



Black Dragon's *Heart*

Anita Philmar

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PRAISE FOR AUTHOR

Anita Philmar

AND HER BOOKS

“BLACK DRAGON’S BLOOD is a unique erotic paranormal that mixes speculative fiction elements very well. Recommended for readers who enjoy Susan Kearney’s futuristics and yearn for vintage historical alpha males.”

~Daisy, Whipped Cream Reviews

“Anita Philmar’s BLACK DRAGON’S BLOOD is an intense and humorous battle of wills between William and Amanda. Amanda is adorably jaded. The way William demonstrates his devotion toward Amanda left me breathless. Not only is Anita Philmar a talented author of romantica, she has created a fascinating mystery in BLACK DRAGON’S BLOOD. I can’t wait to read the second book of the BLACK DRAGON series when it is released.”

~Kathleen, Romance Junkies Reviews

“BLACK DRAGON’S MOON is dragonlicious with eroticism and danger to keep it spicy.”

~Jo, Joyfully Reviewed

"BANISHED HERO has a lot going for it, enough to recommend it as a wonderful way to spend a summer day. Although I should warn you, sit next to the A/C for the fun parts."

~Xeranthemum, Whipped Cream Reviews

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by

Anita Philmar

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons living or dead, business establishments, events, or locales, is entirely coincidental.

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Dedication

To Michael, who grounds my world.
To Stephen, who keeps the story real,
To Matthew, who helps me with my spelling.
And to everyone else who puts up with me when the
story isn't going well, thanks for your support and
encouragement. You guys are the best.

Chapter One

“Do whatever it takes.” The words played like a mantra through Jake Ramsey’s head.

He checked his gun in his holster hidden under his suit and left arm. If he needed to kill someone, he could. After all, he’d done it before. His job as a Dragon Center Agent demanded he perform such horrific tasks.

But this assignment jerked the dragon’s tail.

The large building, crawling with young interns who had just left their youth behind, consisted of sweeping hallways and huge common areas. If gun play broke out, a number of innocent people could get hurt or killed.

He glanced around the corner at the shiny chrome walls to confirm no security guards stood in his way. His mission to return Sarah VanHorn to her family ruled his strategy for success. His boss and best friend, William VanHorn wanted his sister rescued. They both preferred Jake achieve the task without gun play.

Syndetic International might be guilty of unethical practices, but their security ranked among the best Jake had seen in any private business. Motion sensors on the ceiling and floor, metal bars over the doors and windows, and security guards roamed the building both day and night.

He glanced at the ceiling tube. Bright Skylar lights glowed in the evening sky. The place fell into lock down for the night in about thirty ticks of the time veil. Even if he made it to Sarah’s room, he’d be stuck inside until morning.

He shoved his squeaky work bucket into the

storage pit and caught sight of the cot in the back where as janitor he'd been assigned to sleep. The hard bed served as his alibi for tonight. The smell of cleaning chemicals assaulted his senses as he shut the door. The entrance to the intern's bedrooms lay only two steps away.

He clicked the button on his security card. A light next to the door blinked, then turned black, his signal for entering the dorm area. He grabbed the handle and tugged the door open. The moment he released the handhold, the opening began to shrink, closing automatically and forcing him to rush through before the partition hit his backside.

Sarah's room was at the end of the hallway.

His muscles on alert, his confidence of not encountering anyone drew him forward. The guards patrolled a different area when the apprentices were in the grub room. The savory scents of cooked meat met his nostrils. His stomach growled, and he glanced at his messenger on his wrist. No time for food. The students were due to return to their suites in the next few moments.

At Sarah's door, Jake hit the button, and the door opened. The dorm rooms weren't locked until the final check for the evening. Without making a sound, he slipped inside and hit the dial to close the door.

The light stones in the ceiling cast an eerie glow over Sarah's meager furnishings. A frilly doily on her couch, a ribbon pinned to the wall, a stack of thick books on her desk, she'd leave little behind when they left.

Without pausing in the sitting room, he strode into her bedroom. In a corner, he spotted a folding screen, a standard feature in all of the dorm rooms. He settled behind the tall wooden shield to wait for her return.

Her unique apple scent filled the room, making

him hungry for a taste. He'd been avoiding her for years. After she hit puberty, he'd stopped visiting William at home. Her young femininity, blooming into a ripe luscious woman, called to his blood. His desire to claim her as his mate burned through him every time he drew near her.

Yes, his high level of dragon slayer's blood required regular sex, but he couldn't become involved with his best friend's sister. William refused to let any man near her.

Jake reminded himself that his job was to deliver Sarah back home to her family. Tonight, he planned to tell her about how they'd escape.

Tomorrow, they'd leave.

He planned for her to follow her normal schedule the next day, then after the morning meal she'd meet him in the parking structure. From there, they'd leave the campus with no problem.

The information he'd gotten on the compound so far hit the mark, but he didn't want to push it. His boss at Syndetic aided in Jake's search for Sarah. A chart of each intern's room showed all the suites that couldn't be entered. Sarah's name and room number were at the top of the list.

The squeaky sound of shoes caught Jake's attention. He stared through the slit in the panels. Through one, he could see her front door, the other her bed.

A young woman with short raven hair entered the suite. Could this be Sarah? She turned after crossing the threshold to stop the progress of the man dogging her steps. The big guy ignored the hint and forced his way farther into the doorway. She stopped him by ramming her hand in the middle of his chest, a typical move for Sarah when she didn't like something.

"No, Bruce, I'm tired. I'm going straight to bed." Her soft sultry voice caressed Jake's body. When had

the childish squeal he remembered turned into such an alluring purr?

“But I’ll help you relax. If I rub you in all the right places, you’ll feel so much better.” Bruce wrapped his hands around Sarah’s waist. “The air is perfumed with lust to spike our desires. The commander says it keeps us on our toes and helps us work off all our anxieties.”

“I’m not sure his description is accurate, but I’m planning to wait. I can’t afford to get pregnant right now. There’s too much work to do.” Her arms stiffened, the muscles of her biceps bunching. Bruce didn’t release his hold.

Jake knotted his hands, wondering if Sarah could handle the man. Hoping he wouldn’t have to interfere, he watched intently. The oxygen generator cut on, muting the rest of their conversation.

Sarah hit the dial next to the door, using the action of it closing to wedge Bruce out. Her finger spun the dial. The lock clicked, and she headed Jake’s way.

The lights in the bedroom spontaneously snapped on the moment she entered the room. Her exquisite looks struck Jake in the chest. The cute little girl pestering him and William had grown into a gorgeous woman. Jake’s dragon blood ignited into a hot flame of desperation. He sympathized with Bruce’s plight.

Her flawless complexion glowed with a soft sheen of the sun. Short dark hair danced around her face. Following the line of her luscious form, the heavy curves of her breasts flowed into the gentle bow of her waist. Flared hips led to long lean legs that begged for a man between them. Jake’s cock swelled.

She walked toward him, hips swaying in a graceful rhythm. He licked his parched lips and considered revealing himself.

The plan of waiting until after the final security check of the night before making his appearance raced through his mind. He couldn't afford for any of the guards to overhear their conversation.

Had he over simplified things?

Before he determined his course of action, Sarah hit the magnetic mechanism of her dress. Her lush breasts fell forward, free from the confines of the material. She slid the garment off her shoulders and cupped her breasts, holding them in her delicate hands like a gift.

