

The book cover features a romantic couple in a futuristic setting. A woman with long, dark, wavy hair is lying back, her eyes closed, wearing a black strapless top. A man with dark, wavy hair is leaning over her, his face close to hers, with his hands resting on her shoulders and neck. The background is dark with glowing blue circular patterns and a large, stylized 'X' shape. The author's name 'Anne Kane' is at the top in a silver, cursive font. The title 'MILLFUL' is in large, gold, 3D block letters, and 'stargazers 2' is in a smaller, white, sans-serif font inside a black rectangular box. The publisher's name 'Changeling Press' is at the bottom in a silver, cursive font.

Anne Kane

MILLFUL

stargazers 2

Changeling Press

Stargazers 2: Willful

Anne Kane

All rights reserved.
Copyright ©2009 Anne Kane

WARNING: The unauthorized reproduction or distribution of this or any copyrighted work is illegal. File sharing is an International crime, prosecuted by the United States Department of Justice and the United States Border Patrol, Division of Cyber Crimes, in partnership with Interpol. Criminal copyright infringement, including infringement without monetary gain, is punishable by seizure of computers, up to 5 years in federal prison and a fine of \$250,000 per reported instance.

ISBN: 978-1-60521-180-0
Formats Available:
HTML, Adobe PDF,
MobiPocket, Microsoft Reader

Publisher:
Changeling Press LLC
PO Box 1046
Martinsburg, WV 25402-1046
www.ChangelingPress.com

Editor: Chrissie Henderson
Cover Artist: Bryan Keller

This e-book file contains sexually explicit scenes and adult language which some may find offensive and which is not appropriate for a young audience. Changeling Press E-Books are for sale to adults, only, as defined by the laws of the country in which you made your purchase. Please store your files wisely, where they cannot be accessed by under-aged readers.

Stargazers 2: Willful

Anne Kane

Born both a Stargazer and Daughter-Heir to the throne of New Zanadles, Jazlyn is used to a life of pampered luxury. But when the planet runs into financial trouble, her father agrees to bind her to a five-year term of service aboard a vessel with two very virile interplanetary merchants.

Her leisurely life is replaced by a whirlwind of Intergalactic Council intrigues and the lusty attentions of her new employers, but when space pirates attack, a routine delivery turns into a deadly struggle for control of the ship.

Chapter One

"You did what?" Jazlyn stared at her father.

He had the grace to look slightly sheepish. "The Finance Minister said it was the only way to keep the Intergalactic Council from foreclosing and taking over New Zanadles." His gaze silently implored her to understand. "It's only a five solar year contract, and you'll get to travel. You've always wanted to travel."

Jazlyn snorted. "As one of the nobility, not the main power source. Do you have any idea how humiliating this will be? I'll be taking orders from peasants!"

Her father's mouth thinned into a harsh line that always preceded one of his moral tirades. "They are not peasants! I had the palace guard investigate them thoroughly before I even considered the proposal. Mr. Rance and Mr. Nuevo are both law-abiding citizens, well-respected in the merchants' guild. They've promised to treat you fairly, and the amount they've agreed upon for your services will be enough to pay off New Zanadles' loan to the Council." He reached out to place a hand on her shoulder. "Being one of the nobility comes with responsibilities. You should be proud that you're able to save our planet from being subjugated by the Intergalactic Council."

"I know. We really do need the money." She sighed and ran her fingers through her long sandy hair. "I just never pictured myself as a working girl." She lifted her chin. "So how long do I have to prepare for this great adventure?"

Her father dropped his gaze to study the intricate pattern of the tiles on the floor, refusing to look at her. "They're waiting in the green room. I thought it best if you met them just before you board their vessel. Their launch window is at the start of the next solar period and they have a shipment of perishables that needs to be delivered to the Globalbar system as soon as possible."

"Now?" She stared at him in dismay. "I can't possibly pack and say my goodbyes in less than a full moon cycle."

Her father looked up, and she could see the steely determination in his eyes. She knew that look. He'd given his word and nothing she could say or do would change it.

"Fine! I'll go supervise the packing." She flounced toward the doorway, only to stop when he called after her.

"That won't be necessary. I've instructed Mika to have your clothing and personal items delivered to the space station."

Jazlyn pivoted to face him, hands on her hips. "What about Mika? I do get to take my personal maid with me, don't I?" Mika, a distant cousin, had grown up with her and was more of a confidante than a servant. Leaving her home world would be hard enough without losing Mika's support.

He nodded. "It took a bit of negotiating, but they've agreed to let Mika accompany you, provided she doesn't interfere with the ship's routine."

"So I guess I should go and greet my new..." Jazlyn's voice trailed off. She had no idea what to call them. Employers?

Her father gave her an exasperated look. "They are people, Jazlyn. They need your help to deliver their goods, and we need their help to avoid financial ruin." He reached out to pull her into his embrace. "I know you'll make the people of New Zanadles proud that you are the Daughter-Heir."

* * *

Bryce paced impatiently across the lush carpet. The waiting grated on his nerves. They'd paid for the services of a Stargazer, and he was eager to get on with their voyage. Drought had swept through the Global system this past season, and the settlers were desperate for the foodstuffs packed in the hold of his spaceship. The Intergalactic Council would be quite happy to let the settlers starve unless they agreed to be ruled by the Council. He wasn't about to let that happen.

He'd tried to hire a guild-sanctioned Stargazer, but none of the available witches were willing to take the contract. Approaching New Zanadles and offering to take an

untried Stargazer had been a last resort. He hoped her father's confidence in the witch's abilities proved warranted. He'd paid a good sum for her services, and with the cargo bay full, they couldn't afford any lost time.

He pivoted as a quiet swishing signaled the door opening. A young woman swept into the room, her chin held high. Neon blue streaks shone brightly in the sandy brown hair that fell in a silken curtain to her waist. A tight bodysuit showed off her figure in a mouthwatering display of lush curves. Dozens of gaily-colored bangles decorated her arms and ankles, jingling cheerfully with every stride of those long, shapely legs. Her green eyes glowed with a haughty temper. She ran her gaze over him dismissively before she turned her attention to his partner, Tyler.

"On behalf of my family and my subjects, I welcome you to New Zanadles." She bowed formally. "I'm Jazlyn, Daughter-Heir to the throne. My father informs me that he has contracted me to serve on your vessel and I understand you are in a hurry to proceed."

Tyler came to his feet in a smooth move and took the proffered hand, bowing low. Bryce found himself annoyed at his partner's lithe grace. "Yes, we have a deadline to meet and we've wasted much precious time looking for a Stargazer willing to accompany us." Tyler's gaze flickered to Bryce, a wry smile curving his mouth. "Allow me to make introductions. My name is Tyler Rance, and this is my partner and best friend, Bryce Nuevo."

The corner of the witch's mouth curved upward gently. "I see." She looked from one to the other. "You look well with each other. Have you been together long?"

Bryce blinked, not sure what she meant until Tyler guffawed loudly, a wide grin on his face. "We're not a couple."

Jazlyn gasped, lifting a hand to cover her mouth. "Oh, I'm sorry. When you said partner, I assumed..." Her voice trailed off, heat staining her cheeks bright red. "I didn't mean to insult you."

Bryce grinned at her sympathetically. "Not to worry. If I were inclined that way, Tyler would be my first choice." He stepped forward to offer his own hand, bowing low

when she accepted and placed her soft fingers within his hand. "We're honored that you've agreed to serve aboard our ship." The feel of her smooth skin, warm and silky in his grasp, left him wondering what the rest of her would feel like. He gave his head a mental shake. She'd agreed to serve as a valued member of the crew, not a body slave. He obviously needed to take a quick side trip to one of the local pleasure houses before they shipped out. He hadn't been this affected by a woman since his initiation on Qualar.

"How much time do I have before we depart?" Her voice had a musical lilt to it that reminded him of the birds singing in the palace gardens.

He lifted his head, and found himself staring into the depths of those witch-green eyes. "The next clear launch window is just before the second moon rises. We'd like to utilize that. Your father indicated you'd be able to accommodate." He glanced over at Tyler. "Have her personal effects been delivered to the shuttle?"

Tyler tapped a finger against his earlobe, activating the implanted com unit. "Just getting there now." He frowned. "Were we expecting a passenger? There's a female demanding boarding privileges, and she's giving old Harold a hard time."

"Mika!" Jazlyn swiveled to look at Tyler. "Father said you'd agreed to let my companion accompany me."

Tyler nodded slightly. He pointed at the table and a holo-image shimmered into view. He lifted his eyebrows in disbelief. "Is that your companion?"

Bryce looked at the tiny image of a female, her outlandish outfit showing off more of her than it hid as she stomped her foot and gestured rudely at their supplies clerk.

"Yes." A grin curved the corner of Jazlyn's mouth, and Bryce stared, fascinated by her plump pink lips. "You might want to do your man a favor, and tell him to let her in. She doesn't know the meaning of the word 'no'."

"Not a problem." Tyler watched the tiny figure for a few seconds before he glanced over to Jazlyn. "You said her name was Mika?"

Jazlyn nodded. "She's a distant cousin and my dearest friend. Please treat her with respect."

"I'll go down and personally welcome her onboard." Tyler grinned, and Bryce could see the interest in his old friend's gaze as he practically drooled over the display. He had no doubt Tyler would be very welcoming. They hadn't had time to visit their usual haunts and blow off a little steam when they'd gotten into port. The settlers' position was too precarious for them to waste precious time at the pleasure houses.

