

# **SEXUAL DECEPTIONS**

by

**Brenda Williamson & Rayne Forrest**

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**by Rayne Forrest**

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## **Dedication**

From Author Rayne Forrest:

To Ron, always,  
and to Brenda Williamson for proposing such a great idea.





# **SLAVE OF SAHARIC**

by

**Brenda Williamson**

## **Chapter 1**

Renn stuck his head inside the transport container and glanced around, leery of getting caught breaking the law.

“Go on before someone sees us.” His friend Creeg pushed him from behind.

“We shouldn’t be in here.” Renn slipped through the gap, keeping a look out for a guard skulking around the big steel enclosure.

“Hey, you’re the one with the bad love doll.” Creeg brushed past him, always adventurous, never worrying about the trouble he got them into at times.

“Interactive partner,” Renn corrected.

“Interactive partner, love doll, same thing. It’s a machine.” He stopped next to the first rack.

“To relieve tension. You have one.”

“Yeah. Well, I’m one horny mother...”

“Shhh...did you hear something?” Renn grabbed the back of Creeg’s shirt.

“No.” He shook Renn free and trotted down a row of gurney-like tables.

“You still haven’t told me what we’re doing in here.” Renn followed.

“New crop of dolls is going on auction today. You said you wanted to trade yours in.” Creeg stopped and stared at

one female replica. "I thought we'd check out the whole batch before you grab the first one you see."

He did need a new interactive partner, and Creeg was right, he would have taken the first one in his price range.

On individual tables lay the so-called perfectly engineered women. Renn moved forward, attracted to one particular model. Manufactured on the dwarf planet, Ceres, the robotic replicas were everything a real woman was without any negative emotions. Renn often wondered if it wouldn't be nice to have one that wasn't as accommodating. He might enjoy sex more with one that also enjoyed the physical sensations.

"I heard they're the best. Something about their skin being extra realistic and they can learn from experience." Creeg lifted the skirt on one and gave a low whistle. "Will you look at that unused peach."

Renn stared at the smooth, pale pink skin. She did have a nice shape and tightness to her nether lips. He imagined the inside would also be a firmly structured sheath. A snug fit did feel good.

"What are you doing?" Renn shook his head, watching Creeg slip his fingers into the man-made pussy.

"Testing her, and damn, she's already warm. That's a nice touch. I never did like having to stroke them until they heated."

"You really are horny all the time, aren't you?"

While Creeg fingered the one, Renn stared down at the female specimen that had caught his attention. Unusually highlighted, and pretty, her honey-blond hair seemed different than was normal on a replica. He lifted a lock and rubbed it between his fingers.

“And soft,” he murmured, enjoying the silky texture against his fingertips.

“That’s it, baby,” Creeg groaned.

Renn glanced over his shoulder and saw his friend taking further advantage. Like a child in a toyshop, Creeg seriously tested the new merchandise. He had his pants open and his cock out, defiling someone’s future playmate.

Renn resumed his inspection of the interactive woman intriguing him. Besides the difference in her hair, freckles dotted her nose and cheeks. They added a unique beauty to her porcelain smooth face. He reached out to touch her cheek and an electrical jolt shot up his arm.

“Jeez.” He jerked his hand back in surprise. “That stung.”

“Shocked you, huh?” Creeg laughed over his shoulder. “The static in this place is unreal. Twice, I’ve gotten jolted by this love doll. I thought she had some mechanical malfunction before I realized it’s this metal container reacting to us. Good thing, too. I wasn’t relishing having my rod deep-fried.”

“This was different.” Renn cupped the angelic face of the robot and turned her head, inspecting her features.

He wrinkled his brow as he noticed the pulse throbbing on the side of her neck. With wiring too close to the surface, she could have problems. He rubbed his thumb against the vibrating spot. Pressing harder made it beat faster.

Creeg’s agonized groan signaled his finish with the toy.

“You found one you like?” He moved in close while tucking in his cock and adjusting his pants.

“Maybe,” Renn answered.

Creeg reached for her skirt and Renn stopped him. “Don’t. You aren’t going to finger this one. I prefer to break them in myself.”

“It’s just a robot. Besides, they go through quality control and if it was done right, then it means half a dozen hairy-assed fellows have screwed all her holes to make sure she works. What do you think that lubricate is in their snatch? Oil?”

“They don’t all get tested.” Renn didn’t want to think about his new doll having a reservoir filled with semen from other men.

“Sure they do. It says so in their advertisement. Why do you think the directions you get with them say to wash before first use?”

Renn shrugged. He never gave it a thought before. It wasn’t as if he bought a new interactive partner all the time. This would be his third.

“Seriously, you have to stop looking at these pieces of equipment like they’re your true love.” Creeg moved on, examining the others in his crude manner.

“Do you ever think about what it would be like to touch a real woman?” Renn stroked a finger down the doll’s smooth neck. The beat of her pulsating wiring stimulated his organ so it stiffly pressed the inside of his trousers.

“What for, these are better. Have you seen some of the woman on this planet? They scare the shit out of me—too manly and way too bossy.”

Creeg pushed the shirt up on a doll and massaged her breasts. “This one has some nice fat tits.”

Renn put a hand out, holding it over the feminine chest of the doll he liked. From the shape, she appeared to be well proportioned. Laying his palm on her collarbone structure, he slid his fingers beneath the top, over her breastplate frame. His touch lingered for half a second and then he snapped his

hand back from the thump beneath the woman's skeletal covering.

"What's wrong?" Creeg laughed. "Another shock?"

"She has a heartbeat." He gulped, finding the human detail unnerving.

"Yeah, that other one does, as well. I told you the new batch is better. I don't think they could get them more lifelike than this." Creeg plucked a nipple and then pulled the shirt back into place. "We better get going. It wouldn't be good to get caught in here. I understand the last fellow they found boinking government property got a lot of time in the slammer."

Renn let the flow of Creeg's voice go in one ear and out the other. His focus remained locked on the amazing attributes the new replicas offered. He touched her again, pressing his palm directly down on the firmly rounded breast. He rubbed the tip and discovered another new feature. Her rising nipple grew plump and hard. Fondling the nub spiking the thin cloth of her shirt, he found himself considering doing the same thing Creeg had done with the other doll—testing her.

Stroking her thigh, he reached beneath the skirt, anxious to at least finger her pussy lips. Suddenly, her chest heaved. A ripple of sound hummed from her parted lips and a flutter of her eyelashes accompanied the soft moan.

"What the hell are you doing?" Creeg grabbed Renn's arm and pulled him away. "You can't turn them on. She'll remember every detail about your face and report you to the authorities."

Renn hurried with Creeg for the exit. His last look back, locked him in a trance with the robotic woman's stare. It was

too late to prevent her from seeing him, but somehow it didn't matter. The blue of her eyes had an amazing realness and nothing beyond the idea of owning her entered his thoughts.

"She can't tell anyone," Renn muttered, "if she belongs to me."

## **Chapter 2**

Cadie remained as still as possible, afraid the man staring at her would tell someone she was an escapee from Ceres. However, the way the other man kept jerking him, indicated they were in a hurry. She considered that maybe they weren't supposed to be in the shipping container when she heard the one say they were going to get in trouble.

Once the men left, she turned her gaze toward the robot next to her. Unless she looked on the inside of the replica's control panel, there was no way to know who made her. Still, Cadie felt as if she lay alongside her best friend.

She didn't know what to do next. As an imprisoned slave, she had worked at building the replacements for woman. The scheme of the intergalactic rulers was a conspiracy against many worlds—sick men schemed to oust females from existence. She didn't have all the facts, but she had heard rumors that one planet would be held as a breeding ground for new males. That's where she needed to be. She could blend in and exist. Learn more about the plot. Maybe rally others like her against the barbaric plan.

Looking at the container full of replicas, she didn't think the planet she had arrived at was it. The Ceres masters had no reason to send replicas to a planet with real women.



Cadie surveyed the area, searching out all exits—just the one existed. A smile formed on her lips as she considered the fact she hadn't died in transport. While the oxygen level went low, thankfully she only passed out.

Her nipples stood erect, stimulated to jutting points. "The cold," she muttered, though it didn't explain the warmth between her legs.

She rubbed her cold skin and lowered her feet to the floor to get off the rack. Stiff and aching all over, she stretched her arms over her head to work out the kinks she had developed from sleeping in the same position for what had to be a minimum of eighteen hours. She suspected longer by the way her belly grumbled a hungry protest.

The grate of metal alerted her someone unlatched the door. She jumped back on the rack and stretched out, closing her eyes. Shaking in fear that the stranger had turned her in, she remained as still as the replicas surrounding her. The only chance of escape would be if the snitch couldn't point her out.

"Activate them," a voice commanded.

The mild relief was short-lived when a few beeps of an electronic keypad began the replica startup process. She had no other choice, except to play along, going through the motions of sitting, standing, and dusting off. She had fooled the Ceres masters into believing she was a simple, docile female before. The men of this planet couldn't be any harder to trick.

Two men stood at the doorway, neither appeared to be the ones from earlier.

"Ladies, please come this way."

Alternating from one row to the other, the robotic women filed into a preprogrammed single line. Cadie followed. If her information was correct, they headed for an auction.

Once placed with an owner, she could formulate plans to gain total freedom from enslavement.

“These are truly remarkable, don’t you think, Lorus?”

One man touched each robot’s body and it made Cadie nervous. How would she avoid flinching?

“Cut that out, Beasel. You’re slowing them up.”

Beasel apparently didn’t care. He cocked his head to the side and stared at her. His tongue poked out from between his fat lips, swirling a slow wet lick around the rim of his mouth.

“Come on, Lorus, that one back there is giving me a hard-on. What do you say to me test-driving her while you start the auction?”

“The commander won’t like that. He gives a guarantee these are unused models in prime condition.”

“You really believe them guarantees and warranties they offer with these machines?” Beasel laughed. “I ain’t even that dumb.”

Cadie inched closer in the parade of female toys.

“I won’t abuse her. What can one quick fuck hurt?” His arm reached out and Cadie stiffened at his touch. “I’ll do her in the ass.”

Cadie stood at attention, disgusted by the caress of Beasel’s large hand over her bottom. She focused on the exit. Once outside of the container, she’d be halfway to liberation, risking that because a man had her skirt up and his finger wiggling between the cheeks of her ass wasn’t enough to make her give away her humanness.

“No, now let her go,” Lorus ordered. “We got to keep the line moving.”

“You really know how to spoil a fellow’s fun.” He pulled his finger out and she walked a tad bit faster, almost closing the gap in the line as she headed out of the container.

At the front of the procession, the other man directed the replicas to form two rows behind a stage platform. Cadie didn’t know the procedure. None of the replicas did, so following their form of confusion was easy.

From the crowd of spectators and potential buys, she spotted the man she saw earlier. She remembered he answered to someone calling him Renn. Average in height, he kept disappearing behind others that blocked her view.

On Ceres, the overseers of the workhouse had the privilege of having sex with any slave they wanted. The mistreatment she suffered from those men caused her emotional upsets she didn’t want to face again. Yet, Renn’s stare reminded her of a pet she had when she was small. His funny expression of adoration attracted her to him in the same warm, affectionate way her kitten had. His handsome features added to the mixture of reasons she hoped he’d bid on her. If she had to have sex with her owner, then he appealed to her senses.

The auction went quickly through the assembly of replicas in front of her. The amount of credits ranged about the same for each unit, naturally, since most looked very similar, though, it did appear that blonds seemed more sought after.

When Cadie’s turn came, she wasn’t surprised to have Renn speak up first with his bid for her. He hadn’t stopped looking at her since he elbowed his way closer to the stage. Things appeared good. He kept bidding, and his determined expression gave her the optimistic feeling he’d be the winner. Then the bidding escalated to a price exceeding what all the other replicas sold for. She watched Renn frown. He turned

to the man next to him and the discussion between them lasted long enough for the thin man in charge to begin ending the auction for her.

“Going once, going twice...” The auctioneer held his mallet in the air.

“Wait!” Renn yelled.

His friend counted money into his hand. Cadie held her breath. Would it be enough? Was he really going to try that hard to obtain her? A string of replicas still waited in the row behind her.

“Thirty-three thousand, one hundred and ten credits,” he announced, smiling triumphantly.

“Forty thousand credits!” Another man raised the price.

The auctioneer looked at Renn, just as she did. Renn shook his head and he glanced her way with a defeated sadness dimming the sparkle in his eyes. She didn’t know why she experienced angst as she did, but she had really wanted to meet him.

“Going...going...gone!”

Cadie moved her gaze to the winner. Tall and heavy, he would be a problem if she had to resort to something physical. The man outweighed ten of his peers.

“Name?” the auctioneer asked of the man who approached.

“Forje.”

Cadie took an instant dislike to the rotund man. He eyed her like the Ceres masters when they were ready to bed a slave. An unhealthy lust gleamed in his stare. She felt ill imagining his hands scouring her flesh as he took his pleasure with her in any way he chose.

“You are a pretty little thing.” Forje’s gaze went down the length of her as he handed over his credits and waited for a receipt.

She wracked her brain trying to think. A small debate returned. *Run or wait for a better opportunity?*

“I hear these new models are the best replicas of women yet,” Forje commented.

Luckily, she had steeled herself for his less than gentle touch.

“Yes, sir. Looks and actions.”

Forje squeezed her breasts as if he were molding a lump of stiff clay. The pressure threatened to produce a protesting squeal from her any second.

“She’ll be honest and suggestive.” The auctioneer leaned toward Forje and said in a lower tone, “The only problem you’ll have is not getting addicted to their mouths. I hear the Ceres masters have improved the sucking action.”

“That will be interesting to test.” Forje let go of her breast and squeezed her cheeks, forcing her mouth to pucker and open. “I do hope she’s encoded with some bonus programs.”

“Many, sir.”

Forje took hold of Cadie’s elbow. “Come on, my little sweetmeat. I can’t wait to have you suggest something naughty to me.”

They walked the perimeter of the auction room and Cadie tried to spot Renn amongst the crowd. She couldn’t get him out of her thoughts. He was nowhere in sight and she had to assume he went on to look for a cheaper playmate.

Forje guided her down a dark corridor. She glanced up at the light filaments left unrepaired. On Ceres, nothing was left to ruin. *Were there no slaves on this planet?* She could only hope.

The signs they followed in the complex directed them toward a nourishment facility. From the girth on the man, they should have taken the route marked fitness station. Then an idea blossomed.

“You must be small,” she remarked.

“What?” He stopped walking.

“Small men like to eat.”

“Are you blind?” He patted his bulging midsection. “I’m quite huge.”

“Not there.” She pointed lower. “Your penis.”

“M-my...I’m normal.” His face turned an angry shade of crimson.

“Show me.”

He unbuckled his pants like a fool.

*The vanity of men.* She sighed with satisfaction he didn’t have the intelligence to question her comment.

He wiggled his hand into the gap and produced a normal-sized cock. “See, not so small, is it?” His pride overruled his momentary annoyance and a smile widened his odd-shaped mouth.

Cadie bit her bottom lip to hold back her laugh. She planned to run, but the voices of approaching men hampered her intentions.

“Very small.” She resumed criticizing with a poke at the crooked shaft, finding taunting him as much fun as it was beneficial to her plans.

“You’ll learn to like it,” he grumbled.

She threw in a shrill laugh to irritate him, but stopped at the sight of Renn.

"Normally, men wait until they get their merchandise home, Forje." The man with Renn chuckled.

"He's small," Cadie commented again, hoping to create a distraction. A good brawl always worked. She started one with two Ceres masters and ended sleeping alone that night instead of in one of their beds.

"Small ain't the word, doll. Good thing you don't have it in you to complain, because you won't feel much from that noodle."

Forje lurched forward and Renn put a hand to Forje's chest to stop him. "How about putting it away?" Renn suggested. "There are men that may like what you got, but it ain't us."

"He's small." Cadie threw the word out again, not liking the fact they might calm down.

"Stop saying that." Forje grabbed her arm.

"Very small," she repeated, anticipating Renn's interference. "Teeny-tiny."

"I said shut-up." Forje grabbed her other arm and shook her.

The motion upset her empty stomach and made her lightheadedness return so she thought she might faint.

"Small. Small. Small. Small." She blinked rapidly, imitating a malfunctioning machine.

"I said stop it!" He lifted a hand to strike her, and Renn's grip on Forje's wrist prevented her from receiving a blow to the face.

"You wouldn't want to damage the packaging now, would you?" Renn let go.

“This damn replica is busted.” Forje thrust her away.

She stumbled back into Renn.

His arm circled her waist, steadying her. She had the urge to lean back and rest against the solid support his hold suggested. At least if she fainted, she’d not hit the unyielding concrete floor. She hated to think how that would leave her bruised and in pain.

“I’ll buy her from you.” Renn’s offer surprised her as well as Forje.

“What do you want with a broken doll?” Forje asked, obviously suspicious.

She was curious to know the same answer.

“She’s malfunctioning and I like tinkering with machines.”

Renn drew out his billfold with the hand he didn’t have clutching her midsection.

Cadie watched in fascination.

“I paid forty thousand,” Forje reminded him.

Renn flashed a wad of credits in the fat man’s face. “She’s broke, remember. I’ll give you twenty-five thousand credits.”

“If I return her...”

“Did you buy a warrantee?” Renn’s hold tightened, almost possessively.

Her insides fluttered as he mindlessly rubbed her belly.

“No, but...”

“You and I both know they don’t refund on defects unless you paid for the privilege.”

Creag snickered and she prayed he didn’t spoil the negotiations.

“What about that last bid of yours for thirty-three-something.” Forje lifted a brow, his mind working to sound intelligent.



“Wasn’t all my money.” Renn grinned. “Tell you what I can do. I have a model from last year I’ll throw in on the deal. She’s in good working order if you want sex all the time. However, she’s not much good for errands. She can’t remember long-term orders.”

Forje looked at Cadie. “Is she as pretty as this one?”

“They say, ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder,’ so I’ll not compare. But her mouth is quite a treat. She’ll toot your whistle until you practically pass out from pleasure.”

An uglier grin than before curled Forje’s lips and exposed his teeth.

“I don’t know. How can I trust you?”

“Small. Small. Small.” She started up again to encourage him to make the trade, afraid his hesitancy might get the better of him.

Renn pat her belly as if to say, ‘Good job.’

“It’s a deal, Saharic.” Forje took the credits and handed over the ownership papers. “Send your interactive partner to my place in an hour.”

“Great, but I better have Creeg bring her. She’s at his place and she’ll forget your address. Remember, she has a bad memory.”

“Yeah, well it doesn’t take long for what I want one for.”

“What do you go, Forje, less than a minute?” Creeg laughed.

Cadie watched Renn elbow his smart-mouthed friend.

Forje left with a satisfied grin on his face.

“Hey there, beautiful.” Renn turned her in his arms and touched her cheek. “You’re all mine, now.”

He bowed toward her and planted his mouth over hers. Not in the clear, she had to play the robotic woman, respond-

ing with mimicking moves. The hardest part of the experience was not overdoing it. His actions invited her participation and awakened her sexual desires.

### **Chapter 3**

Renn slid both his arms around the woman. He didn't want to think of her as a well-shaped mess of metal, rubber, and circuitry. Her reaction to his hold was slightly off as she stiffened. He allowed it might have to do with her learning process. She became a quick study and within a minute, her petite frame molded against him. The kiss made it easy to forget. Her warm breath drifted inside his mouth and her lips parted to the probe of his tongue.

"Hey, lover boy," Creeg grumbled. "Take her home to do that stuff."

"Yeah, take her home." Renn smiled at his prized acquisition. "What's your name, sweetheart?"

"Cadie."

"I like it." He took her hand in his. "Are you ready to go home?"

"Not eat?"

"Eat?"

"Maybe she's hungry." Creeg elbowed him.

"Robots don't eat." He touched Cadie's midsection and she flinched.

"Tickles." She giggled.

"Did you mean for me to eat?"

“Forge wanted to eat.” She pointed to the nourishment facility.

“That’s where he was headed, not me. I have different plans.” He cupped her delicate face, unable to resist touching her.

“Does he ever.” Creeg rolled his hips, flexing them back and forth, making obscene grunts.

“Some days, I don’t know why we’re friends.”

“Because you’d be bored silly if all you had to do was hump your toy.”

Renn ignored Creeg. “Don’t mind him. He can be such a jerk at times.”

“I’ll see you later.” Creeg waved.

“Yeah, don’t forget to take Forge his new interactive partner.”

Creeg nodded and disappeared out the exit.

Renn led Cadie to another that took them outside a different route. He’d had enough of Creeg’s foulness. He really didn’t know why they remained friends other than the night needs the day, and that’s how different they were.

“It’s hot,” Cadie exclaimed, putting her hand to her face.

“You notice different temperatures?”

“Shouldn’t I?”

Her face wrinkled with puzzlement and he found her beyond adorable. The way she looked at him made his insides ache. When she stood on that platform and Forge outbid him, he had pretended her expression displayed disappointment.

“Water!” Cadie pulled her hand from his and rushed to a fountain.

He watched her drink. No, she gulped. Like a woman dying of thirst, she sipped nosily and drank a lot.

“Is water necessary?” He swept a hand under the edge of her hair and held it out of the fountain trough. “I should have asked Forje for your instructions.”

“Essential,” she answered between slurps. “And food, too.”

Renn found it all strange, but he didn’t question technology. Machinery had a way of amazing him. He just didn’t get why anyone would make something that required food and water. Telling Forje the lie about tinkering with it was only his way of acquiring Cadie. He never touched hardware other than his computer.