Jake almost swallowed his tongue. Desire pooled in his loins.

She exited his line of sight, and he took a silent breath to replace the one he'd been holding. The sweet scent of apple blossoms filled his lungs.

Dragon dung. He'd forgotten how an innocent woman smelled like pure paradise.

The blankets on her bed shifted. A rustling sound echoed through the room. He imagined her removing the rest of her clothes. A tick later, he caught a brief glimpse of her in a red robe, and then she stepped into the wash room.

The click of the door closing allowed him the freedom to shift his position. He cursed the dragon blood running through his veins. He normally redirected his lust without a problem, but with his current dry spell, Sarah's scent slammed him against the limits of his self-control.

But she'd be under the blankets soon. A few deep breaths later, he relaxed and centered his mind on the strategy for their upcoming escape.

The door to the washroom whispered opened. Her shadow passed directly in front of the screen, and then she slid into bed and the lights dimmed.

Her form shifted under the blanket. In a few moments, the guard would lock the outside bolt. Then he'd explain his mission.

Chapter Two

Tired, Sarah sighed and tried to relax. The research to find out why dragon blood held the unique qualities it did required months of endless experimentation only to discover little. Yet, everyone at Syndetic expected her to provide them with answers. She didn't have any.

Dragon blood, just like human blood, possessed a special quality. No chemist understood the process to duplicate it. She'd explained that fact to the executives of the company on a daily bases, but they refused to listen. Her commander, instead, challenged her with a new question every day he wanted solved?

Like why after a blood transfusion, did some non-dragon blooded people develop enhanced abilities? Men could move faster, realized a stronger sex drives, and gained added cognitive powers. Women became more assertive, required sex on a regular basis, and demanded equal rights. The phenomenon created problems their leaders were struggling to solve. Syndetic hoped to provide them with answers.

The burden of her research settled around her shoulders like iron shackles. She longed to break free.

Flinging the blankets off, cool air greeted her naked skin. She groaned with relief. It didn't help to be on fire with lust. For weeks now, she'd been fighting the obsession for sex.

Yes, the air carried a fragrance to stimulate everyone's sex drive. But tonight...tonight she felt

Jake Ramsey's presence. His hunger, wild and strong, rivaled hers for a release. The ripe pear scent of him begged her to give herself over to his skillful lovemaking.

He'd been her dream lover since she'd turned fourteen. The untamed call of his body to hers demanded she answer the hot rich desire in his blood.

Her favorite fantasy played through her mind. Jake dressed in his dark riding pants, a thin caveman shirt covering his chest. His large hands circled her waist, and he helped her from her mount. Strong, firm muscles rippled under her hands when he lowered her to the ground. The hard lines of his chest brushed against the tips of her aching breasts.

At their secret place in the forest, the earthy scent of the trees filled the air. No one knew their location so they couldn't interrupt. She wiggled out of his arms and walked the short distance to the leafy bed he'd prepared for them. In her imagination, she sent him a wicked little smile over her shoulder.

She longed to make love. To forget—forget anyone outside of them existed.

In her mind, she sat on the soft bed of grass and hit the release for her blouse. Her breasts, heavy and aching, fell into her hands. She cupped them and peered at his face. His green eyes darkened. Sarah read the passion burning through his blood. It matched hers.

The crisp spicy bite of his unique scent tickled her taste buds. Her mouth watered. She ran her gaze over his lean form. The shadows from the trees played against his skin, but a ray of light hit the thick bulge growing against the crotch of his pants.

He wanted her.

A sharp jolt of need surged between her legs. She fidgeted on the black silk sheets. If only he were here to press his rigid sex inside her, drive her to the

point of no return.

She sighed in an unconscious invitation for him to step closer. He played the part she'd imagined so many times and ripped off his thin shirt, then undid the snaps on his pants. Caught up in her fantasy, his seductive smile kept her from seeing him shed his clothes.

His thick erection freed, captured her attention. A sharp demanding pulse started in her core, and a stream of desire wet the folds of her sex.

He stepped forward, and her breath caught in her throat. His proud staff stood between them. She wanted to touch him, to feel his smooth rod under her fingers. Licking her lips with breathless anticipation, she rose to knees on their forest bed. A roguish grin flashed across his lips.

Eager, his penis greeted her hands. She fondled him. The hard male member pulsed in her palm, enticing her to slide her fingers firmly around its solid girth. She ran her hand up and down the length, toying with the round testicles and rocking them with the rhythm of her strokes.

Large hands dug through her hair and gripped her head. She sank into the green swirling flame of his eyes. He demanded she endow him with a more substantial caress and nudged the tip of his erection closer. She opened her mouth to ask him how she could please him. His penis brushed against her lips. The possibilities of sucking him into her mouth sent her fantasy in a new erotic direction. Her body pulsed. She gripped the sheets and rocked her hips.

Oh, how she wanted to suck on his cock.

A loud thud sounded. The guard locked her in for the night.

She shook her head. Her dream lover disappeared.

A naughty hand sped down the center of her stomach. Crisp dark hair greeted her fingers, but

she didn't pause. The pressure building inside her demanded she find some relief, one way or another.

The lock bar fell over Sarah's door. The guard's footsteps retreated. *No escape.*

Jake strayed from behind the screen into the middle of the room. Her flowering passion called to him. He took a few steps and stood at the side of her bed. Nothing could keep him from staring at her sexy curves, and the way her skin glowed under the subdued lighting. The silky texture of her black hair danced around her heart-shaped face in a haphazard way. Her creamy, full breasts beaded in small tight buds and begged for his attention. He caught the movement of her hand on its path over her stomach to the curly hair surrounding her sex.

Dreaming of making love and seeking relief?

He licked his parched lips and forced the heel of his hand down the front of his pants. The desire rising in his cock held him captive. Every logical reason for not becoming involved with Sarah VanHorn fled his mind. A touch, a taste—he struggled with the urge to plunge deep into her hot, wet pussy and unleash his pent-up frustration.

The impatient bucking of her hips told him she wobbled on the edge of release. She moaned and lifted her hips, an invitation for him to discover her heat.

The moist pink lips of her sex glistened. Long elegant fingers parted her labia, teasing his imagination with what it would be like to stroke the silken walls of her vagina with his cock.

Her sweet spicy juices caused his dragon senses to tingle with a gluttonous hunger, demanding he taste the nectar dripping from her heat. His mouth watered with anticipation. He didn't know her dream lover, but he planned to banish the man from her thoughts forever.

He hit the release button for his suit and stepped out of his clothes. Next he removed his gun and holster and laid them on top of his things.

With her legs apart, she pressed an insistent finger into her vagina. A deep groan rushed from his lips.

Her eyes opened. Black eyes met his. She blinked.

Then to his surprise, she held out her hand and grasped his. She drew him forward. "You're real, aren't you?"

Jake grinned and slid onto the bed beside her. "As real as a lover should be."

"William sent you here, didn't he?" Sarah laid her hands on Jake's shoulders, wondering if she'd lost her mind. For a lifetime, she'd wanted to make love to him. Now, he covered her chest, stomach, legs.

"Yes, and he's the reason I shouldn't let this go any further." Jake shifted her hips to the edge of the narrow bed. "My assignment isn't to sample the pleasures of your pussy, but to free you from here and carry you home to your family."