"Get the companion and the clothes stowed away. I'll answer any questions Jazlyn has and be along as soon as I can. Oh, and tell the crew to prep for launch."

Tyler snapped to attention and gave him a mock salute. "Yes, sir!" He headed to the exit with long strides of his lanky legs, and then paused. "Oh, and nice to have you aboard, Jazlyn. I can see this is going to be a very interesting voyage."

"Thank you." Jazlyn turned to Bryce. "Perhaps you can fill me in on where we're heading." She led him to the seating area under the great tapestry. She sank into the cushions of the overstuffed sofa, leaving him to choose from several large chairs. "My father didn't tell me why you contracted me instead of one of the Council Stargazers. I've never performed on any vessel but my father's."

She stared at him with those gorgeous green eyes, and he felt the blood pool low in his groin. This would definitely be an interesting voyage.

"We have a shipment of flash-dried subsistence packs for the Globar system. They're in the midst of the worst drought in recorded history and they're getting desperate." He hesitated to mention the Intergalactic Council's interest in the system, unsure of her political leanings. "We need a Stargazer's talent to cut travel times and get the shipment to them before anyone starves. Your father was the only one who expressed an interest in the contract."

Jazlyn raised a hand to sweep the hair back from her face, and the bangles on her arm jingled melodically. A frown marred the perfect line of her brow. "I had no idea the situation was so serious. You might want to reconsider taking on an untried Stargazer."

"None of the others were willing to take the contract." He held up a hand. "I'm sure you'll do fine. Your father seems to have a great deal of confidence in your abilities, as does the Commander of the Imperial Fleet." And he did not intend to trade this gorgeous morsel for one of the hard-eyed Council witches. "We've had a Stargazer platform installed, and I've arranged a meditation chamber just off the bridge for your use. We've never utilized the services of a Stargazer before, so if there's anything else you need, just ask."

"You've never used a Stargazer before?"

"No, usually we're fine with standard means of transportation." He grinned at her. "And we'd never make any money if we had to pay your father's rates on a regular basis."

She cocked her head and his eyes followed the shimmering blue streaks as the silky mass flowed down her back. Were they a sign of her talent or just nano-enhanced strands? He'd never paid much attention to the Stargazers he'd encountered before, but then none of them had caused his cock to harden so that it chafed behind the cloth of his snug leggings.

"Do you know how we work?"

The look of dread on her face caused him to smile gently. "I know enough. You can see the energy lines that join the stars and planets and can tap into them." He paused. "And I know you have to be naked in order to manipulate the energy, although I don't understand why."

Jazlyn visibly relaxed. "Clothing impedes the flow of energy. I use my body to channel the flow, so I don't want anything blocking that energy flow. Part of the reason for the specialized platform is to shield me from the crew." She wrinkled her nose in an endearing expression that made him want to drag her into his arms and kiss her until she couldn't breathe. "Some people have a real problem with nudity."

Bryce nodded in what he hoped was a comforting gesture, and shifted in his seat to ease the pressure of his clothing on his rock-hard shaft. He didn't have a problem with nudity. Right now, he'd be happy to have both of them naked, preferably

somewhere other than in her father's palace. He didn't think the king would be overly impressed with what he had in mind for the Daughter-Heir.

"And then there's sex." Her gaze swept over his body in a frankly assessing manner. "We use sex to bolster our power. The chemicals released in the body during copulation heighten our talents and enable us to absorb more of the power of the ley lines without burning out. I'll need someone to partner with me several times during every voyage." She paused, and he watched, fascinated, as she wet her lips with her tongue. "You and your partner would be acceptable, but if you'd rather not participate, perhaps you could suggest a member of your crew. I'd need to approve your choice, of course."

Bryce stared, shock radiating through him. Had she just suggested a threesome with him and Tyler? The thought had electric charges of heat racing through his veins. He leaned toward the little witch. "You want Tyler and me to fuck you? At the same time?"

A ghost of a smile hovered on those delicious lips. "To be honest, I'd prefer to phrase it a little less bluntly, but yes. That's the general idea. I've never had multiple partners before, and the idea is intriguing."

"Well." Bryce felt like a newbie at the flight academy, propositioning his first female. "I'm sure we'll both do our best to help you achieve your goal."

She smiled wickedly. "Perhaps you'd care to demonstrate?"

Chapter Two

He blinked. Had the little minx just propositioned him? “Now? In your father’s palace?”

She rose gracefully and glided over to key something into the locking device. The door slid shut with an audible click. “There. Now we won’t be interrupted.”

Bryce crossed the distance between them. He’d been playing the gentleman until now, but he wasn’t about to ignore such a blatant invitation. Sliding one arm around her waist, he tilted her head back, teasing her lips open with little nibbles. She tasted of jasmine and honey, things he’d almost forgotten during his long years in space.

She opened to him and he slid his tongue in deep to explore, his other hand sliding down to grasp her buttocks and draw her up against his aching shaft. She arched into him and he could feel the heat of her sex through the thin material of their clothing.

“Damn, you’re gorgeous.” He trailed a row of kisses across her cheek before stopping to nibble on the soft lobe of her ear.

“You’re not so hard on the eyes, either. I was wondering how to get you away from your partner, but he conveniently decided to leave.” Her warm breath caressed his neck.

“I think the sight of your companion motivated him. We haven’t had time to visit the pleasure houses since we docked.” He nipped the delicate skin of her neck. “I thought you wanted both of us.”

Jazlyn ran her hands down his chest. “Later. Right now, I want you. Let’s hope Mika leaves your friend enough energy to perform his duties. My cousin is quite a handful.”

Bryce slid the fastener of her suit down, letting her breasts spill into his hands. "You're quite a handful yourself." He cupped the heavy mounds and Jazlyn moaned softly. He leaned forward to suck one dark nipple into his mouth, swirling his tongue around the turgid peak. He licked and sucked, first one and then the other, pausing briefly to skim the tight suit down over her hips and legs.

"That's not fair." Jazlyn grinned wickedly. "I want you naked too."

"As you wish, Daughter-Heir." He bowed mockingly, and quickly proceeded to strip off his clothing, discarding it in an untidy heap on the floor. He watched her eyes widen as his cock sprang free, curving upward.

"Oh my." She eyed up his shaft. "I think I'm going to enjoy this voyage." She closed the distance between them in three graceful steps, dropping to her knees in front of him.

When she reached up and gently cupped his sac he thought he was going to come right then and there. Heat coursed through him, electrifying every nerve in his body. It took all his self-control not to drape her over that sofa and bury himself deep in her hot sex.

Mischief danced in those witch-green eyes, telling him she knew exactly what she did to his control. He took a deep breath and watched as she licked her lips, her tongue slowly wetting them so that they glistened red. Then she leaned forward and engulfed the head of his cock, swirling her tongue around it in long, smooth strokes.

By all the gods, that felt incredible. He braced his legs and cupped the back of her head, urging her to take him deeper. She obliged, tilting her head to let his shaft slide in farther, her tongue busily lapping along the sides while she gently squeezed his sac.

He closed his eyes and allowed himself to enjoy her amazing mouth as her tongue explored the length of his cock. Her cheeks hollowed as she worked her way down his shaft, the sensations sending heat coiling in the depths of his belly. The little sucking noises she made were incredibly erotic. He gave himself up to the blissful joy of her attention for a few more minutes, and then gently pulled her back.

"I want to feel your tight pussy around me when I come." He pulled her to her feet and led her over to the seating area. She followed his lead silently, her eyes dark with lust. He urged her up onto one of the plush seats, draping her hips across the high back, her buttocks up in the air. Bending over her, he urged her legs farther apart, allowing him easy access to her hot pussy.

"Damn, you have no idea how gorgeous you look from here." He met her gaze as she turned her head to look over her shoulder. "I could look at you all night." He reached down and ran his hands across the silky smooth skin of her ass, down the deep cleft, stopping briefly to finger the tight rosebud of her anus before he parted the damp lips of her pussy and inserted a finger. Heat and wetness greeted his questing finger, her inner muscles clamping greedily around him. He brushed his thumb across the hard nub of her clit, enjoying her whimpering cry as she pushed back against his hand. He teased her for a few moments, pumping two fingers in and out of her slick channel while she squirmed against his palm.

He withdrew his fingers and took his cock in hand, pressing it against her eager sex. Gripping her hips tightly, he slid himself into her tight pussy. Slowly. One teasing inch at a time. She tried to push backward, force him deeper, but his fingers dug into the flesh of her hips, holding her steady, making her wait. She'd made the first move, and the second, but now it was his turn, and he wanted her to acknowledge his lead.

He inhaled deeply, taking her scent into his lungs. Sunshine. She smelled like sunshine, and flowers, and all those things he missed during long voyages. He pulled his shaft out, then rammed it back into her and reveled in the feel of her sex as it clamped tightly around him. Bending over, he brushed his lips across her neck. He bit down on the tender skin, and then soothed the pain away with a flurry of tiny kisses.

She whimpered loudly, writhing beneath him. "Please. Fuck me harder."

"Yes!" He wrapped his arms around her to cup her breasts while he picked up the pace, ramming himself into her repeatedly. She met him thrust for thrust, crying out as they both thrashed, winding higher and higher until, with one last hard thrust, he spilled them over the edge, his hot seed spurting deep within her.

They collapsed across the seat, spent, the only sound in the room their ragged breathing as they struggled to drag oxygen into their starving lungs.

