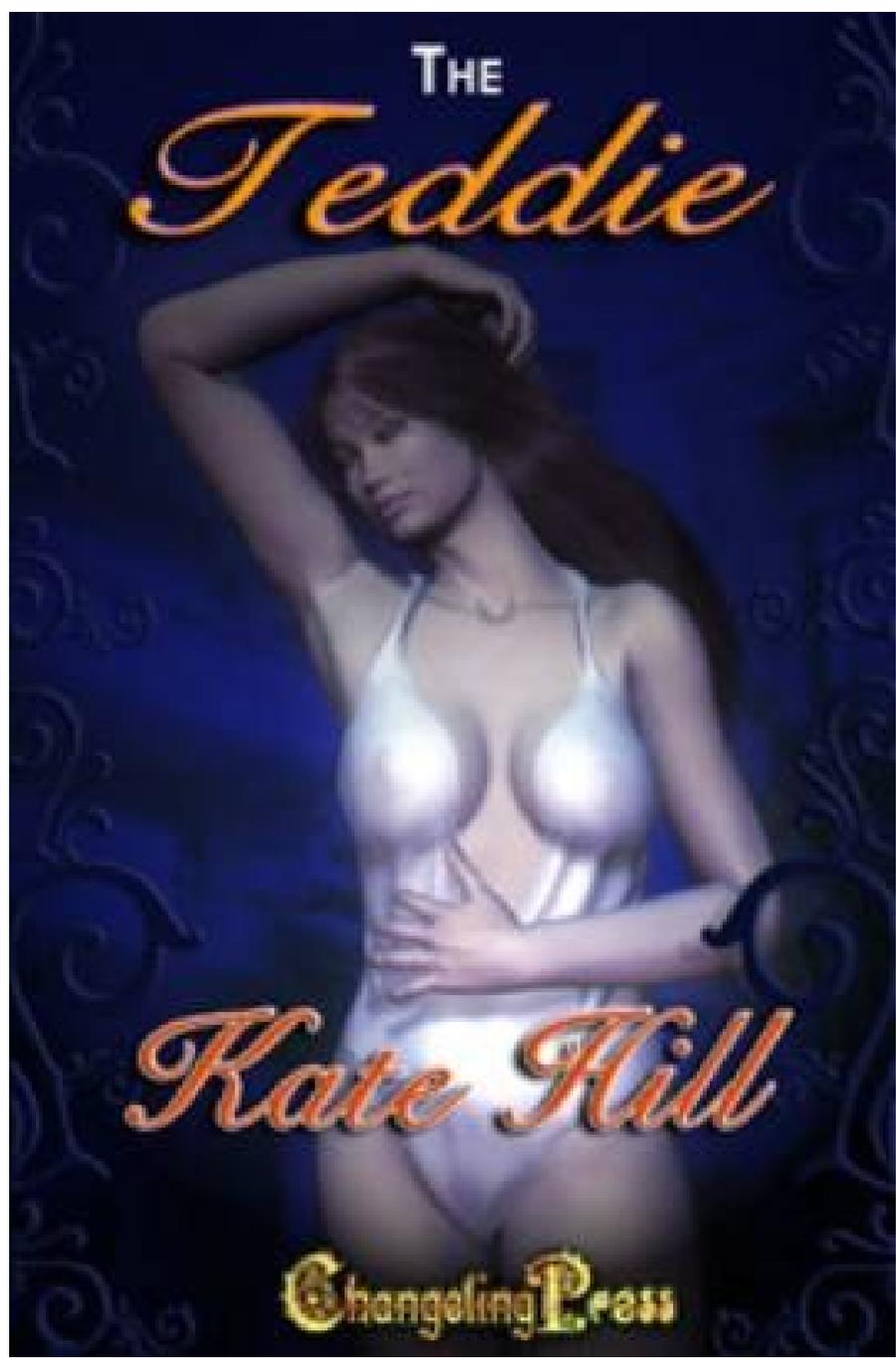


THE
Teddie

Kate Hill

Changeling Press



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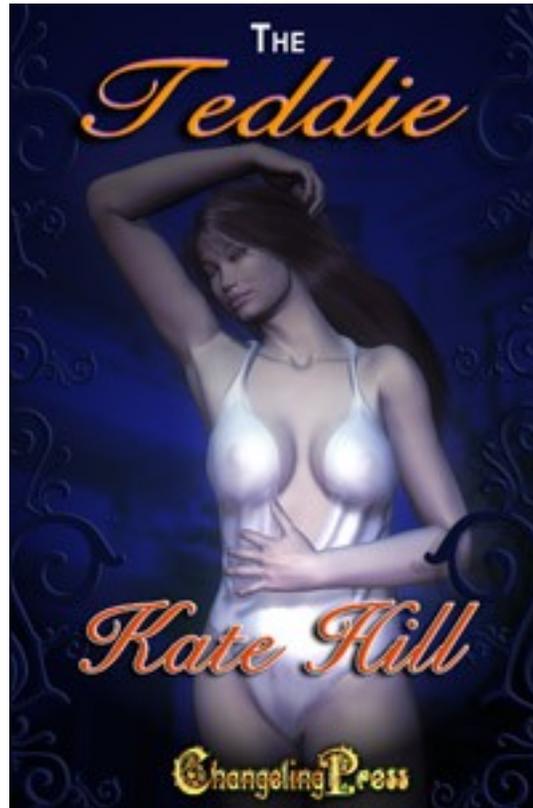
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The Teddie

Kate Hill

Erica, a maid in the house of a wealthy politician, is shocked when Javier, the Aspectian Ambassador to Earth, invites her to enter a courtship with him. The scarred yet sexy alien ambassador arouses her like no one ever has before. Of all the alien cultures Earth mingles with, Aspectians fascinate her the most.

To initiate Erica into the ways of Aspectian lovemaking, Javier sends her a gift to wear when he's not around -- a teddie made of strange material that hugs her curves and stirs her sexual desire.

Javier has been looking for the perfect Earth woman to marry. In spite of offers from humans of status, it's love at first sight when he meets Erica. He knows she's meant to be his mate for life, but their courtship might be destroyed by Erica's jealous and spiteful former employer.

Chapter One

Earth The Distant Future

The idea of seeing the Aspectian Ambassador in person had Erica's thoughts racing and adrenaline pumping. Of all the alien cultures Earth mingled with, Aspectians fascinated her the most. In spite of a decade of excellent relations with Aspectia, some people still feared their shapeshifting ability. The prejudice against them was so great that all Aspectians who traveled outside of the south seas island under their rule were required to wear silver identification bracelets. Silver rendered the Aspectians unable to shift shape. When the precious metal touched their flesh, they appeared in their true form.

The uninhabited island had been given to them as part of the treaty agreed upon by the Continental Council in charge of human-alien interactions. In return, on the planet Aspectia, humans had also been given a designated area to occupy.

To further seal the bond between their planets, the Aspectians had asked that an Earth woman marry the Ambassador. At the moment he was touring the world to find a compatible, willing woman. There was no shortage of interested contenders for the position. The ambassador had wealth, power and almost limitless political connections both on Earth and Aspectia. Not to mention that the woman who married him would be offered the shapeshifting gift. If she was able to endure the change, she would become like her husband, practically immortal.

He didn't seem to be in a rush to select a mate, however. It had been over a year since the announcement that he was to marry, but he still hadn't made a decision about who the woman would be.

Tonight he had been invited to a dinner party at the home where Erica worked as a maid. Her employer was Will Doran, the American representative on the Continental Council. His daughter, Harley, was determined to sink her proverbial hooks into Ambassador Javier. Working in the house, Erica knew that pretty blue-eyed Harley wasn't nearly as sweet and friendly as she acted in public. The woman was a stuck-up bitch, but she was poised, intelligent and thanks to the wonders of modern cosmetic enhancements, stunningly beautiful. No doubt the ambassador would be as taken with her as most men seemed to be. Harley left behind a trail of broken hearts, her often cruel treatment of her partners kept secret by payoffs from the family's fat bank account.

Erica didn't even know the ambassador, other than what she saw of him on the newscasts, but already she felt sorry for him. There was something about Harley that men found irresistible. If only a little of that would rub off on Erica.