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Jake's eyes lifted to hers. "Are you trying to force me into complying with your will?"

"Do I need to?" Sarah raised her upper body so her breasts brushed against his chest. The hard evidence of his desire bit into her thigh. She wished his cock would find a better place to rest, like deep inside her pussy. "We both want the same things."

"You have no idea the things I long to arouse in you." His hands squeezed her breasts and toyed with

the tips. Her nipples peaked into hard buds, and she moaned as heat streaked to her core. His emerald eyes glittered with lust.

He leaned forward and licked her creamy breast. A small shudder raced down Sarah's spine, and her toes tingled. Her fantasies couldn't compare to having him with her in the flesh. Moist lips rained kisses over her puckered nipple, and the erotic sensation he invoked demanded more.

"Jake, please." She gripped his head and thrust her breast forward. The sweet heat of his mouth surrounded her, drew a sigh from the tips of her curled toes.

No longer gentle, he sucked wildly at her breast. The storm of need brewing from her earlier fantasy gathered strength. Silky locks of his blond hair flowed through her fingers. She wiggled, unable to lie still.

Her hips skimmed the sheets, and one leg found a home around his waist. "Jake, please, I want more." Her breathless voice sounded foreign to her own ears as the ache for him to fill her rose to the point of agonizing distress.

With a low groan, Jake lifted his head. Fire burned in his eyes. "I can see you haven't changed. You're as impatient as always."

"No, I'm..." Her mind jumped to the way she'd pestered him as a child. "Jake, this isn't the same. You don't know how long I've been tortured by the inclination to make love."

He shifted on the bed and worked his way between her thighs. "An interesting statement we'll discuss later, but for now..." He cupped his trembling hands around her face. "I'm setting the pace."

Sarah lost the chance to argue when Jake covered her mouth and forced her lips open. Hot and consuming, his mouth took her under to where no thought had any chance of forming. His hands

sought the firm flesh of her breasts. Each touch sent raw pleasure to the center of her soul.

She sprang to life under his touch, wriggling beneath him to rub the moisture of her sex against his hard shaft. Her fingers skated over his back and gripped the warm muscles of his shoulders. Her lungs forgot how to breathe.

His lips broke contact.

She gasped for air.

A trail of kisses traveled across her cheek to the lobe of her right ear. He tugged on the tender skin.

“I should tease you the way you did me.” The head of his penis met the pulsating tissue of her vagina, but he paused, not giving her anywhere near what she wanted of his long thick shaft. “Your dream lover took you almost to the edge. You’re very wet.” He withdrew.

A faint cry whispered from her throat. His departure released a wave of emptiness to flood her chest. She’d been alone so long. Wanted him so long. She couldn’t let him escape, not when she was so close to realizing her dream.

“Jake, please, I...” She rocked her hips to find his hard erection and drive him deeper. His hands stayed her movements.

“Who is he, Sarah? Who has your body alive with lust? Because he’s not getting you back,” Jake whispered in her ear. “I’m your lover now.”

Jealous heat sped through Jake, his rich dragon blood set on fire by the idea of another man claiming her. She belonged to him. Only he could have her, love her, protect her. He’d banish every other lover from her mind.

He thrust his throbbing shaft past her slick, swollen folds until he was buried deep within her. She cried out and lifted her legs to circle his waist. The soft tight haven begged him to thrust harder. His hands cupped her ass and squeezed. He started

a slow steady rhythm, riding in and out of her hungry depths. She responded, matching him stroke for stroke.

Soft purrs sprang from her throat. He lifted his head to study her face. Her head thrashed back and forth against the pillow. Raven hair swept over her forehead and along her jaws. Emotions flashed across her features—desire, doubt, need.

Her eyes flickered open, and her gaze met his. He read the scorching appetite in their depths as her hands clawed his back. Her body, twisting and turning, urged him to shove her into the dark abyss of an orgasm. He might not possess the right type of dragon blood to seed her womb, but she'd never forget him as a lover. Slanting his lips over hers, he worked to forget the curse of carrying gold dragon blood.

He trailed his lips to the flush tip of her breast, and a soft moan slipped from her sensual mouth. The sweet scent of her love juices filled his senses. He increased his pace, driving deeper and deeper while fighting the urgent aspiration to claim her as his mate.

Sarah stood on the brink of sanity. The suction of his mouth on her breast and the pounding force of his cock begged her to rock her hips to his relentless rhythm. Her mind surrendered to the convulsing power of her orgasm and ecstasy exploded through her system.

The pleasure so intense a cry sprang from her mouth, and she floated in a sensual dream, connected for a brief moment with the one man she'd always loved.

After one more thrust, Jake collapsed against her chest. The weight of him covered her like a cloak, and she tugged him closer. The steady beat of his heart raced with hers for a few moments.

Jake took a deep breath and rolled to his side

taking her with him. His arms held her tight. “The only way we’ll be able to rest is if you sleep on top of me.” He shoved her onto his chest and adjusted his hips to a more comfortable spot. “This bed isn’t big enough for us to lie side by side.”

The idea of sleeping in his arms sounded wonderful. Sarah yawned and snuggled closer. “Just don’t snore in my ear.”

Jake relished the melting action of her muscles relaxing. He didn’t comment but held her while she fell asleep. Her lush breasts cushioned against his chest. He smoothed his hands over her silky skin, and the sweet smell of her hair ignited his senses. The taste of her earlier kisses moistened his tongue.

He might be here to rescue her, but a primal part of him yearned to claim her as his mate. The years of fighting the longing were over.

William would adapt to his little sister and his best friend being married. And maybe with a little help from the dragon serum that the Dragon Center produced, they’d create a miracle. She’d bear his child.

A smile broke out across Jake’s face. He relaxed. Once Sarah left Syndetic International, they’d start a whole new life together.

Tomorrow couldn’t come soon enough.

The heavy arm draped across Sarah’s back didn’t allow her to move. She adjusted her hips, and her leg fell off the edge of the bed. Jake was right. Her tiny bed barely accommodated both of them.

She grinned at the fun the limited space provided. Every time she woke in the night, he’d been on top of her or she’d been straddling his waist. The active night of sex didn’t bless them with much sleep.

An idea abruptly tickled her senses. She laid her hand on her stomach. The smile on her face turned

into a wide grin. The blessing was Jake's baby growing inside her womb.

He couldn't end their affair now. Black dragon law gave her the right to claim him as her mate. Granted, the law applied to men with black dragon blood. But she'd persuade Jake the law applied to her, too. Especially if she told William about the baby.

She worked her way out from under Jake's arm and stood. A lock of blond hair covered his closed eyelids. She used all of her self-control to keep from brushing the golden strand off his forehead. If she touched him, he'd wake up.

William's words of warning raced through her head. *Jake isn't the marrying kind. Stay away from him.*

But with her pregnant, wouldn't he want to be with her? Or was she putting them both in a compromising position?

Unwilling to speculate about his possible aversion to being her mate, Sarah ran her hand on the beam of the headboard. A small bump under her finger stopped her search. The information dot was safe where she'd left it. She moistened her index finger and rubbed it over the spot. The small brown speck attached itself to her finger.

She glanced back at Jake. He might not long to be with her forever, but he could help secure her future.