Jazlyn looked up, her eyes dazed. "That was amazing. I've never been fucked like that before."

Bryce smoothed a lock of blue-brown hair off her face and brushed a gentle kiss across her lips. "Thank you. You're quite the amazing partner yourself." They lay quietly together for a few minutes, still wrapped in each other's arms, until Jazlyn sighed and slipped out of his embrace. Retrieving her bodysuit, she shrugged back into it. "I'd better go make sure Mika didn't miss anything in the packing. I'll see you aboard your vessel."

Bryce, scrambling awkwardly to his feet as she turned to leave, watched the gentle sway of her hips as she strode toward the doorway. The bodysuit left little to the imagination, and his was working overtime. He could still imagine the feel of that nicely rounded butt snuggled up against his groin as he buried his shaft in her. This promised to be the most bizarre mission since he and Tyler had teamed up to purchase the ship.

* * *

Mika shook out a pair of green silk pantaloons, folding them carefully before she stowed them in the garment locker. The departure had been so hurried she hadn't had time to unpack before they left the docking station. They'd used conventional propulsion to depart the planet. The partners said they didn't want to advertise the fact that they had a Stargazer onboard. "They're quite the pair, aren't they?" She slanted a mischievous look at her cousin. "You shouldn't have any trouble getting your talent tuned up with that twosome."

Jazlyn stroked the brush through her thick hair. "They are quite yummy, aren't they?" She grinned. "I wonder if Daddy dearest actually met them before he decided to sign the contract. He looked more than a little uncomfortable when he delivered me to the docks."

"Well, it's too late for him to change his mind and marry you off to one of those buffoons who show up at court to beg for your hand. We left the docking ring two cycles ago, and we'll be clear of the civilian shipping lanes soon." Mika transferred clothing from the transport pods to the lockers with a quiet efficiency. "You'd never be happy with one of them. Remember the ambassador from Roheda?"

Jazlyn rolled her eyes. He must have been the fattest male she'd ever seen. With his reptilian features and the sickly green tint to his skin, she wasn't sure she could have stomachached eating in the same room as him, let alone having him touch her. Luckily, he'd found out about the state of New Zanadles' finances and had disappeared with a very undiplomatic haste. "A real winner that one." She put the brush down and studied her features on the plasma display. "So what do you think of Bryce?"

Mika wrinkled her nose. "He's okay. He seemed kind of serious and bossy, though. I think I prefer the other one. Tyler, was it?"

Jazlyn laughed and threw a wadded-up shirt at her cousin. "It was, and you know it. Do you really prefer Tyler? Bryce has those dreamy blue eyes and all that long, dark hair."

"It doesn't really matter." Mika tossed the shirt back to her. "You'll get both of them anyway. Now, I've been scouting out the crew, and there's lots of potential there. Did you know they have a mixed crew? I even saw an Asylian, and you know their reputation for stamina." She laughed. "I think I'm going to enjoy this little adventure."

"You always do." Jazlyn regarded her cousin with affection. Despite being orphaned at birth, Mika had a sunny personality and never failed to see the best in every situation. Throughout their childhood, she'd always found a way to turn every situation to her advantage. Jazlyn almost pitied the crew. They had no idea what they were in for.

"Can you pull up the star charts? I'd like to see where we're heading." Jazlyn shoved the last of her clothing into the built-in clothes chest and flopped down on her belly on the bed closest to her.

Mika sat beside her, and held out her hand to point her finger straight in front of them. Using the microchip embedded under the nail on her left index finger to access the public areas of the ship's computer system, she called up the star charts for the Globar system. With the casual proficiency of long practice, she projected a holo-display into the air in front of them.

"Can you get a fix on where we are now?"

"No problem."

Jazlyn studied the display as it shifted, more planets popping into view as it reconfigured itself to show their ship's current position. She noted the green line that signified the outer limits of the Intergalactic Council's territory. She'd never been outside that line before, and the Globar system was at least six parsecs beyond it. An icy finger of fear slithered down her spine.

"That's a long way from here." She mentally calculated the nexus points and likely energy lines. "It'll take us several solar cycles, with separate jumps from system to system. I'll have to talk to Bryce and Tyler, although, if they've agreed to make a delivery, I assume they know how much distance is involved." She frowned. "They must know I can't make that in one non-stop trip."

"Oh, I'm sure they're aware of that." Mika tilted the holo-vid and absently set the little planets to twirling around their suns. "You should probably go talk to them now that we've settled in." She looked up at Jazlyn and her eyes sparkled with mischief. "How about we do a walk through the ship first? I want to see what my options are, since you get those two to play with." She lowered her hand and the holo-display winked out of existence.

Jazlyn grinned. It had been a while since the two of them had run amok in the civilian quarter, and she'd missed the happy-go-lucky days of their schooling. Maturity was highly overrated. "Sure. Let's go see what kind of trouble we can get into." She stood and linked her arm through Mika's. "How about we try the food dispensing area first? No point in going hungry while we hunt down a male or two for your pleasure."

Mika skipped happily at her side, palming the door controls to lock as they exited their cabin. "Sounds like a good plan to me. Any idea where that might be?"

Jazlyn shrugged and started out down the corridor. "No, but that will give us something to ask when we run into a likely target. You can ask him where the food dispensing area is."

Mika rolled her eyes and giggled. "You noble types are so devious! Why not just ask him if he's interested in some mind-blowing sex?"

Jazlyn tilted her head and imitated Mika's high-pitched giggle. "You working types are so direct! Why not make him work for it?"

"Like you're going to make Bryce and Tyler work for it?"

"That's different."

"Really? How?"

"I need sex with them to build my strength, and they know it."

"You don't need both of them."

"No." Jazlyn grinned at her cousin. "But I'm greedy."

Mika laughed, and eyed up two brawny cadets striding toward them. "Must be a family trait. I'm feeling a little greedy myself at the moment."

Chapter Three

Jazlyn looked down the long corridor and wondered how she'd managed to get lost in the close confines of a starship. Maybe she should have taken a right at the bottom of the drop tube instead of a left? She sighed. Or maybe she should have paid more attention when Mika gave her directions.

She was already overdue for the preliminary meeting with Bryce and Tyler. This was not a good way to start their professional relationship.

She closed her eyes and centered herself. Maybe she could locate one of them if she concentrated. She called up a mental image of Bryce, with his sexy blue eyes and dark hair. She recalled the sense of mastery, the air of authority that tinted his aura. Immediately, a strong sense of his presence filled her. He was in front of her, and high above. A wry grin curved her lips. She wasn't even on the right deck.

She let the image go and headed back to the drop tube. It surprised her that she'd been able to sense his presence so strongly. Sensing people's whereabouts was one of her lesser talents. Generally, she could only locate people if she knew them well. Strangers or people she'd only met casually took a lot more effort. Bryce must have made a bigger impression on her than she realized.

On a whim, she called up an image of Tyler, and tried to locate him. The figure remained stubbornly lifeless, and after a few minutes, she gave up. Apparently, he hadn't made as much of an impression on her as his attractive partner.

* * *

As soon as she landed on the upper deck, she spotted the strategy room. She paused to calm her suddenly racing pulse before she entered. She didn't need to let Bryce know how excited she was at the thought of seeing him again in all his naked glory. Or Tyler either, she added belatedly.

But first, they needed to get the formalities out of the way.

"Ah, there you are." Bryce stood as she entered the room. With his hair tamed back by a leather band around his temples, he reminded her of a picture of an ancient warrior.

She favored him with a smile. "Sorry to be late. I took a wrong turn, but I'm here now." She looked around the sparsely furnished room. An oval table of smoothly polished stone dominated the small space, with seats placed around it in a haphazard fashion. Slowly shifting star charts covered the walls, and she guessed they were generated from within the walls themselves.

Bryce gestured her to one of the seats. "Shall we get started?"

She nodded, glancing over at Tyler. He seemed to be lost in thought, nodding absently at her from the far side of the room. He placed a cube in the center of the table and sat back down as a star chart projected up from the crystal cube. Stars and planets shimmered into view. She recognized her home and some of the closer systems. She took her seat and waited patiently for them to explain what they expected of her.

"Here's our destination." Tyler pointed to a cluster of five planets circling a small sun. "As you know, the settlers are rapidly running out of food, and..." He shot a glance at his partner, who nodded slightly. "We know the Intergalactic Council has been discouraging merchants from making deliveries in the region. They want to annex the inhabited planets, and the settlers have been less than welcoming. We're not sure if the Council is aware of your presence onboard, but we have to assume their intelligence officers have alerted them. We can't take the chance on them pulling some sort of diplomatic crap and delaying us, so we're going to take an indirect route."

He traced a zigzagging path through the myriad of stars that twinkled above the table. "We plan to utilize hyperspace jumps combined with your talent to avoid leaving a path that points directly to our destination. We hope to sneak in and deliver the subsistence packs before the Intergalactic Council realizes we've ignored their 'suggestion'."

Jazlyn studied the projection. She would have chosen a more direct route, but she had to concede that they weren't likely to see anybody or anything along the deserted route he'd proposed. "Do you really think the Council cares that much about a backwater planet in the outer fringes?"

"Oh, yeah." Bryce nodded. "That backwater planet has enough raw minerals on it to keep the Council supplied for the foreseeable future. And they can't touch it unless the settlers either grant them open access, or agree to join the Council and be ruled by them." He gave her a lopsided grin that made her heart do a little flip in her chest. "What do you think the chances are of settlers turning their hard won homes over without a fight?"