Not that she considered herself bad-looking, but on a maid's salary she couldn't afford cosmetic enhancements. In truth she didn't want any. Unlike most of the population, she didn't believe synthetic parts were necessarily more attractive than natural ones. She found it strange that a species who spent so much time trying to change their natural appearance could harbor any prejudice at all against a race with the innate ability to change shape.

"Erica, come on," called Nora, another maid in the household.

Erica turned from the expensive marble table she was dusting in the corridor toward the kitchen where her coworker stood in the doorway.

"The guests are starting to arrive," Nora continued. "We need to serve the *hors d'oeuvres*."

Erica smoothed the skirt of her pale blue uniform and walked toward the kitchen. "Is he here yet?" she asked.

Nora shook her head. "Not yet. I wonder if he'll be in his true form or if he'll use his exemption?"

As a courtesy, certain Aspectians were allowed to travel without a silver bracelet -- mostly those of the ruling class or those who still followed the archaic religious teachings that prohibited Aspectians from revealing their true form to anyone except blood kin or their legal mates.

"He's appeared in public before in his true form," Erica reminded her. "So why would tonight be any different?"

"Because tonight he's coming to see..." Nora paused, tugged Erica closer and whispered in her ear, "the bitch. Harley. Miss 'I only date handsome, young, rich bozos.' If the alien ambassador is interested in turning her head, then he'd better shapeshift himself into a superstud because in his true form the man is hardly cover model material."

"I don't know about that. Obviously you didn't see last week's interview with him at home on the island. Those shots of him walking on the beach in swim shorts." Erica closed her eyes and sighed, her nipples going stiff just from the memory of his gorgeous body. Long-limbs. Lean with chiseled muscles. Yes, an unfortunate childhood accident had left him deformed, but to Erica that didn't detract from his appeal. Actually it made him seem even more real and intriguing. Though she knew better than to believe any public figure was completely candid in an interview, she couldn't help liking what she'd seen. Considering his father was the current leader of one of the oldest, most powerful families on Aspectia, Javier seemed like a normal person and surprisingly straightforward for someone in politics. Of course that's what made a good politician. The ability to make others believe he truly understood average people, even if he considered them little more than peasants.

But during the interview, she had discovered that Javier's mother actually had been a peasant. She and his father had married centuries ago, during a time when Aspectians frowned upon the mingling of mortal and immortal blood.

Regardless of whether or not Javier was as decent as he appeared to be, she couldn't wait to see him.

"I didn't say he wasn't ripped," Nora said. "But that face... If I was him with his ability to change shape, I'd always be looking handsome. If anyone should use his exemption, it's him."

"Nora, that isn't nice."

She raised her eyes to the heavens. "It's not as if I'd say it to him, Erica. Besides, I'm sure he's heard worse."

"Still doesn't make it right."

"All right, Miss Goody Goody." Nora smirked. She picked up a tray laden with delicious-looking miniature pastries and handed it to Erica. "Let's get to work. You're being so thoughtful of the Ambassador. See if he even notices we're alive tonight."

Erica was about to start serving when Michael, the gardener, burst into the kitchen, his overalls covered in dirt and grass stains and his expression frazzled.

"Hey, one of you ladies better go up to Harley's room right now," he said. "I was trying to finish planting all those rose bushes she dumped on me this afternoon. You know *her majesty* wanted them all in by the party tonight. She leaned out her bedroom window and screamed for me to send a maid up to her -- fast."

Erica and Nora exchanged disgusted glances. With a sigh, Erica placed her tray aside and said, "I'll go."

"Thank you," Nora said.

"You're welcome, but you owe me one," Erica teased and with another deep sigh headed out of the kitchen and up the long, winding staircase to the top floor of the house. She tapped on Harley's door.

"Come in! And it better be a member of the staff."

Erica stepped inside to find Harley standing in front of a full-length mirror with a gilded frame. She was tall, thin and had the finest pair of breasts money could buy. Turning to Erica, her plump red lips puffed out in a pout. "Just look at my little black dress! Nora had arranged it on my bed so that after I finished bathing I could slip right into it, but the damn cat jumped on top of it and now it's covered in white hair. I can't meet Ambassador Javier like this."

“Would you like me to help you find something else to wear?” Erica asked.

Harley wrinkled her nose and looked aghast, her contemptuous gaze raking Erica from head to toe. “Have a woman who works in a uniform help me decide what’s appropriate to wear? Be serious. What I want you to do is clean all the hair off this dress. Now. Hurry. And be careful. I’m wearing underclothes with pearls sewn into them. I don’t want them ruined.” She stood, her arms extended at her sides, waiting for Erica to brush off the dress.

It was all Erica could do not to first laugh in her face, second tell her exactly what she thought of her, and third, quit before the bitch could fire her. Unfortunately she needed the job, so she said, “Yes, Ma’am. I’ll be right back with the portable stain remover.”

“Hurry!”

Erica nodded and left the room. On her way to the cleaning supply closet, she muttered to herself, “You’d think this was a major crisis instead of a little cat hair on a dress.”

She took the portable device from a shelf, programmed it for hair removal on silk, and returned to the room where Harley still posed with her arms extended, a snooty expression on her face and her big blue eyes half closed.

I’d love to shove the stain remover up her ass, Erica thought as she carefully ran the device over the dress. When she finished, Harley glanced at herself in the mirror. She smoothed her hands over her flat stomach and narrow hips.

The intercom beeped on the wall and the butler’s voice carried into the room, “Your guest of honor has arrived, ma’am.”

“Good. I’ll be there directly,” Harley said, her voice suddenly soft and sweet. Obviously she was getting “in character” to impress the ambassador.

“If you won’t be needing me anymore, ma’am, I’ll return to the kitch --”

Before Erica could finish speaking, Harley swept past her, trailing a scented silk scarf in her face, and left the room.

Raising her eyes to the heavens, Erica followed her, keeping an appropriate distance behind. As they ascended the stairs, Erica's heart leapt in her throat. Standing in the foyer at the bottom of the winding staircase was Ambassador Javier himself. The simple black long-sleeved shirt and trousers accentuated his lean body. The shirt wasn't tight, but fitted enough to expose the gorgeous planes of his chest, the sleekness of his stomach and the curves of his muscular arms. He wore his true form, a silver bracelet wrapped around his wrist. Though he was hairless, his scalp was far from smooth and scarred from the accident of his youth, as was a large portion of the right side of his face. The eye on that side was partially hidden by knitted flesh. His uninjured side was shockingly attractive -- a hawkish nose, slender lips and a large, almond-shaped eye of topaz blue.

Will Doran stood beside him, a phony smile plastered on his face. Catching sight of Harley descending the stairs, he touched Javier's shoulder and nodded in the direction of his daughter.

The ambassador turned, glancing at Harley, and then to Erica's surprise his penetrating gaze fixed on her. She resisted the urge to smooth her uniform and touch her hair to see if it was still arranged in its neat twist. As if he would have any interest in her. From what she understood, Aspectians were even stricter than human blue-bloods regarding who they married.

Harley reached the bottom of the stairs, her lovely face simply beaming in an ultra-sweet smile. She slowly blinked her eyes in the ambassador's direction. For some reason Erica seemed rooted to the spot behind her. In the back of her mind she knew she had no place there and should get back to work, but she couldn't tear her gaze from Javier. This was a *man* -- one who made her heart pound and her clit throb just from the heated look in his eyes. Now that she stood closer, she saw that his other eye was just as beautiful in spite of the scarring around it. She noted the injuries were unusual, rather like an artist had deliberately twisted the clay on one side of a sculpture. It probably had to do with his Aspectian physique.

She drew a tremulous breath and detected a sexy, herbal aroma. It must have been Javier's scent, since she knew neither Harley nor her father wore such a cologne.

"Ambassador Javier, may I present my daughter, Miss Harley Doran."

Harley extended her hand, the wrist limp and long, slim fingers dangling. The square-tipped nails were painted red, like her lips.

Javier took her hand and shook it briefly. "Miss Doran." Again he looked behind her toward Erica. "And who is this?"

Harley glanced over her shoulder, caught sight of Erica and fired her a scathing look before she once again turned, smiling, to Javier. "She's a maid."

"Harley," Will said through his teeth, though he still wore the same frozen smile, "I don't think that's what the ambassador meant. The young woman's name is Erin. She's been with us for several months."

"Erica, sir," Erica corrected.

Will glanced at her, but didn't bother replying.

