filling her so completely that she knew nothing less than their dual possession would ever feel this incredible.

The men rocked with her, cradling her as she forgot to breathe. Then she exploded in a third round of glorious fulfillment. She lost consciousness--her system unable to handle the power of her soul-shattering climax.

The blackout couldn't have lasted very long because when she woke her feminine muscles were still clenching in aftershocks of pure bliss. While her very bones melted into utter and total satisfaction. Both of her lovers groaned in harmony, pouring their precious sperm into her body.

The power of their release triggered an incredible fourth orgasm, pulling her with them

into joyous rapture while she milked every drop of seed from their mighty shafts.

If she were a good Belle Amity disciple she would feel guilty about enjoying so much forbidden sensual delight with two warriors. But, she felt too exquisitely loved to leave any room for regrets.

She belonged to both men. And for this brief span of time, both glorious Enyo warriors belonged to her.

Life was short and the future always uncertain.

She savored a rare and perfect now where she was surrounded by love and passion. For the moment she ignored the fact that, according to the brothers, nearly all of Enyo's warriors were starved for a woman's touch.

It was her good fortune to fall into the arms of two incredibly handsome, powerful, and potent lovers. It would be even nicer, if she'd been chosen by them. But, the men of this planet had no mating options.

As incredible as it seemed to her, she believed Dexon's explanation that Kelvar and he were ineligible for breeding. Because they produced male sperm.

The very sperm Earth needed so desperately.

If only she had a way to bridge the needs of the two worlds. Snuggled between her men, she let go of her troublesome thoughts, drifting into a never imagined reality where two noble, wonderful, and entirely irresistible men worshipped her body.

Dear Goddess, her body! Adored.

It wasn't as if she'd never been praised. Her skill with weapons and hand to hand combat were widely acknowledged within the sisterhood. But, her body? Never.

Perhaps, if the Goddess smiled, she would be granted a child. A gift beyond her dreams.

Intimately tucked between her lovers, a lifetime of regrets melted away in the heat of their embrace. Dalila joined the brothers in a peaceful nap.

None of them noticed the miniature remote viewer that hovered over their sleeping bodies, broadcasting images back to its controller.

Enyo, Day three after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

After a playful, erotic shower, Kelvar dried Dalila's wet body with loving attention to detail. While he was occupied with this self-appointed duty, Dexon worked a wooden comb carefully through her freshly washed hair.

There was a new lightness between him and his twin as well as with the small breeder standing between them. Reluctantly, Kelvar tucked a fresh towel around her slim form covering her distracting breasts with their hard berry tips. Then he fastened a clean sarong around his hips, stealthily omitting the confining under layer.

Dexon grinned at him, and then copied his clothing choice, knotting the side of own brief garment. "Why don't you two set out the fruit? I'll get the drinks from the replicator."

The most mundane chores were a pleasure with a woman's company. This woman's company. Kelvar thought about all the times he'd designed a lady of light. She'd been small and slender but not nearly as beautiful as the little breeder nestled against him. Now, he couldn't imagine being with another female. No one else could ever replace Dalila.

When her neck curved in graceful concentration, arranging their breakfast fruit, he brushed a kiss along the achingly beautiful line. She turned easily into his arms, her lips meeting his in a welcoming kiss sweeter and more intoxicating than any wine. His cock had swollen and he was achingly aware that only her towel and his sarong separated them. Neither material presented any challenge to full possession of her sweet body.

But, she needed food and drink and rest. He had a sacred duty to protect her--even from himself. Correction, especially from himself.

He moved to release her, wishing for hours alone with her instead of stolen moments. Intending to pull away, he was caught by her soft hand. It was impossible to resist her. She pulled his willing fingers into the damp folds between her legs where she was slippery with arousal, begging for his caresses. Gently, he teased the pearl of her desire, grazing the center of her need with each lazy pass. Soon, she shivered in his arms as ecstasy shook her.

All the while he wanted to replace his hand with his mouth, or better yet--his shaft. Recognizing with a pang of intense longing that constricted his chest, he would always want more. He would never be satiated. Never tire of her. Never get enough of this small breeder.

Tenderly he soothed her with long, slow, calming touches on her arms, her sides, and her back until she was in control.

"You unravel me with a glance," she murmured meeting his eyes for a long moment before Dexon emerged from the hovercraft weighed down with a heavy food pod.

Quickly, Kelvar intercepted his brother, relieving him of the awkward container. Letting him keep the smaller bundle.

Dexon moved ahead and Kelvar deliberately slowed his pace, to allow his twin to greet Dalila. He wasn't jealous, exactly. Though, there were times when he longed to have her to himself. To have the luxury of time and privacy to unravel her over and over again.

Did he want her all to himself? Hell, yes. And in part, no. Sharing her with Dexon had been incredible. But, his preferences mattered little since it was not his choice. She was of Enyo now. She chose who she wanted.

While Kelvar hung back, watching, his twin accepted Dalila's enthusiastic kiss of greeting, and then presented her with a longer length of brightly printed cloth. Her delectable mouth curved into a smile of delight. She traded her towel for the fabric, winding it over her feminine curves.

She brushed another kiss across Dexon's lips. "It's lovely, I adore it."

"I could tie it more securely for you," his twin said hopefully.

Dalila turned to him, the corners of her mouth quirking with the effort of not laughing. "Maybe later."

Setting the thermal pod on the table, Kelvar opened the container, and then began to distribute the contents, feeling truly envious of his brother as the feast mounded in front of Dalila.

Her eyes grew wider and brighter with each delicacy offered.

Her enthusiasm did not carry over to eating the large quantities of food Dexon and he routinely consumed. She nibbled on fruit, tasted the rich casserole, and passed altogether on the pastries arrayed to tempt the most jaded appetite.

Dexon coaxed her to accept another bite of the spicy egg and sausage dish. "You haven't eaten anything. Is there something else you would rather have?"

She answered him with laughter in her dark eyes. "No, everything is delicious but I'm not a big muscle bound warrior. I don't require much food."

"I never thought of that. We don't know much about women. However, we're willing to learn aren't we Kelvar?" His twin winked at him.

His own lips quirked into a grin. Genuinely happy with his twin's good mood and hopelessly enchanted by Dalila.

Then without warning, a hologram materialized in front of their breakfast table, facing

the three of them.

The opaque image was of an ancient warrior, bent, and frail from great age. But, the voice was strong and thunderous. "The Earth woman's craft is confiscated by the council of Enyo's Elders. The woman has one week to choose which of you she claims as mate. The other warrior will pay the prescribed penalty for contact with an unattached female. That is all. The council has spoken."

He had not yet fully absorbed the announcement when Dalila's ship rose in a steady climb to the clouds, picking up speed as it ascended, the vessel vanished within seconds.

Dalila spoke first, visibly paler. She sliced right to the heart of the matter. "Did he say I have one week to make a choice?"

Standing, Dexon began to clear the remains of their meal. "Yes, that is what he said and on Enyo the week is only three days long."

"Three days?" Dalila started to rise, and then sank back down.

The hand she'd laid on the table trembled before she tucked it out of sight.

Kelvar couldn't ignore her distress. He gathered her into his lap enfolding her with his strength, and then he rocked her like a babe. Meeting Dexon's eyes over her head he telegraphed a silent message to stop any further discussion.

One of them would be her mate. The other would pay for their happiness with his life.

As much as he wanted her, Kelvar's chest ached. Of the two of them, Dexon had always been much more tender-hearted. If Dalila chose him, would his twin be able to bear the guilt? Would he? Shutting his eyes, he tried to ignore the question. But, the edict remained whether or not he wanted to think about it.

Fairness demanded that he and Dexon allow her to make her choice without the added pressure of knowing that the loser would die.

"I will take today with Dalila. You take tomorrow," he said. Turning to her, he added firmly. "And the third day you must choose."

* * * *

Though, she couldn't read Kelvar's well-hidden feelings, he issued his orders in the rich voice that made her yearn for his touch even when he was acting like a complete warrior.

Dexon continued repacking the food pod, his shoulders as bent as if he were being scourged. "I guess."

Pushing off Kelvar's lap, Dalila stiffened her spine in order to stretch to her full height. She compelled their attention with her gaze and her voice. "You both forget yourselves. I make the rules and I don't want either of you," she lied with conviction, knowing that it should be the truth. "I came to Enyo with a sacred mission for the Society of Belle Amity of which, I am an unworthy disciple. Your council's ruling changes nothing. I need sperm and a spacecraft capable of intergalactic travel to make the journey home."

"Your ship is confiscated, little breeder. You will never leave Enyo," Kelvar said with more gentleness than she'd ever heard from him.

Dexon met her gaze, his eyes bright with unshed tears. "He speaks the truth, Dalila. I'm sorry for your people."

She shook off the sadness that welled inside her at their conviction. "I have to try."