She shrugged. "Probably not great." She found it amusing that the money from this contract would help buy her own home planet's way out of the Council's clutches as well. A win-win situation all round. She watched the smooth play of muscles in Bryce's biceps as he leaned casually against the stone table. Definitely a win-win.

She cleared her throat, suddenly nervous. Bryce looked up and caught her glance, holding her in place with a look while he slowly circled the table and took her hand in his. He drew her hard up against him and she could feel the barely restrained power in his grip. He framed her face with his hands, tilting her head back. His eyes were liquid pools of lust, mesmerizing her. A rush of heat raced through her, pooling in her belly, and she swallowed, hard. For the first time in her life, she felt herself losing control. She'd felt lust before, used it to boost her abilities, but never this raw urgency, this craving that had every nerve in her body on edge.

He was so big, so hard, so... male.

And she wanted him with every fiber of her being.

* * *

Bryce lowered his head and his lips brushed across hers in a featherlight caress that sent erotic flames licking across the surface of her skin. His tongue came out to tease, tasting and tempting until she opened her mouth with a small sigh, surrendering to the inevitable.

He engulfed her lips, and his hands brushed the material of her top off her shoulders, baring her chest to his warm, questing hands while his tongue invaded her mouth. He cupped her breasts in hands that seemed to know exactly what she wanted, what she needed. She moaned and leaned into his hard body as he tweaked one tender nipple between thumb and forefinger, causing a liquid heat to dampen her pussy.

His lips left her mouth, and he nibbled his way down her cheek to her throat, burying his face in the tender hollow while he grazed his teeth across her rapidly beating pulse.

She gasped as a second set of hands circled her from behind. *Tyler!* She'd been so intent on Bryce that she'd totally forgotten they weren't alone in the room. Trapped between the two hard male bodies, she felt small and very feminine. She arched her back, rubbing her bare breasts against Bryce while Tyler fumbled with the fastenings on her leggings, his breath hot on the back of her neck.

"Looks like we've got ourselves a Stargazer sandwich," he drawled as he managed to undo the last of the laces holding the leggings up.

"Mmmmm. And it's quite tasty." Bryce nipped playfully at her breast. "Pity we don't have any sauce to spice it up."

"Oh, I'm thinking it's going to be spicy enough with a little help from us." Tyler hooked his thumbs in the waist of the leggings and skimmed them down over her hips. "I'm betting she tastes as good as she smells."

Bryce swirled his tongue around one taut nipple, and Jazlyn sucked in a deep breath as scalding tongues of lust ran down her spine. He sucked the tender tip into his mouth and feasted on it, now suckling, now scoring the tender bud with his teeth. He looked up at her, his eyes shining darkly. God, she could drown in those gorgeous eyes. She brought her hands up between them, palms flat on his rock-hard chest.

And all the while Tyler's hands roamed across her body. Caressing. Stroking. Exploring. She shouldn't be enjoying it this much; the feel of four hands caressing her, two mouths licking, sucking, nibbling on her heated flesh.

"Don't look so serious." Bryce raised his head to recapture her mouth, his lips harder now, more demanding. She opened and his tongue swept in to duel with hers, aggressive in its demand for her surrender.

Honeyed heat coiled in the pit of her stomach, and radiated outward to her breasts, her thighs, her pussy. She moaned softly, and Tyler chuckled behind her. His warm presence disappeared for a moment and she heard the soft rustle of clothing hitting the deck. Then he was back, and she could feel the thick length of his cock press up against her ass.

"Now that's hardly fair." Bryce cupped her breasts, tweaking the nipples sharply between thumb and forefinger. "I'm the only one still clothed." He stepped back and quickly stripped off his clothing. Striding over to the door, he engaged the privacy locks. "That's better. Now, where were we?"

Jazlyn licked her lips as she watched his enormous shaft bob gently with each stride. Damn, she remembered how good that felt buried deep inside her. A single drop of pre-cum glistened enticingly on the plum-shaped head, and she wanted to reach out and taste it. But Tyler still held her from behind, his large hands slowly working their way toward her eager pussy.

Bryce reached them and grasped her hips, pulling her to him so that his cock pushed hard against her belly. Tilting her chin up, he kissed her hard. His tongue dueled with hers and he bit down sharply on her lower lip before kissing the hurt away. "Time to get you up on the table."

"Definitely a good idea." Tyler loosened his grip and Bryce scooped her up, depositing her on the hard stone table.

The partners quickly joined her, one on either side. They propped themselves up on one elbow and continued to caress her naked body while the vid image of the star chart danced in the air above their heads. She closed her eyes and concentrated on feeling. She could no longer distinguish between the partners as they used all of their experience to turn her body into a mindless mass of writhing pleasure.

Bryce took the lead. He flicked the ball of his thumb over the tight bud of her clit, and she went wild with lust, turning toward him. Tyler captured her arms from behind, and wrapped his legs around hers, rolling so that she was spread out on top of him, legs splayed wide. His hard cock pressed into the cleft of her butt, hard and thick, and a shudder of delicious fear ran down her spine at the thought of that huge shaft invading her virgin anus. What would it feel like? Would it hurt?

As if he had the ability to read her thoughts, Tyler whispered in her ear, "Don't worry, little witch. I'm not going to hurt you. I think my partner would toss anyone who harmed a hair on that pretty little head of yours out the nearest airlock." He nipped her earlobe. "You've got him spellbound."

"I've got him what?" Her question turned to a gasp as Bryce slid one large finger into her slick channel, stroking inside with teasing little caresses while his thumb brushed over her clit.

She bucked forward, trying to force him in deeper, but Tyler held her back, spreading her thighs a little wider. "You just be good and wait until he's ready."

"He's right." Bryce scooted down and positioned himself between her splayed legs. "You've got me bewitched with those gorgeous green eyes. You're irresistible." He raised his head and caught her gaze, holding it firmly as a slow, sensuous smile spread across his face. "I'm not even sure I want to break free." He lowered his head and swiped his tongue across her entrance in a long, slow lick that had her screaming for more.

"Easy, darling." Mischief sparkled in his eyes. "I'm just getting started."

He proceeded to lick and suck, feasting on her sex like a man who'd been starving for days. Tyler held her still, licking and nibbling on her neck, her shoulder, wherever he could reach. Trapped between the two of them, she writhed and whimpered, careening out of control. She didn't think she'd be able to take much more of it, and then Bryce stopped. He reared up on his knees so that he towered over the pair of them, a monstrous hard-on jutting aggressively out from his groin. He slipped his hand over the shaft, slowly stroking the long length. Jazlyn watched, mesmerized as

his hand moved back and forth from the huge, plum-shaped head back down to the heavy sac nestled in the dark curls.

"Do you want it?" His eyes shone, lust darkening the blue to almost black. She licked her lips and nodded. His hand stroked once more, and he grinned darkly. "I want to hear you beg."

She started to say she didn't beg. She was a Stargazer, one of the elite. But then a single drop of pre-cum slipped out of the slit, a glistening drop. She swallowed hard. "Please."

The word hung in the air between them for a second, and then he dropped to all fours, bracing himself above her on gloriously muscular forearms. The head of his cock pushed against the soft folds of her sex, and she arched up to try to impale herself on it, but was stopped by Tyler who wouldn't relinquish her arms or legs.

"It's okay, sweet." Bryce drew back and then thrust into her, burying himself to the hilt in one smooth strike. "I know what you need."

"I need you." The minute the words left her mouth, she knew they were true. There was something about Bryce that made her crave his touch, his presence.

He started to fuck her with long, slow strokes of that amazing cock and she stopped thinking. His gaze held her pinned in place as his cock slid in and out. Streaks of liquid heat slid along every nerve. She could barely breathe, and her lack of control shocked her. Her whole life was about control, and he'd shattered it with that first deep thrust of his shaft.

Tyler moved beneath her, rubbing his cock back and forth in the cleft of her buttocks, but she barely felt it. Her world narrowed to Bryce.

Only Bryce. His hands. His eyes. His cock.

She could feel herself spiraling upward, higher and higher. Molten darts of pleasure caressed her spine as Tyler loosened his grip on her arms and reached around to fondle her breasts, large hands cupping them as his fingers tweaked the taut nipples, adding to the sensations rocketing through her body. She let out a low keening sound,

unable to form a coherent sentence as erotic feelings looped from her breasts, to her belly, to her sex and back.

Bryce shifted his position, just a bit, and applied more pressure to her sensitive nub. She cried out his name as wave after wave of erotic heat swept her up and over the edge. The inner muscles of her channel spasmed, gripped hard around his invading shaft, pulsing until his cock jerked and she could feel the hot seed jetting deep inside her.

She wrapped her arms around his neck as he collapsed on top of her, shifting sideways so she wouldn't be pinned beneath his bulk. She buried her head in the warm hollow of his shoulder as a hundred tiny aftershocks rippled through her and she fought to drag oxygen into her starving lungs.

"Well, I'm glad the two of you enjoyed yourselves."

Jazlyn peeked out from her warm haven to see the wry grin on Tyler's face as he slid off the table. His cock looked painfully engorged and she realized she'd been so engrossed in Bryce that she'd totally ignored his partner's needs.

"I'm sure you'll manage to find a female willing to take care of that." Bryce didn't sound the least bit repentant. Jazlyn raised her head to see his blue eyes dancing with mirth as he looked at Tyler.

Tyler dragged his pants up over his hips. A barely suppressed smile teased the edge of his mouth. "I saw Jazlyn's companion heading toward the crew lounge just before we started. She mentioned she'd be available later if I fancied a rendezvous."