Javier's gaze met Erica's again and this time she practically stopped breathing. Every nerve in her body seemed to tingle with desire. She hoped she didn't look as horny as she felt. She'd never had such a reaction to a man. Ever. Of course the ambassador had fascinated her from the first and she'd followed his career closely, but she'd never dreamed of actually meeting him face-to-face. What she felt wasn't real in the sense of man-woman attraction. It was more like a form of infantile hero-worship for a public figure. That was *her* reason. But why was he looking at her like this, as if he wanted to devour her?

"Erica," he said with a nod.

"Erica!" came a harsh whisper from the doorway leading to the reception room.

She turned to Nora who stood, a tray of food in her hands and an almost frantic expression on her face.

Finally coming to her senses, Erica said, "Please excuse me. I have to get back to work."

Harley and Will ignored her completely, their attention focused on Javier. Strangely, he was still looking at Erica, an odd half-smile on his lips. He inclined his head to her and she reluctantly went to join Nora.

No sooner had she approached her friend than Nora whispered, "Are you crazy? Did you see the looks Harley and Representative Doran were giving you? You'll be lucky if you still have a job tomorrow."

"What was I supposed to do? Walk away and ignore the ambassador?"

Nora snorted. "I guess not because he sure wasn't ignoring you."

"Really?" Erica grinned. "Then it wasn't my imagination."

"Uh... no.," Nora said. "But watch out. His type will fuck you and leave you. Harley's more in his league, at least as far as money and power are concerned. I can't see her staying faithful to that face, though. But he can turn into anything she wants him to, so what's the difference?"

"I think he's perfect how he is," Erica murmured.

"Oh wow," Nora snorted. "Girl, you'd better get control of yourself before you end up in trouble."

"She doesn't deserve him," Erica said. "He's too good for her."

"Rich people are all alike." Nora shrugged. "I'm just trying to pay my bills and they're living in luxury. You think I give a damn about their petty little affairs?"

"I don't think he's like that at all. You know his mother was poor when she married his father."

Nora laughed. "Pick up a tray and get to work, Erica. We can talk about Cinderella stories some other time. I, for one, no longer believe in fairytales."

Erica sighed. In truth she also knew better than to believe in fairytales. She learned long ago that they never came true.

* * *

Javier sat across from Harley at the dinner table. Many other guests had been invited, most of which Javier knew through his political connections. Will Doran had made no secret about using this party to introduce Javier to his daughter. They both

seemed so certain that he would choose her as his mate, but they couldn't be further from the truth.

Though Javier was willing to make personal sacrifices for his people, destroying his love life wasn't one of them. Though he had agreed to marry an Earth woman, she had to be someone he cared about. Someone he could confide in and hopefully someone who aroused him. He wanted to share his life with his mate, not simply take meaningless vows to ensure a smooth alliance for his planet.

Javier wasn't a fool. He knew there was no shortage of women interested in marrying him because he had wealth and power. He also knew that if he wasn't an ambassador those same women wouldn't so much as look at him, except maybe to gawk at his deformities. In truth, Earth women seemed more accepting of his scars. His kind rarely scarred or became ill, so most pure-blooded Aspectians considered one who did weak. Since his mother wasn't a born Aspectian, but had been changed by his father, Javier had inherited some of her human frailties.

Yes, he could change his shape to hide the scars, but they were still there. They always would be. More than anything else, he wanted a mate who accepted him exactly how he was, regardless of whether or not he was an ambassador.

Across the table, Harley chuckled at a story told by one of the other guests -- a senator whose name slipped Javier's mind. Javier forced a smile, though he hadn't fully listened to the story. His thoughts were on Erica.

To appease his people as well as the Earth humans, he had accepted all invitations from potential mates interested in meeting him. Unfortunately most were politicians and socialites. On his own, Javier had been traveling around, meeting Earth women from all walks of life. He didn't want to limit his choices to women of a certain status. Somewhere on Earth was a woman perfect for him and he meant to find her.

When he'd seen Erica, a feeling such as he'd never experienced struck him right in the gut. His heartbeat had quickened, his cock stirred and he'd wanted nothing more than to shift into a flying creature and carry her off to someplace quiet and secluded where they could get to know each other.

Javier had certainly inherited his father's romantic, rebellious nature. It was that attitude that got him posted here on Earth to begin with.

"Now that dinner is over, perhaps we can mingle in the reception hall," Will suggested.

Guests stood and wandered out of the dining room. Javier was the last to leave. He rather hoped to catch another glimpse of Erica when the servants began clearing the table. However, two different maids started the job, so he went to join the other guests.

The large reception hall was decorated in jewel colors. At the back of the room, two large, cut glass doors opened to a vast garden complete with a pool and fountains spouting water tinted pale pink.

Everyone was talking and sipping drinks. Though Javier was the guest of honor, no one noticed when he stepped outside. Also like his father, he had a quiet manner and preferred to observe those around him than be the center of attention. In social settings it was easy for him to disappear due to his quiet nature. Even Harley, who had focused her complete attention on him all night, had stepped away to gossip with a couple of her friends. From the garden, Javier saw them leave the reception hall, champagne glasses in hand.

He walked a short distance away, removed the silver bracelet as well as his clothes and placed them under a flowering bush. It was time to see just how interested in him the pretty, painted Miss Harley Doran truly was.

He effortlessly shifted into the shape of the moss covering the side of the house and climbed upward until he hung outside the window of an upstairs sitting room. Harley and two other young women -- one with long red hair, the other with short dark hair -- lounged in cushioned chairs. Spying wasn't something Aspectians encouraged. Not only was it bad manners but more often than not you heard things you might not want to hear. Javier expected the worst, so he wasn't surprised when the conversation turned toward him in a most unpleasant way.

“Harley, you’d really marry him?” said one of the women, whom Javier recognized as Darla Harrison, a socialite. She curled her lips and shrugged her long, red hair over her shoulder.

“Of course,” Harley said. “Can you imagine what it would be like being the wife of the Aspectian Ambassador to Earth? I could probably have anything I wanted, not to mention he could make me like him. I could become anything I wanted to be and without synthetic cosmetic alterations.”

“That’s if the conversion process doesn’t kill you,” said the black-haired woman.

“Rita, you’re such a downer,” Harley told her.

“That’s right, Harley,” the redhead warned. “Very few people can take the change.”

“I’m willing to risk it.”

“Are you willing to risk kissing that face of his?” Darla said.

“He can make himself handsome.” Rita sighed, a dreamy look in her eyes. “If I married an Aspectian, I’d make him change into a different actor every night.”

“When he marries me, he will,” Harley stated. “Or else he’ll be jerking himself off. I didn’t spend millions on reconstruction and five days a week at the gym to fuck a guy who looks like a meteor landed on his face.”

Outside the window, Javier’s moss rustled. These women were completely repulsive. That spoiled, self-centered bitch had the audacity to think he’d bind himself to her for life?

Unfortunately it had been the same with many women he’d met, regardless of their social class. Ones like Harley were the worst, however. They were so accustomed to getting what they wanted when they wanted it. How could she have thought him stupid enough to fall for her simpering smiles, tight black dress and squeaky, phony voice that made her sound as if she’d been sucking helium gas?

The three bitches were still engaged in conversation, but Javier had heard enough. He retreated back down the side of the house and reverted to his true form. He pulled on his clothes and slid the bracelet around his wrist. Rather than join the other

guests, he decided to stay in the garden for a while. The fresh air felt good, and at the moment he wanted to be alone.

Chapter Two

After serving dinner, Erica was off duty for the rest of the night. She went to her room, changed out of her uniform and into her pajamas -- soft, black cotton pants and a matching sleeveless top. Before going to bed, she decided a walk in the garden would be nice. She'd keep to the east side, far away from the reception hall where the party was still in full force. She sat on a stone bench and gazed up at the stars, wondering what the sky looked like on a clear night in Aspectia. She'd love to visit the planet someday, but doubted it would be possible. Intergalactic flights were very expensive and on her maid's salary it would take years to save up for one. She collected pictures of Aspectia, though. It was a fascinating place, mostly populated by Aspectians, but humans lived there, too. It was funny that people exactly like those on Earth had developed on a planet so far away. Maybe Earth humans and Aspectian humans were connected in some way. Was it possible that they were even related to the Aspectians? After all, in their true form Aspectians looked human.