Without any further warning, she sprinted for the hovercraft.

They were big and strong but she was much quicker, sliding into their ship a few paces ahead of Kelvar. Closing the hatch behind her, she moved fast. Determined to leave before her courage failed, she strapped herself into the pilot's seat.

As she committed her first act of piracy, she instructed the ship's computer. "Start engines and plot a course for the nearest city."

Nothing happened. She tried again, and then again.

Releasing her safety harness, she prowled through the vessel's cabin, looking for a way to override the computer's lockdown. Finally, pounding on the helm's console until her fists throbbed. And then, she surrendered to the deep sobs that racked her. She should've abandoned them when she'd had the chance and made her way to the population center to negotiate with their government.

Instead, she'd chosen to nurse Dexon responding to his need, and then she'd allowed herself to be distracted by Kelvar's drugging kisses. Even more unforgivable, she'd been seduced by the hunger she heard in their voices, saw in their gazes, and felt in their touches.

She'd failed the sisterhood.

Worse, she'd failed herself. Even worse than that, a tiny part of her was glad that she couldn't leave the warriors. She cried harder, letting the tears wash away her shame and guilt while she sought for some way out of her dilemma. At last, she conceded defeat.

Trembling with fatigue, she stood.

Cowering in the hovercraft did nothing to repair her tattered honor or solve her current problem. She stretched her backbone to its full length. Their council had given her an ultimatum. Now, it was up to her to make the best possible choice.

A new wave of despair threatened to engulf her. How could she choose between the two warriors when both men had already captured her heart?

She opened the hatch, and then stepped out of the craft. Right into the seductive trap of Kelvar's waiting arms.

* * * *

Petting her gently, Kelvar forced her chin up, and then examined her face. "You cried." She met his gaze squarely. "I never cry. I tried to steal your ship. You should be angry."

"You don't understand, little breeder. All that I possess, I would lay at your feet."

"The ship wouldn't start," she admitted wearily.

So she had tried to leave. He'd known it. But, hearing it from her lips still hurt.

He tucked the tiny warrior closer to his body, inhaling her special womanly scent. "Then the council must have put a lock on the engines. I swear to you it was nothing Dexon or I did."

Dalila burrowed into his chest. "I believe you. But, I'm still unable to fulfill my mission and now I have to pick one of you for my mate."

Her words stung. And yet, she sounded so forlorn, he longed to comfort her.

Though the idea of her rejecting both of them chilled his very bones, the words had to be said. The warrior's code did not allow him to deceive her. Even by omission. His conscience prickled that he had not told her about all of the consequences of her choice.

He steeled his heart against the craven urge to beg her to choose him. Telling her a partial truth instead. "You are free to choose neither of us."

Death was nothing to a warrior, less than nothing. Losing Dalila would make his death a welcome release. Far preferable to spending a lifetime thirsting for her touch and knowing she was Dexon's woman.

If the gods granted him the strength, he would end his life, saving her the pain of choosing. If his nerve failed, when the time came, then he would have to hand her to his brother. Walking away from everything that made life worth living.

One day. He had only this one day to give her a lifetime of passion and devotion. Let the Gods soften her heart, granting him this moment of time.

Gently he pulled her away from his body so that he could look at her. "Will you spend this day with me?"

He held his breath waiting for her answer. His heart raced like a ship breaking free of the planet's mass.

Dalila stroked his arm, and then sighed. "Yes. But, I'm not giving up."

Her determination didn't surprise him. In time, she would come to accept the futility of rebellion. The laws of Enyo were for the good of all and could not be defied. But, he had no interest in discussing government with her right now.

"Come," he held out his hand. When she took it, with an expression of total trust, in his heart he silently pledged himself to her with every bit as much love and commitment as if they had been legally bonded.

When they got back to the beach house, Dexon had left. As Kelvar had known he would, giving him the time alone with Dalila that he craved. His first instinct was to plow into her softness full-tilt. But, he wanted more. And most of all he wanted her with him--as aroused, as committed, as much in love with him as he was with her.

He stopped in the main room, framing her face with one hand. And then he brushed his lips softly across hers. Hardly even a kiss. And yet, the sweetness of her stole his breath.

Dalila softened her mouth, inviting his conquest. Still, he tasted her carefully, treating her like the rare delicacy she was. He made a thorough exploration with his tongue. She sucked on his tender probe and his control shredded.

Yanking off his sarong and shoving hers out of the way he picked her up. Holding her slight weight easily, panting with his need, he made himself pause. He'd intended to get her consent. But then, she wrapped her legs around his hips. Hot wet feminine folds rubbed against his shaft and he was lost.

Placing his erection at her entrance, she urged him in, pressing her heels into his backside. He staggered toward the bedroom, but each step jiggled her softness against his hardness, until his climax was a breath away. He made it to the wall, positioning her back against the woven grass covered structure and plunged into her to his root. Grinding against her in a desperate effort to give her pleasure.

"Don't stop," she huffed.

If he'd been capable of coherent speech, he would've explained he didn't dare attempt another stroke. His balls tightened, sending an electric jolt of rapture to the base of his spine.

He was out of time.

With a mighty effort, he continued to grind against her, grunting as his seed spurted so deep inside her that he was pressing against the mouth of her breeding chamber.

Shuddering in his arms, her legs clenched his hips, and her sheath tightened around his cock. And then, she screamed his name as the ultimate pleasure shimmied through her.

Damn, he'd meant to go slow.

Almost immediately, he hardened again. This time he ignored his eager erection, carrying Dalila all the way to the bed, and then gently laying her on top of the covers.

She smoothed her sarong back into place. "Where's Dexon?"

"Probably, resting in the hovercraft."

"Oh."

Was it disappointment he heard in her voice?

He spoke gruffly to hide his jealousy. "You'll be with him tomorrow."

She nodded, agreeing with him. "Right."

Because jealousy sank its claws into his heart he had to ask. "Do you miss him?"

"A little," she gave an embarrassed laugh. "If you weren't here I'd miss you. I care about both of you."

Her admission didn't bother him nearly as much as it should. Maybe if it had been anyone other than Dexon.... But, because his twin was so much a part of him, it was hard to resent him even for owning part of Dalila's heart.

"Tonight, you're mine," he told her firmly.

Putting aside the erotic images of loving her with Dexon. He wanted her exclusively, and at the same time, he wanted to share her. The bond between the three of them had been satisfying to him in ways he'd never suspected. Somehow, loving Dalila together had strengthened the special connection between him and his twin.

He shook his head at his own foolishness. How could one man hold such conflicting desires? He entered the bathroom, and then ran cool water, filling a glass to quench her thirst. After squirting herbal wash into a small basin, he added tepid water, and a soft cloth to bathe her tender tissues, newly determined to lavish her with pleasure until she was completely satiated.

It took him two trips to arrange her drink and all of the bathing things. When he returned, she drowsed on the big bed curled on her side, like a youngling.

Careful not to wake her, he watched over her, memorizing her. Dark hair, glossy and silken to the touch, flowed across the bright bedding, a vaguely floral pattern in the vivid colors of a tropical sunset highlighted Dalila's pale skin, which glowed over her curves like moonlight gilding beach dunes.

He shook his head again, chagrined by the poetic turn of his thoughts. And yet, at the same time wishing he had the true gift of poetry to enchant her. As he cursed his rough manners, she stretched and smiled at him as if he'd showered her with priceless gifts.

She reached for the glass he still held. "For me?"

Handing it over, he grunted. "So beautiful."

Her smile widened. Then she set down the glass and reached for the damp cleansing cloth and fresh towel he carried.

"Let me," he muttered, pleading for the favor.

Dalila picked up her glass and took another long swallow. Her hand trembled as she put it down again.

Finally she responded to his plea. "You want to take care of me?"

The surprise in her tone rocked him. "Caring for his mate is the duty of a warrior."

Her smile faded from her eyes and he cursed his clumsy tongue. He tried again. "The caring is a sacred, honored duty."

"This care taking is something you like to do?"

His head bowed. "I have only dreamed of it."

"Then you should experience the reality," she said gravely.

A hint of the smile he loved so much gleamed in her eyes as she studied him, waiting for him to begin.

The only thing he was sure of was that he wanted to make this perfect for her. He had no training in the pleasure arts to guide him. No experience with pleasing a real woman to hint at the right way to show her everything he felt. All he had were the senses that gods had granted him, the miracle of a willing woman, and an aching need to give her the love she deserved.

He began with her face, bathing her brow tenderly with the cloth he'd dampened with the soothing herbal infusion. Working his way down her body, he maintained a lazy pace that allowed for thorough attention to every single section.

Appreciating the marvel of her skin in a way he'd never done. The fine hairs on her neck and shoulders stiffened and quivered at his caresses. The silken smoothness of her arms and breasts pebbled as he skimmed them with the damp cloth. And then rubbed them to tingling dryness with the towel. Indulging himself in a kiss or a nibble as he worked.