Jazlyn smiled, rolling her eyes. Mika always managed to make her wants very clear, and it appeared this voyage would be no exception. She ran her hand over Bryce's heavily muscled chest, enjoying the feel of hard flesh as Tyler grabbed his shirt and strode out of the room whistling cheerfully, his well-muscled torso still naked.

"That's enough of ogling Tyler." Bryce rolled onto his back, wrapping his arms around her so that she landed on top of him. He met her gaze, his eyes already deepening with lust.

Chapter Four

Jazlyn snuggled deeper into the pile of covers, luxuriating in the feel of Bryce's warm body spooned tightly against her. She felt deliciously sated. It had been a long time after Tyler had left before they'd stumbled back to his cabin and fallen asleep in the spacious bunk.

Warm breath wafted across her ear. "Good rising, little one." He draped an arm across her rib cage in a casually possessive gesture.

"Good rising, yourself." Jazlyn rolled over, covering her mouth as she yawned. "I guess it's about time I started to earn my keep."

Bryce turned to capture her lips, his hand cupping the back of her head while he kissed her thoroughly.

A wry smile curved the corner of his lips as he let her go. "As much as I'd like to spend the next few solar cycles here naked with you, we do have a hold full of food to deliver." He propped himself up on one elbow and laid his warm hand on her belly. "Of course, your contract is for five solar years, so I'm sure I'll have plenty of time to explore your delightful company."

Jazlyn wrinkled her nose, unwilling to admit how very much she'd enjoy spending time in his company. "I'm sorry I ignored Tyler last night. I'm not usually that selfish."

Bryce laughed. "Tyler's no youngling. I'm sure he managed to find a willing female, possibly even your friend. I notice neither of them has come looking for us yet this rising."

"Still." Jazlyn felt sheepish. "My behavior was unacceptable. I'll apologize to him the next time I see him."

Bryce caught her chin in his hand and seared a kiss across her lips. "I'm not sure I want you alone with him. Tyler's quite the ladies' man, and I find I'm not willing to share you."

She raised her eyebrows, staring at him in shock. That was so far out of line, she didn't know what to say. A casual coupling, no matter how wonderful, didn't give him the right to dictate whom she could or couldn't see. "I think it's up to me whether or not I wish to share my body." She glared at him. "The contract you arranged with my father does not give you any rights over my body or my behavior."

Bryce ignored her outburst. "I may not control you, but the rest of the crew knows better than to cross me." He scored a thumb across one nipple, giving her a smug smile when it hardened to a taut peak. "Tyler and I never compete over females."

"Females?" Jazlyn attempted to sit up, shrugging off his arm. "I'm a Stargazer, not some body slave you picked up at a spaceport auction."

"I know that." He let her go. "But I want you."

"Do you always get what you want?" She stood and pulled on her leggings, redoing the laces Tyler had fumbled with the previous evening.

"Always." Bryce wrapped his warm arms around her and drew her back against his hard body. She could feel his cock stirring to life as it pressed into her buttocks.

"Well then, it's about time you learned some restraint." She grabbed her shirt.

"We could certainly try restraints next time, if you desire to."

He'd deliberately misunderstood her. Jazlyn tried to hide the grin that threatened to spread across her face. The man was incorrigible. She reached behind her and encircled his shaft with her fingers, stroking it gently as it hardened. She'd always wondered how it would feel to wake up in the arms of a lover.

* * *

"We had the bridge totally redesigned when we decided to hire a Stargazer." Bryce held her close as they stepped into the transport tube. She took a deep breath and concentrated on the shift of muscles underneath his tight shirt. No matter how many times she used them, drop tubes unnerved her. Mika thought it was the lack of control,

but knowing that didn't help her with the sudden sick feeling in the pit of her stomach. They reached the bridge and Bryce stepped out of the tube, taking her with him.

She looked around the oval room approvingly. The observation screen covered an entire third of the wall, giving a comprehensive view of the space surrounding the vessel. The Stargazer platform was in the center of the room, with high sides designed to give her comfort and privacy as she worked. Workstations for the rest of the bridge crew were located at random intervals around the outer walls, with the captain and first officer stations in front of the platform. Someone had put a lot of thought into the layout.

Bryce let go of her hand and strode to the empty captain's chair. "We're still on auto-pilot. Tyler will take over once you get us connected to the energy lines. We'll take turns captaining the ship, and one of us will be monitoring you at all times." He gave her that lopsided grin that made her heart beat faster. "You're too valuable to take chances with."

Jazlyn lifted her hand to sweep her hair back from her face. The nano-bots she used to create the blue streaks were reacting favorably to the richer atmosphere of the ship. Their color had deepened several shades since she'd boarded. She paced around the deck, familiarizing herself with the layout. The platform was one of the newer models, she noted thankfully. The older models didn't adjust to accommodate the Stargazer's size. She fingered the straps, noting with approval the soft leather and ample padding. She'd be able to work long hours without discomfort.

"Will it be adequate for your needs?" Bryce wrapped his arms around her from behind, nuzzling her neck with his warm lips.

She nodded. "Yes. I'm amazed, everything is exactly the way I like it."

Bryce rested his chin on her shoulder. "I consulted with the captain of your father's flagship. He gave me the specs and a few tips."

He let her go and she turned to frown at him, suspicion bubbling in her mind. "Exactly how long ago did my father agree to this?"

He shrugged. "Two moons, maybe three. Enough time for us to refit the bridge to accommodate you."

"And yet the day I boarded was the first I heard of it." She felt a flash of anger for her absent parent. "He could have warned me!"

"But he didn't. I'm sure he had his reasons."

"So am I." He didn't want to give her time to think of an alternative, or just flatly refuse to cooperate. She knew her father cared about her, but he always put the welfare of the people of New Zanadles first, and he knew she'd balk at being sent off-planet for an extended period. He could be incredibly stubborn when he thought he was right.

She felt a wry smile curve the corner of her mouth. They were very much alike. "We should be far enough out from the system core to avoid detection. When did you want me to start?" They'd probably been far enough out last night, but then she'd been busy. She studied her toes so he wouldn't see the color she could feel rising to her cheeks.

"As soon as you're ready." She could hear the restrained mirth in his voice. He'd been every bit as preoccupied as she had. She glanced around and realized that Tyler and Mika still hadn't surfaced.

"There's a meditation chamber over here." Bryce led her to an alcove to the left, with a small doorway in it that led to a small, white room. A single padded bench stood in the middle and there were shelves on one wall, presumably to hold her clothing while she worked. She nodded in approval.

She looked at Bryce, admiring the way his shoulders filled out the tight suit. "Since the delivery is urgent, I should get started. I'll need some time alone to center myself."

He stepped forward to frame her face with his hands, tilting it up to place a kiss on her lips. "I'll be on the bridge if you need anything." He nodded to a series of touch pads on the wall. "They give you access to all of the star charts for this sector, if you need to check on anything." He kissed her again, and strode out the door, thumbing the control to close it behind him.

* * *

Jazlyn removed her clothing, one item at a time. Folding each carefully, she placed them on the shelves. Her tunic. Her leggings. Her footwear. Her undergarments. Completely naked, she closed her eyes, stretching her arms above her head. *Breathe in. Breathe out.*

She leaned to the left side, feeling the gentle stretch of her muscles. *Breathe in. Breathe out.*

She returned to her upright position and repeated the movement, stretching to the right. *Breathe in. Breathe out.*

She padded over to the bench, lowering herself to sit cross-legged on it. Taking a deep breath, she emptied her mind, reaching for the calm deep inside herself. She ran through each of the meditation exercises that her mentor had taught her, taking the time to do them correctly. Channeling the power of the ley lines required her complete concentration; a single moment of inattention could trigger a dangerous backlash.

A quiet confidence filled her as she finished the last of the mental exercises. She was gifted, a Stargazer. She could handle the power lines and their shining energy.

She crossed to the doorway and entered the main area of the bridge. Bryce turned to watch her as she climbed onto the platform and settled into the frame. She met his concerned gaze with a serene smile. She slipped her feet into the soft leather anklets, set at precisely one leg's length apart, and pulled the straps tight around her ankles.

Next, she grasped the ends of the thick leather belt and wrapped it snugly around her waist. If she faltered while in the trance, the belt would hold her upright and make sure that the energy flow to the engines remained constant. She reached above her head and threaded her hands through the loops. They, too, hung a precise distance apart. Satisfied with her preparations, she lifted her chin and caught Bryce's gaze. Worry clouded his face, and she gave him a reassuring smile before she nodded firmly. Time to start.

Closing her eyes, she tilted her head back. She let her consciousness expand out into the cold void of space, seeking the brilliant energy that signified the ley lines. Behind her closed eyelids, the lines shimmered into view, their seductive energy calling to her. The blues and greens were darker in this quadrant, clearer in the absence of man-made clutter, but they still formed that glittering maze that tempted her to immerse herself in its power. She ignored the temptation, searching amongst the strands for the one she needed to follow to reach their destination. She examined each strand, discarding one after the other. Instinct would tell her when she'd found what she needed. Greens. Golds. Blues. The lines were seductive, tempting her to lose herself in their beauty. Still, she searched.

And then she found it. The line that would lead her to the Globar system. She narrowed her focus, concentrating on that one line, drawing the twinkling energy into herself, and using her hands to direct it to the massive engines of the ship. Dimly, she felt the vibrations as the ship began to move through space, picking up speed as she strengthened the flow of power, acting as a human conductor.