Her neck started to ache from gazing upward and she glanced to the side, toward the light glowing from the reception hall. Surprise darted through her when she saw Javier standing alone by the fountain.

Once again compelled by an inexplicable feeling, she walked toward him. He didn't turn to her and by the distracted look on his face, he was so absorbed in his thoughts that he didn't know she was there. Something in his expression tugged at her heart.

"Are you all right?" she asked.

He turned to her sharply, his brow furrowed as if he hated the idea of being caught in a vulnerable state. Seeing her, his expression smoothed and a slight smile tugged at his lips. "I'm fine. Thank you... Erica."

She tingled all over. He'd remembered her name. "I thought there might be something wrong since you're out here by yourself," she said. "I didn't mean to disturb you."

"You haven't. Actually, if you'd like to stay and talk for a while I'd enjoy the company."

She chuckled. "Right. As if you don't have better company in there."

"It can't compare," he said, his blue eyes fixed on her in a manner that sent waves of lust rolling through her.

Slowly his gaze drifted to her breasts. Her stiff nipples poked against the ultra-thin fabric of her top. What was it about this man that made her lose control of her body like this? Already her clit ached and her pussy felt damp with lust. In an attempt to hide her unruly nipples she crossed her arms over her chest.

"Are you cold?" he asked.

"No." She moistened her lips and met his gaze. "I shouldn't really be here. If my employers find me --"

"Then I'll tell them the truth. That I asked you to stay."

She smiled. "That might work for tonight, but I still think I'd find myself out of a job tomorrow."

"Where would you go?"

A bit taken aback by his question, she stared at him in disbelief for a moment then chuckled and said, "My shuttle and pray I could find a campground with showers."

He laughed and shook his head. "That wouldn't work. The Aspectian Island would be better."

“What?” Her smile faded and she seemed rooted to the spot. “Are you offering me a job, Ambassador?” And if he was, what kind of job? Maybe Nora had been right and he was just a typical sleaze-ball.

“If you want one. Actually I’m wondering if you’re interested in a courtship?”

This was getting weirder by the minute. Courtship. An archaic word on Earth but one still common on Aspectia. She’d read that years ago Aspectian marriages were arranged by families. As the tradition of betrothal died out, it was replaced by courtships, during which eligible partners would spend time together to see if they were compatible. That custom was still in effect today.

“Maybe you don’t know what that is,” he said. “I should explain --”

“You don’t have to. I read about it.”

“Really? Are you interested in Aspectia?”

“Yes. Very,” she replied.

“Then are you interested in spending some time at my island?”

“Ambassador, are you saying you want me to be --”

“I’m asking if you would consider the possibility of mating with me. There’s no rush. The courtship gives us time to know each other and if we find we aren’t compatible, I will provide compensation.”

“I don’t know. This is so unexpected.”

“Maybe, but I’ve been searching your planet for possible mates.”

“But why me? I’m just a working class girl. What do I know about politics? Wouldn’t someone like Harley be a better choice?”

“Not if she was the last woman in the universe,” he said with such heartfelt sincerity that Erica couldn’t help smiling. It seemed the ambassador was a very good judge of character.

“I didn’t mean her personally but someone like her.”

“You aren’t interested. I understand,” he said.

“Wait, I didn’t mean that!”

“Then you are interested?”

He took a step closer and she tilted her face to meet his gaze. He was so tall, lean yet powerful. Her fingers itched to traced the shape of his thick biceps and stroke the expanse of his chest. She wondered what his skin felt like, if his lips were warm and moist. "I just..."

"Erica! What are you doing?"

Both she and Javier turned to Harley who strode into the garden, her eyes blazing.

"Nothing. I..."

"Why are you out of uniform?" Harley demanded, then looked at Javier. "I apologize if she's been bothering you."

"On the contrary, I've thoroughly enjoyed her company." Javier smiled in Erica's direction.

"Harley, what's going on out here?" Will called as he stepped through the open door to join his daughter. His disapproving gaze also swept Erica in her pajamas. "Erin, why are you standing here dressed in completely inappropriate attire?"

"She's here at my request," Javier said coolly. "And her name is Erica."

Father and daughter looked at him sharply.

"Thank you for a pleasant evening, Will," Javier said. "But I must be going if I'm to return to my island at a decent hour. Erica, are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" Harley demanded, her sweet, high-pitched voice dropping to her natural tone.

"She's accompanying me to the island," Javier said and turned to Erica, "if you haven't changed your mind?"

"No," Erica said, her head spinning. This was happening so fast. Part of her thought she was crazy for agreeing to go with him. Nothing could possibly come out of it. Like Nora said, Cinderella was just a fairytale. "I haven't."

"Then pack your things."

Harley looked ready to kill, for all of two seconds. Then she regained control of herself, smiled sweetly and said, "I do hope you enjoy your new post on the Aspectian Island."

"She's not going there to work," Javier said.

"Oh?" Will practically growled.

"I must thank you again, Will," Javier told him. "If not for this dinner party, I might never have found my potential mate."

Harley and her father were both rendered speechless.

Javier extended his hand to Erica who slipped hers into it. She nearly closed her eyes from the pleasure of his touch. His hand was long and slender, warm and strong.

"Show me where your room is. I'll help you pack," he said.

They walked away, leaving Harley and Will staring after them.

* * *

Erica had been planning a vacation to the Aspectian Island, since those interested in experiencing a bit of Aspectia on Earth were allowed to take tours. She'd figured another year or two and she'd have enough money saved to take the trip, so being here with Javier on his private shuttle headed for the island was like a dream come true.

They sat in a plush compartment, complete with a carpeted floor, dining area and several comfortable chairs, including the oversized couch on which she sat rather stiffly.

Javier, who had been talking to the pilot, now entered the compartment. With a pleasant smile, he sat beside her. Erica noticed he was no longer wearing his silver bracelet.

She must have appeared as anxious as she felt, because his smile faded and he asked, "Are you comfortable?"

"Yes. Just a little nervous."

"Don't be. When we get to the island the members of my household will make you feel at home. Right now my father's old friend, Tutt, is supervising the staff while

my regular butler is visiting family in Aspectia. I'm sure you and Tutt will get along very well."

She nodded, forcing a smile. It had been easy to get swept up in Javier's charming offer. Now she realized she might have made a mistake.

Javier reached out and cupped her cheek. He gently guided her face toward his. Earlier his gaze had been piercing. Now she saw warmth in his blue eyes. Something about this man made her feel secure and protected. In her life she rarely experienced those sensations.

"Tell me about yourself, Erica."

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything you want to tell me."

Another tingle of desire shot through her. The way he talked to her and looked at her made her feel like the only woman in the universe.

"There's not much. My parents died when I was sixteen, and I lived with an aunt and uncle for about a year. We didn't get along very well, so I left when I was seventeen and worked in a restaurant for a while. Then I got a job as a housekeeper at a hotel. From there I worked in a couple of private homes. I started working for the Dorans about six months ago. I don't think I'd have lasted much longer there. Harley was really starting to get on my nerves. So you see, I don't come from an important family, I'm not very educated and I'm no great beauty, so I doubt I'm the kind of woman you'll want to mate with."

"I see." His fingertips trailed along her cheekbone then he brushed a wisp of hair from her face. "What do you enjoy doing in your free time?"

Once again those eyes seemed to devour her. Her voice softened and she leaned even closer to him. "I like to swim and walk on the beach. And I like to read, especially about Aspectia. I'm not just saying that to suck up. You can ask me about your planet and I bet I know more than you think I do." She decided to leave out that she also enjoyed following his career.

"I believe you're not sucking up." He grinned. "That's one of the things I like about you. You seem honest and unpretentious."

"You like that?"

"Very much. Tell me more about yourself."

"There's nothing else." She gave an exasperated little laugh. "Other than I'm five-feet four-inches tall, wear a size eight shoe and I'm not giving my weight to anyone. It's a little too much anyway."

He swiftly pulled her into his arms and rose to his feet. She gave a little shout of surprise and wrapped her arms around his neck. Erica found herself staring into his eyes, her face mere inches from his. This close she could see the very texture of his scarred flesh, but also the full beauty of his eyes. They were so blue, warm and sexy.

"You feel like the perfect weight to me," he said.

"You're sure Aspectians can't get a hernia?" she tried to sound teasing, but didn't quite make it. Her entire body was alive from being so close to him. Her heart pounded and though part of her knew she was moving awfully fast with this guy, another part knew it was the right decision.