Cadie lifted her head and water dribbled down her chin. He wiped the droplets from her skin, touching his fingertip to her moist lips. Leaning closer, he brushed a kiss to her delicious mouth. Pulling her closer, he took another sip. As her lips moved with his, twisting, pressing, and sucking, she caught him by surprise with her passion. His chest tightened in an emotional reaction to her soft moan. Kissing her could become addictive.

“I’m going to have to teach you how to be neater.” He swept the water off her shirt.

“Water.” She trotted away from him a few paces and stopped.

“You can’t drink from the ocean, it’s saltwater.” He slipped his arm around her waist to hold her back, afraid she might try.

“Can we go to it?”

He really wanted to get her home, except the wistful sigh she made encouraged him to please her. “Sure.”

She curled her fingers around his and tugged him to hurry. By the time they crossed the pavement of the road and hit the sand, they were running.

Cadie stopped in the middle of the beach. "It's beautiful."

"You're beautiful." Renn embraced her.

Her gaze flitted from the waves to his face. She appeared undecided, as to which she'd watch.

"It's a quiet day and much too hot for anyone to come out of their climate-controlled buildings." He cupped her face and swept his thumb along her jaw. "We're virtually alone here."

Her skin flushed and the pink tint radiated warmth. He pressed his palm to her cheek. "Robots blush?" He liked it.

She tried to turn her head away.

"I've wanted you since I snuck into the container and found you lying in storage."

"You have me."

He gazed lower. "Uh-huh, however, I want you in a different way." He dropped his hand to her chest and rubbed her breast.

"Someone will see us." Her argument appeared to be part of a virtue program. Virginity or bashfulness in an interactive partner was an expensive program. He liked the bonus after his last robot acted more promiscuous than Creeg.

"Not over here." He guided her to a formation of rocks.

Behind the large boulders, they'd be invisible to the world around them. He held Cadie's face in his hands and kissed her. Drinking in her hums, he sucked at her breath and licked circles around her tongue. Had he ever tasted one as realistic before? Caressing her cheek, he pushed her damp hair back behind her ears. Such pretty ears, he decided, fingering the curve of the outer shell.

“I know your programming is basic and you learn by command, so I’ll explain what I want you to do as clearly as possible. You let me know if there is anything you don’t understand, all right?” Renn kissed her again, much longer.

Turning his head, reangling her face for the slant of his mouth, he delved deeper into her emotional bank. Interactive partners didn’t feel, but they responded to a man’s needs. Cadie had a store of reactions. From resistance to aggression, he pretended she desired him. He let his fantasy wrap him with the pretense of her passionate lust.

Renn broke from the bone-melting kiss when her whimper went beyond his expectations.

“Oh, Cadie, you fit me so perfectly. It’s as if you were special-ordered.”

Her eyes watered and he tilted her face to get a better look.

“What’s wrong?” Instantly, he laughed at the silliness of his question. “Never mind, you can’t cry. He swept his thumb under her eye when the droplet fell to her perfect cheek. “But you are.”

Licking the moisture from his skin, he tasted a salty sweetness. Kissing the spot he retrieved the tear, he caught another escaping.

“You’re so real.” He stroked his hand over her head. “Have I upset you?”

“No.”

“No, of course I didn’t. You haven’t any emotions. Probably don’t understand anything I’ve been babbling about.”

“I know what you want to do. You don’t have to show me.”

In a flash, her hand was on the front of his trousers. Nimble fingers worked at his belt and zipper. The sun heated his back, still it didn't compare to the scorching touch of Cadie's claim on his erection. She slid her fingers back and forth several times, gently, in a teasing manner. Then his cock lay in her palm, throbbing for attention. She folded one finger at a time around his shaft, locking him in her grip. Pumping the sheath of skin over his hard erection, she leaned in against him. Her mouth collided with his. From there, he had no memory, no skill, not even a thought to doing anything else. Her mouth swished over his from left to right and all he managed to do was tilt his head to get a better angle. Any way he locked lips with her was right.

"Mmmm, you'll not need instructions with kissing." He drew back, licked his lips, and reaimed. "Not in the least."

Their mouths sealed and he held her head to keep her prisoner. Her tongue rolled alongside his. He flicked it away and delved into her humming breath. Her hand left his cock. She rested it against his hip and slowly inched up his sides, clutching his shirt, and digging at his ribs.

He would have liked to hear her thoughts—maybe a compliment on his kissing. Yet, when she moaned softly into his mouth, the sound was better than words.

His sac tightened, intensifying the ache in him. Restless, he pulled her skirt up and gripped the cheeks of her ass. The supple flesh molded to the gentle squeeze of his palm.

"God, I want to fuck you."



## Chapter 4

While kissing had briefly dulled her thought-process, Cadie heard Renn's comment and it sounded no different then the dozens of Ceres masters in her past. *Men are all alike.*

She turned her head away, and Renn buried his nose into her hair. "You smell good."

Sex was out. He had managed to trick her with his kindness.

"Big, big, big." Cadie lowered to her knees and jerked Renn's cock closer to her lips. "Big."

"Yeah, I am a pretty healthy size."

She glanced up at his egotistical grin.

"Eat big, big, big," she chanted again.

Opening her mouth, she curled her lips back to make her teeth show more. She looked at Renn and knew she'd gotten his attention.

"Oh, damn." He dragged her up from her kneeling position. "I ain't ready to have my stiffy chomped into. How about we take things a little slower until I'm sure you don't bite?"

Renn's hands found their way to her waist.

"I know how to bite." She rocked her head from one side to the other.

"That's what I'm afraid of." He framed her face in his hands to stop her head movement.

A warm sensation spread through her, heating her neck and cheeks. No one stared at her as Renn did. His happy expression tickled her soul. She didn't want to like him. No good could come from forming any bond with her owner.

"I'm really glad to have found you." He swirled his thumbs over her cheeks.

Did he notice how hot her skin was?

"Why?" she asked, distracting him from the way his puzzled gaze lingered on her cheek.

"I don't know."

"You must have some idea?"

"Well, sure." Creases formed at the corners of his eyes as he smiled. "I got you for companionship, housecleaning, and sex."

"Then it's not me you're glad to have found. I could be any one of a million other interactive partners." She resisted showing her disappointment.

He caressed the hair out of her face. "Let's go home. I'll prove that it's you I'm taking about."

"I don't think sex can prove your claim."

"How would you know?"

She opened her mouth to answer and he put his fingers over her lips.

"You don't have to answer. I already know—programming." Renn laughed. "You're still an amazing and unique person."

Cadie's eyes widened and there was no way to retract her surprise.

"See?" He took her hand. "You made me forget you're not human. With all the questions you've been asking, are you sure you're not?"

“I-I’m programmed to learn by questioning,” she stammered, thinking for sure he’d catch on she wasn’t a replica. “You don’t buy *human* women, do you? If you thought I was human, you should report me to the authorities.”

“I’m teasing, silly. Don’t get overheated by a little joke.”

“I don’t understand jokes,” she replied.

“Then you’ll learn.” He tugged her along. “I plan on having you for a long time and with my love and patience, you’ll be the perfect partner.”

Cadie’s eyes welled with tears as she walked next to Renn. He didn’t know she was human and yet, he talked to her as if she were more human than the Ceres masters did. To them, she was less valuable than a robot. She was a slave. One of a hundred replaceable workers they dispose of in a minute if need be. She’d like to think they wouldn’t miss her, but her absence would certainly show in the vacant place on the production line.

“I just can’t believe my luck.” He slapped his thigh with excitement. “You know, if I hadn’t let Creeg talk me into sneaking into that container, I may not have stayed so long at the auction. I would have bought one of the first interactive partners and left.”

He continued his cheerful babbling and she walked alongside him wondering what he’d think when she deserted him. She hated that she’d have to leave him the first chance she got. Nevertheless, emotions had to be left out of her decisions. She consoled herself with the reminder that he wanted a robot, not a real, living, breathing woman. If he had, he wouldn’t have bought her.

Cadie looked back at the ocean. She wondered what it would be like to wade into the big ripples. Ceres’ water came

bottled and imported from other planets. She'd only read about such large bodies of water.

"What is this place?" she asked, not sure where in the galaxy she had landed.

"This city is called—"

"No, this planet."

"Earth."

"I think I will like Earth." She glanced back again at the water they left behind."

"I'll see that you do." He turned her head with a finger under her chin. "We'll come back to the beach soon, I promise."

Cadie nodded, knowing she'd not be around long enough for him to bring her. However, his pledge meant a lot.

"It's occurred to me I haven't told you my name." He stopped and looked at her. "See how brainless I am?"

"I heard your friend call you Renn."

"Yeah, that's right." He had a smile to melt a heart. "You'll need to know that when you run errands for me. Businesses will ask you your account name and you'll tell them Renn Saharic."

Cadie just smiled. She took in the sights of the place, especially the buildings constructed of solid glass with dozens of people behind them working. Her residence was made of stone and metal with small portholes of glass to look out.

At one building, Renn led her upstairs. Inside, he guided her down three flights of stairs. He opened a door and ushered her into a spacious room.

"This is home, Cadie." He closed the entrance and pressed buttons on a keypad.

"There are no portholes."

“Windows? No, not belowground. The apartments above have them, but they cost more.” He let go of her hand and she wandered farther into the room. “Make yourself at home while I go use the facilities.”

He left her alone and she rushed to the door. Jiggling the latch, she found the door locked. Punching her finger at the keypad, hitting numbers randomly, she hoped she’d hit upon the unlock code.

“Cadie?”

She turned and tried not to look surprised by his return.

“What are you doing?” He came toward her.

“How does this work?” she said the first thing that came to mind.

Turning back to the keypad, she pushed the buttons with less verve, acting as if she were merely curious.

“That’s for security and it locks the door by a code only I know. Keeps the riffraff from breaking in.” He put a hand under her arm. “Forget about that now, let’s go to bed. I want to try you out. I spent all my savings on you.”

“What if you forget the numbers?” She suspected he’d have them written down somewhere.

“I won’t forget. Besides, there’s a main control panel in my bedroom.”

“Can I see it?”

“I don’t see why not.” He maneuvered her around the furniture. “It’s in the very room I’m trying to get you in.”

They went through a doorway and he pointed at the wall on the far side of the bed. She kept her gaze on the target. Renn stopped her in front of the small square of gray metal on the wall. The panel had no access.

“How does this work?”

“Voice activated.” He stood behind her, his arms circling her middle, and his chin resting on her shoulder. “I say a command and the panel pops out.”

Cadie had to keep him distracted as she questioned. “What command?” She took his hands and dragged them up, under her shirt to her breasts.

“Open,” he said against her cheek.

The panel popped open, so did her blouse. Renn’s skillful fingers moved fast.

“That’s it?” She pushed the panel shut and repeated. “Open.”

The door did nothing.

“It’s coded to my voice, not yours.”

She breathed heavier, finding the fondling of her nipples a disturbance on her thinking. “Oh, how is that done?” She unfastened her skirt and let it fall to the floor.

“When open, I can change it by telling it something different, recalling the last command.”

“I don’t understand.” She took one of his hands and brought it to her damp sex.

“Open,” he said.

The panel obeyed.

His fingers parted her and she trembled at the touch of them on her sensitive clit.

“And then what?” she whispered.

“Change voice command to...” His lips nuzzled kisses under her jaw.

“Renn, the code,” she moaned softly from the unavoidable orgasm she succumbed to the instant his touch slipped inside her.

“Change voice command to... You’re wet.”

“Wet,” she repeated and shoved the panel closed. “Now what?”

He spun her to face him. “We go to bed.” He grabbed her open shirt and pushed it off her shoulders. “Sweet Sunday, you’re perfect.”

Using the shirt as a hold on her, he jerked her forward. His mouth covered hers. Cadie leaned into his embrace. The sleeves of her blouse kept her from lifting her arms. She used her mouth to show him her interest—her desire.

“You’re better than I imagined.” He stepped back.

Her blouse slipped off her arms and fluttered to the floor. She watched Renn strip off his clothes as if he would win a prize for doing it quickly. The magnificence of his muscular build added a layer of yearning to her heart, to taste more of his affection.

## Chapter 5

Renn pulled Cadie to him and let the natural curve of her luscious body compress to his. Warm and pulsating, her skin had a realism he couldn't believe. Her slender arms surrounded him and her soft, exquisite fingers dusted up and down his spine.

"I wish we had something to talk about. It would be nice to ask about your past." He moved her to the bed, lowering her onto the old covers he should have changed to new to go along with his new interactive partner.

"Why can't you?" Her smile formed cute dimples in her cheeks.

"You have no past. You were born today when they activated your system."

"Oh, right." She lifted her head and put her mouth against his. "I still have a memory. You were in the container."

He turned his head enjoying the light kisses over his face. His cock throbbed between them as a steady reminder of how much he wanted to have sex.

"Yeah, but you weren't activated yet, were you?"

"Partially."

"I never heard of them doing it like that, but I reckon there are a lot of innovations I haven't learned about." He pushed his tongue past hers and circled the inside of her



mouth. She sucked on his thrusts. His whole body burned with desire. He broke free of her mouth and kissed down the velvety ribbon of her neck. Sliding his hands from her face to her ivory shoulders, he traveled to her breasts. The first touch he made on her nipples caused her to shudder.

“Ticklish, I remember.” He bent his head and licked over her finely manufactured skin. “What a truly unique and amazing feature.”

She wrapped her fingers around his aching arousal. The soft tip of her thumb ran carelessly over the head. She guided it to her and let go as he slid his shaft into her wet cunt. He entered the threshold with quiet reserve. Moving gently, he thrust slow, keeping his insertion shallow. Like a virgin, she needed his tender care for the first time use. His momentum gained speed when he felt her rhythmically matching his moves. Her hips lifted, grinding and drawing him deeper.

She nuzzled her face to his and he drew her to him. Her wiggling, squirming legs and arms swarmed him with urgency. He met them with a persuading guidance of his own limbs.

Her lips caressed his chin, his jaw, and his throat. She scattered dozens of lightning quick kisses on his shoulder. Her fingers raked his ribs, lingered at his hips, and crawled to his ass. He leaned into her, flexing his hips back and forth, making her follow. Capturing her panting lips, he thrust his tongue into her mouth. Lowering his whole body onto her, he pressed her into the mattress.

Cadie writhed with an apparent frustration at his weight. Her nails raked his back in long, slicing strokes, marking his flesh. He drew one of her legs up alongside his hip and she folded it over his back. Her other leg moved up naturally and she locked her ankles together behind him.

The pulsing quick spasms in Cadie tightened and released. He slid his hands into hers and locked their fingers together. Gripping her hands above her head, he pushed into her. With complete abandon, their bodies slammed together and peeled apart, only to reunite again. Blood sped through his veins, all aimed for the point of explosion. His body dripped with beads of sweat as he held back from rushing toward completion. Cadie's whimpers and pants fueled his urge to hold out. He met a glorious reward—her cry of soul-wrenching delight.

Lost in the sounds of her pleasure, Renn's intense orgasm streamed from him like a raging river. His last interactive partner had no comparison to the sensual woman gasping beneath him.

He dropped his head to Cadie's shoulder, and burrowed his nose into the softness of her golden hair. Enjoying the scent of her, he inhaled deeply.

"I love you," he whispered hoarsely.

For several minutes, he heaved air into his lungs and recouped. Everything about Cadie fascinated him—her looks, her voice, and especially her reactions. She was the best piece of machinery he had ever owned.

His cock retreated from the moist heat and he shifted off her.

"That was great." He rubbed her damp mound, fingering the short bristles of cropped hair. He liked the feature arousing the skin of his cock.

"I thought so, too," she purred, twisting and snuggling closer.

"Did you, really?"

She rose and leaned toward him. Her blue eyes twinkled.

“Yes.” She kissed him. Then rolled to her back and stared up at the ceiling.

Her smile touched nicely on satisfaction. Deep down, however, he knew she didn’t possess emotions, and that saddened him.

“On this planet, what happens to slaves if they escape?” She shifted farther away from him and turned on her side.

“For starters, there are no slaves on Earth. Second, that’s an odd question. What made you want to know?” He moved to his side and propped his head in his hand with an elbow on the bed.

“I assumed all planets had slaves.”

“We don’t need slaves here.”

“Who does your work?” Her seductive touch glided upward.

“Employees. People paid to work. Like me.”

“What do you do?” Her index finger stroked the pulse in his neck.

“I deal in real estate. That’s how I got this sweet pad for a steal.”

She smiled, obviously not understanding his profession.

“I find people homes they can afford,” he added, wanting to explain every part of his life to her. “And places they love.”

“Don’t you like portholes?” Her gaze swept the room.

Renn liked watching her expressions—especially her smile. It made him wonder about her thought process. *What made her mouth curve upward? Did every reaction happen because of a program? Spontaneity would be a nice change.* Often he thought he hung out with Creeg just for the surprises he put in a day.

“Yes, I like windows,” he answered. “However, apartments aboveground are extremely expensive and I have better things to do with my credits.”

“Like what?”

“Buying you.” He cupped her face. “I’d even give up this place if I had to make the choice between you and it.”

Renn folded his arm under his head and remained on his side, studying Cadie.

“What are you thinking?” His curiousness got the better of him, as did his intelligence. He realized she’d have no amusing memories to reflect on.

“Thinking?” Her lashes lowered for a second.

“Forget it. I thought you looked happy and that’s not possible. Not in the real sense of the word, is it?” He fondled one of her nipples. Ripened by sex, the hard nub tickled his sweaty palm.

“I don’t understand.”

“Never mind.”

“You do too much thinking.” She massaged his temple. “You should sleep.”

“That might be hard.” He tucked the silky strands of her blond hair behind her ear.

“Why?”

“It’s something you wouldn’t understand.”

“You could try to explain.” She turned her hand over. Her knuckles swirled over his cheek and along his jaw.

“I feel like I’m ten and it’s my birthday. I got a new toy and I’m too excited to close my eyes.”

Cadie laughed. Again, he experienced a strong emotional wave of love that tightened his chest. What would he do when

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the day came that she'd have to be replaced? Did he want to  
think a love doll could break his heart?

## Chapter 6

Cadie lulled Renn into relaxing by stroking him—his face, his shoulders, everywhere except the area already half-aroused. Twice she strayed from his upper torso to his belly. Both times, his cock bounced, awakened by the stimulation of her fingers close by.

Once he lay back, she scooted in, along his side. His drowsy state gave her time to think, even though the muscular ripples she stirred her fingers over remained a constant distraction.

The short fine hairs around Renn's nipples elicited her physical cravings. Her recesses, which he had recently delved in with his lust, tingled and twitched. If time were not of the essence, she might have considered staying with him a couple of days, even weeks. She enjoyed his humor, his attention, and his lovemaking. However, her flight from Ceres would have been noticed—an alert sent out. The Ceres masters would eventually find the robot she hid in an infrequently used trash shoot. Someone could be en route to Earth to find her as she lay in the comfort of a man's arms.

"I've found the angel of my dreams," he hummed peacefully.

Cadie closed her eyes for a second, absorbing the sentiment. Having a similar mindset with a man was strangely new

for her. Even before she was sent to Ceres at a young age, she never recalled a human man giving her that connected feeling.

Renn eventually drifted into a deep sleep. She waited awhile to make sure before moving quietly off the bed. Turning, extracting herself from his embrace, she sat up. She waited another minute, leery of him tricking her. The life she had before never allowed her to feel secure. She even mistrusted his declaration of love. After all, in the throes of ecstasy, a man could blurt out anything. It didn't make it real beyond the moment. Besides, he believed he was speaking to a robot—his new toy.

Placing her feet on the floor, she rose from the mattress with caution. A grunted snore from Renn made her stop all forms of movement, including breathing, until she glanced over her shoulder. His eyes stayed shut.

The magnificence in the contour of his jaw, his cheekbones, and his full lips captured her notice again. Hypnotized by the heavenly way he slept, she gave a thought to crawling back on the bed—snuggling against his warm body—letting him feed her fantasies with talk of love. Except Earth had no slaves and she couldn't pretend to be a robot forever. Whether he thought of her as one or not, he *had* bought her. This wonderfully sensitive man wanted a slave.

Cadie tiptoed across the wood floor, placing careful steps upon the boards in case anything creaked. At the panel, she whispered, "Wet."

Nothing happened. It seemed logical that repeating the word after Renn, and being the last voice the control panel heard, would work in her favor. She looked back at him on the bed while she cleared her throat. Facing the panel again, she said, "Wet," with a clearer voice. The panel door popped

open as if it had always been hers to instruct. She slapped a hand over her mouth before the squeal of success slipped out.

“Change voice command to...” Cadie thought for a minute.

Renn would eventually remember her saying wet. “Change voice command to *escape*.” She paused before making another request. “Unlock the main door.”

She pushed the panel shut and wheeled around on the balls of her feet to the sound of the bed squeaking.

Renn flipped over on his stomach, oblivious to her disappearance from his bed. He hugged his pillow to his head and settled into his slumbering stillness. Cadie let out the breath she held and gathered her clothes from the floor. She put them on and trotted from the room in search of a commode. The water she drank had finally made its way to her bladder and she felt ready to burst.

The toilet facility was impressive. Hers had no more room than his large bathing cubicle. She first used the commode and then went on tour of the room as if it were a museum. The cabinet on the wall had odd sorts of tubes and vials holding creams and pills. She didn’t understand what they were used for and put them back wondering if he was a sick man.

She put a hand to her stomach at the rumble of hunger. The call for food dragged her from the room and she went to the cooking area in the large main room. Inside the cabinet, she found foods she never heard of, but tried them anyway. The small round crunchy things she found in a jar on the counter were sweet. While looking at other items, she munched on every one of the disk shaped biscuits. Putting the jar back on the counter, she stared at the door.