She reveled in the feel of the energy coursing through her body, captured by her, controlled by her. The temptation was there, always at the back of her mind, to draw more and more power until there was no going back. She'd merge completely with the brilliant energy of the lines, become one with that incredible maze. It became harder and harder to resist. Every time she channeled the power, she hesitated just a fraction of a second longer before letting it go. She'd always used her father to anchor her to this life -- to reach out to if the temptation were too great.

But he wasn't here.

Time had no meaning in her trance. The power flowed through her to the engines in a steady stream, and she remained passive, letting it use her. Dimly, she was aware of planets, stars and the other heavenly bodies as they came within range, only to disappear as the ship hurtled toward its destination.

It could have been nanosecs or whole solar days before she sensed her destination approaching. Reluctantly, she let some of the power slip away, loosening

her hold on the line. She could feel the engine slow as she came out of the trance. Her body sagged against the harness as fatigue overtook her. When the auxiliary power kicked in, she emerged completely, and exhaustion slammed into her. She opened her eyes to find Bryce striding toward her, concern plowing deep furrows into his handsome brow.

"How long..." Her voice cracked and she couldn't finish. She must have held the power longer than she'd intended. She felt spent, every last ounce of her reserves drained.

"Too long. Why the hell didn't you let go before this?" Bryce's hands were gentle as he unbuckled the restraints. When she would have fallen, he lifted her in his arms and dragged a blanket over her naked body. "You scared the hell out of me. Don't you ever do that again."

Jazlyn smiled weakly at the rough affection in his voice. Typical male, he seemed to think he had the right to give her orders. "I'm a Stargazer. I don't take orders from merchant captains."

"So this is what you do when I'm not around." Jazlyn started as Tyler's deep voice boomed out cheerfully from the far side of the bridge. She peeked over Bryce's shoulder. Tyler had one arm draped possessively around her cousin.

Mika smiled up at him with adoring eyes, before she turned a concerned look in Jazlyn's direction. "Did you overdo it? You know your tutor warned you. Those lines can devour you whole if you're not careful."

"I'm fine." She felt silly, held in Bryce's arms like a small child while her cousin lectured her. "Just a little tired."

"You can rest for a cycle before the next jump." Tyler looked at the dark red planet visible on the observation screen. "That's Makus 1 off to our left. We stocked up on supplies before we left New Zanadles, so we don't need to dock." He glanced at his partner. "No need to alert any Council spies that we have a Stargazer onboard."

Bryce nodded. "I agree. I'll take Jazlyn down to her cabin so she can get some rest. You secure the bridge and make sure we're ready in case we have to power up in a hurry."

"You two are so paranoid." Mika ducked out from under Tyler's arm. "I'll come and take care of Jazlyn."

"Not necessary." Bryce met Jazlyn's gaze, and she felt her cheeks go red. "I can take care of her."

"She needs rest, my friend." Tyler grinned. "Not your amorous attention."

"And she'll get it." Bryce strode toward the doorway. "If you want to take care of someone, Mika, Tyler's in need of some supervision."

Mika laughed, the sound cheerful in the confines of the bridge. "Let him go, Tyler. I told you he's smitten. My darling cousin has him wrapped around her little finger."

Bryce threw the pair a quelling look, and strode out the doorway with Jazlyn held firmly against his heart.

Chapter Five

"Is there anything I can get for you?" Bryce lowered Jazlyn onto his bunk. He'd been terrified when she'd continued to hold her trance even after her body sagged against the restraints. He wasn't sure he could take watching her push her limits repeatedly.

"I'm fine. For now, I just need to sleep." She gave him a smile that lit up her eyes. "When I wake I'll be starving, so if you could get a food platter ready that would be great. And water. Lots of water."

"One food platter coming up just as soon as I get you tucked in." Bryce sat on the bed beside her, arranging the blanket over her. He brushed the hair back from her face, and placed a tender kiss on her forehead. Good thing Tyler seemed to prefer her cousin, because he wouldn't be able to stand by while another man enjoyed her charms, not even his partner.

He watched a ghost of a smile cross her lips as her eyes drifted closed, long dark lashes fanning out on her cheeks. She looked so small and vulnerable. He found it amazing that she had the stamina and power to control the vast energies of the lines. He brushed a finger across her cheek, marveling at the softness of her skin.

Satisfied that she wouldn't wake any time soon, he strode over to the food dispenser and chose a mixed protein and fruit platter from the display panel. The unit hummed briefly before a tray of brightly colored foodstuffs appeared. Balancing the tray on one arm, he grabbed a carafe of fresh New Zanadles water that they'd stocked up on before they left the planet. One of the most common causes of space sickness was the body's reaction to the minerals and foreign organic compounds contained in strange liquids.

He crossed to the bunk and placed the food and drink on a side table where she'd see it immediately upon waking. While he'd love to slide into the bunk beside her, he needed to deal with the logistics of checking the ship over before the next leg of their voyage.

Bending over the bunk, he ran his fingers through the silken strands of Jazlyn's hair. The blue streaks seemed to shimmer with a life of their own, and he suspected she used nano-bots to achieve the effect. Brushing his lips tenderly across hers, he let his tongue linger as he tasted the sweet honeyed flavor that was uniquely her.

He straightened up and turned toward the door, pausing to cast a last lingering look at the witch sleeping in his bed. If he had any say in it, she'd be spending a lot of time there.

* * *

"Warning! Warning! Unauthorized access on lower decks. Warning! All hands to battle stations!"

The shrill blaring of the ship's automated defense system dragged Jazlyn out of her sleep. Still bleary-eyed from her exhausting stint on the platform, it took her a moment to comprehend. *We're under attack?*

The cabin door slid open and Bryce strode in, his handsome face grim. "Damn space pirates were hiding in the debris field orbiting Makus 1. They came up on our blind side and breached the lower decks before we realized we were under attack." He shook his head. "I have no idea how they managed to force the airlock open, but at least they're confined to the cargo decks where they can't do a lot of damage. Tyler is working on sealing off the access tubes to keep them trapped down there. I need you to lie low while we deal with them. If we don't contain them and they realize we have a Stargazer onboard, they won't stop until they find you."

Jazlyn sat up and grabbed a handful of berries from the platter he'd left beside the bunk earlier. The post-trance hunger pangs had her stomach growling at a very unladylike volume. "Pirates? What do they want from us? You have a cargo hold full of flash-dried foodstuffs, hardly a rich haul."

Bryce shrugged, busily keying extra security into the door system. "I want you to lock yourself in the cabin until the fighting's over." He turned, and his expression softened. "I don't want anything to happen to you, and this just doesn't make sense. I'm thinking the Council has a hand in it. Like you said, we're just not a likely target for space pirates."

Her head jerked up as a thought occurred to her. "Where's Mika?"

"She's fine. She was with Tyler when the pirates attacked, so he stashed her in his cabin. She'll be safe there until this is over." Crossing to the bunk, he sat beside her and lifted her chin to seal a possessive kiss across her lips.

Satisfied that her cousin was safe, Jazlyn opened her mouth and returned the kiss, enjoying the warmth of his body next to hers. After a few moments, Bryce lifted his head, a rueful smile on his face. "I'd love to finish that, but we need to deal with the invaders first. The ship's comp system will respond only to Tyler or me. They shouldn't be able to hack it." He straightened up, keeping one arm around her. "Computer, on."

For a brief moment, nothing happened, and her heart sank. She knew that if the pirates controlled the computers, they had little hope of repelling the attack.

Computer ready.

Relief showed on Bryce's face. "Show lower decks."

A visual appeared in the air in front of them, and Jazlyn gasped in alarm. The bodies of crewmembers littered the floor, their limbs jerking awkwardly, eyes dazed.

Bryce let out a frustrated growl. "The bastards are using neuro weapons. They were outlawed back in the twenty-third century, and for good reason. The effects on the brain cells are unpredictable. Computer, locate Tyler."

The image blurred, then solidified to reveal Tyler standing back to back with a burly crewmate in the center of the bridge, blasters held at the ready. As they watched, one of the pirates appeared in the doorway to Tyler's left. He turned slightly to make the shot, and another pirate appeared behind him. The crewmember managed to drop that one, but it soon became apparent that the pirates had the advantage of numbers. As soon as one went down, another replaced him.

"Damn." Bryce watched as two more pirates rushed his partner. "We hoped to get to the bridge and seal off the lower decks. The pirates must have managed to override the protocols on the access tubes."

Jazlyn sat with her eyes glued to the image of Tyler as he fended off attack after attack. A fine sheen of sweat covered his face, and a worried frown creased his forehead. She could see why her cousin was attracted to the virile merchant.

Then, just when Jazlyn thought the defenders had a chance, another pirate strutted onto the bridge, pushing a terrified female in front of him. The pale blue of her skin, along with the short dark hair, marked her as one of the engineers from the Orion system. The pirate shot Tyler an evil grin as he twisted the girl's arm, causing her to cry out in pain. "So, Captain, you want to negotiate, or should I see how much I can make this little tramp squeal before I kill her?" He twisted her arm again, laughing at the girl's helpless screams.

Bryce turned to Jazlyn, his expression grim. "And that's why I don't want you out there. These guys are ruthless." His gaze switched back to the holo-vid image.

Tyler froze, his eyes narrowing as he regarded the pirate. "What do you want?"