"Not from carrying lovely little you," he said, his voice husky. He dipped his head slightly, not quite kissing her but if she wanted to touch her lips to his she only had to move the tiniest bit. She did.

He pressed his lips closer to hers and she felt their warmth. They were slightly moist and moved against hers with just the right combination of roughness and tenderness.

With a soft moan, she tightened her arms around him and he hoisted her even higher as the tip of his tongue thrust into her mouth. Erica's lips parted. She opened herself completely to him, loving the feel of his warm, wet tongue stroking hers.

Erica still in his arms, he sat on the couch again. This was the best feeling in the world, sitting on this irresistible man's lap, feeling his deep, passionate kisses.

When their lips finally parted, Erica was panting but ready for more. Even Javier was a little breathless and the expression on his face revealed the depth of his passion.

"We have nearly an hour before we arrive at the island," he said, stroking her shoulders and back. "I can think of some things to do during that time."

"So can I," she breathed and tilted her face toward his again.

"How do you want me to look?"

"What?" she murmured, her lips hovering over his.

"What shape pleases you?" Right before her eyes, his facial shape rearranged itself. His hawkish features became more rounded, his jaw very square and the scars moved to the back of his scalp then disappeared beneath a head of thick, black hair. Only his eyes stayed the same, but she knew that was a characteristic of Aspectians. Their eyes were the only part of them that didn't shift. Depending on the shape they took the eyes might move to an internal position, thereby unseen, but when in view their appearance never changed.

"You don't seem to like that shape," he observed. "Do ladies prefer blonds?" The black hair changed to platinum and he even sprouted a long, silky beard. She felt his muscles ripple and remold themselves, his tall, slender body becoming shorter and thicker. "How do you want me to look?" he asked again.

She considered the question. Though Aspectians fascinated her, the idea of making love with a man who assumed different forms unsettled her. "Keep your true form," she said.

An almost surprised expression passed through his eyes. "You're sure?"

"Oh yes. I'm sure." She smiled and cupped the back of his neck. "I don't think I'm ready to make love with you changing form all the way through."

"I won't do that. Just pick one you find pleasing."

"I have. I like your real face."

He looked almost disbelieving and she felt a pang of sympathy. Apparently, in spite of his confident demeanor, past rejections had left emotional scars to match his physical ones.

Again his muscles rippled and seconds later she found herself staring into his familiar face.

She kissed him chastely at first, but that mere brushing of lips stoked their passion and the kiss deepened. Their tongues met and Erica placed her hands on his chest, loving its hardness beneath his clothes.

Javier began unbuttoning her blouse and in spite of her arousal she felt apprehensive again. "What if someone walks in on us?" she asked.

"They won't. When it's time for us to land, the pilot will contact us by the intercom."

"Are you sure?"

"Erica, I would not place you in an embarrassing situation. However, if you'd like to wait --"

"That's the problem," she gave a self-conscious little laugh. "I don't want to wait."

"Then don't." This time when he began unfastening the buttons, she didn't stop him. She shrugged off her shirt and placed it aside.

Javier's gorgeous blue eyes fixed on her breasts that strained against her red satin bra. He cupped them, caressing ever so gently.

"I'm afraid I'm ignorant of many aspects of human sexuality." His gaze once again met hers and he said, "I want to please you, Erica. Tell me if I'm doing this right." He unfastened the front clasp on her bra and freed her breasts. His thumbs swept over her nipples, making the sensitive flesh tightened even more.

"You've been great so far," she breathed.

"Would you like them licked?"

"Yes," she whispered.

Javier gently pushed her to her back on the couch. He knelt beside her and while caressing one of her breasts he began licking the other. His hot, wet tongue rolled over the creamy part of her flesh, then he began lapping and sucking the nipple.

Her eyes closed and her heart pounded with desire. "Oh, yes, that's great," she murmured.

He began licking her other nipple while at the same time raising her skirt. She moaned softly when he began caressing her inner thighs with sweeps of his big, warm hand. Then his fingers dipped beneath her panties and circled her slick entrance. Slowly he slid his fingers into her pussy and began exploring her intimately.

She purred and squirmed beneath his touch.

"How about this?" he asked, sweeping his thumb over her clit. "Aspectian women in their true form are sensitive there, as are humans on our home world. Is it the same for Earth humans?"

"Oh yes," she gasped.

"Good." Again his head dipped toward her breasts, and he sucked on first one nipple then the other. He withdrew his fingers from her drenched pussy and used them to fondle her clit.

Erica's heart pounded and her head spun with desire. Usually it took her a while to reach orgasm, but already she was on the verge of explosion. Maybe it was because she'd been admiring Javier from afar for years only to find out he was even sexier in person.

She cried out softly as she came, her hips arching against his hand as he continued stroking her and sucking her nipple until she lay completely satisfied.

After a moment he rose from his knees and sat on the couch again. Erica pushed herself onto her elbows and stared at him. His cock stood out stiffly against the front of his trousers and he watched her with a smoldering look in his eyes that made her belly tighten.

This time she knelt between his legs and unzipped his trousers. His thick, satin-skinned cock sprang free and she wrapped her hands around it, stroking the shaft. "I've had a contraceptive, disease-control injection within the past month," she told him. "In case you're interested."

His lips flickered in a smile. "So have I."

"Good," she murmured, then stood and pulled off her skirt and panties. She sat on his lap, her backside pushing intimately against him.

Javier gave a low groan of desire and placed his hands on her waist. He readjusted her position slightly and she felt his thick, hard cock enter her.

"This is how humans make love all the time?" he murmured, half curious but mostly aroused. "Always in this one shape?"

"Of course." She grinned. "How else would we do it?"

"Good point. It's... nice." He said, then groaned again as she rocked her backside against him a bit faster.

His arms wrapped around her and he fondled her breasts and clit, his long, slim fingers once again pushing her toward orgasm.

At almost the same moment they came. His cock jerked into her faster and she grasped his hand and wrist, holding him in place. Even in the midst of his own intense pleasure, he continued stroking her clit.

Erica moaned as her orgasm waned and settled against him, her back resting against his chest and his breath gently fanning her shoulder.

Chapter Three

Oddly, making love with Javier seemed to alleviate some of Erica's anxiety about the island. They'd only just met, but already she felt close to him. When they arrived at his house and she met Tutt, she began to realize that she might just fit in here after all.

Tutt, a tall-silver-haired Aspectian wearing a pale gray suit with a shell-pink tie, met them in the foyer. "I'm so pleased to meet you, Miss Erica," he said with a pleasant smile. "As soon as I received the transmission that you were coming, I prepared a room for you. I'm sure you'd like to rest."

"Yes. Thank you," she said.

"Javier, there are several messages for you in your office," Tutt said, glancing at the ambassador. "Also, I want to remind you that you're to attend the Earth-Aspectia Society of the Arts meeting in Italy on Thursday."

"Thank you, Tutt," Javier said. He gently ran his thumb across Erica's lips. "I have some business to attend to, but Tutt will show you around. Tomorrow after breakfast I'll take you on a tour of the island. Tutt, if I could have a moment alone with Erica before she retires?"

"Of course." The servant nodded and stepped out of the foyer.

Javier placed his hands on her shoulders and gazed into her eyes. "You've begun teaching me a lot about human sexuality and I thoroughly enjoyed the lesson."

Heat rose in her face and she grinned. "Glad I could help."

"Are you interested in Aspectian sexuality?"

"More than you know."

“Good. I’ll be sending you a gift. A garment I’d like you to wear when you want to feel close to me and I’m not around. It’s not an ordinary garment, but one with Aspectian characteristics. Appreciate the garment and you will understand Aspectian sexuality. If it makes you uncomfortable at any time, remove it. It’s intended to bring pleasure and knowledge, not shame.”

Her curiosity piqued, she asked, “What is it? Some kind of kinky underwear?”

“Something like that, except when used properly it can lead to beautiful experiences. I know we’ve just met, but trust me, Erica. I don’t want you to fear the Aspectian way, but enjoy it. My gift will help you do that.”

“All right, Javier,” she said, holding his gaze. “I’ll try.”

“Good.” He bent and brushed her mouth with a kiss, then leaned closer for a lingering one.