It couldn't have been more than ten feet from her. The disappointment would be great if the lock held. The fear of venturing outside prevented her from nearing it. *A plan*. She needed some sort of direction in her escape, but without any knowledge of Earth, she struggled to proceed.

"Cadie, what are you doing?" Renn startled her.

She spun from her hypnotic stare at the door. Without thought, her hand hit the jar she left on the counter. The glass made a horrible sound as it smashed on the floor.

"I'm so sorry." She rushed to clean it up.

She knelt and a prickle of pain stabbed her knee. Glass clung to her skin and blood dripped to the floor as she rose up.

"It's all right. Nothing that can't be replaced. You're bleeding." He stooped down and studied her leg.

He took a long time and she knew what he was thinking, but waited for him to ask.

"I'm not sure I like this?" He stood up.

"You don't?" She gulped. The secret was out. She was human.

"It's not right."

"It isn't?" What would he do to her?

He reached and she flinched.

"It's all right." He took her arm. "Here, let me get that cleaned up before we have blood all over the place."

She wrapped her arms around his neck when he lifted her in his arms.

"It's beyond me why they'd go to this extent in making you appear real. I could do without this feature. Now you'll have a mark on your beautiful skin."

Cadie let out the breath she held. He didn't know. She thanked technology for the confusion of not knowing the difference between humans and machinery.

"And that matters to you?"

"Hell yeah, it matters."

The declaration felt like a personal rejection. She glanced at the door and hoped he didn't check it. Though, there was no reason for him to walk over there and turn the knob.

"Why are you out of bed?" He sat her on a table and turned away for a second, dampening a towel.

"Was I not supposed to get up?" She tried not to move as he dabbed the cut. Even though he was gentle, it still stung.

"No, I guess there isn't any reason for you to stay. It's just... Well, I'm used to my interactive partner only doing something when I ask her. She never wandered around without carrying out a command." He laughed. "No, that's not quite right, either. In the last few months, she walked around blindly bumping into things for no reason at all."

"Will you miss her?"

"Nah, she was old, worn-out, and I have you—a brand spanking new piece of hardware." He tossed the cloth to the sink. "And I'll show you what woke me."

He pushed her skirt up her thighs and stepped between her legs. His cock, as rigid as a stick, poked against her pussy.

"A wicked hard-on wouldn't let me sleep, sweet thing." His hand cupped her chin and drew her mouth to his. "You were in my dreams."

Cadie let out a sigh and snuggled into his strong embrace.

"What did you do with me in your dreams?"

"I hammered you all night long until I was sore." He slanted his mouth over hers, and hoisted her up.

She wrapped her legs around his waist, reveling in his tender strength. She knew she'd enjoy a level of dominance from him.

"Take me to bed."

Renn carried her as if she weighed nothing. His spirit gave her comfort in a special way.

"Now what?" he teased, rocking her against his arousal.

"You mentioned spanking."

"Brand spanking new." He kissed her again. "It's an old phrase."

"And spanking?" She lowered her legs, pushing him back as she got on the bed. "Wouldn't you like to spank the new right out of me?"

She posed on her hands and knees. Ceres masters loved spanking her. She enjoyed the stimulation even though she didn't like the men. She also learned they liked to do it to the point of treating her better. Renn had more than proved he'd never treat her bad, but she needed more. She had to trust him with her life if he ever found out she wasn't a damn machine.

"Jeez, you have a gorgeous bottom." He rubbed and squeezed one cheek.

"Spank me." She pressed back against his palm.

He smacked her with one gentle *thwack*.

"Again," she coaxed.

The sting of his hand connecting quick made her insides clench.

"Don't stop."

She jerked from the next one. When he made contact once more, he didn't draw back. His fingers raked the crevice and pushed forward, touching her clit. Circling the area, he

heated sensitive nerves. She shuddered and dropped to her forearms on the bed.

Renn's alternating caresses and smacks tingled. He pressed his lips against the inflamed area, kissing, licking, and soothing her hot flesh. His nose pressed into the split as his tongue curled forward and massaged her moistening sex. The climax escalated fast and her orgasm hit hard.

He turned her over on her back and descended on her. She whimpered as his breath, scented with her sex, fused their lips. Desire rocketed her thoughts beyond any, save one—having Renn fill her body with his adoring passion. His tongue plundered her mouth with dominating thrusts and his prior gentleness vanished during the spanking. She liked his aggressive handling, though she shouldn't have since it represented authority. Nonetheless, his moans emitted a sort of frustration she understood. The sounds blended his actions with impatience, as he tried to hold back.

They rolled on the bed, him on top, and then her as they kissed. Sensations of need drove her crazy. When Renn tried to turn her beneath him, she took charge and shoved him on his back.

"Cadie!" His expression was of surprise.

She slung a leg over his thighs, rose up on her knees, and lowered onto his stout erection.

"Oh, God," he moaned.

Throwing her head back, she cried out in pleasure as his rock-solid arousal pushed deep, pulsing against her womb. He scrubbed her breasts in agitation, kneading them within his firm grip. Capturing the tips between his knuckles, he rolled her nipples. She pitched forward, looking for more than the pluck of his fingers.

He grabbed her face, a hand to each side and pulled her all the way down on his chest. Her aching breasts compressed to his taut muscles as his mouth smashed against hers. For several minutes, he gripped her bottom and pulled her back and forth on him. He filled her with his flesh expanding until the tightness prevented her from rocking as fast. Then he shuddered. His hips jolted and the liquid warmth of him spread, flowing and filling her vaginal cavern. Contagious shock waves wracked her body, causing spasms within to clench hard.

Renn pushed with one arm and flipped her over to her back. He drew his hips back and rammed hard, sending his cock to unfathomable depths. He stayed until his body stopped quaking, and she released the grip on the shank of his maleness.

Cadie had nothing to say when they had finished, and neither did Renn. He gathered her into his embrace, and promptly fell asleep. She deemed from experience, this was a male trait. Years of observance gave her many insights to the opposite sex. Renn's inability to stay awake came in handy.

She waited until she was sure her movements wouldn't wake him, and then she slipped off the bed. Moving in a slow stealthy manner, she had her excuse prepared should he miss her presence.

Leaving the bedroom with her clothes, she crossed the living area. She put on her skirt and blouse, wishing she had a change of clothes. While buttoning the top, she touched the door handle. *This is it.* The level of her anxiety rose. She turned the latch and pulled the door open just wide enough to slip outside. Easing it shut, she punched the lock button on the keypad. There had to be backup features to the panel, but

for now, her new code would prevent Renn from leaving. With him locked in, she had time to get far away.

Cadie took several steps and looked back. When she left Ceres, it never crossed her mind to take a last glance at what she left behind.

“I wish things were different,” she muttered, hurrying to the stairs.

## **Chapter 7**

Stretching his arms above his head, Renn worked out the kinks in his aching body. His old interactive partner had a few basic positions and not an ounce of passion in her responses when they had sex. It got to where he wasn't satisfied with her for even the basic chore. Cadie wore him out in one day.

"Hey, sweet thing." He rolled over and his hand dropped to the mattress instead of her silky body. "Cadie?"

He lifted himself on his elbows and looked around the room. Not in the bed and not in the room, she couldn't be far.

"Cadie, come back to bed," he called. "I still have some energy."

Flopping down on the pillow, he yawned and waited.

"Cadie?"

She didn't appear.

Renn sat back up, swinging his legs to the side of the bed. Placing his feet on the cold floor, he slowly rose. "Come on, Cadie. Where are you?" Walking to the bathroom, he rubbed his balls and stopped at the urinal.

Closing his eyes, he relaxed and relieved himself of his morning stiffy. Once he stood at the basin washing his hands, his hard-on returned. It took only a tiny thought about Cadie's luscious rump to excite him.

“Oh, Cadieeee. Come out, come out, wherever you are.”

Glancing at the clock on the wall, he couldn’t believe how late he had slept. Morning was over.

“Cadie?” He strolled from room to room in search of her. His hunt led him to closets and to his knees to look under furniture.

Frantic, he rushed to the entry door and turned the knob.

*Locked.* He took a deep breath, relieved she couldn’t wander away. Then he studied the living room. In each room afterward, he tried to spot a place he hadn’t looked for her. His search became pointless once he assured himself he had thoroughly checked every nook and cranny.

He went to the door and punched in the code, but nothing happened. Repeating the pattern, he took his time to get it right.

“What the hell?” He hurried to the panel in his bedroom.

“Open.” He hit the panel door with the side of his fist. “Open, dammit.”

Renn’s communicator sat on the dresser. He grabbed it and tapped in Creeg’s number. Sitting on the chair, he leaned forward, and pushed his fingers into his hair. He felt like slamming the communicator against the wall in frustration.

“She’s gone,” he told Creeg as soon as he answered.

“Who?”

“Cadie. She’s disappeared. To top it off, my door won’t unlock and the control panel won’t open.” He walked back to the front door.

“Where’d she go, and what’s wrong with the panel?” Creeg asked.



“I don’t know where she’d go. She’s brand new. And how the hell should I know why the control panel isn’t working. Now get over here.”

He dropped the communicator on the table, and banged on the keypad again, trying to get it to work. “Open, you blasted box!”

Pacing back and forth, he dissected all his moves from the last time he used it.

*Cadie’s curiosity.*

“How could I’ve forgotten?” He ran to the panel. “You’re wet.” He used the last words he said before Cadie closed the panel.

Nothing.

Renn tried dozens of commands he had used over the years. Never having had the problem before, he didn’t know what to do other than call the landlord for a pass code. After trying to make the call and not getting through, he remembered it was a holiday. Every Friday, the government shut down, so everyone used it as an excuse not to work—including dwelling owners.

Creeg pounded on the door hours later.

“Renn?” he yelled into the intercom.

“Yeah.”

“You still locked in?”

“What do you think?” Renn leaned his back against the door.

“Did you call the landlord?”

“It’s a holiday.”

“He might still work.”

“I tried. No answer.”

"I guess you're stuck in there until tomorrow." Creeg snickered.

"Not if you go find a foot patrolman to come unlock it."

"Holiday. Government workers won't be out. Remember?"

"I've seen some. They don't make enough money to take off every Friday. You might find one." He had to hope.

"All right, I'll go see if I spot one."

Renn returned to the panel. He placed his hands on the wall and leaned his head against the metal door. Wracking his brain for ideas, he leaned away and stared at the sealed vault. *Cadie said wet when she shut the panel.*

He had his answer, but it didn't help remedy his oversight. Her voice was now in command of his panel.

As the hours passed, he stalked the room, worried about losing her. There were unscrupulous men who wouldn't think twice about stealing her—selling her to someone out of town. He had no idea how many hours she'd been gone before he woke up. If darkness came, the possibility of finding her dwindled severely.

## Chapter 8

Cadie took long strides, making sure not to appear in a hurry. She didn't go back toward the ocean for fear someone would remember her with Renn. Every place had rules and what she didn't know could get her in trouble.

As she walked, she observed people and her surroundings. The clean streets with the cheerful couples continued to be her greatest distraction. She wanted to be a happy person. Then she stopped and watched the men. The females weren't real—they were replicas. Every single one had no genuine contented moments or joyful memories. None had any idea what they missed by not knowing how to laugh because something was funny.

Suddenly, she felt paranoid. Could the people that noticed her tell she wasn't one of the many machines? Hours had passed and the setting sun had long disappeared behind tall buildings. Darkness would hide her. All she needed to do was tough it out until night and then no one would ever know a human woman walked among the men.

"Hey! Cadie?"

Creeg's voice made her turn. His strides moved him toward her.

*Run.* Her brain functioned—her feet didn't.

"Renn was afraid he lost you." Creeg grabbed her arm.

She remained composed—unemotional.

“I can really appreciate that, too. You’re one stunning love doll.” He turned his head and gazed around as if he searched for someone.

“Is Renn looking for me?” She actually liked pretending he cared.

“No.” He laughed. “Seems he can’t get out of the apartment.”

“Why not?” she asked as if she didn’t know.

“Malfunctioning control panel.” He tugged her toward a doorway. “Let’s go in here for a minute.”

“Why?” She followed anyway.

“I need to call Renn and tell him I found you.”

Creeg’s constant glances around the area made her nervous. She tried to spot what made him edgy. Nothing stood out that she could point at as the problem. Inside the building, men sat at tables and a long counter. Everyone had a drink, but no food. Creeg led her around the furnishings and guided her to a cubicle in the back.

“Don’t you have your own communicator?” She didn’t like the atmosphere of the dimly lit room.

“Not on me.” He pushed her to sit on a red bench.

“What is this place?” She scooted over for Creeg to sit next to her.

“A pleasure pub.”

“What do the men do here?” She had a guess it wasn’t anything productive.

“Drink, enjoy themselves, and...”

“How much?” A man came forward and asked.

“You tell me,” Creeg answered.

Cadie wanted to keep her gaze down, except the way the man stared at her, she felt safer watching him.

"A hundred credits." The man's offer made Creeg laugh.

"Open your blouse, Cadie. Show this gentleman how new and improved you are." Creeg reached for her buttons.

"I thought you were going to call Renn." Naturally, she breathed heavier as Creeg's nimble fingers traveled down, flicking each button through a hole.

"I will. I will. Now show the man how well made you are."

"No." She didn't plan for the word to come out, but there it was, and from the looks on both men's faces, they'd never heard a replica refuse them.

"I s-said she was new, didn't I?" Creeg stammered. "Not much training, so she doesn't have all her etiquette skills perfected yet."

"No thanks, then. I want easy."

"Wait." Creeg jumped up from his place alongside her. "I'll take the hundred credits."

Cadie quickly reinstalled the buttons through the holes to hold her blouse closed. She got up and slid out of the booth behind Creeg.

The man waved a hand in the air as he continued walking away, clearly not interested in the transaction.

"You're hurting my business, honey." Creeg wheeled about and grabbed her arms. "Look, I had a good thing going with Renn's other doll. Once a week, I'd sneak her out of his apartment and bring her here. I'd rent her for a hundred a few times in a day and it made my life easy."

He stroked her arms, his long stare indicating he devised a new plan. The gleam in his eyes should have given her a

quicker warning as to what it was he decided upon. Leaning in, he planted his mouth on hers. In response, she bit him.

“Damn.” He jerked his head back.

Turning his face away, he spit, sending a gob of saliva and blood to the floor. She prepared to receive a familiar kind of punishment. Clenching her jaw, she waited for him to strike her. His lack of doing so gave her time to think.

“Eat. Eat,” she said twice to start her malfunctioning routine.

The anger in his expression didn’t go away.

“Maybe you just need warming up.” He pushed her against the wall, hard enough to send the wind out of her lungs, and she gasped.

“I don’t understand.”

“Fuck, honey.” He let go and fumbled with the buckle on his belt. “If Renn had been a better friend, he would have given me that old doll of his the moment he figured out she was conditioned for only sex. It took me awhile, but I had her asking for it the moment a guy came near her.”

“What are you doing?” She watched his pants open.

“I’m going to bang you until you love it.”

“Renn didn’t want you, or anyone touching me.”

“Let’s just say what Renn doesn’t know, won’t hurt him.” He grasped her at the waist.

“We should return to Renn?” She tried to move.

“In a little while.” Creeg’s hands traveled over her hips, down the sides of her skirt.

“Don’t do that.” She attempted to stall his actions by questioning everything. “It tickles.”

She pretended to laugh, while wiggling, hopping to get free without creating too much question about her replica status.

"You need breaking in, honey, and there's no one that can do it better than me."

"Renn."

"No, he's tame when it comes to sex, and extremely cautious with how he handles his possessions." Creeg's hand slid up the back of her thigh beneath the short skirt. "He'd never think to do the things I can do to you."

Her butt muscles tightened against Creeg's hard squeeze.

Unable to think, Cadie panicked, and she pushed him away. He stumbled back, falling into another table, and then landed on the floor.

"Cadie!" he yelled.

She ran as fast as she could. Her freedom from Ceres gave her a stronger will and eliminated the reasons for submissiveness. All she had left in her was the fight for her freedom. Men snatched at her as she weaved through the room toward the exit. Creeg shouted several times for someone to stop her. Apparently, they had no desire to put any effort into catching another man's property, so she managed to get away from each one.

Bolting through the door, she turned and fled down the walkway. This time, she didn't give into her fear of someone questioning her rush.

Ten minutes of flat-out running finally exhausted her enough to make her stop and take a breath. She watched for any signs that Creeg followed. The cool glass of a storefront felt good against her hot skin as she rested.

"Excuse me." A man startled her from behind.

She stiffened and considered whether he spoke to her or someone else.

"Can I see your identification?" His authoritative voice rattled her.

Cadie swallowed past the dry lump in her throat, worried about what would happen next.

"Miss?" A hand landed on her shoulder.

"Errand." She turned and blinked rapidly. "Errand."

"Do you have your papers?"

"Errand." What else could she say to get him to leave her alone?

"Do you know your address? Your owner's name? Where are you headed?"

*Too many questions.*

"Errand," she repeated, hoping he'd get frustrated and go away.

"If you can't tell me anything other than errand, I'm going to have to take you to a holding cell at the station."

"Renn," she murmured, wishing he were there to help her.

"Renn, who?" the man asked.

Cadie gave in. "Renn Saharic."

"Now we're getting somewhere." He raised his arm and talked into a small black box in his hand.

A voice answered and gave him an address as a reply to his question for the location of Renn Saharic.

There was a tiny thread of relief in her mind with the idea she'd see Renn again. But she also had a heavier concern. What would he do to her for running away?



## Chapter 9

Renn's intercom buzzed and he rushed to the entry.

"Creeg, is that you?" He tapped his hand on the wall, impatient for the answer that immediately came.

"It's a foot patrol, Mr. Saharic."

"Finally." Renn leaned closer to the intercom. "Can you open my door?"

He had heard on occasion that while some foot patrol officers worked on the holiday, they didn't actually exert themselves. But how hard was it for them to unlock a keypad. All it took was their master code. He once felt it was wrong the government could get into anyone's domain, even if their reasoning were valid. Today, he was thankful they could do it.

"Sir, I'm here with an interactive partner that I think belongs to you."

"Cadie?" His thoughts shifted immediately from the laws of the city to his wandering interactive partner.

"Yes, it's me," she announced.

She sounded distressed—an unusual tone for someone with no emotions.

"Officer, my code isn't working and I can't get out. Can you unlock the door?"

Renn listened to the beeps and the click of the mechanism unbolting inside the steel.

"This has been the longest day." Renn swung open the door.

"Does she belong to you, Mr. Saharic?"

"Yes." Renn stretched out his hand toward Cadie and tugged her into the apartment.

"She should have an I.D. card on her at all times."

"I know."

"She didn't answer right away when I asked her for information. I think she's broken and you may want to have her checked out." He let his gaze roam down the length of Cadie.

"I just bought her yesterday and forgot about the I.D. Sorry, Officer."

"Very well." The man gave a nod and walked toward the stairs.

Renn shut the door, held it for a moment, and gathered his senses. Cadie made him crazy worrying over her.

"You wandered off." He turned and folded his arms over his chest. "You could have gotten lost. I'm going to have to call the auction house and see if they have records on you."

"No." She stopped him from picking up his communicator.

"Why not?"

"They'll take me away."

"They can't. I own you."

Cadie turned her back to him.

Putting his hands on her shoulders, he didn't question her emotional reaction. The feature had become one of his favorites. She tensed when he moved closer.

"Everything will be all right." He tried reassuring her. "A little information and an exam by a technician, and..."

“There’s no way to ease into this.” She spun around, breaking away from his grasp. “So I’ll tell you straight out. I’m a slave from Ceres—a worker that makes the female replicas. I hid aboard the cargo as one of them, and I’m begging you not to turn me in.”

Renn grabbed her shoulders and looked over her face. He touched her cheek, her lips and her nose. “You’re capable of that kind of thought process?”

“You’re not listening to what I’m saying. I’m not one of them.”

He stroked her hair and let the silkiness tickle his palm. Tears dripped from her eyes to her cheeks and he wiped them away, tasting them on his fingertips as he had before, rubbing the wet on his skin with his thumb.

“You’re human?”

He didn’t think the nod of her head would make him as happy as he felt.

“You’re a living, breathing woman?” He gripped her face, framing it in his hands.

Her watery gaze darted around. She studied him and maybe his reaction. Of course, she wouldn’t be able to trust him. On the run, in his civilization would make any woman nervous. They didn’t exist for the most part.

The buzzer sounded and he ignored it.

“You’re not a robot?” He had to be sure. “But when you were with Forje, you were broken.”

“I was pretending.” She wrung her hands together, another sign of the human anxiety trait. “I thought I could escape, and then you came along.”

“Damn, this is hard to believe.” He rubbed the back of his head. “And then, it’s not. So much of what you spoke about

didn't fit a mold. Your appearance, the constant questions, and your observations and comments—everything that stood out as unique was because you're real."

The buzzer interrupted his thoughts and he walked to it. "Yeah?"

"It's Creeg. I couldn't find a—"

"I got the door unlocked." He swung it open.

"And you found your love doll." Creeg grinned as he strolled into the room. "Has she said where she's been?"

"She's not a doll," Renn corrected. "You aren't going to believe this, but she's—"

Cadie's terrified expression stopped him for a second.

"She's what?" Creeg asked.

"Broke," Renn answered. "Worse than my other doll. If it weren't for a foot patrolman finding her and bringing her home, I don't know how far she would have gotten. He's the one who got my door unlocked."

"Does your luck ever run out?" Creeg circled Cadie. "You've had one eventful couple of days. Now tell me I can borrow her."

Renn grabbed Creeg's arm, before his hand landed on Cadie. "She's off limits."