She sighed, she shifted, and she undulated like a cat, responding to his touch in a hundred ways. The faint fragrance of the herbal wash only enhanced the wondrous scents that belong to Dalila. The fruity sweetness of her mouth, the honey that seemed to cling to her breasts, the musky sugar between her legs. He inhaled each part of her, savoring the aphrodisiac of his woman's body.

No matter who she chose, she would always be his woman. His mate. His love.

Chapter Five

Enyo, Day four after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

Reluctantly, Kelvar moved away from her sensitive breasts to her torso. Delicate abdominal muscles shimmied as he trailed the wet cloth down to her navel and stopped to dip in, and then circled his tongue for a taste of the sweetness waiting there. He lowered his sights. Entranced by the satin texture of the skin stretched taut over fragile hip bones and curving into the hollow above her feminine mound. He laved the cloth over the flare of hips and down her slender thighs. Teasing them both by ignoring the mysteries under her feminine curls.

Her legs shifted, restless, betraying her disappointment and he settled a wet kiss of apology on her knee as he proceeded on his preset course of exploration, disregarding her whimpered protest.

Moving at his own leisurely pace, he washed her feet, legs, and back, drying them thoroughly before emptying the basin, filling it with fresh water, and arming himself with another set of linens before returning to her side. He arranged his fresh ammunition carefully.

"I forgot a section," he growled.

Her dark eyes glittered dangerously. "You certainly did."

Deliberately he raised her hips, spreading a towel under them. Wetting his washcloth, he gently parted her outer lips and began cleansing her delicate folds, enjoying all the sights, the scents, and the sounds of her growing arousal.

"I've never been quite this clean," she said in a voice grown tight and breathy.

"Maybe you need to be messed up again," he purred, sampling the glistening essence coating her delicate tissues.

She moaned, a low throat-catching sound, ratcheting his desire. But, making him even more determined to bring her to ecstasy. He needed to taste her excitement, to learn the flavor of her fulfillment.

Letting her reactions guide him, he tasted her entrance. Swirling in as deeply as possible, he lapped up the honey of her passion. Next, he licked his way to the hard nub at the peak of her folds, alternately circling and flicking the pearl with the stiffened point of his tongue.

Her moans turned hoarser and more urgent, her hips tipping to give him better access. He worked one callused finger inside her core, teasing the rigid spot he found there with his coarse pad. At the same time, he increased the tempo and pressure on the tiny outer nubbin with his tongue. She bucked against his mouth with more strength than he'd expected. Holding her fast, she went rigid in his embrace. Finally, her whole body shuddered, her inner muscles clenching around him in wondrous release.

He soothed her with tender, slow strokes until all quivering stopped and she'd relaxed completely. "You are a miracle of beauty, little breeder."

Dalila pushed herself to a sitting position, laughing with heart-lifting joy. "Your touch is the miracle. It's well that the sisterhood doesn't know about the pleasures of lovemaking."

He grinned at her, painfully aroused and hopelessly enchanted. "Why?"

"Because then I'd have to fight them all to do this." She fisted her soft fingers around his

hard shaft.

And then she was sucking the crown into the wet heat of her mouth. Thought became impossible. His only option was to spread his legs, tilt his hips, and watch as she tormented him. Too soon, the combination of her wanton mouth and clever hands had him spurting his seed deep in her throat.

She licked the last drops from his crown with a sigh that made his cock stir back to attention. That mindless part of him as eager to please her as the rest of him. Though, he would have to avoid the delights of her mouth if he wanted his babe swelling her hollow belly. And he did. More than he could have imagined.

With this worthy goal in mind, he began a new sensual assault.

"I already love you," she sighed as if that would accelerate his leisurely reconnaissance.

Immensely pleased by her admission, he released the toes he'd been sucking. "Why do you love me?"

"Fishing for compliments?" she teased.

"Maybe," he shrugged and went back to nibbling her round pink toes.

"Not because of that, though.... Oh my. Holy Goddess. Don't stop," she paused to catch her breath, her eyes glazed by pleasure. "Where was I? Ah, I remember. It is definitely not because you're determined to kill me with ecstasy."

Kelvar released her toes, kneading her instep and waiting for her to continue.

"I love you for your strength, your courage, your honor, and your tender heart."

He tried to protest but she leaned forward, silencing him with a finger to his lips.

"You hide it well, but it shines in your eyes whenever you look at Dexon or me"

"I've shown you nothing of my honor," he said, genuinely believing his words.

"Everything you do shows me your honor. Even your plan to sacrifice yourself to allow Dexon and me to bond."

His hand stilled. He clamped his jaw to keep from gaping at her. She was guessing. She had to be. There way no way for her to know.

"I won't stand for it," she said mildly.

He scrambled for a credible denial. Then she leaned closer still, taking his mouth in an erotic assault of lips and teeth and tongue. A soft hand snaked into his hair, massaging his scalp. By the Gods, it felt good. His cock grew longer and harder. Her slim fingers pressed deep into the side of his neck.

A pinch, a tingle, and then consciousness slid away before he could protest.

* * * *

It was all over in second.

The mighty Kelvar lost consciousness in less than a heartbeat. It had been sneaky to distract him with a kiss. Dalila shrugged away the regret. He was at least twice her size. A woman did what had to be done.

She struggled to move him into a comfortable position, finally managing to straighten his limbs and tuck a pillow under his neck.

Once confident she'd made him comfortable, she took the time to comb and coil her long hair before retying her sarong. She checked on Kelvar, who rested peacefully. She considered restraining him, but didn't want to destroy her pretty sarong or sacrifice the bed linens. There was nothing else suitable for binding in the beach house. She would have to move fast. Very fast.

Sprinting to the hovercraft, which had been parked a discreet distance down the beach,

she leapt onto its deck and pounded on the hatch.

Within seconds the door slid open and Dexon peered at her. "What's wrong?"

She pushed past him into the ship. "Do you have any rope?"

"Of course," he raised an eyebrow in a silent question.

But, thankfully he sorted through compartments until he emerged with a useful length of sturdy line.

"Great, bring it along." She hurried out of the craft, racing back to the beach house without waiting to see if he followed.

"Dalila?" he called from the great room.

"In here," she answered.

Sensing his presence in the doorway, she held out a hand for the rope. After a second of hesitation, he gave it to her. Regretting the necessity, she immediately began securing Kelvar to the heavy bed frame.

"What's going on?" Dexon asked, shifting uneasily.

"We're saving your brother's life."

Dexon moved again, plainly not totally satisfied with her brief explanation. But, not stopping her either. She didn't have time to deal with his doubts, handing him a length of line, she instructed him calmly, infusing her voice with command. "Here, use this to secure his feet."

Making no move to follow her orders, he set down the rope.

"Why isn't he moving?" he asked worriedly.

After tying Kelvar's other wrist, she sat back, silently cursing her failure to master the art of mind control.

Then she shrugged modestly. "I rendered him unconscious."

"How?" Dexon asked, skeptically.

"Nerve induction. Maybe I'll teach it to you someday. But, first we have to figure out how to keep both of you alive."

Dexon shot her a look of patent disbelief. If the situation had been any less lethally dangerous, she would have laughed aloud at his slack jaw.

"You knocked out my brother?"

"Yes. And I'll do the same thing to you if you get in my way," she said fiercely.

Dexon seemed to consider her threat seriously before he spoke. "Tell me why you believe Kelvar is in danger."

Checking to be certain that Kelvar still rested peacefully, she settled herself on the bed next to the unconscious warrior.

Then she explained more fully. "I'm not a fool. The hologram messenger strongly implied the brother I didn't choose would die. Since I'm in love with you, I should choose you. Except, that would mean Kelvar would die. And that is completely out of the question. Because I love him too. Your brother recognized my dilemma so he planned to eliminate the need to choose by taking his own life. I couldn't stand by and do nothing. You see that, don't you?"

Dexon crossed his arms and frowned at her, looking every centimeter the intimidating warrior. And this, she reminded herself, was the reasonable brother.

"You have to choose," he explained patiently. "Imagine what would happen if more than one warrior was allowed to mate with a breeder. Men outnumber women by the thousands. Without the laws protecting them, the breeders would be fucked to death."

Dalila fought to control a surge of anger, wishing she could compel his cooperation rather than trying to explain her logic.

"You're wrong. I don't have to choose," she snapped at him.

And then she softened her tone. "When the rules of the game don't allow you to win then what you have to do is change the rules."

He shook his head sadly. "The laws of Enyo can not be changed. The council has spoken. You have three days to choose."

"What happens if I refuse?" she demanded.

"Then Kelvar and I both die." He met her gaze, his dark eyes glazed with unutterable pain for a few seconds before he turned away.

His words iced her blood. But then, she straightened her spine. She wasn't wrong about this. Though she needed to convince Kelvar, Dexon, and the council. In that order. There was no doubt she faced a daunting task.