"Your ship. What else?" The pirate shrugged eloquently. "You surrender your weapons, and tell your crew to stand down, and we'll put you and your crew off at the unmanned way-station anchored outside the system. You'll have food and shelter while you wait for rescue. Nobody gets hurt." He stumbled slightly as the ship lurched sideways, and smirked down at a body slumped unconscious at his feet. "No one else, at least."

"They're not pirates," Bryce said in a disbelieving voice. "Watch how they lose their balance when the ship moves."

Jazlyn studied the invaders. The crew hadn't been able to engage the autopilot, and with no one at the helm, the gravitational fields they passed through were pulling the ship off course.

"There!" Bryce pointed at the pirate behind Tyler. He stumbled and grabbed the nav-station for support at a slight shift in the ship's progress. "What the hell is going on? Space pirates should be able to take a mild shift like that in their stride."

"Were they sent by the Intergalactic Council?" Jazlyn could hardly believe the Council would go this far. "You said they didn't want us to make it to the Global system with food. Would they be willing to fake a pirate attack to stop us?"

Bryce studied the invaders. "I think you may have nailed it. Those have got to be either mercenaries or Council troops. They're just not behaving like pirates. If they manage to take the ship and strand us on a way-station, the settlers will be out of options." He glared at the holo-vid.

The ship lurched sideways again, and she watched with satisfaction as all of the pirates scrambled to keep their footing. The crew, having weathered many a deep space storm, didn't even sway. "I've got an idea." She turned to Bryce. "They don't know about you, they think Tyler's the captain. If we can convince them that we're on their side, maybe they'll let me power the ship." She grinned. "If I get it up to full speed, and then drop the power lines, anyone who's not tied down is going to be thrown into the nearest bulkhead."

She looked at the holo-vid again. Tyler had dropped his weapons. She knew he didn't have a choice. He couldn't stand by and see the Orion engineer punished for his defiance. The pirates were shepherding the crewmembers toward the meditation room, which suited her plan. "We let our crew loose and they take back control before the pirates, or whatever they are, manage to recover."

Bryce looked doubtful. "I guess it could work. I count fourteen pirates, at most. Should be able to round them up without too much trouble, but how do you plan to keep the crew from getting thrown around along with the pirates?"

Jazlyn gestured at the meditation room. "Easy. We'll get you thrown in there with your crew and you can let them know what's going on."

Bryce nodded thoughtfully and slanted her a quizzical look. "How do you plan to convince them you're on their side?"

Jazlyn snorted in a very unladylike fashion. "I was born into palace life, and I've been playing at political intrigue for years. These peasants don't stand a chance." She tossed her head and bounced to her feet. "Let's go play nice."

* * *

Jazlyn looked up into the eyes of the lead pirate and gave him her best innocent smile. "My father sold me to the captain. I wanted to try out for the Intergalactic Council, but he said they weren't offering enough money." She sighed dramatically. "I'd be ever so grateful if you could get us to one of their stations." She studiously avoided looking toward the meditation chamber. If they could hear her, she sure hoped Tyler would realize they had a plan.

The pirate looked suspicious. His beady eyes narrowed as his gaze went from her to Bryce and back. Jazlyn's heart started to sink. He wasn't buying it.

"You want me to believe you and your male-friend are thrilled to see us and want nothing more than to be dropped off at the nearest port under the control of the Intergalactic Council?"

Jazlyn nodded and kept her gaze lowered. These overbearing types always bought the submissive act. Too arrogant to think a female might not be thrilled with their virile presence. She suppressed a sudden urge to giggle. "If I harness the power of the lines, I can get you wherever you want to go much faster than if you have to use the ship's turbines."

He paced over to the viewing screen. "Suppose I let you practice your witch magic, how can I be sure you won't do something to help the crew escape?"

Yes! He was buying her story. She could hear it in his voice. "You have my lover as hostage." She gestured at Bryce. "I'm not going to do anything to get him hurt." It amazed her to hear the depth of feeling in her voice.

The pirate nodded slowly and Jazlyn could see him weighing his options. His expression hardened. "Okay then. Do your little rain dance or whatever it is you do to psyche yourself up. One wrong move and I'll have lover-boy executed." He motioned to one of the other pirates who stepped up and grasped Bryce by the arm. "There's a

deserted way-station close by. We'll drop this bunch off there, and then head back to Rieger Station as quickly as possible. You do know where Rieger Station is, don't you?"

Jazlyn nodded, trying not to look too eager. Bryce played along, letting himself be led away without protest. "I've never been there, but I know its position."

"Good." He turned his head to give Jazlyn the full benefit of his evil grin. "Just remember we have your lover handy in case you try to pull any funny stuff."

The pirate led Bryce to the meditation room and unlocked the door. She caught a brief glimpse of Tyler and the rest of the crew before the pirate shoved Bryce through the entrance. Bryce turned and met her gaze as the metal panel slid closed and the locking mechanism engaged with a metallic click. His confident expression bolstered her determination to defeat the pirates. She'd dropped the lines once, when she was in training, and the results had been devastating. Hopefully, she could repeat the effect.

Rieger Station had been built to house the Intergalactic Council's training barracks. Bryce was right. The Council had orchestrated the attack. She felt a surge of pride that her father had managed to avoid turning New Zanadles over to them, even if he had sacrificed her freedom in the process. A good ruler always put his people first.

"Ready?"

She raised her arms and ran her hands through her hair, remembering how it had felt when Bryce had done just that. Damn, she hoped the crew could manage to brace themselves. "I just need to meditate first." She gave him what she hoped was a disarming smile. "It helps me control the trance."

"Whatever. Just make it quick." He turned back to study the control panel in front of him.

Jazlyn sat on the deck in front of the Stargazer platform. She'd never had to work under less than ideal conditions. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and reached for that small part of herself that radiated calm. Her breathing slowed and she ran through the exercises quickly. This would be harder than any other time she'd worked with the lines, since she couldn't sink into a full trance or she wouldn't be able to find the perfect moment to drop the lines.

She narrowed her focus, letting the fear of failure, the self-doubt, slip away. She couldn't let worry about anyone else's safety interfere with her control. Not Mika. Not Bryce. Unintentionally, she reached for the reassurance of his mind. He was there, and she felt a surge of peace.

She opened her eyes and stood, keeping her focus on what was to come. She removed her clothing and placed it neatly on the floor beside her. Mounting the platform, she slipped her feet into the anklets and tightened the straps. The belt at her waist was next, and she made sure it was secure enough to hold her when she dropped the lines. Ignoring the stares of the pirate crew, she reached up and threaded her hands through the wrist straps. She threw her head back and let her consciousness expand. At once, the beauty of the lines filled her senses, but she ignored their seductive pull. She had a job to do, and people's lives were dependent on her.

Bryce's life.

She found the line leading to the way-station and gathered the energy to herself, reveling in the warm strength that washed through her as she directed it to the engines. Since she hadn't truly entered into a trance, it took her a lot longer to stabilize her link to the ley line. When she'd established a strong flow channeling through her to power the ship, she risked opening her eyes enough to check on the pirates.

The leader paced back and forth in front of the view screen, alternating his attention between the stars that were visible as the ship hurtled toward its destination, and her. She watched as he stalked the same path over and over. She needed to time the disruption to throw him into the solid bulk of the ship's wall, not the soft fabric that coated the center of the viewing port.

With most of her energy focused on controlling the lines, she estimated how long he took to complete his path. She needed to drop the lines just as he passed the center point of the bridge. Time slowed to a crawl as she watched and calculated.

Now!

Without hesitation, she snapped her eyes open and broke her connection to the ley lines. The groan of the engines was audible throughout the ship as the massive

turbines ground to a halt. The bulk of the ship shuddered for a split second, and she held her breath. She couldn't afford to fail.

The ship jerked, as if it had run into an invisible wall.

The inertial force threw Jazlyn's body hard against the restraints, as the artificial gravity field failed to compensate quickly enough.

The pirates fared much worse. None of them had been strapped in, and the sudden deceleration had them flying across the bridge to smack into solid bulkheads. The leader landed hard against the ship's forward control panel, his head making a sickly thunk as it connected with the solid metal. His eyes glazed with incomprehension before he slid unconscious to the floor.

Jazlyn fumbled her way out of the restraints. Not bothering to stop for her clothing, she sprinted to the meditation chamber, quickly placing her palm on the scanner to deactivate the lock. The panel slid back with agonizing slowness, and then she saw Bryce in the opening, hands up in a defensive position. She spared a quick glance at the rest of the crew. No one looked injured, although old Harold favored his left leg as he hobbled forward.

Tyler stepped up beside Bryce. His jaw dropped as he took in her naked body and the pirates lying unconscious all over the bridge. He relaxed and stared at his partner, a grin slowly spreading across his face. "That's one hell of a woman you've got yourself."

"I know, and I fully intend to keep her." Bryce gathered her into his arms and kissed her hard, ignoring the whistles and catcalls from the rest of the crew. He shrugged out of his shirt and wrapped it around her shivering body. The backlash of power had left her fingers too numb to connect the fasteners, and she could feel her strength ebbing quickly away.

"Are you okay?" He anxiously searched her face.

"I'm fine, just a little tired." Considering the stunt she'd just pulled off, she was doing great.

Bryce looked past her to the pirates lying in crumpled heaps on the bridge and addressed Tyler. "Don't just stand there ogling my girl. Go secure the ship before these cretins regain consciousness."

Jazlyn grinned. His girl. It had a nice ring to it.