Her gaze scanned his naked frame. His broad chest was sprinkled with blond hair that led to a flat stomach. Her mouth watered, and her sight ventured lower. Thick thighs brushed with golden hair framed his semi-erect penis. His crisp spicy scent excited her taste buds. A raging fever gathered in the cavity between her legs.

Where on his gorgeous body did she want to hide her insurance for tomorrow? The data represented

months of work, and she didn't want to lose it because she'd decided to leave with Jake now instead of going through weeks of exit interviews.

She could be searched whenever the mood struck one of the guards. But no one from Syndetic would know they were together and they wouldn't have any reason to search Jake.

Her gaze lingered on him. With a few simple strokes, he'd be awake and ready to please her again. The dot needed to be in place before he woke. She licked her lips and stared at the small cinnamon nipple hidden under his chest hair. She liked the idea of her research lying securely over his heart.

Bending forward, she ran her tongue around the light brown disk, then placed her finger on his skin and attached the small brown speck to his nipple. The special saliva glue reacted exclusively to her chemical makeup so no one else could remove the data. And best of all, he'd never know she placed the micro chip there. She blew a steady stream of air over the spot, and his nipple puckered in response.

A hunger grew inside her to confirm his desire. If he only craved her body, she'd build a relationship by exploiting his passion for sex.

He lifted his head off the pillow and stared into her eyes. "If you keep playing around, we'll never make it out of bed." His arm drew her closer, and he checked the small messenger strapped to his wrist. "I want us to leave the compound while everyone else is in the grub room getting breakfast."

He started to sit up, but Sarah shoved him back against the bed. "That's not a sound plan." She straddled his waist and braced her hands on his muscular chest.

"Oh, yeah?" He skimmed his hands along her sides and drew her closer. "And why not?"

"Well, first of all, I don't plan on making it to the grub room this morning." She palmed his face and

guided her hands over the rough stubble on his chin. He couldn't escape from her so quickly. "A much more important engagement requires my attention." Her pussy caressed his erection.

He groaned and stopped the rhythm of her hips by placing his hands on her ass. "And what would that be?"

"Oh, you're a smart man. I'm sure you'll figure it out." Sarah lowered her head and placed wet kisses along his jaw to his ear. The salty flavor of his skin teased her taste buds.

His hands flew from her back to her shoulders. "We really don't have time. We should break away from Syndetic's stranglehold while we still can."

She lifted her head and gazed into two green pools of eagerness. He didn't want to stop any more than she did. "Yes, but don't you think it'd be better to leave when everyone else does? That way, no one will notice our departure."

"Like when?"

"Well, after the morning session a number of students leave. Some head over to other buildings while others are off until the afternoon. Most of the interns head to town for a break or to run errands."

"Do you ever leave?" Jake stared off into space.

"Yes, I'm scheduled to work in the lab for the morning session, and then I'm off for the rest of the day." She smoothed her hands along his shoulders and onto his chest as she sat up to straddle his thighs. "That is, if I feel like taking some time off."

He captured her waist and kept her from sliding over the thick length of his erection. "And how long can you be gone before someone notices your absence?"

"Depends," she said, and his eyes narrowed. Her free hand played with the light hair on his chest. His cock, wedging slowly deeper between her thighs, toying with wet lips of her pussy, teased her with the

pleasure to come. If he'd let her shift a little, he'd be right where she needed him most.

"Sarah," he said in a stern tone.

Jake wanted her to be serious, but at the moment, she lacked the brainpower to contemplate anything but the ravenous lust sizzling through her black dragon blood. She couldn't care less what happened after the next few minutes.

She grinned and scraped her fingernails over his stomach to the indentation of his navel. "Come on, Jake. Can't this discussion wait?"

Her hand slid lower and found her prize. She fondled him, kneading her way up and down his long thick shaft.

"Sarah." Her name sounded like a plea for mercy.

"Yes, Jake?" she answered but didn't pause in her task. Her busy hands rode along his rod, mimicking the movement of her body riding against his.

"You're killing me."

She smiled and sank lower, down the length of his body to settle in the middle of the bed. "No, I just thought I'd show you what I'd rather be doing. I'm really not interested in food this morning."

Lowering her head, she blew a warm stream of air on his penis. He moaned and cupped her head. She licked the tip, and he arched his back. His hands tugged her closer, demanding she gather more of him in her mouth. Her lips covered the mushroomed head. Her tongue flicked the tip again with a light stoke. His fingers tightened in her hair, and she sucked him deeper.

Sliding back to the slitted end, she withdrew to catch her breath and study his face. He groaned, and the heat in his gaze burned through her, ignited a flame that shot liquid through the center of her body to gather in her core.

She sucked the smooth head back into her mouth to arouse him before she guided her mouth over the solid girth of his rod. The spicy flavor of hot peppers and sweet pears rode against her taste buds. She closed her eyes and drew him deeper. After a brief pause, she took the same path to the tip. Again and again, she played along the length of his erection.

“Stop.” He grabbed her arms and aligned their bodies. “I can’t take any more.”

“Really, so I guess it’s time to leave.” She couldn’t hold back the smile of victory when he rolled over and pinned her to the bed.

“You’re not going anywhere.” He reached between them. With his gaze locked to her, he guided his hard cock to her wet opening.

“And I guess I’m supposed to submit to your will?” She rocked her hips to ease the round head of his penis inside her, then just as quickly drew back to release him.

“Oh, no, you don’t.” He thrust forward and buried his rod deep. “We’re not playing games or delving into any of your fantasies. I want to enjoy the pleasure of being deep inside you.”

She moaned and wrapped her legs around his waist. “Then if I ask you to move, you’ll decline my request.”

He slowly lifted his upper body to wedge a hand between their bodies. His index fingers found her clit and used her own moisture to pleasure her.

Energy radiated through her body, and she slapped her hands against his ass. “I thought you said we weren’t playing.”

He grinned and began a fast, hard tempo, his stroke slamming deep. Pressure built, and her heart pounded in her chest. Sweat formed on his back, and her hands slipped over his skin.

“Harder,” she groaned and tightened her legs

around his waist. "I'm almost..."

His pace increased.

She held on and rode the wave of pleasure that crashed repeatedly through her. The amazing rapture washed every thought but Jake from her head.

A deep howl erupted from him when he came, his body pulsating in rhythm with her contractions. He slipped his hand from between them and eased his weight onto his elbows. His head rested briefly on her shoulder, and he whispered in her ear. "How did I ever survive without you?"

She guided her hands up his back. "Are you sure you'll survive being *with* me?"

Chapter Three

A short time later, Jake helped Sarah out of bed. Fast and furious, each time they made love, he couldn't go slow and enjoy the moment. She sped him past foreplay to ball-crushing lust.

With only a few ticks passing since they'd had sex, he wondered how long he'd be required to wait before he could sink into her heat again. Their relationship might not last once she found out he couldn't supply her with a child, but for now, she enjoyed his lovemaking.

He slipped on his holster then worked his green suit back over his hips. "What lab are you working in this morning?"

She padded across the room to the screen he'd hidden behind last night. The gentle sway of her naked ass, the soft bounce of her breasts hindered his ability to fasten his suit. He longed to jerk her back to his side, buried his cock deep inside her pussy and spend the day pounding out the hunger building in his loins.

His plans for leaving the compound interrupted his lust-filled musings. His job to protect her didn't include the right to taste her honey lips and find pleasure in the tight warm haven between her legs. "I want to be in the right area so when the morning classes are over, we can leave."