"What do the mighty warriors of Enyo need most?" she asked.

Dexon's shoulders stiffened, but he didn't look at her. "Nothing."

"Ah, but you are wrong. There is something you need. Enyo needs women. Lots of women," she corrected him with sweet patience.

He stiffened even more, making it clear she'd offended his precious warrior pride again. "Our scientists will correct the gender imbalance within a few generations."

Dalila shrugged carelessly, an easy gesture. Because, she truly was unworried about his posturing. Neither he nor Kelvar would ever hurt her. She was willing to stake her life on it.

"Perhaps so. But that leaves a few generations of frustrated and unhappy men. Why should so many suffer? When I can bring thousands of women to Enyo. Women eager to breed," she said calmly.

Then she held her breath waiting for his reaction.

His face lit up like a super nova at the prospect and her selfish heart sank. She would lose both of them if the buxom beauties from Earth arrived.

But at least, they would both be alive.

"Don't you see, it's the perfect solution to everyone's problems," she explained, using her voice and her gaze to compel Dexon's agreement. Determined to make this work.

Now, if she could convince Kelvar and the council then her only problem would be delivering the promised Earth women.

Surely, the sisterhood would be willing to compromise. The round trip to Earth, after her ship was repaired, would take twenty five years. She'd be in stasis for most of that time, which meant she would be virtually the same age. But, Kelvar and Dexon would live through every day of the intervening years. A quarter of century was a long time to wait for any woman.

She didn't have a better idea, so she would just have to take her chances. At least, this way she guaranteed that both Kelvar and Dexon survived. The sisterhood would get the sperm they needed and the warriors of Enyo would have women to breed with. Compared with all that, one woman's broken heart didn't count for much.

* * * *

With an irritated jerk of his head, Dexon tore his eyes away from her. The woman must be part witch. And all pure seductive sin. He adored her. If there had been anyway for him to be with her that didn't include his brother's death he would've jumped on it.

Unfortunately, Kelvar's death was too high a price to pay. Even when the prize was Dalila. Besides, she loved his brother. She would never be content without Kelvar any more than he would.

"Tomorrow was supposed to be my day," he said, the words slipped from his lips without

permission. More humiliating, regret tinged the admission, making him sound like a weakling.

Dalila moved closer and began massaging his shoulders. "You're here now."

The sensation was relaxing and erotic at the same time. It took all his strength to push himself out of her reach.

"What's wrong?" she asked. Her voice was rich and thick with notes that made him eager to please her.

A glance at his unconscious twin firmed his resolve.

"I'd like to stay awake for the rest of our little talk," he said dryly.

She laughed, a rich, musical sound that wrapped around him like the smoke from a dream inducing ceremonial pipe, sapping his will.

He shook off her spell. "Stop playing with me. I'm listening to you. I want to find a way out of this mess too. But it's not going to happen if you keep trying to manipulate me."

He'd spoken harshly. She stepped back from his accusation, making him feel like a cruel and clumsy youngling.

However, the hurt vanished so fast he wondered if he'd imagined the pain he'd seen in her expression.

Now her pretty eyes glinted with sparks of temper and her stubborn chin lifted aggressively. "I am not going to apologize for trying to keep you two alive. I am going to do whatever it takes."

"And I will help you," he said, dropping his voice to qualify his promise. "If I can."

She narrowed her eyes at him. "I heard that."

Ignoring her censorious look, he sought answers to their problem. "How long did the trip from Earth take you?"

Her belligerent chin lowered. "What's that got to do with anything?"

"Humor me."

Shrugging, she answered. "Twelve years."

"Not exactly a quick fix."

"Better than generations," she countered.

"True," he admitted. "However, convincing the council will be a whole other matter. And even if you can get them to listen and agree to your plans there's still no reason for them to reverse the ruling on us."

"When we offer them the solution to Enyo's shortage of women then they will grant our petition for an exception to the mating rules. That's how politics work," she said with more hope than logic.

"You don't understand. The council has never revisited an edict."

Her mouth tightened into a stubborn line. "I have to try."

An old warrior saying came to him. *When faced with an entrenched enemy, adopt new tactics.* Perhaps, his brother could talk sense to her.

"Tell me why you had to restrain Kelvar," he said mildly.

Dalila sighed. "I was afraid he wouldn't be as reasonable as you."

"Damn right," Kelvar growled from his position on the bed.

"I'm not going to let you kill yourself." Dalila jumped to her feet, and then crossed her arms in an implacable gesture that reminded Dexon of his twin.

Kelvar glared at her. "Untie me, woman."

"Give me your word that you will not harm yourself in anyway and I will," Dalila stood her ground.

To Dexon's amazement, his brother stopped straining against his bonds.

"You would trust my word?" Kelvar asked.

Dalila and Kelvar stared at each other for a long moment, communicating silently.

Finally, apparently satisfied, she began untying him.

"I trust you with my life," she promised gravely.

While the two of them argued about honor, and which one of them loved the other more, Dexon gnawed on the problem of convincing the council to listen to Dalila.

A flash of movement outside yanked him away from his thoughts.

A large shuttlecraft settled neatly on the beach. It didn't resemble any Enyo vessel he'd ever seen. Besides, it was too soon for the council to arrive.

"What the fuck?" Dexon muttered to no one in particular.

A large bay door opened and an army began to emerge. He recognized their uniforms--they were the same as the one Dalila had worn--with a premonition of disaster.

A slender woman aimed the business end of a blaster at him. "Step away from our disciple, warriors."

He'd had no intention of leaving his woman to face the army alone. However, he felt the mindless compulsion to obey taking control of his body, recognizing that Dalila had used the same technique on him.

Too late, he realized that Dalila's mastery of the mysterious art was slight compared to the skill of the soldier, who now commanded him. His muscles strained with the effort to defy her. He lost the battle, moving helplessly away from his mate.

"Stop," Dalila demanded, crossing to stand in front of him. Shielding him with her small body. "This man is my chosen mate."

"What of him?" the woman with the blaster asked suspiciously, gesturing with her weapon toward a glowering Kelvar.

Dalila trembled, yet when she spoke her words were strong and steady. "Do not harm him. He too is my chosen mate."

His mate, how he loved the sound of that. She had claimed him and Kelvar publicly. Yet, his gut knotted with fear for her. Would her strategy work?

The commander did not lower her weapon. "You have no right to choose one mate, let alone two, disciple. You are unfit."

Dalila flinched at the flat words as if she'd been hit by a stun-blast.

Dexon ached for her.

Kelvar growled.

Both he and his twin strained against the force holding them, wanting to move closer to their mate. However, their woman was only wounded, not defeated.

Dalila's dark eyes flashed with temper and her spine straightened. "This is Enyo, not Earth. Here women are rare and prized. Any fertile female has her choice of warriors."

"You dare to defy the will of the sisterhood?" The female soldier questioned her in a voice rich with undertones of lethal menace.

"I do," Dalila said with convincing calmness.

"We will delay judgment, pending your examination."

The commander signaled for a squad of her soldiers to escort Dalila.

When Kelvar and he were released from their invisible bonds, they tried to follow.

A newly installed force field stopped them cold.

* * * *

Dalila was escorted to a single unfurnished compartment. When her guards left, the door closed. A lock tumbled into place, clicking with ominous finality.

She tried the handle, which only confirmed her first impression. The opening mechanism had been disabled. After several attempts to override the locking device, she let it go. But just until she thought of something else to try, she assured herself. Absolutely determined to keep a positive attitude.

Pacing her new quarters did little to dispel her anxiety or relieve her frustration. The plain metal walls, ceiling and door offered no distractions from her captivity. A round of prone body lifts, followed by a full session of old fashioned crunches, eased her tension only marginally. Forcing herself to stillness, she settled crossed-legged on the metal floor. By concentrating on controlling her breaths, and walling off all thoughts of Kelvar and Dexon, she tapped into the center of calm within herself.

"Good, I see you decided to use your time well," Joon said, destroying her moment of fragile serenity.

The commander, a sister Dalila knew nothing about, had entered the tiny chamber so quietly that she'd started at her voice.

Deliberately, she met the other woman's gaze, willing herself to stay centered.

The Belle Amity officer smiled. "There is hope for you, disciple."

Nodding curtly, to acknowledge the compliment, Dalila schooled herself to patient indifference and simply waited.

"I am Commander Joon sent from Earth to...help accomplish your vital mission. The sisterhood has made many advances in the time you've been away, including hyper-light drives. However, sperm reproduction eludes us. We have much to accomplish and little time in which to do it." She paused, offering Dalila a chance to ask questions.

Not trusting her tentative hold on composure, she forfeited the opportunity to get answers she wouldn't like anyway.

"I will examine you now," Joon said her voice thickening with the force of the sisterhood's united will.