"You really need to learn to share." Creeg ambled over to the kitchen. "You got something to eat? I'm starving."

"I'll prepare a meal." Cadie went around the counter.

"She cooks?" Creeg jerked a stool out from under the counter.

"Apparently." Renn sat next to him, watching Cadie. "We haven't exactly had time for eating."

“Then what have you been... Oh, I get it. You’ve been breaking in your doll.” Creeg slapped him on the back. “Is she good? I bet she’s real good.”

Cadie’s head turned and her brow cocked.

Renn winked at her. “It’s more like she was breaking me in.”

He thought she’d smile. Yet, her expression remained troubled. Creeg’s constant stare at her appeared to be the cause.

Cadie didn’t eat. She tidied the area while Creeg rambled on about inconsequential subjects. Renn caught a word or two about Forje and his concern about the deal swapping dolls. He tried to respond when appropriate, except Cadie had most of his attention.

A real woman stood in his apartment and he had a million questions. He had never talked to a woman who wasn’t a government official.

Renn let Creeg eat his fill and then sent him away. After Creeg left, he sat silent, studying every move Cadie made. Everything had changed in his perspective of her.

“Your friend is very—”

“He’s rude, crude, and a conniver, but he can be fun.”

“I was going to say talkative.” She carried a plate to the counter and sat next to him. “Have you always been friends?”

“You didn’t want him to know about you. Why?” He placed his hand over hers. “He wouldn’t tell anyone. Creeg is the last person to get involved with any government doings. He has enough of his own scams going to have them looking at him too closely.”

“That’s another reason for him not to know. I wouldn’t want your friend to get into trouble should anyone find out.” She took a bite of her sandwich.

Renn watched in fascination. “Tell me about you.”

“There’s not much.” She sat her sandwich on the plate. “I was a slave. I was told what to do every minute of every day. If they demanded that production speed up, I worked faster. If a Ceres master wanted sex, I was his... Well, as your friend would say, I was his love doll.”

“You had no choice?”

“None. They did what they pleased with me. To them, I was property, and because I had emotions, they preferred me to a replica.” She picked up her food, taking another bite.

“How did you come to be there?”

“All orphans of other planets are taken to Ceres. I don’t know for sure, but I suspect I was sold to them in exchange for machines. I heard it negotiated once for a twelve-year-old girl.”

Cadie’s bad memories reflected in her watery eyes. How young had she been when they started abusing her? He could hear it in her tone. She didn’t have good recollections of her past.

“They didn’t treat you well, did they?” Renn rubbed her arm. “I’m sorry. There’s something wrong in a world that has no respect for any life force.”

## Chapter 10

Cadie slipped her hand into the one Renn offered. While she liked him, her trust couldn't be one hundred percent unless she got to know him. As close as she was to depending on Renn for her safety, she was equally distanced from letting Creeg know. Schemers often looked out for themselves, and Creeg proved some of his disloyalty to Renn by secretly borrowing his replica for financial gain.

"It's been a long day. I bet you're tired." He ran his fingers through his hair, messing up the brown locks. "You can have the bed to yourself."

She turned and put her hand against his chest. His heartbeat thumped under her palm. The solidness of his body had her push upward, over the ball of his shoulder. "That's not necessary."

"What *is not* necessary is me using you like you were my possession."

She pressed her fingers against his warm lips. "I told you about me and the Ceres masters, not to stop you from wanting me, but so you know what Ceres is like—what the conditions are for women."

"They used you and I'm not like that."

"I know. If I thought you were, I would have pretended to be broken again." She moved her finger aside to press her lips against his.

"The beach." He held her back. "You were...hmmm, don't I feel stupid."

"I'm sorry."

"You're real and I went crazy trying to buy you."

"I'll make it up to you."

Renn's arms swept up her back and he pulled her close. "Don't ever feel as if you don't have a right to say no to me."

"I've not wanted to do that since I saw you staring at me in the cargo container."

He slanted his mouth over hers and kissed her hard, probing her lips with his tongue. She welcomed the depths he went to be gentle, and yet, passionate. She rolled her tongue around his—savoring the texture and flavor of his flesh.

His touch slid down her spine. Splaying his fingers over both halves of her bottom, he paused. Cadie rocked her hips forward and nudged the bulge of his pants.

Renn groaned and grasped her ass. He kneaded with rhythmic squeezes each time he brought her firmer against him. His mouth moved faster and she turned her head to accommodate every lock of his lips grabbing hers.

"Let's go to bed." She panted the suggestion between the short releases of his mouth.

He led the way.

Cadie unfastened Renn's trousers while they kissed. She tipped her head one way and then the other to accommodate his breathless assault on her mouth. Dragging herself from his lips, she kissed his shoulder. Renn's chiseled contours attracted her lower. She curled her fingers beneath the bottom



of his shirt and pushed it up to where she exposed the taut muscles of his abdomen.

Circling, caressing, traveling upward, she sucked on his skin. Pushing his clothing even higher, she dragged her tongue over one of his nipples. His groan rumbled low out of his throat. She dropped his shirt and placed her hands on his face. Stubble along his jaw prickled her palms. Kissing him, she pushed her hands behind his head and held him.

Renn's hands hadn't stopped moving the whole time. His fingers journeyed everywhere and he had her half undressed. Her blouse hung open, unbuttoned by his dexterity. Her skirt unfastened, drooping lower on her hips. It only remained up because his body stayed pressed to hers.

She stepped back enough to gather his shirt edge again, dragging it up his chest. Renn crossed his arms between them and took over. Without effort, he jerked his top over his head and tossed it on the floor.

Cadie laid her hands on his well-developed chest. She sank downward, leaving her arms stretched up. Kneeling before him, she faced his open trousers. The heat of his arousal drifted under her nose. She moved her arms and held his hips as he pushed his trousers from his waist. The pant legs bunched at his knees.

Grasping his shaft, she aligned his erection with her mouth. Renn made a sound, both anxious and excited. She delayed the sensation he craved with an alternative, rubbing his silky flesh on her face. Along her jaw, beneath her chin, down her neck, she glided his hard throbbing maleness. Retracing the route back to her lips, she wrapped him in the wetness of her mouth.

"Oh, God." His fingers dove into her hair.

She swirled her tongue around the rim of capped flesh, tickling the underside with a massaging lick. If it weren't for his gentleness, her thoughts might have lingered on the past. However, each time she pushed him deeper into her throat, he was first to draw back.

While she sucked on him, bringing about the wonderful sound of his pleasure, she explored. She took in the feel of his intimate area. The texture of his cock was like velvet sliding across her tongue.

She broke free, kissing down his shaft, blowing a stream of air over his wet skin. Looking up, she saw him watching her. Hypnotically filled with desire, his eyes glazed over. She had the same lust weaving through her.

"Don't stop," he groaned, when she let go to get up.

The serious tone captivated her. His raspy voice had an air of agitation. With his body stiffening, she had already guessed his climax had escalated near completion. It was why she'd withdrawn. She wanted him in her, making her warm with his discharge.

Forming a circle with her mouth, she sheathed him. She pushed as far as she could go. His cock jammed against the back of her throat. Her gag reflexes made her convulse and the first taste of Renn trickled down her throat unhindered. Swallowing hard, she made Renn gasp. He jerked his hips away and his long cock fell from her lips.

He bent down, gripped her forearms, and dragged her up the front of him.

"You said don't stop." She smiled.

"Changed my mind." His mouth settled against hers and he kissed her deeply. "You feel so good, Cadie."

Panting, out of breath, he nuzzled his nose against hers. She felt his exhilaration.

“Everything is much more wonderful knowing you can feel and experience sensations I help create.” He enveloped her with his arms.

“Then allow me to finish what I started.” She rubbed her hands over his body and encouraged him to let her lower herself to her knees.

His reluctance waned as she fondled his arousal. Gliding down the framework of his muscular torso, she resumed her intent to pleasure him. She hummed against the quiver of his silky cock. Slipping her fingers beneath his cock, she cupped the firm sac. A shiver zipped through her. The unbelievable thrill in tasting his flesh drew her into the moment.

“Cadie.” Renn stroked a hand over her head.

She pulled her mouth off, sliding her lips along his shaft. Holding his cock against his belly, she puckered her lips and pressed a kiss against the taut skin of his scrotum. Nuzzling her nose playfully in the masculine scent of his groin, she took pleasure in listening to his incoherent moans. His vocal expressions were rather touching and his gentleness endeared him to her heart.

His arousal grew more with her incitement. He widened and stretched her lips as the length snaked into her throat. She swallowed the stimulated erection until the throbbing veins pressed on her tongue. His groan awakened her senses to the preservation of her sanity and she leaned back from him.

Renn stooped to pull her up from the floor. His slowness aroused her. Men, she knew were quick in taking what they wanted, and harsh in the handling. She moved by his directing turns, putting her on the bed. He leaned over her and the si-

new in his arms went taut. Cords of steely flesh held him within inches of touching her. Heat radiated from him and warmed the space between them.

“You are everything I’ve ever wanted.” He lowered and their skin met.

Her nipples tingled from the brush of his hard-muscled chest making contact. Splitting her pussy lips apart, the head of his cock entered. He withdrew and drove deeper. His hips gyrated, grinding his groin against hers, caressing her insides and stimulating her outside.

Cadie arched, pressing her breasts against him, anxious to feel his weight. He pushed back, forcing her down on the mattress, making the short hairs on his chest tickle her nipples.

“Renn,” she murmured.

His mouth covered hers. He rocked back and forth, increasing the stimulation—taunting her body to react.

“You’re so beautiful and sexy.” His words engulfed her heart.

“Is there anything else?” She raked her nails along the slabs of muscle on his back.

Renn pulled out and hung over her.

“Hmmm, is there anything else?” He lowered slightly, letting his cock poke at her.

Her involuntary response made her try to squeeze her thighs together. Instead of shutting her legs, her knees locked against the sides of his thighs.

“You’re ticklish everywhere.” He laughed. “That should have been another clue for me to question whether you were real.” He nudged her open.

She shivered in anticipation of him entering her.

"I suppose I could compile a list." He pecked a kiss to the tip of her nose. "This is a cute feature."

"My nose?"

"Yeah, I like the freckles." He kissed her cheek. "I like this area, too."

"I wasn't exactly referring to physical parts of me." She put her hands on his chest and stopped him from kissing her again. "What else is there about me that makes you think I'm *everything* you've ever wanted? How many women have you been with before me?"

Renn flexed his hips as he entered her, not much, but enough to make her aware of his needs.

"I've never been with a real woman." He drew back and thrust deeper. "I've always wondered and wished I knew what it would be like to be with a human female. You've satisfied my curiosity."

"That's it?" She turned her head. "I'm the answer to your fantasy?"

Renn rested on his forearms alongside her shoulders. His blue eyes picked up the little light in the room and twinkled.

"Cadie, do you believe in love?"

"For what, exactly?" She fingered his collarbone. "Like what food do I like the most or my favorite animal?"

"Love between two people." He rubbed her cheek with the back of his fingers.

"I don't know anything about that."

"I never did either—until you."

Cadie slid her arms around his neck, hugging him. He held her in that comforting way she had grown to appreciate.

They resumed kissing, tender and fulfilling, passionate and hungry. She understood just what he meant. There was a

bond between them and if it were love, then she was in the beginning stages of learning.

Renn sank into her. His actions were quick and to the point, and his groan gripped her thoughts, plunging them back into their sexual encounter. She brought her legs up, holstering her knees at his hips, hanging onto him as he tensed. His whole body shuddered against her.

Cadie whimpered. Her orgasm coursed through her as a testament to the wonderful way Renn made her feel. She relaxed under the gentle caresses of his hand as he shifted off her.

“Have you never thought about having children?” She turned and kissed his palm as he slid it over her face.

He had his dreams and she had hers.

“Children? We don’t have children around here. No women, remember?”

“There aren’t any on this planet?”

“In a few places. Remote areas where they breed.” He grabbed her arm when she tried to get up. “I mean have babies.”

“I was supposed to be a breeder, but they considered me too rebellious and kept me on the planet. Their slogan was *never an escape*.”

“They’ll have to change that now that you’re gone.”

“No one will ever know. I can’t say anything and neither can they. Oh sure, a report will be filed and a discreet search will be done. However, no one will say I escaped. It’ll be something insignificant like they lost me.”

“Well, something should be done... Maybe the government here on Earth?”

## **Chapter 11**

Cadie shook her head. “They’ll send me back, Renn. Intergalactic law is a touchy area with all governments. They’d have no reason to help me. Earth is every bit involved in the scheme to wipe-out women.”

“No one wants to do that. The interactive partners are to fill a void. With women scarce, it’s...”

“I overheard details. Ceres masters don’t think of women having any intelligence and they talk quite freely. Have you never wondered why there are very few women here, in your area of the world?”

“No... Well, maybe it has crossed my mind a couple of times.”

“It’s because of the replicas. Years ago, they gave replicas to men that lost women in their lives. The replicas did most things a woman did, plus they took orders. Men being what they are took advantage of having the luxuries of a housekeeper and a sex partner without the emotions of a female human. You said so yourself.”

“I didn’t.”

“You did when I asked you why you were glad to have found me.”

“I didn’t mean it like that.”

“Yes, you did, and I don’t fault you for the way the government has brainwashed you. Everyone is a product of their society. I was used as a slave, and I let them use me.”

“Yet you escaped. You rebelled against the wrong done to you.”

Cadie got up from the bed. “I should go. If the government catches me here, I’ll be sent back to Ceres. I don’t know what will happen to you, but it can’t be good.”

She picked up her clothes from the floor and looked at them.

“Dresser,” Renn said, indicating for her to look for clothes there.

He slid his pants up his legs and within seconds, hid the beautiful masculinity of his lovemaking organ.

She walked to the dresser once she lost the view of his half-aroused body. Opening the top drawer, she reached for the first object gaining her attention—the pink panties.

“Whose—” She dangled the garment from her finger. “Oh, your old replica.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Huh?” She looked up and saw his reflection in the mirror. She also saw her frown.

Jealousy was an odd sensation.

“Nothing.”

“Under the bed is a traveling bag. Pack whatever you need, but leave a little room for me.”

“You?” She wheeled around and faced him.

“You didn’t think I was letting you leave without me, did you?”

“But—”



“No buts. You’re everything I wanted and everything I plan to keep.” He walked to her, placing his hands on her shoulders. “Do you have any objections?”

“Helping me can get you into serious trouble.”

“Only if we’re caught.” He kissed her cheek. “And that’s nothing I’m planning on happening.”

She turned back toward the dresser.

Renn’s arms circled her—one wrapped under her breasts, the other over them. He gently hugged her. For a minute, he stared at her in the mirror. Then he let go and walked to the bed. Bending toward the floor, he reached beneath the frame, and hauled out the bag he mentioned. Laying it on the bed, he finished getting dressed. Cadie didn’t think it a good idea that he come with her, but she didn’t have the strength to go on alone. Renn’s status of a male citizen might be useful. He knew the planet, the customs, and most of all he knew where to take her to be safe.

She watched him out of the corner of her eye. Could she trust him? Creeg was a deviant character. Wouldn’t his friend be like him to some extent?

“Hey, I have a few things to take care of before I leave. You finish packing for the both of us and I’ll be back in an hour.”

He rummaged through a drawer and took out a leather folder. Flipping it open, he thumbed through papers.

“I won’t be long.” He gave her a quick kiss and strolled from the room.

Cadie opened another drawer and held up a long dress. The thin material didn’t have a chance at concealing anyone who wore it, yet she slipped it over her head to try it on.

“Oh, yeah, definitely bring that one.” Renn’s voice startled her.

She folded her arms over her chest. “I thought you were gone.”

“I still can’t get out.” He raised a brow.

“Oh, sorry.” She walked to the panel and spoke the password clearly. “Escape.”

“Nice.” Renn’s expression never gave a hint of anger at her stunt.

“Change command to—” She motioned for Renn to speak.

“Cadie,” he said, issuing the new command with his voice.

Resetting the door lock combination, he closed the panel.

“That should do it.” He left immediately.

No more kisses, caresses, or hugs. She stood practically naked and he hurried out of the room. Did he know the Ceres masters offered bounties on escaped slaves? Renn could only collect if he went to them directly.

Cadie shook the thought from her head. Paranoia now was pointless. She had to trust someone, so why not the man professing all kinds of sentiments about love—or were those statements too over the top? Was it his intention to make her trust him?

She resumed checking clothes and packing practical items. She set aside one outfit to put on when she was done.

“Going away, are you?”

Cadie spun around and stared at Creeg in the doorway.

“I-I’m or-organizing Renn’s...”

“You’re packing.”

“No. Yes, but Renn asked me to. Renn’s not here.”

"I know." Creeg stepped into the room. "He came by my place and said he was leaving the city. Told me I could have his apartment. Gave me the code to the door and a bunch of other codes for paying utilities and such."

Cadie moved from the dresser to the other side of the bed, placing her farther from Creeg. She didn't know where to put her hands or arms to cover up the areas over which Creeg's gaze roamed.

"He figured out you're real, didn't he?" Creeg's tongue swung around the rim of his mouth.

"No!" she answered too fast.

"Then you told him." He glanced into the drawer and when his hand dived in, it came back out with the pink panties she had looked at. "Took me awhile, but everything fit. Your reluctance to perform sexually was only the beginning. While watching you fix lunch, I noticed the way you kept studying Renn. There seemed to be too many human characteristics for you to be a doll. And now, look at you hiding yourself with your arms. Dolls don't have modesty."

"What are you going to do?" She picked up the blouse she had on earlier and held it up in front of her.

"First, we're going to come to an understanding. Renn is my money-line. If he leaves town, I'm in financial trouble."

"You said he's given you his apartment and access to credits for other things."

"Yeah, but I need extras. Therefore, doll, you need to convince Renn you want to stay here."

"If the government finds me here, he'll be arrested."

"No one's going to find out."

Creeg stood up and walked around to her. It didn't take a genius to know what he wanted.

“Second.” He widened his stance and rested his hands at his hips. “You’re going to make sure I haven’t a reason to turn him in for harboring an escaped slave.”

“How do I do that?”

“By having sex with me—where I want, when I want.”

“Renn is supposed to be your friend.”

“And he is. That’s why we don’t want him to know of our arrangement.” He reached out and grabbed her arm.

“He’ll be back soon,” she argued. “If he catches us, he’ll turn me in.”

“Then I suggest we hurry.”

Cadie cringed from the way Creeg twisted her arm, forcing her down on her knees. She stared at the crotch of his trousers. Instinct for self-preservation demanded she comply. Impulse had a stronger argument and she hit him in the sensitive area.

Creeg yowled like a wounded animal. He fell back on the bed, holding his groin. While he writhed in pain, she scrambled to get off the floor. She stuffed her arm in one sleeve of the blouse she held and snatched her skirt off the chair. Racing through the apartment, she reached the entry keypad at the same time Creeg emerged from the room.

“I’ll kill you, bitch!”

Cadie tapped the numbered buttons. She opened the door as Creeg slammed into her. They both went tumbling into the hallway. Kicking him in the chest, she crawled far enough away to get up and run.

## Chapter 12

Renn never paid attention to joggers. He wasn't interested in men exerting themselves in public. But when the runner was Cadie, he ran after her. Dressed in the sheer nightgown, a blouse over it and a skirt under it, she stood out as much as her racing down the street.

He crossed the road, dodging cars and caught Cadie.

"Let me go." She struggled to break free.

"What's wrong?" He glanced around at the people staring, and eased her into a doorway.

"Creeg knows I'm human. He's going to turn me into the authorities."

"He wouldn't do that."

"Renn, he's not the person you think he is. He came to the apartment and tried to make a deal with me to keep you in the city."

"That's a friend. He just doesn't want me to go."

"He called you his money-line."

The words stung. "I suppose I have spoiled him, but money isn't everything."

"It is to him and he wanted me to help him use you. He threatened to turn you and me into the government if I didn't."

“You have to be mistaken.” He didn’t want to believe his best friend had stooped that low. They were buddies for ages. There hadn’t been a day they didn’t get together and create some mischief, though Creeg was better suited for it.

“I’m sorry, but he tried to force me to have sex with him. That’s when I ran.”

“He’s always interested in sex with dolls. I caught him once trying to steal my other interactive partner,” Renn reasoned. Although, as the words left his mouth, doubts danced in his head.

“The difference is I’m not a replica. As for the one you gave to Forje, Creeg wore her out. When I left yesterday, he found me and took me to a place that rents replicas to men. He called it a pleasure pub. I questioned him about the place and he confessed that’s how he broke yours. He claimed to have taken it there often and rented her so many times, the machinery just wore out.”

Renn respected Cadie’s intelligence. Even as frightened as she was about getting caught, she’d not have a reason to make up everything she said about Creeg. He did push Renn to his limits with his greed and inconsiderate ways.

“I have to say I did wonder once or twice if Creeg hadn’t been tinkering with her. He never did have an ounce of restraint for my personal property.”

“He doesn’t have any manners whatsoever.”

She kept rubbing her arm and Renn lifted it up. “How did you get the bruise?”

“Your friend forced me to the floor to...”

“That son of a bitch.” Anger maneuvered through him and his blood pressure rose. “Even when he knew you weren’t a machine?”

Cadie's head bobbed.

"I'm sorry." He folded his hand behind her neck and pulled her close. "I've overlooked his flaws far too long."

He leaned his forehead against hers. He had everything they needed to travel. However, on the chance Creeg might do something rash, he pulled out his communicator.

"Creeg," he said into the receiver.

"What are you going to say?" Cadie asked.

Renn put a finger to her lips.

"Yeah," Creeg answered.