She hit a button on the wall, and a panel opened. After placing a few items over the top of the screen, she strolled behind it. "I'm scheduled to be in lab two. It's in the east wing, only a short distance from the vehicle storage area."

“I’ll meet you by the exit.” Jake sat on the edge of the bed and slipped on his shoes. Glimpses of her form tempted him through the slits in the screen. He bit back the urge to persuade her to let him watch a reverse dragon-tease show. Instead, he ground his hand along the length of his stiff erection.

“When are you supposed to start work?” he asked, hoping to keep his focus on the task ahead. The crisp scent of the sex they’d shared earlier hit his senses, and his cock grew harder.

He stood, adjusted his stance, and checked his messenger. She still hadn’t answered. “Well, how long do you have?”

She walked around the screen. The sight of her in a tight, form-fitting, black dress, which barely hit the top of her knees and hugged her breasts like a second skin, sent a shot of fire through his loins. He staggered forward, and his dragon blood ignited for a taste of his woman. Every brain cell in his head screamed for her to choose a more conservative dress.

Or better still be without any.

“I’m already late. My shift started five ticks ago.” She strolled to him and rubbed her hands over his chest. She brushed against him seductively. The air heels on her feet added height to her short frame.

Jake grabbed her shoulders. “Then you better go. I don’t want you to draw attention or change your routine in any way.”

“But I’m never on time.” Sarah swirled back and surveyed her bedroom. “Everyone knows I always walk in ten ticks after nine.”

She strolled away and into the other room. “Since no one knows I’m leaving, I guess everything stays behind.” She fingered a blue ribbon hanging on the sticky pad by the door.

With her back to him, he couldn’t tell how much leaving might be upsetting her. He reviewed the

interior of her suite. Everything appeared the same as the other suites he'd been in yesterday. Her clothes and a few pictures comprised most of the items to be packed.

"We can always ask them to forward your things to you, after you arrive home." He stepped behind her and gripped her shoulders.

"I know William wants you to take me home. But to be honest, this place hasn't been bad. Until recently, I wouldn't have minded staying longer." Sarah mashed the button beside the door. "I better get to work."

Her spine straight, her stride was sure as her scarlet air-heels tapped their way down the hall. He admired the black lines of the dragon art that played over her left ankle.

The shiny black metal floor acted like a mirror, highlighting every one of her luscious moves—the long length of her steps, the swing of her arms, and the graceful flow of her supple body. He didn't wonder if the male interns used the floor to look up girl's dresses. He knew.

Sarah sauntered from the dorm area.

Lust moistened his mouth. He swallowed and exited her suite. In less than three bongs, they'd be gone. He turned in the opposite direction and headed for the grub room. His boss said they always needed help in the kitchen.

Just the place to be seen by the rest of the staff.

He couldn't risk anyone suspecting he'd spent the night with one of the apprentices. And if asked about his early arrival, he'd explain about the cot in the equipment closet. His plan to escape the Syndetic campus didn't include any problems developing.

"Sarah, what are you working on?" Arms on both sides of her, Bruce, another apprentice, pinned her

against the counter. His lips caressed her ear. “Whatever it is has you hot and horny.”

Her gaze refocused on the delicate equipment on the table in front of her. Sarah took a few readings on the scale and sent the scanner over the machine to record the numbers. She still struggled with why Jake hadn’t commented on her pregnancy. The guilt of trapping him into marriage played through her mind like a wheel in perpetual motion.

“Bruce, I’m working.” He edged closer, and she veered away from his repulsive presence. “I’m trying to identify the special enzyme that binds character traits together.” She hoped the excuse would explain her preoccupation. “You should know. You worked on this project for a while, too.”

His hands landed on her waist, and he pretended to peer over her shoulder. “Right, you want me to believe a simple CT is responsible for giving every man in the room a hard on. I know the smell of the hot juices seeping onto panties. You yearn for a man to relieve the ache.” He brushed his groin against her hip.

A loud crash rang through the room. Glass shattered, and steel pinged against the hard metal floor. Shards flew at Sarah’s feet, and she jumped away from Bruce to avoid being cut.

At the station next to hers, Victor stared at the mess. Broken pieces of equipment and glass spotted the floor around his feet. “Dragon Drool, these damn bamboo trays are so weak.”

“Bruce,” Madame Blake barked out her orders from across the room. “Go summon the clean-up man. Everyone else stand back. We’ll take care of this mess in no time.”

She rushed forward and grabbed Sarah by the arm. “Step outside in the hall with me, Sarah.”

Not wanting to argue with the leader of the lab, Sarah led the way out of the room. Madame Blake

mashed the button to close the door behind them. Sarah turned ready to hear the same garbage about how she'd caused more problems in the lab.

"When was the last time you had sex?" Madame Blake attacked in her usual vicious manner.

"What?"

"You heard me." Madame Blake lifted her hand and pointed a finger at Sarah. "You know what the commandant said. 'Every student is to participate in regular sessions of sex.' It helps release your stress, and according to your chart, you're fighting the program."

"What chart?" Sarah didn't know how the faculty could keep track of who sleeps with whom.

"Oh, please, do you really think the guys here don't tell every time they screw someone. It's the cost for having the aroma therapy in the oxygen vents." Madame Blake's hands flew through the air, emphasizing her words. "Every male in the compound is required to comply with the rules or the program ends."

The lab leader peered over Sarah's shoulder as if someone stood behind her. "Bruce, we discussed this. You were supposed to help Sarah with her problem last night."

"I tried to." Bruce laid his hand on Sarah's waist. "She said she wanted to sleep and to leave her alone."

The evil glare in Madame Blake's eyes told Sarah she would not escape her leader's verbal attack. "I've been very tolerant about your desire to choose your own mate, but having stress-relieving sex isn't about commitment. Your raised hormonal levels are causing problems in my lab."

The sour Madame Blake shook her little finger one last time. "You're dismissed for the rest of the day. Now, find an answer to your problem and forget about the job." She turned on her heels and entered

the lab.

A sloppy kiss landed on Sarah's neck. Bruce jerked her back against his chest and ground his hard erection against the cheeks of her butt. Stupidly, he figured Madame Blake's consent gave him license to have sex with Sarah whether she wanted to or not.

But only Jake's sperm could feed her baby's hunger.

The long time frame for the morning session had played havoc with her hormones. She'd miscalculated her body's necessity for sex. A pregnant woman with high levels of dragon blood needed regular sex, but only with the man who impregnated her. Bruce didn't qualify.

His hands rushed around her and cupped her breasts.

Sarah twisted to face him. "Bruce, you don't understand. I—"

His head lifted. "What the—"

"Let her go." With his hand buried in Bruce's hair, Jake jerked him back a step.

Bruce released her, pivoted on his heels, and his fist flew through the air. The punch missed. Bruce's momentum carried him in a circle, providing Jake the advantage. He shoved Bruce against the wall. Angry, he started to turn, but Jake planted his hands between Bruce's shoulder blades and pinned him to the wall.

"Let me go." Bruce yelled and struggled to free himself.

Jake caught the man's arm behind his back and jerked upward to keep him still. "Why don't you be quiet?" Jake hissed then nodded to Sarah. "Little lady, why don't you go ahead and leave?" His tone friendly, he acted like a complete stranger. "That teacher of yours told you to take the rest of the day off. You should head out and enjoy some time away

from work.”