Fighting the need to obey, Dalila managed one question. "How did you find me?"

Joon considered for a few seconds before speaking. "There is no harm in my imparting this information. You carry a microchip tracking device under the skin close to your left shoulder blade," she said then her tone changed, eliminating Dalila's will to resist. "You will permit my examination, disciple."

The commander's hands held her head still, while thin fingers, cool and light, moved over Dalila's eyes.

Total blackness descended, robbing her of all sensory input.

And then she fell.

Fear rippled through her as she tumbled into space. She fought for serenity and grasped the edge of sanity and held on tight.

The freefall ended.

She stood, heart racing and fighting for breath, in an idyllic tropical glade. A small waterfall cascaded into a clear pool, thick moss, lush ferns, and her favorite vanilla orchids, along with many plant species she didn't know, grew in profusion. Sunshine filtered through the jungle canopy warming her. The sound of falling water soothed her spirit.

Then she heard Kelvar's deep masculine chuckle. She turned toward the sound, poised to fly into his arms. An Earth woman laughed up at him, held close in his embrace. Dalila took a

shaky step back into the dense growth of the jungle.

More laughter turned her gaze to the opposite side of the glade. Scanning for the source of the noise with dread, she saw Dexon and a tall blonde sister step into the clearing. Their fingers locked together in familiar intimacy. His woman was very pregnant.

Silent tears slipped down Dalila's cheeks, unnoticed as her heart squeezed with pain.

Joon appeared next to her in the small glade. "They can not see or hear you. I brought you here to show you one possible future for your warriors. Would you wish them happy?"

"I--yes," she choked out. She sensed a test in the commander's words. But, given the choice of death of at least one twin or health and happiness for both of her men--even with other mates--then she chose life for them.

Commander Joon held out her hand and Dalila grasped it. "I shall consider your wishes after I've examined these men."

The distain in her voice when she pronounced the word 'men' punctured the last of Dalila's fragile hopes.

Had she given them up for nothing?

There was precious little time for brooding. Joon touched her temples and the total blackout of her senses recurred--all except for the terrible, helpless, sensation of falling. A scream bubbled in her throat. But, without hearing, she couldn't tell if the sound had escaped.

She came to on the hard floor of the sterile compartment. Once again, back on the collective's shuttlecraft.

Sister Joon stood very close, watching her impassively. "A cruel but, necessary test. Your mind is strong and your heart pure. You have no reason for regrets. You chose wisely. The society requires all of your strength, skill, and cunning. Are you ready to serve, disciple?"

Hesitating for only the fraction of a second it took her to shove past the sorrow overwhelming her, Dalila answered. "I am yours to command."

"Good, see to it that you remember your duty in the future." Commander Joon made the sign of the Goddess over her before stepping through the open portal.

Dalila sank to the cold floor. At last, she let the tears, which had been clogging her throat, flow.

When her sobs receded, she rose. Her muscles trembled from the effort. It felt as if she'd aged decades in the space of a few hours. She tried the door, but again it resisted all her attempts to open it. Forced to accept defeat, for now. She sank back to the ground and tried to find the elusive peace inside her heart.

The serenity she'd battled to win earlier eluded all her efforts to recapture it. At last, she gave in and simply sat, letting her thoughts roam.

She had wanted to save Kelvar and Dexon at any cost. It was ungrateful to cry over the price the sisterhood demanded. She'd failed to accomplish the specifics of her mission. But, she had found a source of sperm.

Now, the lovely breeders had arrived to harvest it.

Images from her mates' happy future threatened the thin comfort she wove around her raw feelings. She stared at the unadorned metal wall, willing herself to a place of detachment.

After an endless stretch of time, a measure of calm returned, easing the sharp, pounding pain of losing her lovers.

Then the wall she focused on shimmered and seemed to melt. A viewer emerged where there had been nothing but immutable metal before, disconcerting her anew. Unable to resist, she stood, leaning closer, and staring.

Kelvar faced Joon. He dwarfed the commander, who was a full head taller than Dalila. Neither his size, nor his strength, intimidated the sister-soldier.

Dalila prayed to the Goddess to keep him safe. For the first time, the vision from the future offered her comfort. She reminded herself he would live and be happy. Then she remembered the commander's warning that it had been but one possible future and her heart sank to her stomach.

Joon's lips moved but, no sound carried to Dalila. It was easy enough for her to imagine the commander's instructions to the warrior, who had conquered her heart.

Kelvar was held fast, his mighty strength useless. Completely under the woman's spell, he suffered Joon's touch to his temples.

He crumpled to the floor. Dalila stuffed a fist into her mouth to keep from screaming.

Chapter Six

Enyo, Day five after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

A sickening freefall through a featureless void was the only sensation left in Kelvar's universe. He wasn't even sure if he were still alive. There was no awareness of either his heartbeat or his breath. No way to measure the passage of time.

He was a warrior and therefore prepared to die. But, something very much like panic squeezed him where his chest should have been. Was this to be his fate? Imprisoned in a sensory vacuum for all eternity? Left with only his own thoughts for company--surely he would go mad. But, unlike his father, he lacked even the means to take his own life.

When he landed, the ground under his feet was unfamiliar. At first, he cared little about where he was. His legs wobbled like a babe taking his first step. Each breath he took was a miracle. Each beat of his heart a gift from the Gods.

Looking around, he found himself poised atop a rocky outcropping high above an angry sea crashing against the jagged rocks of a hostile shore.

Then he saw the rope at his feet.

The line was pulled taut and badly frayed. Icy fear seeped into his bones even though the sun continued to bake the stone cliff. Forcing himself to look down, he saw Dalila clutching the end of the rope. Her hands oozed blood. She struggled, frantically searching for a foothold on the sheer rock face. He scanned the area for someplace to brace himself. There was nothing. He would have to use his body as a lever. Sitting, he reached for the rope.

"Touch the rope and she dies," Commander Joon said flatly.

Kelvar didn't bother turning to see if the Earth woman was actually there. There was little point when he wasn't even sure that he was there.

His rational mind said it was a test. But the smooth cliff face, the frayed rope, and her wounded hands, recalled the climbing accident that had cost him both parents.

What was the solution to this problem?

Was there a way to save Dalila? Or was he doomed to repeat his father's final act of despair? Should he trust the commander? His thoughts flew and beat as useless as trapped insects. At that moment, he would have given anything for a truth teller.

What kind of monsters were these Earthlings?

His hands curled into impotent fists, trembling with anger and fear. "Then tell me how to save her, woman."

"Walk away from her."

Kelvar stared at Joon, not able to trust her and fearing any choice he made would be the wrong one. Another strand of the worn rope snapped.

Tears blurred his vision as he staggered away from the cliff's edge.

Then the last few strands parted.

Kelvar screamed in rage.

But when he stumbled back to edge, Dalila had disappeared. There was no sign of her broken body on the rocks below.

As he turned to wring answers from the commander, blackness enveloped him. His knees turned to water and he tumbled helplessly into the interminable void.

When he woke, he sat slumped inside the plain metal chamber. Once again, Commander Joon studied him impassively.

"Be at ease, warrior. You chose well. Someone will arrive shortly to escort you back to your dwelling."

He pushed himself upright.

"What of Dalila and Dexon?" he demanded.

"Your twin? Dexon? What strange names you males have. I examine him next. If he survives he will be free to join you."

Kelvar lurched toward her.

She repelled him with a casual gesture. Barely a wriggle of her bony fingers slammed him against the far wall.

He scrambled back to his feet, quickly finding his balance.

"Dalila?" he growled at the witch.

Joon eyed him with icy detachment. "No disciple of the Belle Amity Sisterhood is any concern of yours, warrior."

"She could be carrying my son," he bellowed at her.

"How very fortunate for the collective," she said softly, already moving away from him, taking with her any hope he'd had of staking a claim on the little breeder.

When he opened his mouth to argue, he found himself alone.

True to her word, within minutes a uniformed soldier appeared and invited him to leave the barren cell. Following the guard's directions, he emerged from the ship. A brilliant sunrise signaled the dawn of a new day. The beach house appeared unchanged, waiting to welcome him. The hovercraft was parked where he'd left it. He was free to go where he liked.

But, somewhere in the labyrinth of the space shuttle, Dexon faced whatever hellish test the Earth commander had concocted. And what of Dalila?

Had the scene at the barren cliffs been real or illusion?

To his right, disciples performed martial exercises with impressive skill. One woman, smaller and faster than the rest, grabbed his attention, holding it fast.

Until that moment, he hadn't known if she still lived. He wanted to run to her and scoop her into his arms. But his feet refused to cooperate. They stayed planted to the beach path, waiting for a signal that she would accept him.

As he watched, she flipped a fighting stick with effortless precision. She moved through the drills with an elegance that made all the other disciples appear clumsy in comparison. She didn't acknowledge his presence by as much as a darted glance in his direction. He knew because his eyes burned from staring at her.