"Cadie's with me." Renn paused for an excuse that Creeg didn't offer. "We're on our way out of the city and I won't be back. I hope you understand that my accounts only stay active as long as I'm never convicted of anything by the government. You know how they love to confiscate a person's belongings."

"Yeah, I know." Creeg's somber tone was all he needed to hear.

"So long." Renn held Cadie's arm and walked to the street corner.

"Now what?"

He tossed the communicator into a trash incinerator. "We go to the docks and take the first ship leaving for South America." He pulled the tickets out of his pocket. "These will get us onboard whatever one we want."

"We're leaving the planet?"

"No, not a spaceship. A sailing ship. A boat that crosses the water to another area of this planet."

"I've never seen a sailing ship." She shrugged, still looking confused.

"You will and you'll like it."

They walked the several blocks to the ocean. Cadie's face lit up when the water came in view. Wherever they settled down, he'd make sure the ocean was close. She'd like that.

Leading her along the dock, he read the signs for the right vessel with an immediate departure. Finding the one he wanted, he walked to the clerk and handed him his tickets.

"How strange?" Cadie leaned on the railing and looked at the big ship. "It looks nothing like spaceships."

"They still have some primitive forms of transportation on this planet. I've been on a boat a few times. Nothing this large, but enough to know you'll enjoy it. We'll be surrounded by water." He slid his hand down her arm and folded his fingers between hers. "You'll love it."

She stared into his eyes. "I know I will."

"Hold it right there." Two men stepped in front of Cadie.

"What's the problem?" Renn slid his arm around her waist.

"There's a wanted bulletin on this woman."

"She's an Interactive Partner."

The officer held up a poster with Cadie's picture on it.

"That's not my replica," Renn declared. "Do you really think that blurry image looks like this lovely machinery?"

"She does."

"Well, she's not who you're looking for." Renn pulled his wallet out. "She's my property."

"You might think so if you bought her at the recent auction. She escaped by pretending she was a replica. Did you happen to buy her at the auction?"

"No. I've had her for years."

"Can we see your papers on her?"



Renn held out the card. "I only have a license. Like I said, I've had her a long time."

The officer examined the card and studied Cadie.

"Thank you, Mr. Saharic." The officer handed back the card. "Sorry for the trouble. But she really does look like the woman we're searching for."

"Coming from Ceres, maybe she was a model for their line of replicas." Renn offered a plausible reason for the likeness.

"There's an idea." The officer smiled. "She is one of the prettiest I've seen. You wouldn't want to sell her?"

"No. I think I'll hang onto her for a long while." Renn held his hand out to Cadie and led her away.

"I thought for sure they were going to take me." She hugged his arm and a ripple of love warmed him.

"Not as long as I have this." He leaned closer and flipped the card over in his hand.

Her fingers glided over the plastic and rested against his thumb. "But none of this information is about me."

"It's from my old unit." He walked across the gangplank with her and took her to the railing to watch the shore they were leaving.

"But there's a picture of me?"

"It's the picture from the auction. I know a guy and he got me a copy. There's this other fellow that does some...let's say, he's creative with documents."

"When did you have this done?"

"It was one of those things I went off to do before we left." Renn pulled her close. "Didn't you hear me tell the man I'm hanging onto you for a long while?"

"I love you." She put her head against his shoulder.

“That makes us even.” He patted her arm entwined with his. “Hey, tell me. If you make the replicas, then you know all their programs, right?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think you’ll be sharing any of the kinkier stuff with me?”

Cadie’s laughter gave him that tightening sensation in his chest again.

“I plan on sharing everything with you.” She tipped her head back.

Renn took full advantage of the angle and kissed her. Life with a real woman was going to be better than he ever imagined before.

# **MISCHIEF AT MIDNIGHT**

by

**Rayne Forrest**

## Chapter 1

Madelyn Murphy did not normally allow herself the luxury of indulging in panic. Panic kept a girl from thinking clearly, and she desperately needed clarity. A plan was necessary—now—only her mind had shut down.

She stared at the clock and decided that maybe, just this once, she'd forgive herself for the sheer, unadulterated panic she currently suffered. In five hours and seventeen minutes, her guests would arrive, and Hazel was on the fritz. Triple D Drones were supposed to be more reliable.

"Hazel, please go clean the bathroom," she instructed through clenched teeth. The drone looked at her, confused.

"I know you cleaned it, but I made another mess. Please do as I say."

"Yes, ma'am." Hazel walked off, her right foot dragging. That had been the first indication of trouble, that dragging foot. It had been downhill from there. Madelyn knew she should have called for service the second she noticed that foot.

More than a drone, Hazel's programming allowed her to perform every aspect of domestic work. She cleaned, did the laundry, grocery shopped, and most importantly, she cooked. She also had an extensive database covering everything from the history of Machu Picchu to how many pitches were thrown in every World Series, to the private phone numbers

of every fashion stylist and artist in New York City from Soho to the Bronx.

Friend, companion, and confidante, capable of making modest decisions on her own, Madelyn made sure Hazel received all her scheduled maintenance and every upgrade as they became available. She'd hoped Hazel had just a small glitch and would make it through the evening, but obviously, the malfunction had cascaded through her circuitry.

Madelyn enjoyed preparing her own meals and rarely used Hazel's cooking program when dining alone, but with a dinner party for her fellow board members of the local chapter of the Mystery, Mayhem, and Murder Tours scheduled for tonight, she needed Hazel's expertise. She slipped in the menu card and hoped for the best as Hazel went to work on the bathroom.

Now her ambitious menu of crostini with white truffle oil, tomato-crab bisque, arugula salad with her own olive oil, basil vinaigrette and home baked bread, baked lobster tail with a butter sauce, fresh asparagus with a homemade hollandaise sauce, white and dark chocolate amaretto swirled cheesecake, and old-fashioned caffeinated coffee brewed from freshly ground beans imported from the Pacific hydroponics platform was in serious jeopardy.

Yes, a little panic was definitely in order.

Well, a little thinking was in order, too. She marched to the bathroom and pulled Hazel's cooking chip. She'd do a little reprogramming so Hazel could still do the simple things like tear up the salad greens. Thirty minutes later, she snapped the chip back into place and told her drone the bathroom had never looked better.

She sent Hazel to the kitchen with orders not to deviate from her cooking instructions and said a little prayer she wouldn't. Madelyn needed to call in the wine order and couldn't watch Hazel and talk to the drone at the wine shop at the same time. Thank goodness the finished cheesecake sat safely on its serving plate in the refrigerator. A resounding crash sent her running to the kitchen. Hazel stood in the middle of the room, confused, a mixing bowl lying on the floor.

Madelyn picked it up and examined the small dent in the copper. It wasn't too bad. She'd still be able to whip egg whites in it. She rinsed the bowl and quickly added the ingredients for her vinaigrette and handed the bowl and a wire whisk to Hazel.

"I want you to gently whisk that for two full minutes, then pour it into the crystal cruet, seal it tightly, and put it in the refrigerator. Do you understand?"

The drone nodded, a blank look on her face, and began stirring, her strokes executed at uneven speeds. Maybe trusting Hazel with the crystal wasn't a good idea.

She opened the oven and checked her bread. The loaves were rising nicely. As she stood sniffing the heavenly, yeasty fragrance wafting out of her oven, another crash sounded behind her and something wet hit the top of her head. She whirled around. Her heart sank to the vicinity of her knees. Her carefully planned evening was in serious jeopardy.

Oily vinaigrette dripped from the counter to the floor, coating Hazel as she knelt on her hands and knees in the middle of the mess trying to wipe it up with her bare hands.

"Stop!"

Hazel kept right on wiping.

“Hazel, I said stop! Stop!” she yelled frantically, waving her hands. The drone appeared not to hear her. Madelyn skidded into the mess and did what she’d never done before. She hit Hazel’s off switch, freezing the drone in mid-swipe.

Oh, heavens, what should she do next? Only one thing came to mind. She needed professional, technical help. She needed it now. She washed her oily hands then found the customer service number for Triple D Drones.

Someone had better answer and they better be authorized to send a temporary replacement drone with full function capabilities while repairs were made to Hazel. If they didn’t, why, she’d just have to politely explain the situation.

Madelyn punched the number into her computer. The Triple D Drone logo flashed on the screen acknowledging the call had connected. The most handsome man she’d ever seen, bar none, appeared in front of her—wavy black hair, brilliant blue eyes, cheeks darkened with a close-cropped beard and a killer smile. His broad shoulders filled her screen and five curly hairs teased their way free of his shirt just below his throat. She counted them. Twice.

A soft, sexy voice purred from her speakers.

“Triple D Drones. May I help you?”

Falling back on the very strict training of a very expensive finishing school education, Madelyn managed to keep from gawking. Or at least she didn’t gawk openly. Much. Not that it would matter if she did.

*Damn.*

He had to be a drone. The gorgeous ones always were.

\* \* \* \*

Dallas Dyson had weathered his fair share of calamities, but this one threatened to expand far beyond the initial pre-

dictions. A tiny, fifty-cent relay wreaked havoc across his multibillion-dollar, service-drone empire. The years it had taken to build his company into the industry standard, the long hours, hard work, and personal sacrifices would all be for nothing if he didn't manage this crisis very carefully.

Almost eighty-percent of the Hazel I model drones around the world equipped with the Gamma Del Royce upgrade had crashed and burned. His screen lit up with information about the incoming caller, identifying her as one Madelyn Murphy. *Damn*. This customer had a GDR equipped original Hazel. He took a deep breath and forced his lips into a smile.

"Triple D Drones. May I help you?"

Dark hair, dark eyes, the pale complexion of someone who took care not to allow sun damage to her skin, and a smudge of... Was that a parsley leaf on her otherwise perfect nose? Dallas discretely zoomed in for a closer look.

It was a basil leaf on her nose and olive oil in her hair. This didn't bode well for the condition of her drone. The GDR upgrade involved Hazel's cooking protocols.

"Are you authorized to dispatch a temporary emergency replacement drone for the Hazel I model?" Her voice, soft and schooled, complete with a charming touch of southern accent, quivered.

"Yes, ma'am, I am. Tell me a little bit of what's wrong with Hazel. Is her right foot dragging?"

Relief washed over her attractive oval face. "Does that mean you know how to fix her? I'm having a dinner party in a few hours and I need her desperately!"

Her full lower lip trembled. A drop of olive oil broke free and dripped from her bangs. Her eyes rounded in horror as she swiped her hand over her face.



“Oh, dear. I must look a fright,” she murmured. “I guess it’s a good thing you’re a drone.”

*Drone?* Not the last time he checked, he wasn’t. Last night, he’d been a flesh-and-blood man as he sweated through his workout at the gym. His shoulders and thighs still ached from the punishment he inflicted on his body to keep it in shape. He checked her account.

She didn’t own a Triple D personal pleasure drone, but that didn’t mean some of her friends didn’t, which would explain why she thought him a drone. Not for the first time, he cursed his vast stupidity in basing the appearance of the Trent personal pleasure model on his own features.

Dallas quickly gave her the good and bad on her drone, his mind racing as it tried to come up with a temporary replacement for her.

“Ms. Murphy, we have isolated the problem with the Hazel I model with the most recent food preparation upgrade. However, we’re waiting for the repair part to become available.”

Her lovely face carefully arranged itself into a bland expression. She blinked rapidly, several times, her long, thick eyelashes dampened.

Dallas knew from experience to choose his next words carefully else he’d fall into the bottomless pit of feminine desperation. A woman’s tears sent him to his knees, every time, and this one hovered on the verge of major flooding.

“However, I’m available to assist you in any capacity necessary.”

He’d not planned on saying *that*. Good lord, how had that spilled from his lips? He’d lost his mind!

She stared at him, astonishment holding the tears at bay. He watched, mesmerized as the tip of her tongue flicked over her full lips. She cleared her throat—twice.

“I need an emergency replacement that can assist with preparation and serving a very important dinner party in...” She checked her watch. “Four hours. I need the replacement to arrive immediately.”

Insanity seized him, sucker punched him right in the gut and he didn’t even feel the blow until it was too late to dodge it

“I am trained as a chef, ma’am, and as a server with full host protocols. I will arrive in approximately thirty minutes.”

*What the hell is wrong with me?* He couldn’t impersonate a drone!

His Ms. Madelyn Murphy blinked. Her cheeks darkened. If only he were psychic—but an experienced man didn’t need to read minds to see where her thoughts had gone. She believed him to be what he wasn’t and what his penis told him to pretend to be. If she took him up on his offer, he’d confess and clear up her misunderstanding.

She nodded, forging brusquely ahead. “I’ll expect you to be prompt. Thirty minutes. Please be prepared to remain on call until my Hazel is repaired.” She pursed her lips. “And...um...activate your level five personal interaction chip before arriving.”

Dallas’ stomach plunged nervously even as his penis sent out urgent, greedy pleas that he fulfill that level five personal interaction request to the best of his ability. After all, hadn’t he invented what was frequently called the ‘love machine’ chip? Hadn’t it made him a very wealthy man?

Before he could say another word, his screen blanked as Madelyn severed the link, eliminating the opportunity for him to tell her the truth before he reported for the assignment. Only one option remained.

*Tough it out.*

\* \* \* \*

Twenty-eight minutes later, Dallas jockeyed his cruiser into a hover spot beneath the very posh—and outrageously expensive—Manhattan Views. A masterpiece of technology and engineering, Manhattan Views married the two to deliver one hundred housing units that floated above a New Jersey wetland. With a view of the New York City skyline, observation decks for birdwatchers, and a nine-hole golf course, only the wealthy elite lived at the Manhattan Views. He'd considered a sky-condo there before opting for a traditional penthouse with a view of Central Park.

Madelyn opened the door, more testimony to the serious condition of her Hazel. She stood about five-foot seven with well-rounded, lushly padded curves. His interest in her kicked up a notch. No body sculpting for his Madelyn, no nips or tucks, no liposuction. No implants, either. A real woman, one confident enough to live in her own body just the way her genetics formed it.

She was the kind of real woman he didn't often get to meet. He did his best, and failed miserably, to keep his gaze off her generous breasts with their little pointy nipples. Thank all the stars she didn't seem to notice him gawking at her like some sex-starved teenager.

"Thank you for coming, Trent. The kitchen is this way." Madelyn walked away leaving him no option but to close the door and follow, which was what the Trent model would do.

She led him through the drone closet, a small cubicle with doors that opened on the foyer and the kitchen, and straight into a disaster the likes of which he'd never before seen. Tucked in the corner, a deactivated and disordered Hazel wore a blank stare.

Now was the time to get one thing straight with her before he did his paltry best at tidying her kitchen and helping her with dinner.

"Ma'am, my name is Dallas and..."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Are you a new model?"

"I'm the prototype, I'm afraid. It's just..."

Her dark eyes rounded in horror. "Prototype?" she squeaked. "Please tell me you're fully functional for domestic work! Please tell me you can help prepare this menu. Please?" She handed him a sheet of very expensive monogrammed vellum smeared with olive oil and reeking of balsamic vinegar.

Dallas scanned her menu and let out a low whistle. Madelyn snatched the paper from his fingers.

"Oh, I knew it! You're only programmed for sex and I need more than that tonight!"

## Chapter 2

Madelyn tossed the paper in the trash. She had but one recourse—to scale back on her menu. Her guests were friends, ones who would understand that without Hazel, it would be impossible to serve her original menu. Most of them spoke of their constant amazement she could function with one household helper. It was just that she was proud of her abilities in the kitchen. Hadn't her grandmother warned her about pride going before a fall?

Her gran had certainly warned her about good-looking men. Only...the gorgeous fellow standing in front of her wasn't exactly a man, was he?

"Okay, Tr—Dallas. This is what you're to do. Clean the floor working from that side of the room," she pointed at the side nearest the drone closet, "and when you get to where I'll be working at this counter, please go to the other side of the room and work back to me. Do you understand?"

The Dallas model nodded. "Yes, ma'am. When I'm finished, what would you like me to do?"

She patted his hand and paused before stroking his knuckles, marveling at the realistic texture of his warm skin. His hand felt so authentic, she wondered what it would feel like to have him give her a massage. He even had a smattering of fine hair on the back of his hand.

“Hmm. Triple D has really improved the skin quality of their drones, haven’t they?”

It was a rhetorical question. Good thing, too. The Dallas drone looked ready to choke. His cheeks actually flushed red. She hoped he wasn’t about to go offline over a simple comment. She’d heard a lot of crazy things about personal pleasure drones and their unique programming.

“When you’re finished, I’ll have other instructions. Are you sure you’re programmed to serve?” She blushed, realizing that with a personal pleasure drone, her question could mean myriad activities beyond serving dinner.

Dallas stared at her, mouth open, obviously needing clarification. Prototype, indeed.

“I mean are you fully programmed to serve properly at a dinner party?” she reiterated.

He nodded. “Yes, ma’am. I thought I was clear on that.”

Taken aback, she stared at him. Since when did a drone speak in terms of self or of being able to think? Speculation about the drone’s unique qualities would have to wait. She must get her timeline back on track. The nice, relaxing thirty-minute soak in the bathtub she planned had already become a quick ten-minute shower before dressing. She simply couldn’t afford anything else to go wrong or dinner would be delayed, and now that she had the chance to salvage dinner—and her pride—she meant to capitalize on it fully.

“Start cleaning, Dallas!” She clapped her hands together. Surprise flickered in his blue eyes, another improvement on this model. Her curiosity about this prototype kicked up a notch.

The drone diligently began his appointed task, and Madylyn worked on hers. In short order, her impression of the

Dallas model's overall performance improved. His attentiveness in opening the oven door, or the refrigerator door, in advance of her asking was impressive. She gathered ingredients of a recipe and the proper size bowl would appear in front of her like magic. It had taken several months for Hazel to work so seamlessly with her. Finally, everything that could be done had been done, and Madelyn breathed a sigh of relief.

"You've performed very well, Dallas. Please set the table with the dinnerware you'll find on the sideboard, ice the wine, and replicate a proper serving uniform for yourself. I'm going to go dress."

Dallas bowed politely.

"Yes, ma'am. Do you prefer my attire to be black tie, white tie, tails, or a simple suit?"

Madelyn stepped back and looked him up and down. "A black suit in a 1940's *film noir* style, I would think. Tuxedo stripe on the pants. Oh, and a blue tie to match your eyes."

His eyebrows disappeared under his hairline, but he recovered quickly leaving her to wonder once more at how extensive the new programming might be. Dallas bowed again and disappeared with alacrity into the dining room, she assumed to complete his assignments. She had her own.

The efficiency of the Dallas model had given her back time for a short soak in the tub. She drew her bath and sank into the hot, plumeria scented water, sighing gratefully as the heat immediately soothed away the tension in her back and shoulders. The Dallas drone would be here for several more hours. She couldn't escape the memory of how realistic his hands were. Maybe she would get a massage before he left.

Or maybe not. Her one experience with a personal pleasure drone had not been satisfactory at all. Years ago, she and

several girlfriends had spent a week at a spa that included anything and everything a girl could ask for. Madelyn had availed herself of the 'night protection' option on the first night. She didn't order it again.

The drone had been cold, mechanical, following its program to the letter with no variation. It couldn't make allowances for the fact that midway through the encounter, Madelyn craved something else. Come to think of it, that had been a Triple D drone, too.

This Dallas drone was very different from that earlier model. There didn't seem to be anything mechanical about him. Well, it didn't mean anything if a girl speculated about these things. It was simple curiosity and nothing else.

She knew that wasn't quite true, but maybe if she told herself that enough times, she'd get over it.

She needed to dry off and get dressed. Draining the water from the tub reminded her Hazel wouldn't be along to clean it behind her tonight. Dallas would need to be told it needed done. Madelyn wrapped an oversize towel around her torso and went to the dining room to find him. What she found was a perfectly set table, except the wine buckets were on the sideboard.

Ah, of course. Dallas wouldn't know the ladies preferred to pour their own. She stepped into the kitchen—her well ordered kitchen. Dallas certainly had been busy while she bathed, but where was he? The door to the drone closet was open. She turned to go back into the dining room and collided with him. He grabbed her to keep her from toppling over backward with the force of their contact.

For a drone, he had fast reflexes, and very warm hands. And he was breathing. How remarkable! She regained her



composure, making sure her towel had remained in place. His gaze flicked to her cleavage, then jerked back to her face. Low and silky, his voice finished the job his eyes had begun. Her nipples tingled.

“Are you all right, Ms. Madelyn?” His large, male hands gripped her shoulders.

“I’m fine, Dallas. The table is perfect and the kitchen looks great. I’m going to dress now. You should, too.”

Instead of releasing her, he trailed his hands down her arms, caressing her all the way to her fingertips.

“Yes, ma’am. I’ll do that immediately. Please call me if you need help with buttons or zippers.” He bowed and stepped away. It was then she noticed how much heat he had given off.

Maybe, just maybe, she should reevaluate her opinion of personal pleasure drones. Some new research was definitely in order later tonight. With Dallas.

\* \* \* \*

Dallas peeked around the corner and made sure Madelyn had closed her bedroom door. Of all the stupid, lame-brained ideas he’d ever had, impersonating a drone took the prize. He had to visit the little boy’s room in a big way, something drones didn’t do. Of course, a drone wouldn’t have sucked down a bottle of mineral water on the way to this assignment. He darted into the powder room and made the fastest pit stop of his life. It almost wasn’t fast enough.

“Dallas, where are you?”

He barely got his zipper safely up without unmaning himself before she flung the door open. Her brows knitted together, the most adorable quizzical expression on her face.

“What on earth are you doing?”

Thank heavens he could think fast on his feet and had an answer for her, a lie though it was.

“Straightening my tie, ma’am. Is it suitable?”