“Yes, well, uh, the morning session has a few more ticks of the time veil to go.” Sarah didn't know what to do. They'd planned to meet by the exit after the morning session. If she left now, she'd be stuck standing around waiting. Someone might notice and report it back to security.

“Not a problem, the doors will open soon. But if you're going outside, you might fetch a coat or a jacket to carry with you.” He indicated the dorm area door that led in the other direction.

“Excellent idea,” Sarah jumped at the excuse to return to her room. After a quick glimpse at Bruce's restrained form, she rushed away. If she hurried, she could gather a few things and still arrive back in time to meet Jake by door.

Chapter Four

The bell sounded. The hall swelled with people. Jake carried a crate full of chemicals with him to the exit. His gaze caught Sarah smiling at the two security guards as she cleared the building. Her coat over her arm, she maintained an unhurried stride on the path leading to the vehicle storage area.

After several people in line passed through, he greeted the guards. “Hey guys, I’m carrying these supplies to the main building. The boss told me to work over there for the rest of the day.”

The dark skinned guard with the bald head nodded and then addressed the next person behind Jake.

Increasing his pace, he passed Sarah on the black lava pathway that led to the parking structure. The light tick of her air-heels followed. He kept a steady pace and scanned the area, taking in the sights of the Syndetic’s campus. Large red rocks and cactus sprinkled the wasteland, adding color to the arid brown landscape. Students scattered in every direction. Some walked toward several black, metal buildings in the distance while others strolled to their flyers stored in the multilayered parking house. The dim light in the western sky displayed the spirit comet moving across the horizon.

After walking up the ramp to the second floor, he found his Zeppelin and stopped next to it. The sensory in his pocket automatically clicked the locks open. He popped the hatch in the belly of the flyer and stored the crate. Sarah slid into the passenger seat.

“Looks like we’ve made it.” Jake started the vehicle and shifted into gear. He followed the traffic out of the compound and waited in line for the runway to the cruising lane. They’d be flying in a matter of moments.

He studied Sarah, her coat spread over her legs with her hands clutched together in her lap. Sharp white teeth bit into her moist red lips. She hadn’t spoken a word since they’d gotten in the Zeppelin.

“There’s no need to worry. We should be out of here in no time.”

“Good, because I’m afraid we have another problem.”

The vehicle in front of him raced into the sky. He glanced at the signal that told him when he could take off. The light turned black. He revved his engines and sped off the runway. After entering the cruising lanes, he fed their route into the data center and hit the button for the autopilot.

“What’s up?” he turned in his seat and observed the rigid set of her shoulders.

She twisted her hands together. “I need you to, uh, make love to me.”

Jake grinned. He’d caught the crisp apple scent of her in the hallway before his little talk with her friend. He understood why Bruce fought to keep her, but he didn’t have a dragon breath’s chance of firing the sea. Sarah belonged to Jake, and no one but he could touch her. “I don’t see that as a problem.”

After hitting the lever to lower the console between them, he covered her hands. The close proximity of her body to his excited his blood, and his cock swelled. He ached for a long bout of sex, too. “Is it for you?”

She raised her head. Her brown eyes, full of doubt, showed her uncertainty of him wanting to make love to her again. “No, but...” She lowered her gaze to the space between them. “This isn’t exactly

the best place to, uh..."

He tilted his head, confused by her doubt. Just because they weren't in bed didn't mean they couldn't enjoy sex. "It'll be fun."

She leaned back against the door beside her, moving as far away from him as possible. "But shouldn't we wait?" Her gaze fell away as if she wanted to say more.

Jake scrambled for an explanation for her strange behavior. This morning after waking in his arms, she'd been hot for his body. Yet now, she seemed distant. What happened to change her mind?

Could she just be nervous about leaving her work behind? Or did she want to break off their affair now before they arrived back at home?

He tightened his grip on the arm of the chair and stared at her. One night wouldn't be enough, a lifetime wouldn't be enough. They might not be able to conceive a child, but he planned on spending a lot of time in her arms. And if William agreed, he'd use some dragon serum to get her pregnant.

"There's plenty of room." He slid his hand behind her neck and turned her head. Her bedroom brown eyes reminded him of the unbridled joy of sinking into warm, willing pussy. "I'd find a way to make love to you no matter where we are." He leaned forward and brushed his lips over hers.

Her plump lips, so soft and moist under his, seduced his senses. He nibbled on the edge, a slow sampling of the sweet treat her mouth provided. Tugging her closer, he dove into the moist recesses of her mouth. He tasted each secret morsel, the hard texture of the top, the watery hollow at the back, the smooth surface of her teeth. He lifted his head, and she sighed.

Jake settled back in his seat and drew her onto his lap. Her coat fell to the floor. The edge of her little, black dress rode up her thighs. "I know you

might be nervous about leaving Syndetic, but I won't let anything happen to you."

"But..." Sarah's head spun with the realization that Jake didn't know she was pregnant. But why? How?

They participated in plenty of sex. Or did the mating connection only happen after a dragon kiss?

His palms caressed the sensitive skin of her inner thigh, and he nudged her legs farther apart. "Once we get back home, I'll convince William to let you live with me, and then we can enjoy each other all the time."

She grabbed his arm to stop his seduction. William wouldn't let her live with Jake unless she explained about the baby. And how could she tell her brother if Jake didn't know? He'd accuse her of trying to trap him.

"Jake, maybe we shouldn't rush this. I mean, we, uh...both have jobs that require our attention."

His fingertips at the center of her heat brushed her wet folds.

She gasped.

"Not a problem, we can both work and still spend our nights enjoying each other." One finger slipped inside her vagina and teased her clit to drive her insane.

"But..." Her hold on his arm loosened. She spread her legs farther apart. His sinuous touch heated her passion. "Jake, I..." A second finger joined the first. "You, uh..."

Unwilling to debate the point, he felt the argument remained the same. He'd heard from different married friends that their wives fought the bonds of commitment at the offset, too. Sarah, like other dragon women, strived for independence.

"I think," she panted, her hips moving in time with the slid of his hand and adding friction. "We..."

"No, Sarah. I can't let you go." He increased the

pace, and intimate muscles convulsed around his fingers.

Her nails bit into his arm. “What if...” Jake pushed her into quitting her job? And what if once they were married, he grew to hate her for trapping him into marriage. William warned her Jake wasn’t the marrying kind.

Her thoughts raced and suddenly she remembered other female interns with this problem, but they’d...Sarah’s strength fled, and she slumped against Jake. What if their baby didn’t—

“It won’t work, Sarah. We both know you belong to me.” Jake shifted her to straddle his lap.

Trying to iron out the problem, she fought the need to make love to him and find a workable solution, but he refused to listen. Instead, like her brother, he took control and didn’t even bother telling her where they were headed.

“How do you know you won’t tire of me?” She laid her hands on his shoulders.

He hit the magnetic release with his fingertip, and the front of his suit sprang open. Light hair sprinkled across his chest and down his stomach and gathered into a tight horde at his crotch.

He shrugged his shoulders, and the green material fell behind him. He freed his arms, took hold of her waist, and lifted her hips so that her wet heat lay poised above his stiff erection.

A moan of passion sang from her throat as she sank onto his cock.