His elation at seeing her wavered. If she didn't want him there was no point in gawking at her like a lovesick fool. Truth be told, there was no point in him breathing. Stubbornly, he stayed and stared at her--willing her to look at him.

Not even a flicker of her lashes in his direction. He would've known since he watched her like a love-starved fool. Even when the instructor called for a break and the other disciples formed into small groups, she didn't meet his eyes. She sat alone, her back to a palm tree while she continued to practice with her weapon. He began to doubt his sanity. Was this the woman who'd come apart in his arms? Maybe that had been the dream.

There was no sign of his wanton little breeder visible in the small soldier. She tossed her

fighting stick in a blur of careless expertise. Covering the distance to the house before he realized he'd even moved, he carried a chair out to the veranda, propped his feet on the rail, and then returned to boring a hole into her with his hungry eyes.

He had nothing else to do. Watching Dalila gave him an alternative to worrying about what was happening to his twin.

The sun sank into the sea before the women quit, marching back to the ship in single file. Still he couldn't make himself move. His gaze followed her until she disappeared inside the shuttle craft, and then he stared at the closed bay door.

He was so fixated that he didn't see the figure emerge from the other side of the ship until it was halfway to the beach house.

Dexon moved closer, lurching like an intoxicated youngling.

Kelvar dashed to his brother, anchoring his waist to support him. "By the Gods, what did that witch do to you?"

The harsh laughter that grated from his twin was followed by racking coughs.

Finally, he managed a few words. "Showed me the future."

And then Dexon collapsed.

* * * *

Dexon lost it, helpless to hold back the blackness. The worst part was the nightmare returned, playing over and over again in an endless loop of misery and shame and howling pain.

The horror began the same way every time. First, he was shoved into a small room composed of grey metal. Its only distinguishing features were the barely perceptible seams, outlining the portal in one wall. The nearly invisible door offered the only way in or out of the tight quarters.

Despite the lack of access, the Earthling commander appeared next to him in the solitary cell. "I am Commander Joon, from Earth. I will examine you, warrior. It is pointless to struggle or resist."

She reached out, clutching at him with thin fingers. When he tried to bat her arm away he was unable to move. His limbs looked normal, but they didn't work. It was as if he'd been encased in full body restraints.

Pushing with the full force of his might against whatever held him, he demanded answers. "Where's my brother? Where is Dalila?"

"Your brother awaits your return, having survived my examination. The disciple is not your concern. You have your own journey to make. You must forget her."

Then her scrawny fingers slipped through the barrier surrounding him, pressing into his temples and covering his eyes. He was robbed of all sensation, lost in a void.

When the tumbling stopped, he stood in full battledress on one of New Eden's busy streets. Scanning the area, he recognized the structure straight ahead. Kelvar had a dwelling unit there. He'd visited his brother's unit many times and even stayed there when his twin's duties took him out of town. Like most adult males, they both served the council as active members of the military. Kelvar was in Enyo's Space Corps while he served in the planet's Air Force.

The recollection of Commander Joon and his strange trip had faded into the mists of memory, leaving him slightly disoriented about how and why he was there.

Noticing that his uniform carried a unit commander's insignia, he wondered why he didn't recall getting the longed for promotion. There was no unit key-code on his person, which was unusually careless of him. Nor did he have an access card or identification papers. Not that

anyone was likely to accost a man in full battledress.

His nerves stretched tighter, reacting to an unidentified threat, as he waited for his brother to come home.

Then a woman, cloaked and hooded and flanked by her guard-droids, appeared. She hurried down the busy street. The passing stream of warriors averted their eyes and cleared a respectful path for the small breeder. As she tossed back her hood, a huge smile lit Dalila's face, forming a beacon of warmth and love.

Then Kelvar called to her from behind Dexon. His heart sank into his gut as he realized her smile belonged only to his brother.

Thankfully, neither of them noticed him waiting. Shameful tears lodged in his throat, and though his body was that of full grown man, inside he was still a youngling--the second son.

The one who never quite measured up to his big brother.

While Dexon watched, unable to turn away, Kelvar caught Dalila under her arms, lifting her off the ground and twirling with her. Their love was plain to see even without the intricate tattoo on her left wrist, matching the one on Kelvar's arm. The sign that marked her as his brother's bonded mate.

Helplessly, Dexon drank in Dalila, noting her fuller breasts and rounded belly. Kelvar sat her down carefully, covering the slight bulge with a possessive hand. At the same time, pressing an erection Dexon felt in his own groin, against her bottom.

His shaft strained against his uniform in aching arousal.

And then Dalila met his eyes, a kind smile on her seductive lips.

"A breeder has a duty to choose the best warrior," she said with cutting honesty.

Tears of shame, loss, and inconsolable pain rolled down his cheeks.

She grazed his aching erection with her fingernails. "Such a waste."

Right there on the street, he climaxed. His hot seed staining the front of his uniform. Spreading and spreading and spreading until it had turned his pants transparent. The passing men pointed and laughed at the warrior with the limp cock, shriveled balls, and no control.

Commander Joon arrived, whispering. "You need to stay away from them. Your presence only humiliates them and does you no credit, warrior."

Keenly aware of his shame, Dexon nodded in mute agreement, curling into a ball of misery at her feet. The freefall in the void of space was an improvement over the future the Earth woman had shown him.

When he woke, reality was much worse.

There was no Dalila.

He stumbled toward his brother on uncertain legs.

Enyo, Day five after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

Unable to bear closing his eyes, Dexon hadn't slept. Kelvar had kept him company on the wide porch. They both rested in cushioned chairs. The only perceptible difference was the soft snore from his brother's seat.

Dexon watched the morning sun highlight the waves, listened to the birdsong, and the surf lapping against the beach, smelled the salt water, the loamy richness of the jungle, and felt nothing, save for hopelessness and the stiffness of his own joints.

Moving cautiously, he stretched.

"Kelvar," he called quietly.

His brother bolted upright, instantly alert. "What's wrong?"

"The council's ship arrived."

While Kelvar and he watched, an official ship of state settled on their remote beach.

At the same time, a small corps of disciples moved into the glade. Soon they began their martial arts practice. The Earthling's shuttlecraft remained stationary, serenely reflecting the beauty of daybreak.

Then both ships released their main bay doors in a move that seemed eerily coordinated. Commander Joon emerged at the head of a small delegation.

A Council representative, easily recognized by his white robes and gold cuff decorating his right bicep, led a group of warriors from the Enyo vessel.

The two factions merged into abutting rings. Dexon guessed that each contingent was carefully graduated by rank.

As he stared, Enyo's Councilman and Earth's Commander met in the center.

Dexon's eyes felt as if someone had sandblasted the inner lids. His beard was itchy. He could smell himself and it wasn't pleasant. Still he didn't move from his post on the veranda. Something big was happening.

A protein drink nudged his hand, courtesy of his brother.

Kelvar leaned a hip against the railing. "Did I miss anything?"

"Nope." Dexon took a swallow. "They're still on the formalities."

His twin watched the delegations for a few moments, and then gulped the remainder of his breakfast drink.

"You look like hell," he said mildly. "I probably look worse. You watch the old folks gabbing, I'm taking a shower."

Dexon tilted back in his seat. "Go ahead. I'm staying right here."

Two sister-soldiers accompanied a familiar figure, and then the trio edged inside the Earthling's circle, making their way through the ranks toward the front.

Dexon's heart lifted at his first glimpse of Dalila. He sat his drink on the floor and strode down the beach to crash his first meeting of intergalactic diplomats.

Apparently Kelvar had changed his mind about grooming, because his brother caught up with him before he'd reached the outer ring of warriors attending the Councilman. Craning his neck to see past the sea of giants between him and Dalila.

* * * *

Dalila stoically endured the rough grip of her guards. The disciples walked so fast that they half-carried her as they cut a wide path through the crowd to the front.

She used the brief trip to try to rebuild her dangerously thin reserves of strength.

Yesterday had drained her of all resources. After the ordeal of Joon's examination, she'd deliberately exhausted herself with hours of training exercises. It hadn't stilled the inner keening of her mates names, which echoed in an endless, silent howl. Losing Kelvar and Dexon sliced deep into her heart.

The worst of it was, the commander was right, with thousands of Earth women, either already on Enyo, or in orbit--pending negotiations with the warrior's government-- the twins would have their pick of top breeders. She wasn't so horribly selfish that she would hold them to promises they'd made when she was their only option. Though, Goddess alone knew just how much, she wanted to do exactly that.

Knowing she was doing the right thing didn't stop the inner wailing.

Her guards let her go so abruptly, she stumbled, and then straightened her backbone. She would not shame the men who'd taught her about passion.

She caught a glimpse of Dexon's dear face through the sea of warriors. His eyes were

red rimmed, his beard stubble dark, and his hair wild. He looked almost as horrible as she felt.