Chapter Six

Bryce wrapped his shirt more securely around Jazlyn's naked body before he picked her up, cradling her against his chest. He'd let Tyler direct the mop up of the pirates, most of whom weren't even conscious yet. He felt a surge of pride when he thought of Jazlyn single-handedly outwitting the Council's group of brutes.

"I'm so cold." She buried her face in the hollow of his shoulder. "Did we get them all?"

"Ssshhh." He nuzzled his face into the silky cloud of her hair. "You need to rest. Even Tyler can take care of a bunch of unconscious Council thugs." He glanced through the doorway and chuckled softly. "That is, if he manages to let go of your cousin long enough. I guess she got tired of hiding safely in his cabin."

"He's holding Mika?"

"I'm not sure holding is the right word." He watched as Tyler scooped Mika up in his arms and engulfed her mouth with his own. "It looks more like he's devouring her."

"Devouring?" She raised her head to peek over his shoulder, and gasped. "Wow, he really is devouring her."

Bryce loved the way her eyes sparkled with delight. "Jealous?"

She turned her attention to him, and his heart melted. "No, because I'm sure that as soon as things are under control, you're going to take me down to your cabin and show me just how proud you are of me." She smiled smugly. "You find me irresistible, if I recall."

He laughed again. He didn't think he'd felt this happy since... well... maybe he'd never felt this happy before. "That I do. Are you sure you're feeling up to another round of my attention?"

"I am a little tired," she conceded. "So I guess I'll just have to lie still and let you have your wicked way with me."

"Hmmm." He twisted his neck to nip at her perfectly shaped ear. "That sounds promising."

She arched her brows at him and her mouth curved upward in an amused grin. "Then why are we still on the bridge?"

"Because he needs to help me figure out what we're going to do with these... pirates." Tyler let go of Mika and produced a handful of plasti-cuffs from the synthesizer. "We can't just carry them around with us, and if we let them off at any of the bases, the Intergalactic Council will know they failed and send another pack of vultures to finish the job."

"We don't have enough security facilities to keep them onboard. The brig is rated for three bodies, max." Bryce prodded one of the unconscious bodies with the tip of his boot.

"We could leave them on the way-station, and disable the com-sender." Mika glared at the unconscious leader. "They won't die, but by the time anyone finds them, we'll have made our delivery to the Global system and be long gone."

"Great idea!" Bryce headed toward the doorway, Jazlyn still held securely against his chest. "Tyler, get security to round them up and confine them to cargo bay two until we get to the way-station."

"And where are you heading off to in such a hurry?" Tyler's grin said he knew exactly where his partner was going.

"To reward our resident Stargazer for outwitting the pirates." Bryce palmed the door locks as Tyler hooted with laughter.

* * *

"Resident Stargazer. I like the sound of that." Jazlyn nuzzled his shoulder as he strode toward the drop tube. "I've always been referred to as the offspring of the Regent, or the Daughter-Heir. No one has ever seen me as a person with my own

abilities and talents." She peeked up at him from under her lashes, and he felt his cock harden at the smoldering look in her witch-green eyes.

"I think your father may have to find himself another heir." Bryce held her tight as he stepped into the access tube. Exiting on the crew deck, he carried her into his cabin and tossed her onto the bunk. Stepping back to admire her creamy limbs splayed across the dark brown covers, he started to shuck his clothing off. "I have other plans for you."

"Oh, really?" Jazlyn propped herself up on one elbow, her eyes glowing as she watched him. "Are you going to share those plans with me?"

"If you ask nice." He paused, his hands on the waistband of his leggings. "You're quite the willful little witch. Part of my plan involves teaching you to ask nicely."

Jazlyn's brows rose. "Really? And how do you propose to do that?"

"Well." He stripped off his leggings and strolled over to sit on the edge of the bed. "Perhaps ask nicely is a little misleading. What I had in mind involves begging."

"Begging?"

"Definitely."

"Me?"

He nodded and traced a finger across the mound of one breast.

"I don't beg."

He dipped his head to score his teeth across a dusky nipple. "We'll see about that."

Jazlyn gasped and arched her back, offering herself up to him. He grinned. By the end of this cycle, she'd definitely be begging. He sucked the nipple into his mouth, swirling his tongue around it. He ran his hand down her belly, marveling at the silky softness of her skin. Shifting himself lower, he used his lips to trace a path from her breasts to her hips, stopping to delve into the sexy dimple of her belly button before he continued on down toward her mound. Positioning himself between her thighs, he raised his head and looked into her eyes. "Ready to beg?"

She snorted. "Never."

He sighed theatrically, rolling his eyes. "Don't say I didn't give you a chance."

Resolutely ignoring his painfully swollen shaft, he grasped her legs and spread them apart, his nostrils flaring as he inhaled the sweet smell of her sex. Resting her thighs on his shoulders, he lifted her tight buttocks and angled her pussy toward his mouth. The first swipe of his tongue had Jazlyn gasping and bucking her hips, and he smiled to himself. He loved how sensitive and responsive she was. Not giving her a chance to recover, he settled in to feast on her sweet juices, licking and sucking, stabbing his tongue deep into her tight pussy.

Jazlyn moaned softly, writhing as he held her to him. She tangled her fingers in his hair, holding him in place. A low keening sound escaped her lips, and he could sense her edging higher, spiraling toward her climax.

With one last deep thrust of his tongue, he lifted his head and watched her as she whimpered. "Don't stop, please." Her voice, low and sexy, sent shivers of heat racing to his groin.

He let her legs go and rose to his knees, leaning forward until his cock pushed against the damp folds of her sex. "Ready?"

"Oh gods, yes!" Her gorgeous eyes glowed with a desperate need that had his cock swelling even harder. She wanted him. This gorgeous, talented Stargazer wanted him.

He braced himself above her on his forearms and entered her with one hard thrust, seating himself to the balls in her tight channel. Her inner muscles clamped down hard on him, and he started to move, shafting her with long, even strokes.

"Bryce." She gasped his name out as she wrapped her arms around his neck, urging him to go faster. Her hips arched up as she met him thrust for thrust, her nails digging into the muscles of his shoulders. "It's too much. I don't think I can take this."

"Yes, you can." He nipped the delicate lobe of her ear. "This is me telling you I love you. You can take that."

The stunned look on her face told him she'd never expected him to use the L word. He grinned wickedly at her astonished expression and picked up the pace,

burying himself repeatedly in the silken heat of her slick channel. He felt himself rocketing toward orgasm, and he lowered his head to take her lips in a searing kiss as the world exploded around them.

Her muscles clamped down hard on his shaft, milking the seed from him as wave after wave of climax washed over them. Her soft cry mirrored his hoarse one as the pleasure started somewhere deep in his belly and rolled through his entire body. He collapsed beside her on the bunk, wrapping his big arms around her.

"Damn." She stared at him with a dazed expression. "That was one hell of a ride." She paused, and he could see uncertainty creeping into her expression. "Did you really mean it?"

"Hell yes." He pulled her close and brought his lips down on hers, kissing away all the doubt. "I've never said that to any female before. I love you. I love your witchy green eyes, and your kissable lips and your soft sexy body. I love the way you laugh, and the way you go all serious when you're working. I love you awake, and I love to watch you sleeping in my bunk." He dropped a kiss on the tip of her nose. "So you can leave your cousin to deal with Tyler. You're mine, and no one else is ever going to make love to your sexy little body again."

The corner of her mouth twitched, and he watched as she tried unsuccessfully to stop a smile from bubbling up on her face. "My little sister Belinda is going to be one happy Daughter-Heir when she gets the news. She'll make a much better regent than I would anyway." She wrinkled her nose in disgust. "She actually enjoys formal high court functions." Her expression turned serious. "Do you think the Intergalactic Council will give us any more trouble?"

He shook his head. "We'll strand this bunch on the way-station so they won't be able to make contact until they manage to flag down a passing starship. By the time the Council realizes we foiled their plot, the supplies will be in the hands of the colonists, and we'll be long gone." He traced his finger down one of the shiny blue streaks in her hair. "We'll fly under the radar for a while until they give up looking for us. We have

falsified papers for the ship and most of the crew.” He laughed at the surprised expression on her face.

“I can see I have a lot of explaining to do.” He nibbled a row of kisses across her throat. “Have you heard about the rebellion?”

She looked at him, an uncertain frown creasing her forehead. “Of course I have. You mean to tell me you’re part of the rebel forces?”

He nodded, kissing the hollow at the base of her neck. “Yes, ma’am. And so are you. As interplanetary merchants, we get to travel all over the known worlds without arousing suspicion.”

Jazlyn wound her arms around his neck, her eyes sparkling with mischief. “Well, I always wanted to travel, but I never pictured myself as the resident Stargazer on a merchant spy vessel. I’ll have some interesting stories to tell my grandchildren.”

Bryce ran his hand across her smooth belly. “First, we need to get to work on children. Grandchildren come later.”

He claimed her lips in a kiss that promised a lifetime of love and laughter.

Anne Kane

Anne Kane lives in the beautiful Okanagan Valley with a bouncy Jack Russell terrier, a cantankerous Himalayan cat and too many fish to count. She has two handsome sons and three adorable grandchildren. By day, she's a respectable bean counter, but after hours her imagination soars and she writes romances that span the galaxy and encompass beings of all sizes, shapes and origins.

She first started telling stories as a toddler and she just can't seem to stop. When she's not busy working on her next story, her hobbies include kayaking, karate, hiking, motorcycles, swimming, skating, playing guitar, singing and, of course, reading.