Madelyn smiled up at him, surprising him all over again with her open attitude toward drones. Most people treated them poorly and never recognized that a drone’s programming expanded with positive interaction. At least Triple D drones did.

“Here. Let me fix this for you.” Sparks danced on her fingers as she adjusted his tie. It was paradoxical that she wore an array of glittering diamonds and yet she maintained her own fingernails, not an applied cosmetic surface. “There. Perfect.”

She turned her back to him, giving him a look at the long, graceful line of her spine. Her smooth skin glowed warmly from her bath, a bath that had been scented with tropical florals, heavy with plumeria.

“Can you zip me, please?”

She looked over her shoulder at him. He blinked dumbly at her. What had she said?

“Dallas, please zip my dress.”

He jumped to comply, clenching his jaw against the rush of longing that swept him as his knuckles brushed her soft skin. Ignoring the voice of reason, he ran his fingertips along the top of the garment, smoothing it. She dangled a necklace over her shoulder.

Dallas stepped closer to her, breathing in her exotic scent. He gently plucked the diamond collar from her fingers and draped it around the graceful column of her neck. The stones were real, but they couldn’t match Madelyn’s inner beauty. Everything he’d ever learned about women told him she was a rare gem.

And he was a drone, in her home for one purpose only—to serve dinner.

*Like hell.*

He fastened the clasp of the necklace and bent to her. His eyes closed as his lips caressed the soft skin of her shoulder, once, then again. Gentle kisses to lure her to a moment when he could confess his transgression and beg for her forgiveness. Madelyn inhaled sharply. To his utter amazement she tilted her head, inviting him to continue. Being ten kinds of a fool, he did, worshipping her with kisses.

She thought he was a personal pleasure drone and she clearly needed a moment of what those drones' programming offered. How much more trouble could he be in if he gave it to her?

Dallas slipped his arms around her waist, splaying his hands across the gentle swell of her belly to pull her back against him. His manhood responded, surging strongly, swelling in quick wonderful jolts that echoed his racing pulse. His lips teased at her earlobe on their way to shower small kisses along her jaw.

She moaned, a low, dark sound of a woman caught unsuspecting by her own desire. Dallas bent her forward, his erection nestling between her buttocks. She boldly pressed her rump firmly to him, wiggling her hips. Her hand snaked between them, her questing fingers gauging his length and girth. Gooseflesh shivered across his belly and chest. His balls drew up close to his body. His penis throbbed with unwarranted anticipation and he reminded himself firmly that this momentary indulgence would not continue after the dinner.

"Oh, my," she whispered breathlessly. "You really do have a few upgrades."

Dallas cupped the weighty bounty of her breasts, massaging gently, finding the hard points of her nipples and carefully rolling them between forefinger and thumb. His eyes crossed as Madelyn bucked against him, giving him the cheapest thrill he'd had in many moons.

Throwing caution to the winds, he cupped her heat, applying a firm pressure to her mound. It lacked finesse, but too many layers of fabric covered her secrets, rendering her safe from the intimate touch he ached to bestow. She moaned again, but not with passion. The sound of her regret quickly sobered him. He released her, stepping away only after he kissed her neck one last time.

"We'll continue this after my guests have departed." She smoothed the front of her dress. "We need to do the last minute items. Come along, Dallas."

He'd like to come. He *needed* to come, only he was fucked again. Drones didn't have, or fake, orgasms.

Her hips twitched provocatively in front of him as he followed her to the kitchen. He slipped his hand into his pants pocket and discreetly rearranged things. Even the touch of his own hand sent his nerve endings into fits of sexual delight. Not a good thing because he did not want to incite any of her guests to request his 'services'. He needed to settle down and forget about sex.

There wasn't a chance in hell of that happening and he knew it. He needed to buck up and be a man about it since he'd gotten himself into this situation all by himself.

He had the option of doing the honorable thing and telling her the truth when the dinner party was over. He rarely stumbled when it came to doing the right thing, so why did this seem so difficult? She wanted a fantasy, something with-

out emotional repercussions or entanglements. He couldn't give that to her.

Madelyn turned, smiling at him. Her rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes did little to strengthen his resolve.

It would be a long night, but he'd suffer through it...somehow.

### Chapter 3

Dallas closed the door behind the last departing dinner guest and slumped against it. God, what an evening. Never in his life had so many inquisitive women put their hands on him while enjoying cocktails, ohing and ahing over his...attributes...and his lifelike blushing. He didn't apologize for his red face, either, mainly because he'd been rendered speechless by their actions. His butt cheeks had to be pink from all the patting they'd received.

These women had secret lives and any reasonably intelligent man should avoid participating in them, so what did that make him? The evening improved when the conversation moved beyond him to the planning of a Mystery Trip.

The entire concept of the Mystery Trip fascinated Dallas. He'd eavesdropped all evening, not that he could help it as he served, and wished he could go with them. Hell, he probably could if he'd asked, but he feared what they might do to him in the wilds of Cleveland, Ohio.

Seventy 'guild members' would board a luxury coach for a weeklong adventure with no idea of their destination. Only the ladies present this evening, those planning the event, knew the details. They arranged for wheels, meals, and deals, as they called it, but he understood it to mean transportation, dining, entertainment, and lodging. Their no-holds-barred

itinerary included a scavenger hunt through the city of Cleveland that would likely land half of them in police custody.

Yes, these women had some refreshingly frightening ideas on how to have fun, and his Madelyn, his quiet Madelyn, served as the ringmaster. Clearly, she was accomplished in the position. He bet she could do anything she set her mind to.

He'd covertly watched her all evening. Her genteel manners and shy smile masked the tigress within. She'd settled the group to dinner, presiding over each course with Southern charm. Her easy smile and quick wit kept her guests laughing.

After dinner, as Dallas cleared the table, she'd ordered the Chardonnay made available for the...ladies...to pour themselves and she settled those assembled down to business. They'd consumed fifteen bottles of the stuff before finally calling it an evening. Now, finally alone with Madelyn, he wrestled with his conscience. He had to tell her that her night with a 'Dallas drone' wouldn't happen. He couldn't continue to lie to her. Could he?

She called softly to him from the kitchen. He squared his shoulders and prepared to meet his fate, the one pouring another glass of wine for herself. Lord, he was thirsty. He'd had opportunity to fix himself a glass of the Chardonnay, but he judged it to be a foolhardy risk. He'd never forgive himself if he embarrassed her in front of her guests. He made this mess and he'd bear the censure, not her. She looked up, her dark gaze enigmatic, as he approached her.

"Yes, ma'am?"

"It's too bad you can't enjoy wine. This is a marvelous vintage." She took a sip. "No matter. Come with me please, Dallas." She glided out of the room, her mocha skirt swirling

softly with the sway of her hips. His good intentions flew south—way south.

Dallas said a silent prayer and followed her.

\* \* \* \*

Madelyn swished her way to the living room, thanking her lucky stars the Dallas drone had performed splendidly. She'd not seen any evidence of 'chip dip' as he moved from task to task. Most drones, even Hazel, suffered from that little hesitation as their functions switched back and forth from program chip to program chip.

She settled her skirt around her as she sat in the middle of the sofa. Of course, being a prototype, the possibility existed his...his...skills...were totally integrated. She'd read something about a new chip being developed and tested on the information net a while back. She patted the spot beside her. The Dallas drone hesitated then perched next to her. If she didn't know better, she'd swear he suffered from nervousness.

She smiled at him.

"You carried out your duties quite admirably, Dallas. I read about a new chip. Do you have it?"

He stared blankly at her.

"Oh, please. I'm not a corporate spy or anything. I'm just curious." She patted his knee reassuringly. He jumped, piquing her interest further.

"My, but you really do have some unusual responses, don't you?"

"I think it best I not discuss my programming, Ms. Murphy," he replied dryly. She nodded, amazed at his perfect tonal inflection.



“You’re probably correct, but I can tell you’re something that will set the industry on its collective ear. I think I’m going to buy additional stock in Triple D Drones.”

Dallas wheezed, choking and coughing. She pounded on his back then stopped herself. What was she doing? Drones couldn’t choke. Madelyn took a closer look at him. He straightened his tie and cleared his throat.

“Sorry. Glitch.”

He certainly was a strange one, not that it should matter. Her mood called for something quick. Simple and quick. She leaned against the sea of throw pillows her decorator had insisted upon and plopped her foot up in his lap.

“Well, Dallas, I’d like to take the edge off. Tonight went splendidly and I want a little ‘sleeping pill’ from you. I think you should start with the basic foot massage.”

His reaction was everything she’d expect from a real man. He swallowed and took a deep breath. His gaze slid from her foot up to her thighs, flicked to her breasts, to her eyes, then dropped back to her foot. Madelyn’s pulse quickened with hope he’d continue to respond naturally. She’d been alone for so long, she welcomed even the touch of a drone’s hand. Part of her was sorry that tonight she was just too tired to indulge all her fantasies.

Dallas remained motionless, staring at her foot. She wiggled her toes at him. He jumped, like he’d suddenly realized what had been asked of him, and wrapped his long, warm fingers around her foot and squeezed.

“Oh, God, that’s marvelous.” She sighed blissfully. He ground his thumb into the ball of her foot, Madelyn gnawed on her knuckle to keep from squealing. She would retain her dignity—she would! His manipulations increased and her in-

sides turned into a mass of quivering jelly. Triple D must have hired a professional masseuse for consultation when this part of the Dallas drone was programmed.

To hell with dignity. She squirmed as Dallas pressed, squeezed, twisted, and stretched his way to her calf. He set her foot on the thick carpet, reached for the other one, and proceeded to repeat the process. Madelyn squealed. He paused.

“Am I hurting you?” he asked her with unfeigned sincerity.

“Oh, nooooo,” she moaned, closing her eyes. “Keep going. I’m enjoying this.”

He elevated her foot. A gentle breeze blew across her toes. “How far should I keep going, Madelyn?” he purred softly.

How far, indeed. The moment of truth. What did she really want from a personal pleasure drone? The little voice in her soul, the one so often denied, whispered to her...*please*.

The iron grip of her upbringing reared its head, stating firmly a personal pleasure drone was hardly personal. *How many others had it serviced?*

*Please...*

*What if it had a recording device? What if the recording fell into the wrong hands?* She had heard that sort of thing happened occasionally. A woman with her wealth could be a target for con artists and scammers.

*Please...*

What if her mother found out? Her aunts? What would they think of her? She who was raised to such high ideals? She who well knew that to disappoint them was to be shunned until she’d bowed to them.

*Please...*

She slammed the door on the voice of proper behavior, of expectations that stole her breath in the bleak darkness of lonely nights. Too often that voice had kept her from living. Too often she'd wept with regret over the lost opportunities in her life that would never come again, opportunities not seized simply for fear of what someone else would think of her. What if the world did find out? Would she care? Should she care?

Her wealth had not protected her when the world had been unkind, had beaten her down when she had no champions to stand with her. Now she stood firmly on her own two feet, the same ones that rested in the lap of a pleasure drone.

The tiny voice called to her again, weaker now, fearing rebuke. *Please...*

She looked inside herself, finding the fey source of the tiny rebel to wrap loving tendrils around it. It quivered, daring to hope, yet fearing the very hope that shook it.

Madelyn answered it...yes.

\* \* \* \*

Dallas massaged Madelyn's slender foot, about a size seven, he estimated. Her fingernails might be adorned with only clear gloss, but her toenails were sunset red. He never really had a thing about feet before but found himself changing his opinion. Her feet were like her—strong and sturdy, the elegance not apparent until one looked closely.

He watched the emotions flit across her face, evidence of whatever inner battle she waged. He hoped the right side won, even if the winning side said he had to go home.

*What could this pretty lady want with a drone, other than the obvious physicality? Surely she had men falling at her shapely feet everyday.* He looked at the dark lashes resting on the paleness of her cheeks and he wished he knew what to say to turn the tide in his favor. Her full lips bowed in a smile. The dark lashes swept up and she met his gaze openly, without blinking.

Chivalry died. He'd just killed it. His last opportunity to confess his deception looked him square in the eye and he let it slide away.

It wasn't that he lacked female companionship. He had plenty of women falling at his size eleven feet. Unfortunately, it wasn't the size of his feet that attracted all those women, it was the size of his bankroll. He had the distinct impression Madelyn had a bankroll of her own, a definite plus for a man with his wealth, and maybe part of the reason why she would consider a night with a personal pleasure drone. She probably had more than a few men looking at her bankroll, too. She wiggled her toes against his palm.

"Tell me, Dallas, how extensive is your intimate programming?"

A shiver ran up his spine, quickly followed by the breakout of sweat on his back. "Extensive enough, however, I am not programmed for extreme fetishes."

Madelyn blinked coyly. "I'm not programmed for fetishes, extreme or otherwise, either, so we're even, although that wasn't what I was asking. No matter." She pulled her foot out of his grasp and rolled to her feet. Dallas stood up promptly, ready to follow her, or run, he didn't know which.

Yes, he did. The mix of facial expressions that had come and gone, and come again, as she waged her internal war would haunt him if he walked away. All the unasked, unans-

were questions he had, his unbridled curiosity about this good-looking woman who seemed part kitten, part tigress, part shy, part bold, would not allow him to walk away. If she needed company for tonight, she would have it.

Never had he courted such disaster.

It was thrilling, invigorating even.

## Chapter 4

Dallas' jaw dropped as he entered Madelyn's golden chamber. With its rich gold tones, flowing fabrics, and crystal chandelier, it couldn't be called something as mundane as a bedroom. The massive canopied bed that harkened back to all those medieval period movies he'd seen as a boy dominated the space. Madelyn glided across the plush carpet and opened a drawer, revealing a control panel.

She pushed a few buttons. The chandelier dimmed and went out. The thick fabric drapes covering the entire northeastern wall slowly pulled back and the shimmering light from New York City spilled into the room turning the gold to silver and shadow. His groin tightened as the image of her sprawled before him on that bed rose up behind his eyes. She turned to him.

"Dallas, does your programming allow you to make decisions about what you do?"

His attention snapped back to her fully clothed self.

"What do you mean?" He was not at all sure where she was headed with that question.

"If I ask you to do something, can you refuse?"

Lord, what could she possibly ask him that he wouldn't do for her? He frowned.

“My programming does allow for me to refuse any activity that would injure me, or you, in any way.”

“That’s not what I mean, Dallas. I guess I’m trying to find out if you can refuse to go to bed with me.”

*Refuse her? Not likely tonight, or ever.* Of course, his deception, once admitted, would end any chance of seeing her again. *How stupid could one man be? Very, apparently.*

“Why would I want to refuse?”

“You answer a question with a question. That’s very unique for a drone. I’m truly curious about you.”

He’d bet she was. Considering he was impersonating a drone and about to hop into bed with a virtual stranger, he shared her curiosity about himself because he’d stepped out of his comfort zone several hours ago and showed no inclination to step back.

“I see. Then I suppose the answer is yes. I can make that decision, but I’m not going to.” He’d said it now. In for a penny, in for a pound, and he was just in—over his head.

Madelyn met his gaze, her dark eyes unfathomable. Why was it a woman could read a man’s mind and yet the fairer sex remained such a mystery to all men?

She turned. “Unzip me, please.”

Such a simple request to make a man’s hands shake so badly. Dallas fisted his hands tightly then flexed his fingers to ease their trembling. Slowly, so slowly, he eased the zipper down.

*Breathe, Dallas, you idiot. Remember to breathe.* He shivered again as the cooled, conditioned air of the room filled his lungs.

The elegant dress dropped off her shoulders revealing the smooth skin of her back and the graceful line of her spine. It

pleased him that he couldn't count every bone, that she was soft and most definitely feminine, the way a woman should be. Madelyn turned, smiling shyly, her arms crossed over her bosom to keep the dress from falling to the carpet as she sank onto the ornately carved chest that sat at the foot of the bed.

"Will you undress for me, Dallas? Please?"

He nodded, but he worried. Personal pleasure drones had several disrobing protocols and usually required some hint of what the patron wanted. If he actually were the prototype, he'd wing it and see how she responded.

What would his Madelyn prefer? Something to put her at ease, surely. No mock striptease would do for tonight. This moment called for something finer, more personal. He looked at her. Her chin rose. Her tiny white teeth, perfect by nature or dentistry, he didn't care, scraped over her luscious lower lip. Heat coiled in his belly fueled by the knowledge she was nervous, too.

Dallas crossed the room and perched on the edge of the chaise to remove his shoes and socks, setting them neatly aside. The carpet was soft under his bare feet. Unconsciously, his toes curled into the plush nap. He stopped the tiny movement abruptly. A drone wouldn't notice such a thing. Thankfully, she hadn't observed his reaction.

Madelyn kicked off those strappy little, heeled sandals she'd worn all evening, picked them up, and flung them with great aplomb in the general direction of her closet. Her eyes were bright with mischief when she looked at him. He grinned at her, stripped off his tie and flicked it at her before he folded it up neatly and placed it beside him.

Under her watchful gaze, Dallas shrugged out of his suit jacket and draped it over the back of the chaise. Economical



rather than showy, undressing the way a man who had known her and was comfortable with her would disrobe, he kept his movements slow as his shirt followed. Covert glances in her direction, at the rise and fall of her breasts as she took deep breaths, fueled his excitement and his readiness for a woman. It was time.

He stood, allowing her to get a good look at the bulge that pushed his zipper forward. She wasn't shy and gave him attributes another lingering assessment. He knew he passed inspection. Slowly, he unbuttoned his trousers and unzipped his fly, letting the edges of fabric fall open to her gaze. She didn't look away, not once, nor did she blink. Dallas let the pants drop to the floor and stepped out of them, suddenly hurried. He needed to touch her, feel the heat and texture of her skin.

Madelyn jumped in surprise as he went to his knees in front of her, sliding his hands under her skirt to grasp her firm calves. Onward, he stroked, over silky smooth skin, all the way to the velvet of her dewy inner thighs. His groin tightened as he thumbed across her satin-covered mound, felt the dampness there. She was not impervious to the sight of a man stripping for her, not his Madelyn. She licked her lips, and he couldn't refuse her. Dallas claimed her mouth, his lips covering hers greedily, seeking an end to his charade and knowing there would be none. There was no redemption to the deception he was about to commit. Not even in the heat of her body would there be absolution, but he couldn't walk away from her.

Madelyn didn't resist his onslaught but met him on the field as an equal. Her tongue swept across his lips, and he tasted the lingering flavor of the Chardonnay. Back and forth

they volleyed, give and take, until he pulled away to look at her in the silvery light.

“Tell me what you want, Madelyn.”

She looked at him, openly, honestly. “I want it all.”

\* \* \* \*

Madelyn watched him, fascinated. Who was he? What did he want with her? More importantly, why did she permit his deception to continue? She should call the authorities and end this farce. Dallas wasn't a drone—far from it. He was completely human.

The tiny beads of sweat on his chest and the uniquely tangy scent of aroused male had given his game away. A drone would never sweat much less smell good enough to lick from head to toe.

A man this gorgeous certainly didn't need to deceive his way into anyone's bedroom. Any woman in her right mind would fling open the door to her boudoir for him. Her common sense said he was simply another gold-digger. Her heart screamed in denial that he would do that to her. He couldn't have targeted her.

She'd been the one to call Triple D Drones to arrange for service on Hazel. The truth slammed her, stole her breath. How could she not have seen it earlier?

*Oh, my God.*

Triple D Drones. Dallas Dyson Drones. The nearly naked man on his knees in front of her was Dallas Dyson himself!

Hardly a gold-digger, Dallas Dyson was on the list of the top twenty wealthiest people in the East Coast megalopolis that stretched from Boston to Miami. Her money was the last thing he needed. So why had he responded to a service call himself? Why perpetuate the illusion of being a drone when

he was a flesh-and-blood man? It didn't make any sense. His caring voice snapped her out of her reverie.

"Madelyn, what's wrong?"

"N-nothing," she stammered, suddenly nervous. "I was just thinking about something, that's all."

Her eyes crossed as he thumbed across her again. If he did that too much, she'd fall to the floor, fling her dress over her head, and let him do...whatever. She blinked him back into focus. The only way to get an answer was to play her part and continue the charade. He'd make a mistake, sooner or later. But then what? She'd figure that out when it happened. Right now, she had to see this through. She wanted him.

"Remove your briefs, Dallas."

There it was. The sudden flickering of his pupils. She'd not imagined it earlier. It had been there.

"I'd like to see you." She needed to stay in control of the situation—if it were possible. His warm hands dropped away from her thighs. He rocked back on his heels and stood.

Oh, Lord, his erection was directly eye level, right in front of her face. What a nice one it was, too, eight inches at least, and barely contained by his shorts. Her nipples tingled and peaked at the thought of his body filling hers. Deep inside her flesh contracted then burgeoned outward on a wave of longing. The tiny bud at her core pulsed.

No wonder he'd made a fortune on personal pleasure drones. All her girlfriends had Trent models and loved them. She'd even dallied with the one belonging to her best girlfriend although she'd not indulged fully. She smiled inwardly. He didn't lie about being a prototype. He modeled Trent after his own proportions making the drone incredibly lifelike.

Dallas hooked his thumbs under the waistband of his shorts and carefully eased them down over his hips. His erection sprang free, jutting full and heavy in front of her. Madelyn wrapped her hand around his cock. Her middle finger and thumb didn't touch.

He stood still as a stone, his intense gaze unwavering, as she stroked him, rolling the velvet sheath of soft skin over the hard inner core. It never ceased to be a source of wonder to her how a man's body functioned with so many contradictions, soft yet hard, smooth yet ridged. His muscular, pelted thighs quivered as she gently rolled the silky skin over the glans.

Had he forgotten a drone's outer skin wasn't that elastic?