But, she reminded herself, she'd seen his future, or at least one of them. Goddess willing, he would find love and happiness with one of the prime breeders. She focused her gaze on the Enyo official's chin and kept it there.

"This woman is one of your disciples?" the official asked Commander Joon.

"She is a Belle Amity disciple," Joon answered.

The official's chin angled to his left and Dalila adjusted her gaze to stay with him.

He fixed Joon with a piercing stare. "Be straight with me, woman. Do you speak for her or not?"

Joon didn't respond immediately.

At last, the commander spoke. "Like all Belle Amity disciples, she is a free woman. She speaks for herself."

"Fine," the official muttered. "Your attention, disciple."

Dalila was too stunned by Joon's statement to answer.

"What's her name?" He demanded of no one in particular. A warrior stepped close, whispering in his ear.

Once again, the official trained his gaze on her. "Your attention, Dalila."

"Yes, sir," she said, grateful that her voice had come out strong and even.

"Thank you," he sneered at her. "Now, perhaps we can proceed. Which of the Virlo twins do you take as your mate?"

Dalila stood straight. But, her mind reeled from the question. Frantically she sought for Kelvar or Dexon. When she found them, their expressions were as rigidly stony as the carved mask of a warrior facing battle.

"What happens to the man not chosen?" she asked, keeping her voice firm by will alone.

"He will be punished according to Enyo law. Any contact with another man's mate is forbidden. There are no exceptions."

After everything Kelvar, Dexon, and she had suffered, nothing had changed.

They weren't going to be allowed to pick new mates. One of them would be stuck with her. And one of them would die. The howling in her heart grew louder, making it near to impossible to think.

How did she pick between the two men she loved? Dexon was passionate, sensitive and irresistible. Kelvar was rougher. But, with a hunger for her that left her breathless and totally addicted. What's more, secretly she suspected of the two men, he needed her more.

Two warriors, both devastating handsome, both men of strength and honor, both had captured her heart, and now, both faced death because of her.

Gathering her breath, she fought to find the center deep inside herself that was her own touchstone of truth.

"I choose both," she said, willing her voice to stay strong.

The Enyo official raised his eyebrows in disbelief. "Both? You intend to mate with two of Enyo's warriors? Permanently?"

"Yes." Dalila held her breath, waiting for his pronouncement.

Conversation rose into a noisy buzz around them. The official shook his head wearily.

"We can only hope this nonsense doesn't set a dangerous precedent," he muttered.

Then Commander Joon replied. "In view of Enyo's shortage of women, multiple bonding makes a great deal of sense, Councilman. You will enhance your stature when you lead your people to the smart solution by approving this new mating bond."

Dalila heard the woman's subtext, compelling obedience.

The councilman nodded sagely. "True, very true, Commander. You are a woman of unusually acute perception."

"Thank you, sir. You guide your warriors well," Joon bowed her head, stepping away from the inner circle.

The Enyo official held up a hand to stay her. "However, it is my understanding this woman has been judged unfit. Wouldn't the men be better off bonding with one of your approved breeders?"

Hearing herself labeled unfit, so publicly, knotted Dalila's belly in misery.

Bowing again, Joon spoke neutrally. "An astute insight, Councilman. How do you suggest implementing this option?"

Without answering, he turned to the disciples behind Dalila. "Are there any Earth women willing to breed with these two warriors?"

After a few seconds hesitation, one of the A-rated Amazons, moved to the front. A dozen more beauties followed suit, forming a loose queue. The councilman beamed with approval. It was easy to see the top-rated breeders met his personal perception of what a woman should look like. Dalila's hopes burst in shards of stinging pain. Biting her lip was the only way she could keep it from quivering like a babe's.

Kelvar inspected the women, standing confidently before him. And then he consulted with Dexon, who had made his own friendly appraisal. The surrounding warriors offered their advice loudly and freely.

"Well warriors, how say you?" their official asked.

Dexon answered first. "The women are lovely, but we have a mate, Dalila."

The councilman frowned at Kelvar. "I see nothing wrong with these breeders."

"They aren't Dalila, Councilman," Kelvar said as if he'd offered irrefutable logic.

Dexon captured Dalila's hand, twining his fingers through hers. "Exactly."

If she hadn't already been in love with them, she would've fallen hard right then.

A quiet word from Joon cut through the noisy crowd. "In the interest of conserving your valuable time, Councilman. I examined both warriors and the disciple Dalila for most of yesterday. They have formed a unique but very strong tri-bond."

Recognizing the clear notes of truth in Joon's words, a new strand of hope wove around Dalila's bruised heart. But then, she heard the underlying imperative in the woman's voice and fought a rush of fresh fear.

Nothing was ever simple when the Belle Amity sisters meddled in the affairs of others.

Did the warriors simply honor their pledge to her? Did Kelvar and Dexon understand the bond she wanted wasn't based on duty? More than anything, she wanted them to choose her freely. But, bonded to her, for whatever reason, was still preferable to death.

"Tri-bond?" The Enyo official wrinkled his nose. "No, please do not elaborate, Commander. I have heard more than enough."

Without further ado, he turned and faced the crowd. "The Earth woman, Dalila, claims Kelvar and Dexon Virlo as mates. Is there anyone present who objects to this bond?"

The hum of conversation stilled to an expectant silence.

He barely paused before continuing. "Will the Virlo warriors come forward?"

Kelvar and Dexon moved ahead. Kelvar took a position on her left. Dexon stood on her right. The men were close enough for her to take comfort from their body heat and their earthy, sensual scent of fresh sweat and musky masculinity.

Flanked by her warriors, her courage flooded back. She stole peeks at them from under her lashes, searching their handsome features for warmth, seeking a hint as to what they were feeling. But their expressions remained stony. The small strand of hope, which she'd clung to so desperately, began to fray.

"As warriors you have the right to be questioned privately. Do you waive this right?" The Enyo official waited for a response.

Kelvar and Dexon answered in unison. "We do."

The council representative whispered to one his attendants. Then returned his attention to her warriors. "Fine, which one is which?"

Kelvar spoke first. "Kelvar Virlo, sir."

"Dexon Virlo, sir." Dexon said from the other side.

The official shook his head again. "Highly irregular. Kelvar, do you understand that the mating bond is permanent?"

"I do," Kelvar said confidently, his deep voice, setting off a round of feminine flutters deep in her belly despite all her fears.

"Think carefully, son. There are many unattached Earth women here, who have shown themselves willing to choose you for their mate."

A round of feminine giggles confirmed the official's assessment.

A blush of humiliation crept up Dalila's neck while she braced herself to endure the warrior's rejection.

Kelvar stayed rigid. "There is nothing for me to think about, sir. Dalila is my mate."

Then the official angled to address Dexon. "Have you considered the consequences of sharing your woman for a lifetime when you could have a mate, who was solely yours?"

"With all due respect sir, she wouldn't be Dalila would she? Dalila is the only woman I would ever accept as my mate."

Shaking his head in an expression of bafflement, the council official sighed and then signaled for quiet. "Do the three of you take each other as bonded mates for your lifetimes?"

Kelvar squeezed her left hand while Dexon stroked circles inside her right. And then they spoke with a single voice. "We do."

"Congratulations, warriors, and best wishes breeder. Your union is sanctified. The state of Enyo recognizes this unit as bonded. You, breeder, may kiss your mates."

Dalila tugged both of the brawny hands she still held to her lips. Then she threw caution to the wind, kissing each man thoroughly.

Later that evening a special feast was prepared cooperatively by the warriors of Enyo and the breeders of Earth to celebrate the union of Kelvar, Dexon, and Dalila. Nobody allowed Dalila lift a finger to help.

When a group of warriors surrounded Kelvar and Dexon for a men-only ritual, she sought out Commander Joon. She found the sisterhood's emissary instructing a group of disciples. She hung back, waiting for a chance to speak privately.

Joon caught her eyes and dismissed the others, beckoning for Dalila to join her.

After polite greetings had been exchanged, Dalila spoke about what had been bothering her since the ceremony. "You deliberately influenced the councilman's decision today. I want to understand why you chose to do so when you know I'm unfit as a breeder."

Commander Joon considered the question carefully before answering. "The breeding fitness rating system made a great deal of sense on Earth when our supply of sperm was so limited. However, what was appropriate for an artificial insemination program, operating with

severely limited resources was one thing. The situation here on Enyo is very different. Now, the sisterhood has a vast new gene pool available for perpetuating our kind."

Dalila examined the commander's explanation for several seconds, seeking the courage to ask what she really wanted to know. Had Kelvar and Dexon chosen her of their own free will? Or, had Joon influenced them too? But, her nerve failed.

Joon studied her openly. "There was another factor influencing my decision to persuade the councilman, do you wish to hear of it?"

Not at all sure, she said, "Please."