Erica slipped her arms around him, loving the feel of his hard body and the gentle pressure of his lips against hers. Then he stepped away and called for Tutt who returned to the foyer and guided Erica up the stairs.

“I’ve given you a room next to Javier’s. You have a balcony and a lovely view of the ocean.”

“Thank you, this island is beautiful. I’ve never seen trees and flowers quite like the ones growing here.” On the drive to the house, she’d seen jewel-colored trees and other strangely beautiful vegetation.

“Mostly imports from Aspectia.”

“I’ve read that Aspectia isn’t just the name of your planet, but also the name of the oldest kingdom on it.”

“Yes, Javier’s father and I grew up in the kingdom of Aspectia, then we moved to a smaller, human kingdom called Windfarv where he met Javier’s mother. They will be visiting here next month. I’m sure you’ll like them.”

“If I’m still here.”

Tutt glanced at her in surprise. “You’re in courtship with Javier, are you not?”

“Yes, but what if it doesn’t work out? Tutt, just between us, I don’t think he gets the full picture regarding me. I’m not some socialite. I’m just an average woman.”

“And what is wrong with that? If you’ve spent even a short time with Javier you must know that he’s not impressed by superficial trappings. Of a royal bloodline he might be, but his mother was a peasant dancer before she married.”

“I know but I feel like I’m going to mess up somehow. Embarrass him or myself.”

“If that’s all you’re worried about then I can help you, if you’d like. Centuries ago I instructed Javier’s mother in the ways of royalty and I’m proud to say I was also her teacher in the art of shifting shape. Nothing would please me more than to do for you what I did for her.”

Erica was stunned by the kindness she’d been treated with, first by Javier and now by Tutt. Most of her life she’d known people who were out for themselves. Everything was a struggle and most people liked to kick you to the dirt instead of help you stand. She almost wondered if this was too good to be true.

Tutt seemed to sense her emotional withdrawal and said, “Forgive me, miss, if I’ve overstepped my bounds. I didn’t mean to imply that you need instruction. Only that if you want it, I’m here.”

Closing her eyes for a moment, she sighed and shook her head. “No, I’m sorry, Tutt. I guess I’m a little... unsure. That’s all. I really would appreciate the help.”

“Excellent. Now. Here’s your room.” He paused and opened a door at the end of a long corridor with walls painted pale green and polished wooden floors.

They stepped into a spacious room, the floors and walls made of wood. Doors led to a balcony that, as promised, had a beautiful view of the ocean. There was a big four-poster bed with a sheer canopy. By a picture window facing the jungle stood a breakfast table and two chairs. The room also had a polished wooden chest of drawers, a vanity with a mirror framed in gold, and a sitting area with a mint-green and white couch and matching chairs.

She found her luggage had already been placed on the bed, probably unloaded from the shuttle by other servants.

"This is beautiful," she murmured. It was even prettier than Harley's room at the Doran house.

Tutt pointed to the right. "That door leads to your private bath and that door," he pointed left, "leads to Javier's room. Would you like a tour of the house and perhaps a meal before going to sleep?"

"Actually I'm kind of tired," she said. Not that she didn't want to see the rest of the house, but she needed some time alone to collect herself. A lot had happened to her in a short time. "But I am a little hungry." Making love with Javier had stirred her appetite.

"Not a problem. I will have a snack sent up for you."

"Thank you very much, Tutt."

"My pleasure, Miss." He bowed from the neck and left the room, closing the door behind him.

She went to the bathroom where she relieved herself. Just as she stepped into the bedroom, someone knocked on the door. "Come in."

A maid entered with a tray of food.

"Hello." The young woman smiled. At least she looked young. If she was Aspectian, she might very well be centuries old. "Would you like this on the table?"

"Please," Erica said. It felt strange having someone wait on her for a change.

While the maid set up the meal, Tutt also entered the room carrying a pale blue gift bag. He handed it to Erica and said, "Javier asked me to give this to you. He said you'd know what it is. Again he sends his apologies that business has kept him from you tonight."

"Thank you." Erica took the bag and peered in, past the blue tissue paper. Translucent rainbow-colored material glimmered inside.

"Good night, miss. I'll see you in the morning."

"Good night, Tutt."

The maid also left Erica with a smile and a nod.

Once again alone, Erica sat on the bed, the gift bag beside her. She reached in and removed a beautiful teddie of the most unusual material she'd ever seen. It had a soft but uneven texture and felt warm, almost pulsing in her hands. Sexual desire shot through her, making her nipples stiffen and her clit tingle. This was crazy, getting turned on just from holding an article of clothing. The sensations unsettled her so much that she flung the teddie back into the bag and walked to the table.

As she ate, her gaze kept returning to the bag until the desire to touch the teddie again almost overcame her. Javier had warned it was a sexual gift and a little kinky. She'd promised to give it a try. That in itself seemed enough of a reason to indulge her desire to put it on.

She decided to make herself wait, to extend the anticipation. In the bathroom, she showered and brushed her teeth, then walked, naked, to the bed. She removed the teddie and held it up to the light, watching it shimmer and ripple in the slight breeze blowing through the open window. It was still warm and seemed to have a pulse of its own.

Drawing a deep breath, she held it over her breasts. Her nipples spiked against the soft fabric and it seemed to mold to her body. She gasped, lust and a hint of fear darting through her. Again she held the teddie away, but it seemed to beckon her. She slipped it on and it immediately fit itself around her like a second skin, dipped between her legs to form transparent panties and fitted around her torso. Strangely, it felt like hands cupping her breasts. Strong, warm male hands that knew exactly how to hold her. The material tightened around her nipples, squeezing them gently. It felt like tiny tongues were built into that uneven material, thrusting against her nipples and roaming over her breasts and belly.

"Oh damn," she panted and moaned softly. This was unbelievable. Kinky and incredibly erotic.

Then it struck her that she was getting a sexual buzz from a teddie.

"This is too weird," she said, jerking at the material and pulling it off her. She tossed it across the room and it landed on the floor. The wind blew it and the fabric shimmered.

"No way," she whispered. "I'm sorry, Javier, but I don't know if I can handle this."

She pulled down the coverlet and lay on the sheets, letting the breeze fan her as it fanned the teddie. Staring at the ceiling, she tried to forget about the stupid garment, but couldn't. Frustrated and filled with desire, she rolled onto her side and stared at the discarded teddie.

Javier's words echoed in her mind. *Appreciate the garment and you will understand Aspection sexuality.* She hadn't come here simply because she had nowhere else to go. She wouldn't toy with emotions like that, hers or Javier's. The truth was she liked him. A lot. She wanted to get to know him and she hoped they would turn out to be right for each other. When they made love, he had stirred feelings in her that weren't just sexual.

"All right, Javier. I'll try it again." Still tingling from head to toe, she rose from the bed, walked toward the teddie and nudged it with her toe. To her surprise it molded to her foot, just as it had done to her torso. Those dozens of little tongues lapped her and the soft material warmed and caressed her toes.

She reached down with a trembling hand, picked it up and put it on. This time it didn't hug her so snugly, but seemed willing to give her time to adjust.

Moistening her lips that had gone dry, Erica walked to the bed and lay down.

Pulsing with a life of its own, the Teddie rested on her flesh. Slowly, gently, as if sensing her apprehension, the teddie began fitting to her again, caressing her intimately. A portion of the silky material dipped between her legs. It solidified, feeling much like the tip of a thick, velvet-skinned penis pushing against her passion-drenched pussy. Bit by bit it filled her. Unconsciously, Erica spread her legs. The bra cups changed to the shape of golden hands that held her breasts snugly, the fingers caressing her nipples. They stiffened to rock-hard peaks, becoming so sensitive that the touch caused pleasure-pain.

She moaned and her eyes closed again. Around her stomach and ribs, the material stroked her tenderly, those tongues licking her again.

"Please," she breathed, letting her hands fall to her sides. She didn't need to caress herself. The teddie was doing a fantastic job on its own. The velvety cock that had emerged from the panties began thrusting into her.

Waves of heat broke over Erica and her entire body pulsed with need. Her back arched and hips lifted to the rhythm of the teddie's caresses. She could scarcely believe what was happening.

"This can't be right," she panted, trying to will her body back under control, but it was impossible. The weirdness of the situation struck her and she nearly panicked. "No... no."

Then it was no longer a teddie wrapped around her, but a man's body covering her. A familiar body -- hard, lean, and powerful.