All that maleness quaking with anticipation at her touch sent Madelyn beyond caring what game he played. The inner voice of her soul knew that no matter what his reason for being here, he was not a man to hurt a woman. Everything in his aura spoke to him being a good man. There would be time later to visit his office and ask him why he'd come as a drone. In the daylight, when sanity returned. Tonight, she'd live a fantasy, at least most of one. She had the unexpected urge to taste him, only one wouldn't perform fellatio on a drone.

"Undress me, now," she whispered, stilling her hand and allowing her bodice to drop from her breasts. His eyes closed as he inhaled deeply. His hands came to rest on her bare shoulders.

Dallas' hands trailed down her arms before grasping her wrists and pulling her to her feet. The dress dropped to the floor leaving her standing naked before him and praying he would open his eyes and look at her, even while she dreaded

what she might see in his eyes when he did. If only she were pretty—and thin—but she wasn't.

She was fifteen, okay, twenty pounds overweight with freckles, mousey brown hair, and a bump on the bridge of her nose from some long-forgotten tumble as a girl. Men like Dallas Dyson didn't give women like her a second glance.

*So why hadn't he left?*

"Madelyn?"

His quiet voice broke in on her thoughts. "W-w-what?" she replied, realizing he looked at her with male interest.

Real interest, something that didn't happen often, but she still recognized it. She took in his intent gaze, the features sharpened by arousal, the parted lips, the firm erection, the proof he wanted her. For real.

"Should I go?" he asked quietly. She shook her head rapidly. The last thing she wanted was for him to leave. One night was all she'd have with him, and she wanted it. "No. I was just..." She took a deep breath and continued the deception. "I'm glad you're a drone, that's all."

Dallas cupped her breasts with warm palms, lifted their weight. Her knees shook, threatening to buckle under her as he thumbed across her taut nipples.

"You're beautiful, Madelyn. Everything a woman should be." Gentle fingers cupped her chin, lifted it to force her to meet his gaze.

"Everything a woman should be," he repeated as he leaned over her, his mouth descending to lay claim to hers.

## Chapter 5

Dallas swept Madelyn off her feet, lifting her into his arms, never taking his mouth from her. She clung sweetly to him, her lips greedily feasting on his as he lowered her to the softness of the bed. This was insanity and he embraced it with arms wide open, with arms that refused to release her body as it became the cushion for his, softer than the bed beneath them both.

She moaned into his mouth, a low dark sound that shot hot jolts of arousal to his groin. He reveled in the sharpness of them, in the heat that coiled through his belly as her nails dug into his flanks silently urging him on. He spread her knees with his own and thrust into her, sheathing himself in her heat. She fisted around him like a velvet glove, soft and silky—yielding. She cried out with the suddenness of it, her teeth clamped down painfully on the soft skin where his neck flowed to his shoulder. It would just have to hurt.

He wanted it to hurt, to keep him in control.

Madelyn writhed beneath him, panting. Her inner walls rippled and gripped his cock. He withdrew, almost completely, then drove into her again and again. Her legs rose to wrap around his waist as he set a bruising rhythm. She moaned again, the long low sound of a woman riding the wave of orgasm. She came, drenching his thighs with the proof of her

pleasure. The swiftness of it threatened to send him hurtling after her as he struggled to maintain the motion, to carry her as far as he could before bringing her gently back to earth.

“Stop, Dallas. Please.” Her voice was a hoarse whisper in his ear, pleading with him. Her trembling thighs gripped his hips in the effort to suspend the thrusting force of his body within hers.

He stilled, his body screaming for the release he must deny himself as her flesh pulsed and jerked around his. Red spots danced in his vision as he struggled to fight the tide that rose within him. His mind desperately clung to any thought that wasn't about Madelyn and the heat of her body surrounding him.

The twitching sensations of her body finally eased enough for him to risk looking at her. Madelyn's legs dropped limply to the bed. She moaned again, a breathy sound this time, the soft sigh of a woman too sated to move. Need cut through him, knife-edged, and he hastily relinquished his possession of her, rising on his hands and knees over her. He didn't dare ejaculate. It wasn't part of a pleasure drone's construction.

If he did, she'd know his deception and he'd never have a chance to explain, a chance to come back and woo her the way she deserved, the way he needed to woo her.

Madelyn sighed contentedly as she rolled to her side, curling up with one hand along her cheek. Lord, she was lovely. He pushed away the need to pounce on her again and flopped over onto his back beside her, tucking his hands under his head to keep them from reaching for her. Slowly, finally, the tension in his body eased to a manageable level, although his desire for her did not abate. At least he could breathe again.

She watched him without comment, her eyes searching his face until he could not remain silent any longer.

“You look a little tousled, Ms. Madelyn.”

“Hmmm. Imagine that.” She ran her toes down the side of his calf muscle. “That was wonderful, Dallas,” she said. Her voice quivered, but she smiled and stretched lazily

She had no idea how wonderful. That she’d taken pleasure of him was worth much more than an orgasm, or even several. He had to figure out a way to stay with her until morning and not trip over his deception.

Dallas longed to hold her again, to kiss her from head to toe and tell her how sweet she tasted, only he couldn’t. If he stepped too far outside his ‘programming’, she’d become suspicious. Anything he did to her without her asking would give him away. He forced his muscles to relax so he could respond naturally.

“We aim to please. Are you all right? Would you like me to get you something to drink?”

She blinked at him. What he wouldn’t give to know what she was thinking.

“Yes, I think I would. Not wine, though. I’ve had enough of that for tonight.”

Dallas kissed her forehead before he could stop himself from the undronelike behavior.

“Coffee?”

“No, iced tea, I think.”

He could use a few swallows of tea, too. Dallas rolled off the bed, not bothering to pull on his pants as he headed for the kitchen and a lucky break. Parched, he gulped half a glass of tea and darted into the bathroom again while the opportunity availed itself.



*Stupidity, thy name is Dallas.*

Carrying the glass into the bedroom, he found the bed empty, but he heard the shower running.

Before he gave it conscious thought, he set the tea on her nightstand and entered her master bath. The walk-in shower was a tile and glass marvel. Madelyn stood, her back to him, six jets of water cascading like rain over her wet skin. He reached past her, selecting one of the several bottles of scented shower gel she had on a shelf. Squeezing a generous portion onto his palm, the scent of plumeria rose with the steam, the same scent she'd used earlier. With lathered hands, he washed her back. She leaned into his caress. The tile echoed her voice even as the water muffled it.

"Tell me something, Dallas. Do you go out on many calls?"

His stomach plunged with despair. His Madelyn deserved as much truth as he could tell her. She'd piece his story together soon, see all the lies, and then she'd be lost to him forever.

"No, I don't. My specialty is in the product development offices. Unfortunately, the problem with Hazel is global. All the usual drones were out when you called."

"Is that the truth, Dallas?"

Uncertainty, and the desire to believe, was in her voice. He offered up a silent 'thank you' to the powers of the universe that he could reply with sincerity.

"Yes, it is."

She turned and looked up at him. "I don't usually indulge in, um, pleasure drones."

He began soaping her breasts because if he didn't touch her, he'd die from the lack of physical contact with her. She

flashed him a little smile and started working up some lather on his chest.

“I think maybe I should invest in a personal pleasure drone, Dallas. Do you think Triple D would sell you?”

*Oh, fuck.*

\* \* \* \*

Madelyn closed her eyes as Dallas’ soapy hands worked heavenly magic on her breasts. She wanted him again, and again, and again. How much could he take before he couldn’t hold back any longer and he blew his cover?

She laughed softly at the thought, being unaccustomed to thinking of *double-entendres*.

“What amuses you?” he asked, his fingers busy with her nipples.

No way would she confess to such a crude, albeit funny, thought, leastways, not out loud. A lady with her Southern heritage needed to remain a lady.

She’d blown her cover, too, because a real lady would have called the authorities on Dallas Dyson instead of taking him to bed.

“Who said I was amused? I’m sure you’re rather expensive.”

Dallas nodded. “Very expensive. I’m a top-of-the-line model.”

Madelyn soaped his genitals. Even a real drone would benefit from a little wash following sex. He swelled under her ministrations.

“You’re very responsive, Dallas, very lifelike. I’m sure you’re worth the investment. What else can you do besides cook, serve, and...you know?”

“Very little. My program is somewhat limited when it comes to practical things.”

Madelyn hid a smile at his wry tone. A real drone wasn’t capable of complicated inflection.

“Can you interpret stock market reports?” Madelyn was sure he could. Hardly a week went by that Dallas Dyson wasn’t on the front page of some financial magazine, e-zine, or news article.

“Absolutely. Just don’t ask me to do laundry.”

“Oh, no. Of course not. That would put Hazel in a snit.” Which was true.

Hazel was very territorial with her chores, being programmed to serve domestically. She slipped her arms around his waist. His lips brushed her temple, a delicate caress a drone would never master. They’d rinsed long enough. She set her mouth to his nipple and sucked.

Dallas spun around and fell against the tiled wall with a splat, never breaking his hold on her. If he thought it odd she was deliberately provoking a drone sexually, he didn’t say anything.

He wasn’t a drone. He was a man and she wanted to hear him admit it. Nothing less than hearing him scream her name as he begged her for total release would do.

This time would not be fast, and this time she would remain in control.

Madelyn kissed her way up to his neck, nipping his wet skin as she went. His hands gripped her waist, steadying her on the slippery tiles. She found his mouth. Dallas met her halfway, burying one hand in her hair.

Back and forth the mock battle ensued, the heat of his mouth making her shiver, the thrust of his tongue sending de-

lightful sparks to her most secret place, the tiny bud responding forcefully. She plundered at will all he offered for her taking as the hot water stung her back.

A sudden lurch sent them tumbling to the tiles, warmed by the water. It didn't matter to her if he'd slipped or deliberately gone down as she sprawled across the broad expanse of his chest. The water wasn't hitting either of them in the face—they wouldn't drown—and she had him right where he probably wanted her.

Or something like that.

Dallas flexed strong muscles and suddenly she was on her back.

"My butt..." she grunted, lifting her hips to move. Long, strong fingers gripped her hips. His elbows pushed her knees apart and she forgot what she was going to say, although she became vaguely aware that the water seemed to be rising.

It didn't matter. They were in the shower, after all. What mattered was his breath and lips teasing her intimate flesh and turning her insides to greedy, quivering jelly.

"Yes, my God, your butt!" He fastened his mouth to her heat, his tongue slipping into her wet folds, finding the needy center of her being. Madelyn flung her legs open as far as she could to give him better access as he sent her soaring toward the precipice.

With his mouth and his hands, he pleased her until all she knew was the throbbing of her body and the ever-intensifying waves of pure sensation that lifted her toward ecstasy. Her cries of pleasure echoed off the walls, interrupted by a surreal, brief moment of clarity as the water deepened around her.

"Dallas! My butt is covering the drain!"

He looked up across her, his blue eyes sparkling. "And here I thought *I* was making you that wet."

She tried to wiggle her bottom off the drain, frantic that her squirming had made Dallas cease his ministrations. "Don't stop!"

His gaze locked to hers, giving her the briefest of warnings. His large hands slipped beneath her, cupping her bottom, and sliding her away from the gurgling drain. Strong arms turned her, lifted her to her knees. His voice, rich with amusement, warmed her more than the water pouring over her.

"My goodness, Ms. Madelyn. You have a perfect suction mark of the drain on your ass."

She yelped as he nipped the tender skin of her rump and she reached back to swat at him. His thighs were against hers, his cock slid over the slickness of her vulva, and the hand that was going to smack him urged him closer. She tipped her hips, her soft flesh suddenly yielding to his hard length. Her body greedily accepted all he offered.

Dallas took her in one quick thrust, then stilled. His body covered hers. He moaned, low in his throat, his lips near her ear.

"Madelyn." He pushed into her as her knees slipped further apart, bringing him to the very spot she needed him to touch. Her body tensed, clenched his length, needing him.

"Move!" She rocked back against him, driving his cock deeper.

He responded to her demand, thrusting into her with a bruising force that she welcomed with all her being. His hand cupped her mound, holding her tightly to his hips as he applied a spiraling pressure on her bud. She hungered for the

friction of his cock moving strongly within her, desperately craved the fulfillment of the promise of his skilled fingers.

Deep inside her, the waves of her orgasm swelled and lifted her out of herself. Light burst through her, bright as the sun and twice as hot, dropping her into a blissful, sparking darkness where all that she had lived under the control of his body. Madelyn sucked in a deep breath and fell back into her body, spent, with Dallas as her only anchor.

They lay sprawled on the wet tiles, the hot water still running over them. Dallas' hand still cupped her, his fingers moving gently over her now while his lips pressed tiny kisses to her shoulder. She sighed and he ceased the soft caress. Awareness, and disappointment, over the fact his penis no longer nestled within her body washed through her, even as her doubts about the man resurfaced.

"Madelyn, these hard tiles can't be comfortable for you." His fingers gently stroked her wet curls one more time, as if he were reluctant to release her. "We should perhaps wash off again and then get you tucked into bed."

That was a splendid idea, she had to admit. Her fingertips looked like prunes and even with the heat of the water and steam, she felt chilled. As for tucking her into bed, she had another plan because she wasn't ready to let him walk out the door and out of her life.

"You mean we'll tuck each other into bed, don't you, Dallas?"

## Chapter 6

Thank God for running water. Dallas had barely been able to pull free of her body in time when he'd climaxed. His jaws ached from being clenched so tightly closed to keep from howling as his orgasm had seized him. The undeniable evidence of his flesh and blood fertility had disappeared down the drain with the water that rinsed it off Madelyn's skin before she became aware of it. He kissed her dewy neck and prayed his legs would hold him when he stood. Managing to lever himself onto his elbow, he kissed the corner of her mouth.

The unwelcome return of sanity drove him to find a way to gently take his leave before either of them got in any deeper. It didn't matter that he'd suffer because of his deception, not causing her any heartache was paramount.

"I should remove Hazel's component and get it back to the workshop. I may be able to replace the carmagsynthacatordiode spring and have her restored later today."

Madelyn pressed her bottom tighter into the curve of his body. "I'd like you to stay until morning."

He couldn't argue. Drones didn't unless they had a specific rental contract that specified an exact length of time. He was ten times an idiot and a fool.

“As you wish.” He released her, rolled to his feet, and held his hands out to her to help her up. They rinsed off one last time and she flipped the shower off.

“I’m very waterlogged, Dallas.” She laughed softly as he wrapped her in one of her luxurious Egyptian cotton towels.

Damn. So was he. His fingertips were as wrinkled as hers and he kept them buried in the towel. She did a little hopping sidestep maneuver and was out of his grasp before he could dry her hair.

“Sneaky move, Ms. Madelyn.” He followed her as she walked behind the shower area and into one of the new state-of-the-art drying tubes. He’d been curious about these since they’d come on the market. She pressed a button and heated air enveloped him.

Madelyn stretched her arms over her head and turned slowly, moving in a tight circle.

“I feel sort of like a chicken on a rotisserie spit, but isn’t this great?” she purred.

It certainly was, but how could a drone confess that?

“It seems very efficient.” He fluffed his hair, grinning at her as she did the same. She yawned and stretched again.

“So what exactly is a carmsyn—a carmagcathiode—a whatever it is that Hazel needs?”

“Carmagsynthacatordiode. It’s the coolant that keeps the processing chip cool. There’s a little spring that allows the proper amount of gel to move around the chip when the drone is in use. The springs are substandard quality, not at all what the supplier promised in his product specs and delivered for our lab testing. The product we received fails under the strain of repeated flexing. Hazel crashes.”



“That’s all very technical. You’re a prototype unit. Do you have one?”

“No. I’m much more advanced.”

She cocked one perfectly arched eyebrow at him. Her dark gaze fixed on his with unnerving intensity. “I’m sure you are, Dallas. Please push the button. We’re dry enough.” She didn’t wait for him to follow her instructions, brushing past him on her way to the bedroom.

He complied with her order and followed her twitching hips all the way to the bed. He lifted the covers and she slipped between the sheets. If he were ever to make a clean getaway, the moment had to be now because if he slid between the sheets with her, he was a goner. He’d start babbling the truth to her instead of taking the time to develop a better strategy for his confession. Leaving wasn’t what he wanted, either, but it really was his only choice. Dallas had to force the words out of his mouth.

“I think I should return to the workshop, Ms. Madelyn.”

She lay still and silent for several minutes, her dark eyes fixed on some spot more distant than the rich fabric canopying the bed, then sighed tiredly. All for the best, or not, her complete dismissal stung.

“Very well. Turn off the lights and lock the door. You know the way out.”

\* \* \* \*

Dallas snapped the cover plate into place and patted it. He’d taken a spring from the original parts sent for testing out of the lab and given it to Madelyn’s Hazel. He knew full well he needed a few of those springs for the lawsuit pending against the supplier, but the remaining twenty-four should be

sufficient for the independent testing the courts would require.

He verified his use of that spring for a customer by video recording the repair, beginning to end, and finalizing the disc to prevent further additions. That had added an advantage of showing the courts the minimum amount of man hours involved in making thousands of replacements. Right now, he was more concerned with reinstalling the component than the court. He had to face Madelyn again.

Just thinking about being in the same room with her turned his knees to jelly and his penis to stone.

The smart thing to do would be to send a real installation drone. Too bad stupidity had such a grip on him. He ached to see her again, only this time, he'd introduce himself as the real Dallas Dyson. Maybe he'd get lucky, not that he deserved it, and she'd agree to have dinner with him. He wanted to take her out on a real date and court her the way a lady should be courted, and try to forget the little sounds she made as he took her so he could converse intelligently with her.

There it was again. That swelling in his pants. Maybe he should take something to keep that at bay before he went to her home. If he didn't, he'd embarrass both of them beyond any hope of getting a relationship with her on track.

He'd procrastinated long enough. She wouldn't be able to see his bulging zipper over the link. Dallas squared his shoulders, ran his fingers through his hair, and put the call through to Madelyn. She answered immediately, her face filling his screen.

"Ms. Murphy, I'm Dallas Dyson. I've replaced the defective part in your Hazel's component, and she'll be as good as new. I'd like to come to your home and install it."

Her eyes narrowed as she searched his face and he squelched the urge to squirm under her intense gaze. “The owner of Triple D Drones makes house calls?”

“Yes, ma’am, when he’s in a pinch, he does.” Dallas took a deep breath and plunged ahead. “And when it’s such a lovely lady needing help.”

Madelyn looked flustered. She truly didn’t believe any man could find her attractive. He wondered what had been said to her in the past to undermine her opinion of her appearance and made a silent vow to do what he could to show her how beautiful she really was.

“Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Dyson, and for your personal attention. I do need my Hazel. She’s more than a housekeeper. We have wonderful conversations.”

“I’m glad she’s living up to her programming. Would it be convenient for me to come over in about an hour?”

She hesitated. Dallas blinked to keep from staring at her perfect white teeth nibbling her plump lower lip. She took a deep breath, visible in the way her bosom rose and fell, not that he was looking at her breasts on purpose. He had good peripheral vision.

“Why don’t you come for dinner, Mr. Dyson? After my experience with the ‘Dallas’ drone last evening, I’m very interested in your company. I’d like to learn more and perhaps invest in some Triple D Drones stock.”

Dallas silently and fervently thanked all the gods in the universe for bestowing such good fortune upon his unworthy and sweaty brow.

“I’d love to have dinner with you, Ms. Murphy. I’ll bring the wine.”

\* \* \* \*

Dallas wasn't a man used to second-guessing himself, but that's all he did for the rest of the afternoon. Had he lost what was left of his mind?

He should have sent a drone to reboot Hazel. Hell, he should have had a drone make the call and not even spoken to Madelyn.

Christ! He should have at least acted like a gentleman and taken her out to dinner!

No, he had to let his penis lead the way again because that's what had happened. One look at her and he was drowning in the memory of her kiss, of her body, and the next thing he knew he offered to bring the wine with little recollection of the conversation in between. He'd turned into a hormonal idiot, one with a really big problem—last night.

It was too late to turn back as he parked his cruiser in the same hover spot it had occupied last night. *It's an omen.* Madelyn would have his head on the proverbial silver platter.

She had one. He'd seen it and recognized it for genuine antique silver.

The doorman smiled and nodded, ushering him in without asking him to provide identification. He looked closely. It wasn't a drone. He murmured his thanks and asked if he needed to log in. The man shook his head and replied Ms. Murphy had instructed her guest was to be admitted without inquiry.

And how was the doorman to recognize Ms. Murphy's guest, Dallas asked the man. Why, he was told with a grin, her guest would be the man with wine, flowers, and a worried expression.

*Worried expression?* Dallas breathed a sigh of relief as the elevator door glided closed. Yeah, worried. That certainly de-

scribed him. *Did she suspect?* The corkscrew his conscience twisted into his belly took another turn as the lift deposited him on Madelyn's level. He pressed the button. The door opened before the echo of the chimes inside faded.

Madelyn stood before him, from the roots of her glossy dark hair to the tips of her red toenails, all woman, dressed in a gown of swirling purples and lavenders that did something incredible to her whiskey-brown eyes. The fabric kissed the curves of her breasts, caressed the swell of her hips. Dallas stared, completely awestruck, and he'd seen her naked.

"Mr. Dyson, please come in." She moved aside, motioning him in. Somehow he found enough brains to make his feet move. He handed her the flowers and tried not to let her scent intoxicate him.

"You put them to shame, Ms. Murphy."

She actually blushed, the color rising prettily in her cheeks. "Thank you. Please, call me Madelyn. Come into the kitchen with me. I'll put these in water and you can put the Chardonnay on ice."

"If you'll show me where Hazel is, I'll attend to her. I'd like to have her serve, so I can observe her."