"Very well. You have a rare portion of courage, disciple. I would see your genes carried to future generations."

The commander smiled and started to make the sign of the Goddess over her, signaling the end of their conversation.

Before her so-called courage failed, Dalila blurted, "Kelvar and Dexon, did you....did you influence them also?"

"It wasn't necessary," Joon said evenly. "When I examined them, I read their hearts. You have no reason to doubt your mates' love."

"Thank you," Dalila said. The commander's assurance was without question. Finally, the last of her fears were conquered.

"I need to find them," she murmured

"The sisters and I will be leaving for New Eden, the capitol of Enyo, in a few minutes. I take my farewell of you now, disciple. May the Goddess keep you until we meet again."

"And you, Commander Joon."

Then she made the sign of the Goddess over Dalila, giving the sisterhood's blessing to her union with the warriors.

Hurrying in search for her mates, she halted almost immediately.

Kelvar and Dexon waited for her just far enough away that she was confident her conversation with Joon had remained private. But, close enough to protect her. She remembered what Dexon has told her about how women were guarded here and the very real dangers to any female. Shivering from the memory of their warning, she ran to the men.

The warrior's caged her between them.

"You are unharmed?" Dexon asked his voice rough and urgent.

Kelvar scowled at her. "You frightened us, little breeder."

Nuzzling each man in turn, she reassured them. "I'm fine. And don't even start the lecture I was never alone for even one minute. The sister-soldiers of Belle Amity make formidable foes. I was in no danger. I would never be careless of my safety when I could be carrying our child."

"You are breeding?" Kelvar asked, stunned.

Dexon simply grinned at her.

"I doubt it. It is past time for you two to correct that situation," she said deliberately provoking them.

Kelvar untangled himself, taking a stride away from them, and then addressed his brother gruffly. "You never got your day with the little breeder. Tonight belongs to you."

Her temper flared to life. She understood there were restrictions she would have to adapt to here on Enyo. But, she was not some prize they'd just won at feast day games. They were not going to set their own taking-turns-schedule without any input from her.

She was starting the way she intended for their bonding arrangement to go. "A second of

your time, warriors. Didn't I just bond with two men, swearing in front of the Goddess and everyone within listening range, I wanted to mate with both of you?"

"Of course, you did, Dalila." Dexon kissed her cheek.

"Kelvar," she called and he halted, turning slowly to face her. "I wasn't lying. I do want both of you. Starting tonight."

He strode back, stopping so close that she felt his words as much as heard them. "The three of us together?"

For an answer she wrapped her arms around his neck and brushed his lips with hers. Then she boldly teased the seam of his mouth with her tongue. When he opened for her, she moaned her pleasure, tasting him--coaxing him to deepen the kiss. He plunged past her softened lips, giving her his tongue to suckle. Drugging her with his kiss. His hands cupping her bottom, pressing his hard shaft into her belly. He broke the kiss, still holding her.

"Don't go anywhere," she warned him.

Twisting in his arms, she then captured Dexon's face and pulled him closer. Kissing him with seductive softness until he plundered her mouth with his lips, his teeth, and his tongue. Dexon filled his palms with her small breasts. She moaned again, rubbing against two very aroused men.

In the distance, she heard the muted blast of thrusters being fired as the others left their island paradise. Her mates worked together to strip off her uniform, and then theirs. At last, there were no layers between them. The overwhelming pleasure of two strong, hair-roughened, and fully aroused warriors loving her threatened to unravel her before they even started.

"Hurry," she urged her mates. "I need you both inside me."

Kelvar chuckled, the gravelly sound, starting flutters in her core and a gush of liquid desire dripping between her legs. He nibbled lightly on the side of her neck, spreading her lavish wetness to her back passage. Her legs trembled with excitement. Dexon lifted her and she wrapped her watery limbs around his slim hips opening her secrets to both of her warriors.

"Now, sweet Dalila?" Dexon growled against her mouth.

"Yes," she whimpered rubbing her hard, tight, tingling nipples against the hard planes and coarse hair of his chest.

And then they both plunged into her body. Filling her. Stretching her. Possessing her. And loving her.

She rocked between them, screaming and spiraling out of control and helpless to stop the orgasm that seized her and exploded with light and magic and glorious bliss.

When she regained her senses she was still clenching their erections but they were grunting and spurting hot seed into both of her openings. Their climaxes caught her completely happy and utterly limp body by surprise, setting her on fire, and then shattering her in another soul-fusing orgasm.

Epilogue

Enyo, Day one hundred ninety after Dalila's arrival, 2386 post exodus

Dexon rolled over in the big empty bed and squinted at the time display. Kelvar and Dalila had gone to New Eden for her first trimester medical check. She'd been so sick, that she had actually lost weight that she didn't have to spare, and yet her stomach already bulged.

He'd damn near worried himself as sick as his mate. She was so small and he and Kelvar were so big. What had they been thinking to breed with her?

They hadn't been thinking--that was the problem. They were animals. And she paid the price for their insatiable hunger. Guilt gnawed in his belly, pushing any possibility of sleep hopelessly further away.

The round trip should have taken no more than ten hours. Easily, accomplished in a single day. Even allowing for delays, or a longer than anticipated examination, two days was more than adequate. They'd been gone three, very long, days.

He flopped away from the edge, planting himself defiantly in the center of the bed. However, he found no comfort in that position either. Within moments, he'd turned over and was pounding his pillow into submission before squeezing his eyes shut once again.

Still unable to rest, he grabbed another pillow. Dalila's familiar scent--sweet-hot woman mixed with the fragrance of the clean linens and holding an under layer of something musky and irresistible--wafted from the soft cushion. His body immediately responded to the fragrance with a titanium-hard erection.

Of course, there was no soft and willing mate to sooth his savage need. He was such an animal, how could he be aroused while he was worried sleepless about her?

The evidence of his true, savage, nature had formed an impossible to ignore aching rod between him and the sleeping pad, banishing any possibility of rest.

And he remained worried. His fears torturing him relentlessly. Even if she were healthy, anything could have happened in three days. What if the Belle Amity sisterhood had reclaimed her? What if the android guard had failed? He should have insisted on going with them.

He'd foolishly agreed to alternate taking Dalila to the city with his brother. That way each of them got the private time they craved with their mate. Right now, Dexon was more than willing to forego any amount of one-on-one time for the simple assurance she was safe.

After his restless night, he finally drifted off around dawn and woke in the early afternoon, feeling like shit.

The tropical sun heated the sandy shore. A slight breeze blew over the waves, keeping the heat from becoming oppressive. He squinted at the irritating perfection.

He was still in a foul mood. Though, the light of day did make the worst of his fears seem less likely. They'd only been gone a few days. Perhaps, Dalila had wanted to shop or visit friends. There had to be a good reason for the delay.

He'd made up his mind about one thing. They were getting a communication station installed. They could use some of the credits they'd banked for a pleasure unit. Dalila had made the ladies of the light obsolete. Now that he'd known a real woman, the artificial version had

lost all of its appeal.

He heard the hovercraft's throaty thrusters and ran for the beach. Shifting from one foot to the other impatiently while as he observed the ship landing smoothly. When the vessel had finally settled, he sprinted to the outer deck. And then accepted the welcome armful of Dalila from his brother.

"I can walk," she protested crossly.

He pressed a kiss on her hair, ignoring her grumbles as he speared Kelvar with a frown to remind him that he was still waiting for answers. "Well, what did the doctor say?"

Kelvar jumped down. Pounding him on his free shoulder, his eyes crinkled. His mouth quirked into a broad grin. "Our mate is carrying twins."

"She's been so sick," Dexon scanned her slight form, seeking a lot more reassurance.

As he watched her, Dalila fought the curve of her lips and lost the battle, letting her smile grow. "The nausea is typical. A natural by-product of carrying two manly warriors."

"Males? Identical twins?" he asked. A selfish inner voice wondering if the babes were his sons or his nephews.

Kelvar shook his head. "They are very close in size and development. But not identical. Each twin has a different father."

Grinning like a fool, Dexon simply stared at Dalila's rounded stomach with affectionate greed as if trying to see through her to the place where his son and nephew snuggled safe inside their mother.

"Different fathers, huh?"

Rolling her eyes at them, Dalila complained. "If you two are quite finished congratulating yourselves on your potency, I would like something to drink."

"I'll get it, little breeder." Kelvar nuzzled her cheek as he strode by on his way to the beach house, and then turned back toward them when he reached the first step of the veranda.

"Oh yeah, I almost forgot. She is on complete bed rest. Doctor's orders."

Dexon frowned at his brother's back. "Confined to bed? We may have to tie her down."

Laughing, Kelvar didn't bother to turn back. "That could be interesting."

"My mates will need to keep me entertained," Dalila said demurely.

And then her lips curved into an angelic smile, an expression, which reached into Dexon's chest and wrapped around his heart, making it swell with love.

The End