Her eyes flew open and she found herself staring into Javier's eyes.

"I'm sorry," he said, his expression filled with tenderness. "I thought this would teach you to appreciate Aspectian sexuality. I didn't mean to upset you."

Her mouth opened but no words came out. For a moment she lay there, torn between shock and arousal. Then a hint of anger struck her. "Why didn't you tell me?" she demanded.

"I'm telling you now. If you want me to stop making love to you, I will. If you want to leave, I'll give you the promised compensation, but if you stay I promise I will do everything in my power to make you happy, Erica, and show you the pleasures of being with an Aspectian. Let me finish making love to you. Please."

He could take what he wanted, or he could have continued the lie, allowing the teddie to stimulate her to climax. He had warned her that his gift would be sexual in nature and she had accepted it.

At the moment she was so aroused that she almost didn't care what shape he was in, as long as he pushed her toward the climax she so desperately wanted.

"Just fuck me, Javier," she panted. "You can explain later."

“Are you certain this is what you --”

In reply she grasped his neck, kissed him hard and jerked her hips against him, forcing his rock-hard cock deeper inside her.

Obviously he was just as aroused as she was because he didn't waste any more time on conversation. His hands braced on either side of her head, he began thrusting into her, filling her over and over with his magnificent erection. In spite of his desire, he didn't rush their lovemaking. In fact he kept up that slow, steady rhythm for so long that she thought she might scream from frustration.

“Javier, please,” she gasped, wrapping her arms and legs around him. “Faster. Harder. I can't wait anymore.” The damn teddie had her teetering on the edge and his slow, deliberate movements had only served to tease her to a level of desire she'd never before experienced.

Covering her mouth in a searing kiss, he began thrusting fast and hard.

Within seconds Erica came, gasping into his mouth, her body straining against his. The orgasm was so long and intense that she thought she might faint. As it began to wane she felt him come. His breathing was hoarse and he tore his mouth from hers, every muscle in his body tight. He shouted her name as he climaxed, then collapsed on top of her.

After a moment Erica felt him move aside, giving her room to breathe. Drifting to sleep, she felt the caress of his lips on her temple and the sensation of the cool sheet settling onto her heated flesh as he covered her.

Chapter Four

“Erica...” Javier sat at the breakfast table in her room, turning a fat berry between his long, slender fingers.

She sensed he wanted to tell her something but didn’t quite know how. This seemed unusual for a man who was so composed, so worldly. “What is it?”

“I’m still thinking about last night. I’m afraid I might have destroyed your trust rather than reinforce it.”

“Javier, no. I was surprised at first, but I think I understand why you didn’t tell me the truth about the teddie.”

“I didn’t want you to fear the Aspectian way and I guess part of me thought you would prefer a handsome partner, that if you let me change form when we make love it would please you more. I’ve found most women prefer making love that way, at least with me.”

“I thought you liked me because I’m not most women.”

His brow furrowed. “I do, but --”

“I’m not. And for your information, you are handsome. And sexy. No one has ever made me feel like you do. Even if it doesn’t work out between us, I’ll never have any regrets and I’ll never forget what we shared.”

He reached for her hand and squeezed it gently. “I knew you were a special woman, Erica. That sounds trite, but I mean it.”

“Can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

"How did it happen?" She leaned closer and ran her fingertips over the scarred side of his face.

"It was stupid. When I was a boy I was cocky. Really cocky. I had great talent for shape changing and picked up shifting more easily than even full-blooded Aspectians. The father of one of my friends was a weapons technician. He tested silver explosives. On a dare from my friends, I shifted into ammo for a ray rocket and tried to out-fly the explosives on the test range. Well, obviously I wasn't as quick as we all thought I was."

Erica looked horrified. "You could have been killed!"

"I nearly was. Cosmetic enhancements don't work on Aspectians. The only way to disguise defects is to shift shape. Unfortunately my injuries were so traumatic that even when I change shape I can't hide them completely. I'm glad you don't seem to mind."

"I hate knowing you were hurt, Javier, but if you must know I find your uniqueness very sexy."

"If anyone but you said that I'd think they were... how did you put it? Sucking up."

Anger stirred inside her, but his smile disarmed her.

"However I don't think you have a conniving bone in your body, Erica," he said. "So thank you for the compliment. Regarding my appearance, it's a first. And I promise I will never use my abilities to deceive you again."

"You better not," she scolded, only half-teasing. "However, your plan worked. I love having sex with you in your true form, but now I'm more than willing to try new things."

"I'm glad you said that. I thought you might enjoy going for a flight around the island."

"You're going to change into a shuttle?"

"No. I have something simpler but much more fun in mind."

"Such as?"

He stood and before her eyes he changed into a sleek, winged leopard of solid black.

She stared at him in wonder. When she was finally able to speak she said, "You call that simple?"

Javier purred softly and approached her, nudging her arm with his nose. Erica lifted her hand and stroked his face, hesitantly at first. Against the black fur, his eyes looked even bluer. He brushed against her and glanced behind him. Apparently he wanted her to get on his back.

She mounted him, feeling his muscles ripple between her legs. Placing her hands on his powerful shoulders, she held on as he approached the balcony. She gasped as he leapt into the air, his wings carrying them higher and higher. At first she was afraid, but soon she realized she was safe with him and began to enjoy the flight.

They circled the island several times and each time she saw something new. Waterfalls and villages, people playing on the beach, and all the beautiful trees imported from Aspectia. After what seemed like ages, his body grew warm and damp. She heard the rasp of his breath and wondered if he was getting tired. Surely flying like this must take a lot of energy. It seemed impossible that such an amazing creature existed, yet the Aspectians were quite real. In fact they passed by several other flying creatures -- an enormous parrot and a winged mare.

They finally landed on the lawn in Javier's backyard. She slid off his back and he changed to his true form. He stood, tall, naked and gorgeous, his chest heaving and sleekly-muscled body glistening with sweat. Hell, she couldn't resist him.

Her belly tight with lust, she approached and slid her arms around his neck. He stared at her, his eyes fierce with passion. Cupping the back of her head, he kissed her deeply.

Erica's hands slid over his shoulders, feeling the rock-hard muscles beneath sweat-slicked flesh. His cock stiffened and pushed against her, and she moaned with desire.

"That's her," came a stern voice from behind her.

"Ambassador, step away from that woman."

Their kiss broke and they turned toward a group of Aspectian guards. A shiver of fear darted through Erica. The guards were armed with modern laser pistols, but they wore the traditional shape of an Aspectian warrior -- a man's body with a buffalo's head.

"What's the meaning of this?" Javier demanded.

"That woman, or an Aspectian in the shape of that woman, entered your house a short time ago and planted silver explosives. Luckily your servant, Tutt, found them before they went off and we were able to disarm them."

"It wasn't Erica," Javier stated. "She has been with me all morning. Lock down this island immediately. Initiate the silver shields."

Two of the buffalo guards left to carry out his orders while the third escorted Javier and Erica to the house.

"Why would someone pretend to be me?" Erica asked, fear coiling inside her. "Who knows I'm here besides you, Tutt and --"

"The Dorans," he said.

"But Will Doran is on the Continental Council. Why would he do something that could destroy relations between our planets?"

"It might not be him," Javier said. "But his daughter is accustomed to getting her own way."

"You think she'd tried to kill you because you rejected her?"

"If it is her, then it seems she wants to kill us both, or at the very least frame you."

"This is insane."

"But not impossible."

Erica was starting to believe nothing was impossible.

* * *

Though Javier remained outwardly calm and collected, inside he was seething. Being a public figure, he was accustomed to occasional threats on his life, but he hated the idea of someone harming Erica.

Already he considered her his mate. It was just a matter of time before she, too, realized they belonged together. Unless she was frightened off first by this incident. If she was, he couldn't blame her.

The immediate lockdown of the island proved worthwhile. All Aspectians who either lived on or were visiting the island were registered by island security. Late that evening an unregistered male Aspectian was picked up hiding in the jungle not far from the island's main port. When questioned, he admitted to being hired by Harley Doran to plant the silver explosives. She had shown him an image of Erica and instructed him to infiltrate the house using her shape. She had also given him enough money to bribe island security into slipping him past registration when his shuttle landed. The security guard was also arrested.