Amazed by the incredible feeling of his rod buried deep inside her, she wondered how long before the secret of the baby growing inside her would be revealed.

He rocked deeper and shoved her dress over her head. “I’m not playing around Sarah. You belong to me, and I plan on making love to you for the rest of our lives.”

His erotic thrust cleared her mind of doubt.

Yes, she wanted his child. And if he asked her to marry him, she would.

Right now, she'd say yes to anything as long as he made her come.

She closed her eyes. A shiver, then goose bumps rushed over her skin. Her nails bit into the muscles of his shoulders. Need bubbled inside her and shattered her compulsion to be cautious.

"Jake," she sighed.

His mouth covered her right breast. She gasped and rushed to say the words speeding through her head. "But I might not be a good wife. Some people say I'm married to my work."

His lips sucked on her breast, drawing a line of desire through the center of her body. The taut string vibrated with the steady pace of his cock and the hard sucking action of his mouth. She didn't know which strokes excited her more. She shuddered. He lifted his head. Something dangerous flashed in the depths of his eyes.

Her breath caught in the back of her throat. She choked out his name. Not a simple demand for sex, he placed a brand on her soul to mark her as his. Sarah couldn't fight her lust and his strong will, too. Her heart and mind opened, letting him claim everything he wanted.

His pace increased, driving heat into heat, building a fire of desperation. The pleasure, when she exploded, sent a thunderstorm of light streaking through her senses. She shattered into pieces. Her body floated in a dark abyss, Jake the only solid thing in her universe.

She melted as he poured himself into her. With her head on his shoulder, sated, satisfied, she had no desire to move.

At peace with the world for the first time in months, she let herself drift to sleep.

Bright sunlight streamed through the windows of the cabin, but a chill still clung to the wood walls from the night's frigid air.

Jake wondered about starting a fire in the old fashion hearth then decided against it. Instead, he carried Sarah into the bedroom and laid her on the bed. He hadn't planned on bringing her to his cabin, but it was closer than traveling all the way to Centerville.

He drank in the sight of Sarah's naked form stretched across his bed. They hadn't traveled more than a few hundred kilos. Yet, she appeared exhausted. He drew the blanket at the end of the mattress up and covered her exquisite body.

Whether from their busy night of sex or the added drain of fear over leaving her job, she'd passed out right after they made love in the Zeppelin. He decided to let her rest before they faced William. Her brother would ask lots of questions about the activity going on at Syndetic. Not to mention Jake's intention of making Sarah his wife. He wanted to make sure they provided the right answers.

He checked his messenger and punched in a quick note to William.

Sarah's safe.

Will bring her home soon.

Jake.

He took off the device and hit the release for his green suit. He hated the way the smell of chemicals still clung to the fabric.

Pulling the shade down over the window by the bed, he unstrapped the weapon under his arm and placed it on the table by the bed. His magnetic cuffs, he pulled out of his side pocket and laid them beside his gun then slipped out of his clothes.

The notion of cuffing Sarah to the bed's railing entered his head. The technique of restraining a

woman with high levels of dragon blood to relieve fatigue tempted him.

But he didn't fool himself into believing that was his only reason. For years he'd allowed her the freedom to walk away, to have a life without him. But now he wanted her forever by his side. Her life so intertwined with his they'd never be separated.

She'd figured it out, but he longed for that physical connection of knowing she couldn't go anywhere without him.

And seeing as his job dictated he kept her safe, he had a valid reason for cuffing her to him. Their escape from the compound might have gone off without a mishap. No one followed them, but a number of devices could be used to track them with little or no problem.

He took her hand and kissed the soft skin of her palm. How could he love her so much?

The cuffs would only unlock with his touch, but even with very little sleep for the last few days, he couldn't do it. Instead he stretched out on the bed and repositioned Sarah across his chest. Her alluring scent stroked his senses. His cock reacted to her nearness, and he considered waking her to satisfy his lust. Then a sigh escaped her lips, and she settled one leg between his.

She needs to rest.

He forced his body to relax.

Chapter Five

“Jake, let go of my hand.” Sarah ran her free hand over his golden hair and marveled at the silky strands. He lay on his stomach, not having budged, except to tighten his grip on her wrist, since she’d slipped off the mattress. “I need to use your facilities.”

He opened one eye. “First you have to promise me you’ll come right back to bed.”

“And if I don’t?” She stepped away from the bed and tugged his arm off the side.

“Then I won’t let you go.” He closed his eye and appeared to go back to sleep.

Sarah glared at his back. “Where else can I go? I don’t even know where we are.”

He released her and dropped his hand. “Come right back.”

She glanced at the cuffs lying on the table by the bed. What did he plan to do with those?

Curious, she picked them up, weighed them in her hands. Best not to tempt him with these. She carried them with her as she walked naked through the bedroom door. The rustic cabin appeared to be from the early dragon period. Wood screamed at her from every surface. An evening chill seeped through the cracks in the floors and over her feet. She shivered.

Once in the main area, she surveyed the space. *Where did Jake put my clothes?*

A door to her right stood open. The metal basin led her into the washroom. The misting chamber filled most of the small area. Sarah wondered again

about their remote location.

The idea of staying here with Jake for an extended period of time ignited her blood. Happiness and fear warred inside her heart. Jake could set her on fire so easily, and to finally enjoy him the way she'd always wanted to sent erotic images through her head. She toyed with the cuffs in her hands. Would he let her chain him to the bed?

Her nipples tightened.

But what if he discovered she was carrying his child? Would he demand they get married? Should she break away now, before he knew? After all, she didn't want to trap him in a marriage he might not want.

Her mind replayed the course they'd traveled from the compound. If they continued in the same direction, they shouldn't be too far from Madisonville. Her brother, Scott lived near there. But how close were they?

If she contacted Scott, he'd free her from Jake. But Syndetic had confiscated her messenger when she started working for them. Only a public building would provide the means to send Scott a message.

After washing her hands, she retrieved the cuffs from the counter and opened the door to the main room. A large fireplace stood on the far wall. Peat logs piled in the hearth ready to burn. A switch next to the mantle probably turned on the fire. She ventured forward, and a beam of sunlight warmed her skin. Next to the front door, a large picture window granted her a view of the world outside.

A wooden porch and some tree enhanced the scenery beyond the window. She worked her way across the room and found her coat lying across the back of a plaid sofa. She slipped it on and dropped the cuffs in her pocket. Her gaze slid to the other sofa against the wall leading back into the bedroom. The dark reptile skin didn't invite anyone to relax on

its surface. She shook her head at Jake's horrible choice of furnishings.

Turning back to the window, Sarah's hopes of leaving the cabin died. No other buildings were in sight, just trees and a worn stone path. She couldn't even see where he parked the Zeppelin. Her heart sank and her womb contracted. She couldn't leave anyway. The baby needed Jake as much as she did.

"What are you doing?"

Sarah peered over her shoulder at Jake. He stood in the bedroom doorway, a quick frown passed over his face.

"Why don't you come back to bed?" His tone held a seductive charm. "You have to be tired after last night."

Her salacious hunger, responding to his voice, demanded she turn. She drank in the tall glorious sight of his strong naked form. The wide expanse of his chest led to his trim waist and drew her gaze to his muscular thighs. She avoided the dangerous temptation of his cock. It marked her as its target like the flick of a dragon's tongue brands its mate.