Madelyn looked over her shoulder at him, waving her free hand airily in the direction he was to go. "She's in the drone closet."

Dallas had the unnerving suspicion Madelyn knew it had been him last night. She had to know. How else would she know he'd brought Chardonnay?

He glanced down at the wine bottle. The label faced outward. She'd certainly read it. It was just his guilt working on him, that was all.

He shook off the uneasy sensation, looked around the kitchen, and pointed at the closet door. The corner of her mouth twitched in what may have been the beginning of a smile.

Or a smirk.

She nodded and continued arranging her bouquet.

He just kept getting himself in deeper. He certainly didn't feel like the suave, debonair bachelor several magazines had named him last month. He wasn't acting like the confident and competent man he knew he was. No, Madelyn Murphy turned him into a quivering teenager on the one date that would cement his social position in high school. What was wrong with him?

Guilt. It all came back to guilt.

Fixing Hazel took only a few moments. He snapped the repaired component into place and activated the drone. She blinked, straightened, and stepped out of the closet, smoothing her uniform as she made a beeline for her mistress.

"Miss Madelyn. Should I chill the wine?"

Madelyn patted her hand. "Oh, Hazel, I'm so glad you're with me again. We've a lot to catch up on. Yes, please take care of the wine. Serve it with tray number ninety-nine, and then we're having menu number thirty-four for dinner. This is Mr. Dyson."

He barely noticed as the drone curtsied to him. Madelyn had touched him and his attention homed in on her as she took him by the hand and led him through the living room to the balcony. His chin dropped to the floor when she opened the French doors onto a tropical paradise. It had not been like this last night. The balcony had been bare as he'd glanced out at the bright lights of the New York City skyline. She must have

spent all day—or a small fortune—to create this seductive tableau. He whistled appreciatively.

“This is incredible.”

She laughed nervously. “I’m hosting my gaming club this month. The theme is ‘Tropical Solitaire’.”

“You’ll get kudos for this, Madelyn.”

“I’ve a creative decorator.”

She motioned for him to sit on the chaise while she lit one of the many candles scattered about and tucked in the corners. Her movements were unhurried and graceful, but her hands shook slightly. Was she uncomfortable with him now that he was a real flesh-and-blood man? The scent of plumeria drifted to him. That fragrance would forever be tied to Madelyn in his mind, in his memory. He held out his hand to her.

What had begun last night needed to be finished. Once completed, it could rise from the ashes like the phoenix, renewed, to begin again openly and honestly. She accepted his hand and he pulled her down to him.

## **Chapter 7**

Madelyn melted into his embrace, all soft curves and eager lips. Alarm bells echoed in his head, but he could do nothing—nothing but meet her kiss and give her his own. Dallas allowed her momentum to carry him down as he stretched out beneath her, reveling in her boldness as she feasted on him. His surprise gave way to passion, and to hope.

He touched his tongue to hers, and she swept into the heat of his mouth. His hands found her breasts, teased her nipples to hard peaks. Madelyn moaned deep in her throat, a dark, needy sound that drew lust from its lurking place to bubble through his entire body and settle in his groin.

Dallas needed to get a grip on his libido. He had to talk to her and explain, and he would—after he kissed her breathless. After she kissed him senseless. He buried his fingers in her hair and plundered her mouth. His hips rocked up to hers, and she answered in kind, arching her pelvis slowly to his. The heat in his belly coiled and grew, whispering to him to accept her invitation to take her and leave explanations for later. Much later.

Her hands were on him, seeking, finding the ridge of his erection. She rubbed the length of him, pressing firmly. Closed or not, Dallas' eyes crossed and twinkling stars danced with delight in the darkness behind his lids as their tongues mated. He tore his mouth from hers, panting.



“Madelyn, we must...”

“Yes, we must. Don’t stop now, Dallas.” She pulled his mouth back to hers, kissing him soundly. “I need a man,” she murmured against his lips.

He groaned, not strong enough to deny her need. His confession would have to wait. Her hands were on him, her quick fingers dipping under the waistband of his slacks, her hand cool against his heated skin.

Dallas tugged on her gown, sliding the shimmering fabric up and up until...Madelyn was totally bare beneath it. His hand caressed the smooth skin of her bottom as she whispered encouragement to him. He dipped lower, teasing at her heat from behind. She was dewed with desire and his control slipped further. Madelyn’s questing fingers freed his cock, pushed his trousers off his hips. He threw caution to the winds and pulled his shirt over his head. Her sparkling gaze met his for an instant before she lowered her head to his nipple, laving it with her tongue. A jolt of white-hot heat shot straight to his balls. The tiny nub hardened.

It occurred to him through the fog of pleasure her caresses created that his Madelyn was bolder than he’d imagined. She didn’t know the real Dallas. Last night, she’d utilized a pleasure drone.

*Did it matter?* He tried to make it matter, but she kissed her way down his chest following the little strip of hair that connected the patch on his chest to the dark, curly thatch at the base of his cock. He forgot to breathe as she teased him with her lips then went down over him.

Someone cried out hoarsely, someone like him, the moist heat of her mouth about unmanning him. She licked his rigid length, slowly, once and again, before sucking the glans into

her mouth. Desperation rode in tandem with his desire. He would come if she kept that up and he had a lot of explaining to do first.

Coherent thought fled as her fingers wrapped around his shaft, her grip feather-light, stroking him in unison with the rise and fall of her mouth over him. Again and again, her lips and her hand gave him devastating pleasure, his body tensing then relaxing only to tense again as she lifted him toward the waiting bliss. Just as he feared he could endure no more without coming, she released him with a little ‘pop’ and smiled up at him.

Madelyn rose over him, her gown rucked up around her hips. She paused, her gaze met his, then she slowly lowered herself over him, taking him fully. Her inner walls gripped him, released him, gripped him again. She smiled and began a slow ride. Dallas tried to work her gown further up, to slip it over her head, but there was too much frustrating fabric. It prevented him from seeing what he knew would be incredible—the sight of his body joined to hers. He contented himself with thumbing across her mound, teasing her with light strokes until his thighs were drenched by her pleasure.

His hands moved to grip her hips, urging her faster to some point where the torture would become more manageable, but she refused. Her strong thighs held his hips still as she took her sweet time, a slow glide, over him. She rose until their connection almost ended, then she eased down, sighing as his body parted hers. He was caught in her rhythm, caged by his own raging desire for her. He wasn’t going to last very long and even as that awareness sent him frantically searching inside his being for some way to hold on, he knew it was far too late for both of them.

Without warning, the breath caught in her throat. She pitched forward, her hands spread on his chest. Her tempo increased, the friction built. A low, desperate sound flowed out of her as her body bowed and her orgasm seized her. He did what he could, but he was coming, too.

The climax bubbled through his body, effervescent in his very blood. His vision hazed red, every molecule in his body throbbed deliciously. He poured himself into her, unable to stop the flood. He held her tightly as Madelyn collapsed limply on his chest.

Just holding her brought him a peace he'd never known. She sighed contentedly and nuzzled her face into his neck. He committed the moment to memory, one to hold against the lonely night he knew lay ahead.

All his life, he'd avoided entanglements with women and now he knew why. None of those other girls, no matter how sweet and charming, made him feel complete. Despair swamped him.

Now what was he supposed to do?

He'd come, no pun intended, with the intention of telling her the truth. How could he do that now? How could he not?

He would spend the rest of his life trying to win her back, but he had to tell her the truth.

"Madelyn, are you all right?"

She purred at him. "I'm *wonderful*. This was better than last night."

Guilt twisted hotly in his stomach. "Madelyn, we must talk. I have to tell you..."

She took his mouth again, cutting off the fine speech he'd prepared on the drive over to her home. With every ounce of

intestinal fortitude he possessed, he lifted her off him, rolling them so he could look at her.

“Madelyn, there are a few—”

Her fingertips covered his lips.

“We don’t need to talk, Dallas. We’re two adults.” She squeezed his turgid penis again. “You wanted me. I wanted you. It’s very simple.” Her beautiful whiskey-brown eyes blinked innocently.

“Let me explain. Please, Madelyn.”

“Explain later. Here comes Hazel with our tray.”

The tolling of the bell had sounded for him and Dallas knew it. He was fucked.

Dallas made a grab for his pants, then remembered the Hazel model wasn’t programmed to take note of nudity. He grabbed a throw pillow and covered up regardless. A guilty fist squeezed his sinking heart when he got a look at the contents of the tray Hazel held.

Oh, God. Wine. Strawberries. Whipped Cream. A fondue pot, no doubt with chocolate. He had to confess. He had to make his mouth form the words.

“That’s fine, Hazel. Thank you,” Madelyn said as the drone placed the tray in front of them. “This is just a bit of a twist on *fragole al vino*. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Um, no, not at all, but, Madelyn, we have to—”

She popped a strawberry in his mouth. The sweet, tart flavor of the berry was enhanced by the flavor of wine. Madelyn smiled prettily at him.

“I love this. The strawberries are sprinkled with a little Chianti and sugar, then chilled. I happen to like to add a spritz of whipped cream or a drizzle of chocolate, too. It makes me feel quite decadent.”

Dallas swallowed, then tried to speak again, only this time she shot whipped cream into his mouth. He did his best to get the fluffy stuff down his throat. He held his hand up in front of his face, warding off her attempt to stuff a chocolate-covered strawberry into him.

“M-Madelyn. Wait a minute. I have a confession to make.”

She paused briefly before cramming the gooey chocolate confection in his mouth.

“If you need to confess, perhaps you should contact your priest,” she purred, batting her eyelashes prettily.

“Iz ot tha’ kin ob confebson,” he mumbled around the food in his mouth.

Madelyn tilted her head, smiling coyly. “I’ve heard confession is good for the soul, though. Maybe you *should* practice by telling me first.”

Dallas pressed his lips firmly together. She wasn’t force-feeding him goodies again. He struggled to sit up on the chaise. Her gaze fell to his manhood, still slightly swollen from their encounter. The little wench pursed her lips to keep from grinning.

Let her smirk. If he were lucky, she’d get hers, and he’d be the one to give it to her. God, let him be lucky, he prayed silently. He forged ahead.

“Madelyn, about the drone that served here last night. I need...”

“Oh, the new ‘Dallas’ model? It’s wonderful! I think I need one. Are they ready for production?”

Dallas put his hands on her shoulders and met her gaze, wondering again what lurked there. Something did, no doubt about it.

“There is no ‘Dallas’ drone. Madelyn, it was me last night.” He knelt in front of her, not caring if someone in New York City with a telescope saw his bare ass. Her eyes welled with tears. What a fool he’d been! What a fool he was.

What a jerk! Making such an innocent, beautiful woman cry should be a crime punishable by something really nasty like no sex for a year.

“I’m sorry, Madelyn. I never meant to deceive you, truly I didn’t.”

She sniffled and swiped her fingertips over her wet lashes. “Then why did you?”

“I didn’t mean to. When you called for service, no techs were available. I wanted to pick up the bad component and take it back to my shop for repair. That’s all! I swear. But when you called and were so distressed, I knew you needed help that I could give. Then you answered the door and thought I was a drone. I decided it would be fun to help with dinner and then tell you who I was. I never meant for things to get so out of hand.”

Madelyn’s eyebrows lifted. “Fun? You think deceiving people is fun?”

“No, no. I really don’t! It’s just, you were so beautiful. And you started giving me orders and talking about sex. Hell, I was intrigued. I never expected you to actually haul me off to bed.”

Her eyes widened. “Haul you off to bed? *Haul you off to bed!*” She sprang to her feet. He rose quickly, ready to move out of the way of flying objects if necessary, keeping the throw pillow strategically covering his male bits.

“I listened to you and those women and it was a real education, let me tell you. I kept thinking you were the smartest,

prettiest woman at that table and I'd blown it with you by pretending to be something I wasn't."

She froze and sniffled again. "You think I'm pretty? Really?"

"You're beautiful, Madelyn."

"So you said last night, but I didn't believe you. I really did wonder about a drone lying, but then I knew..." Her voice trailed off in a tiny squeak. Her lovely eyes rounded into alarmed brown saucers.

*What?*

Dallas gawked at her. Her shoulders squared. Her chin lifted defiantly.

The truth hit him like a ton of bricks.

*She'd known all along!*

He tried to speak, but the words clogged in his dry throat. Coughing several times, he accepted the glass of wine she handed him before she pounded on his back. His thoughts whirled out of control.

"You...you knew?" he finally choked out.

"Now, Dallas, I can explain."

"Explain! I've been dying here! I've walked around all day feeling lower than whale dung and you *knew*?" His legs went weak and he plopped down on the chaise.

*Good thing, too. All the better position to spank her from.*

He grabbed her wrist and pulled her down to sprawl across his lap, then brought his hand down on her rump with a most satisfactory *twack*. Madelyn bucked, twisting out of his grasp and onto the floor. She scurried away from him on her hands and knees. He dropped to all fours and stalked her.

"What do you think you're doing?" She gasped indignantly as she backed away from him.

He inched closer. "Pretend I'm the big bad wolf, Madelyn."

Her lip curled, showing him her pointy canines. "Pretend? I have to pretend?"

Dallas lunged. She scrambled to her feet and scampered out of his reach. He rose fluidly and followed her, grinning broadly as all the implications of his situation began to clear the fog from his mind.

She'd *known* and she'd wanted him to come back to her. She wanted him, the flesh-and-blood man with all his quirks and foibles, and not a drone programmed for the guilt-free fuck.

"You're backing yourself right into the bedroom, Madelyn. Would you like to explain that little bit of subliminal behavior?"

Madelyn's eyes narrowed. "Why you egotistical, conceited, self-centered, arrogant m-m-man! Oh!" The back of her legs made contact with the bed and she sat down to keep from keeling over.

Dallas' gaze never left hers as he knelt in front of her. "Madelyn, let's cut the chase. We need to talk about what happened last night and what just happened on your balcony, and where we go from here."

A discreet knock sounded. Hazel spoke softly from behind him. "Miss, dinner is ready."

*Damn.*

"I'll talk better on a full stomach," she murmured. "Honest, I will."

He shook his head. "I won't. You're afraid to talk to me, afraid to hear me out."



She pursed those pretty, pouty lips and glared at him. "That's not true. I'm not afraid to listen to you! Talk fast because I'm hungry."

\* \* \* \*

He was right. Madelyn was afraid of what Dallas would say to her. What he'd done wasn't right, but she had known and allowed his deception to continue. And now, hadn't she invited him back and maneuvered him into having sex with her without confessing she knew he wasn't a drone? He was here, but what if he left?

*Don't be stupid, Madelyn. You know where to find him.*

"You go first, Dallas. I don't know where to start."

He stared at her, his sinfully blue eyes glittering with ferocious intensity.

"You go first, Dallas.' Is that all you can say?" He licked his lips, slowly, teasingly. She shivered, thinking about that tongue and what it might do. She tore her gaze from his mouth and looked in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Dallas?"

He snorted rudely. "That's better, but still not enough."

"What else do you think I should say?" She planted her clenched fists against her hips. He rolled to his feet and mimicked her, forgoing the safety of his throw pillow to put his hands on his hips.

"I think you should tell me why you didn't tell me you knew I wasn't a drone."

"I don't want to tell you that."

"Don't make me spank you again, Madelyn."

She sprang to her feet, ready to defend herself if necessary. He hastily took a step backward.

“Don’t you even think to lay a hand on me again! You’ll be sorry if you do!”

His eyes narrowed, his gaze never leaving her face as his head cocked to one side. A slow smile bowed his sensuous mouth, spreading into a wide grin. His eyebrow lifted.

*Oh, bugger.*

Of course he’d take that for a challenge! How stupid could she be? She sprinted for the door.

In spite of how quickly she moved, Dallas caught her and spun her back to the bed. She scrambled across it. His grin widened smugly as his strong hands closed around her ankles, ending her escape attempt.

“You knew I wasn’t a drone and you wanted me, Madelyn. Admit it. You wanted a real man with sweaty, hot skin and everything. Not a drone. You were as intrigued by me as I was by you, so just say it.”

She couldn’t deny it, couldn’t lie. Last night was as much deception as she could live with. Here was a chance to close the door to the past and open one to a wonderful future—if she were brave enough.

He pulled her closer, the comforter sliding along beneath her, bunching up between them. It didn’t matter. Let it wrinkle for all she cared. Dallas mattered and the myriad possibilities that stood before her. She made a half-hearted effort to kick free of his grasp.

“You’re absolutely right. Now let go of me.”

“Let go of you? I don’t think so.” He pounced, catlike, landing on the bed straddling her. “I don’t think I’ll ever let go of you again.”

His mouth came down on hers, hard and bruising, refusing to accept any dissent she might muster.

Any notion of protesting fled as his lips moved on hers. Gentle now, his kiss burst into her awareness to find and summon forth those echoes of their shared passion that resonated within her, ones that refused to fade from her existence. Madelyn wrapped her arms around his neck and answered with her own demands. A low rumble sounded in his chest, the sound so purely male, her nipples puckered painfully in unspoken reply. Every pore in her skin opened to soak in his essence.

Madelyn sucked in a deep breath as Dallas pulled his lips from hers. When had she last breathed? It didn't matter, not when to breathe now was to absorb his scent. The mix of spicy cologne and slightly overheated male sent shivers along her nerve endings to settle at her center. The tiny bud at her core throbbed with wicked anticipation. Only...

"Do you forgive me?" she whispered.

"There's nothing for me to forgive, Madelyn. 'Do *you* forgive *me*' is the question. I lied to you."

Did she forgive him? He'd not lied to cause her harm or embarrassment. He hadn't lied for financial gain. His sense of humor, occasionally, might need a little shove back to center, but she could handle that.

She weighed her actions against his and decided it didn't matter to her how they'd met. All that mattered was what happened now. They were both guilty of deception, but neither of them had been hurt by it. That fact didn't make it right, of course, but the past couldn't be changed. What did she want for her future? Dallas looked worried, truly worried, as any decent man who'd had a lark backfire on him would be.

“Say something, baby. Please. Tell me to go if that’s what you want.” He stroked her cheek with his knuckles, a slow, lingering caress that made her yearn for him to stroke her all over.

Her choices were simple. Take the chance to have him be a part of her life, or close the door to him. It was up to her.

She made the only choice she could. Madelyn listened to her heart.

“It’s okay, Dallas. I forgive you.”

Relief washed over his features, the worry lines smoothed out on his forehead. His eyelids slowly dropped, then snapped up. Her name was a breathy sigh on his lips.

“Madelyn.”

She smiled up at him. “I forgive you, but I think you’ll have to do something really special to get back in my good graces.”

“Just tell me what it is and I’ll do it. Say the word.”

Madelyn batted her eyelashes coyly. Surely he could figure it out without her going into great detail. Surely.

Dallas’ eyes widened slightly, his pupils expanded to be surrounded by only a thin ring of blue.

“You-you don’t mean I have to have sex with you again, do you?” He feigned horror.

Well, she’d drawn herself a joker. That was clear. Every deck had two and she could give as good as she got.

“Yes. That’s exactly what I mean. Are you up for it?”

He coughed. “Maybe you should check that out for yourself.”

She ran her hands down his sides, down the inside of his thighs, before trailing one index finger along his growing erection. “Hmmm. I remember it...bigger.”

“Madelyn,” he groaned. “Give a guy a break.”

She wrapped her hand around him and stroked ever so gently. “Let’s see if I can provide a little encouragement, shall we?”

Dallas fell onto his side. Madelyn giggled as they bounced on the soft mattress. He scooped her up into his arms and kissed her.

“I don’t deserve you. I don’t deserve a second chance. Why are you giving me one, Madelyn?”

It was a valid question. She hoped he’d understand her reluctance to catalogue every feeling, every thought, every nuance, and just go with what she felt. At least for now.

They could dissect every stray blip of emotion over coffee for the next one hundred years if that would make him happy, but not tonight.

“Does there have to be a ‘why,’ Dallas? Must everything be explained? Can’t the connection we feel—and I know you feel it, too—be enough?”

“I do feel it, and yes, it can be enough for tonight. I love you, Madelyn. I knew it the moment I saw you.” He pulled her closer. She melted against him, content to rest in his embrace. They had the night, and all the nights that followed, to find out. A bright future, well served.

She would follow his lead across all their nights, and days, too. “I’m so glad you’re real, Dallas, because I love you, too.”

Outside the door, Hazel smiled, and went to put their dinner in the oven to stay warm.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Brenda Williamson lives to write and create stories containing timeless love with sensual, sexy, and spicy themes. Foregoing household chores most of the time, she has a great husband and one son who put up with her many long hours hidden behind a computer. For contemplation, she sits on the porch swing and watches nature inspire from her country home.

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Best selling author Rayne Forrest lives in scenic Western Maryland, where she was born and raised. Her many novels, ranging from futuristic settings to romantic suspense have earned stellar reviews from the toughest critics in the industry—her readers.

Rayne was chosen as a 2007 EPPIE finalist, one of electronic publishing's greatest honors, and has also garnered a CAPA nomination.

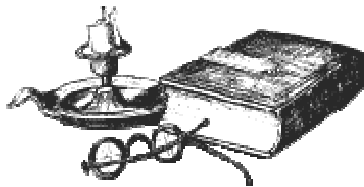
When not at her computer, she enjoys working in her garden, crafting, bowling, and reading romance and science fiction. Rayne enjoys classic rock and New Age music. She is a member of the Romance Writers of America.

If you'd like to learn more about Rayne and her novels, please visit her website at [www.rayneforrest.com](http://www.rayneforrest.com). You can subscribe to her monthly newsletter, Forrest Whispers, at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/authorrayneforrest> or visit

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