"I bet you never thought things would be so difficult when you decided to enter courtship with a maid," Erica said when they sat down to dinner very late that night.

"I only hope this incident hasn't turned you off the idea of mating."

"No." She grinned. "I'm made of tougher stuff than that. Besides, if I took off now that means Harley won."

"Harley is spending tonight in custody."

"Somehow I doubt she'll get any serious punishment though. Her kind never do. Her father will pay someone off and she'll be free."

"I'm not so sure about that. Aspectia has taken this attack very seriously. Her father will probably be voted off the Continental Council, that is if Earth wishes to keep good relations with Aspectia."

"I don't even care about the Dorans anymore. All that matters is that no one was hurt, especially you." She stood and approached him. Slipping her arms around him, she kissed the top of his head and held him closer. Warmth filled him and he guided her to a straddle position on top of him.

He pulled up her shirt and she raised her arms, allowing him to remove it completely. After unfastening her bra and discarding it, he took her breasts in his hands and squeezed them gently, then he lifted them and ran his tongue from one nipple to the other.

Erica sighed with pleasure and held his head closer, running her hands over his scalp and noting how it was smooth in places and textured in others.

“Oh, Javier,” she cried when he began sucking hard on one nipple. Desire almost overwhelmed her and she began rocking atop him, rubbing her clit against his stiffening cock. If only they weren’t wearing clothes.

As if reading her mind, he stood, still holding her, his hands cupping her buttocks. She wrapped her legs tightly around him as he walked to the bed and lowered her onto it. Grasping her pants, he tugged them off along with her sandals. Before her eyes his clothes seemed to melt away and he was completely naked -- all broad shoulders, long legs and lean muscle. His cock stood out, long and thick. The balls beneath seemed to beg for her touch, so she reached out and squeezed them gently.

Javier’s eyelids fluttered and he groaned with pleasure. She wrapped a fist around his cock and began stroking him while he thrust into her hand.

After several moments of teasing, he grunted softly, picked her up beneath her arms and tugged her higher on the bed. Stretching out lengthwise, he hauled her legs over his shoulders and slid his tongue deep into her pussy. It swirled around, then he thrust it in a steady rhythm. Then his tongue seemed to grow and change shape. It felt as if a thick penis with the texture of a tongue was filling her. She cried out and trembled with desire, her hands clutching his bare scalp. While he fucked her with his mouth, his hands slid around and fondled her ass. The sensations overwhelmed her and she came, her entire body tense and pulsing.

Before she caught her breath, he covered her body with his and filled her drenched pussy with his real cock. Over and over he thrust, driving her once again toward ecstasy.

“Oh, Javier,” she panted, clinging to him tightly.

He groaned and thrust his warm, wet tongue into her ear, then kissed her shoulder and neck. Finally he covered her mouth with his and thrust his tongue between her lips to the same rhythm as his hips.

Erica’s tongue met his and they lapped and thrust. Their moans of delight mingled and she loved the feel of his big, hot body so close to hers. In the final moments, he tore his mouth from hers and his breath echoed in her ear as he hovered on the verge of orgasm.

No sooner had the first pulsations of Erica’s climax began than he also exploded, her name a ragged cry on his lips.

In the midst of the intense pleasure, Erica realized that this was exactly where she belonged. It had been a long time since she’d had a real home, but something told her she had finally found it here with Javier.

Epilogue

One Month Later

Erica stood with Javier and Tutt in the safety of the porthouse on Aspectian Island watching the shuttle carrying his parents approach.

It had been a mere week since Javier had shared the gift of shapeshifting with her. Not that she would ever be as powerful as a true Aspectian, but she could shift shape at will and would probably live a long, long life. She could think of no one she would rather spend centuries with than Javier. They still had much to learn about each other, but she looked forward to each new discovery.

He and Tutt had been teaching her the basics of shapeshifting and she found even the most difficult exercises enjoyable.

In the designated area outside, the shuttle landed and her stomach tightened. She had heard so much about Javier's parents that she could scarcely wait to meet them. Hopefully they would like her. She knew how much they meant to Javier and intended to do everything in her power to get along with them. Tutt had assured her that she needn't worry, yet she couldn't help feeling a bit apprehensive.

The shuttle's power cut off and moments later the door opened. An attractive black-haired woman and a tall man with long, wavy chestnut hair stepped off.

"Come on," Javier said, a smile on his lips as he took Erica's hand and tugged her out of the porthouse, Tutt following close behind them.

They met his parents a short distance from the shuttle. They paused a few feet away and Javier nodded. "Mother. Father. Welcome to Aspectian Island."

The vibrant look in his eyes was at odds with his calm greeting.

"Thank you, Ambassador," Lady Vida said, an amused glimmer in her eyes. "I suppose it's too much to ask for you to hug your mother in public?"

Javier grinned and embraced her tightly. "It's so good to see you again."

He turned to his father who also embraced him, then they turned toward Erica who stood with Tutt.

Javier said, "May I introduce my intended mate, Erica. Erica, these are my parents, Lord Xavier and Lady Vida."

"Xavier with an X," his father said. "We wanted our son to have at least some individuality."

"Oh, he definitely has that, sir," Erica said, casting an affectionate glance at Javier. "It's an honor to meet you both."

"The honor is ours," Lady Vida said. "Javier, your intended is lovely."

"He has a discerning eye for humans who make fine Aspectians," Xavier said. "It's an inherited talent."

"Please excuse my interruption," Tutt said. "Xavier, Vida, it's wonderful to see you again but we should return to the house. The kitchen staff has spent the morning preparing an excellent meal and it's probably ready to be served as we speak."

Vida smiled and grasped Tutt's hand. "We've missed you at home, Tutt. No one runs a household with your efficiency."

Tutt looked pleased and Erica smiled. He certainly took pride in his work and he was a good friend. She would miss him very much when he returned to Aspectia after the wedding.

At the house they enjoyed a pleasant dinner with Lord Xavier and Lady Vida. Just as Erica hoped, she got along excellently with them. She saw many similarities between Javier and his father -- their soft spoken gentleness combined with intense masculinity. She noticed that from his mother he had inherited a charming unpretentiousness. After meeting them, any remaining doubts she had about not fitting in with his people faded completely.

That night, she retired shortly before Javier. She had a surprise for him and needed a few moments to prepare.

When he stepped into his room, he found shimmering black boxer shorts on his bed, a note beside them.

A smile touched his lips as he read.

Javier, please accept this token of my love and wear this undergarment that has Aspectian characteristics. It is intended to bring you pleasure.

Erica

"All right, Erica," he said, removing his clothes. Naked, he picked up the shorts and stroked them lovingly. Every caress sent little thrills of desire through Erica and the shorts pulsed in his hands.

He stepped into them and she molded to his body. She had spent the past few days practicing this particular shape, wanting to give him the same pleasure his teddie had given her.

His cock swelled and throbbed as she licked him with a multitude of warm, wet tongues. She molded herself around his balls and slid between the indentation of his ass to tease his sphincter.

Gasping with pleasure, his hips thrust against the air. He curled his fist around his cock and stroked.

"Oh, Erica," he panted, lost in sensation. "You are a natural shapeshifter and already an expert in Aspectian sexuality."

If she'd been in her true form, she'd have smiled. Instead she responded by rubbing and lapping his most sensitive parts. The soft material tickled the underside of his cock head and gently rubbed against his ass. It squeezed and released his balls in a rhythmic pattern that soon had him groaning and gasping on the verge of climax. She felt him trembling and pulsing and she also throbbed in ecstasy.

They came together, he in his man shape and she in a foreign shape, but the pleasure was equally intense for each of them.

Javier stretched out on the bed and she shifted back to her true form. Lying on top of him, breast to chest, she kissed his lips and smiled.

His arms tightened around her and he said, "I love you, Erica."

"I love you, too, Javier. And now I do believe in fairytales."

Kate Hill

What do trips around the world, endless nights of breathtaking sex, and a muscular, 6-foot 3-inch, brown-haired, blue-eyed significant other have to do with Kate Hill? Absolutely nothing, but she can dream, can't she? In reality Kate is a single, thirty-something vegetarian New Englander who loves writing romantic fantasies. Visit her online at <http://www.kate-hill.com>, www.myspace.com/katehillromance, or join her newsgroup at groups.yahoo.com/group/katehill. Stop by Kate's Amazon blog at www.amazon.com.