Her gaze rose to his face. Heat simmered in the air. His wicked smile tempted her with the pleasures to come if she followed him back to bed. "Right, and you're just interested in a few more hours of sleep."

"Well, I could be convinced to snuggle a little." He stepped closer.

She walked along the back of the plaid sofa to avoid getting anywhere near him. If he touched her, she'd submit to his will and her desire for him would grow even stronger. Could she afford to love him more than she did?

He said he wanted them to live together, but every relationship he'd ever been in hadn't lasted more than a few months. Was she a temporary distraction?

She glanced at his strong robust form, and her

traitorous body ached with longing. Liquid eagerness seeped between her legs. “No, I think I’ll stay up a little while longer.”

“You’re playing a dangerous game.” He took another few strides closer. “You want me as much as I want you. Why are you fighting it?”

Sarah shoved her hands into her pockets to keep from reaching out to him. Metal nudged her fingertips. She drew the cuffs out of her pocket. “And are you planning to hold me prisoner?”

He grinned. “Hadn’t planned on it, but I’m open to the idea.”

Prior fantasies played through her head, and the reason for partaking in such games sped through her mind. Would it give her more energy?

“Do I get to tie you up, or do you want to tie me?” Sarah examined the line between the two cuffs. Could she really delve into the sport of bondage? Her heart raced, and she considered the freedom to touch him anywhere she wanted. Excitement tingled along her nerve endings.

“Either.”

She shook her head and rocked on the ball of her feet. Her over-sensitized breasts rubbed against the soft fabric of her coat. The tips of her nipples beaded into tight points of pain. She gripped the back of the couch to keep herself from jumping him.

“Or why not just tie us together?” He held out his hand for the cuffs.

Sarah warily edged her way around the end of the couch. She couldn’t believe he’d agreed to such an alluring game. After all, anyone with any amount of dragon blood hated to be restrained. “So instead of being tied to the bed, you’ll be connected to me?”

“Yes, that way if you get out of bed, I’m forced to follow, and vice versa.” He motioned for her to join him in the middle of the room. “But you should slip off your coat first?”

Thrilled with the plan of finally living out one of her fantasies, she hit the button to release the magnetic fasteners of her coat and placed the cuffs in his hand. He circled her to lift her coat from her shoulders, and she turned to see him lay it on the arm of the couch.

He smiled and captured one of her hands. “Why don’t I slip a cuff on you first?”

The sight of him easing the metal over her wrist increased her heart beat. Her mind rebelled at the notion of being bound, but the raw lust rushing through her blood made the adventure worth the risk. She groaned and lifted her gaze to Jake’s. He had to know how much she loved him now. Otherwise, why would she allow him to ever put restrains on her?

He dropped the other cuff and wrapped his hand around her breast. His thumb played lazily over her aching flesh, teasing the tip until she cried out. “Jake, you have to know how much I need you.”

“Yes, I can smell the crisp spicy flavor of your heat.” His other hand landed on her waist, and he jerked her closer. “Your body is screaming for release.”

Sarah laid her hands on his chest. The cuff on her wrist restricted her movement and reminded her they still had some unfinished business.

“Why don’t you let me put on your wristband, then we can head for bed.” She lifted her wrist to catch the cuff at the other end of the line.

“I have a better idea.” He bent and lifted her into his arms and headed to the bedroom. “Why don’t I carry you to bed first?”

Her arms found their way around his neck. She sprayed wild kisses along his jaw, along the curve of his ear and down his neck. The soft bed squeaked under their combined weight.

He didn’t allow her time to settle before he

seized her mouth. The pressure of his lips opened hers, his kiss hungry and invading. He caught her hands around his neck and raised them above her head. She released her grip on his cuff and shoved it out of the way.

The hard contour of his muscular frame lying over hers sent a flood of white-hot need rushing through her blood. A gush of liquid escaped from her pussy. His thick rod nestled so close, the wet lips of her sex caressed the mushroomed tip.

His lips fed her desire, his tongue dueling with hers. She nuzzled closer, eager for the pounding force of his cock driving her insane.

He lifted his head and his hands slid along her arms. She shuddered. His eyes met hers. The dark green pools told her how much he wanted her. He cupped the sides of her face, and a wicked grin marked his lips. "Now, it's time to enjoy the dragon kiss I've been denying myself."

He edged lower, his tongue creating a wet trail over her belly. When his mouth hovered above her sex, Sarah tried to grab for his head. Her hands stopped short, barely brushing the top of her own head. Her gaze flashed to her wrists. The cuffs secured both to the headboard.

She shivered with a cocktail of conflicting emotions. Fear spiked her blood. Anger ignited. "Jake, you said you wanted to be tied to me."

He lifted a wayward brow. "I still do, but I thought we'd try it this way first."

"Jake," she wiggled beneath him, riled, yet excited by the idea of him holding her captive. Her heart beat faster, and her palms grew moist. This was part of her fantasy, his unrestricted freedom over her body. But after giving her a dragon kiss, he'd know about the baby. "I'm not sure I like this."

"That's not true." His inflamed green gaze caressed the swell of her breasts as if memorizing

the sight. “The scent of your desire is telling me how hungry you are for me.” His hands kneaded her breasts.

She tugged on the cuffs, amazed by the carnivorous hunger speeding through her veins. How could just being tied to the bed excite her so? She grappled with the reality of one of her favorite fantasies coming true. “Maybe, you should let me go.”

He shook his head and caught her left nipple with his thumb and forefinger. He rolled it between his fingers. The nipple tightened into a round pebble, aching with need. She surveyed his face, hoping, silently begging for him to release the cuffs. His lips parted, a long wet tongue licked the tip of her breast. An intense wave of heat rushed through her and gathered in her core. “Jake, please. You can’t...”

“Oh, but you are sweet.” Jake lowered his head, took her right breast and sucked the milky white flesh deep into his mouth. The spicy sweet flavor of her lust teased his tongue, and a hot bolt of fire shot through his blood. His balls filled. His cock turned rock hard. Too much, too much to hold out for long.

Sarah thrashed beneath him, begging him to ease the desires burning through her blood. He climbed up her body and wedged his thick staff between her thighs, nudging the wet folds of her sex. She screamed.

Instinct drove his cock deep into the hot wet haven of her pussy. She rocked her hips encouraging him to start a steady rhythm.

He paused and licked his lips. As much as he wanted to pound his way to release, the rich candy from her breasts inspired an appetite for a spicy counter balance. The taste of her first orgasm would be sweet. Slowly, he drew his cock from her tight pussy.

"No, Jake," she moaned and arched her back as he freed his rod from her wet heat and slid lower.

Her desperation matched his, but first he longed to make her come with his tongue. After a few strokes, her intimate muscles would pulse against his mouth. The thought vibrated through his aching cock, and his heart beat a rapid tattoo in his chest.

He glided his lips over her silky skin, moist with an insatiable hunger. Energy pulsed through his blood as he charted a wet trail to the pink petals of her sex. Her rich fragrance enticed his appetite for more. He took a deep breath and drank in her arousing scent. Shifting closer, he wedged his head lower and sent a warm breath onto the delicate lips.

She arched her back, after the first swipe of his tongue. Her thighs closed over his ears, which rang with the blood pumping through his veins.

"Jake," she panted, "I'm so close. I can't take..."

Sweat dripped from his brow, but the need to taste her ran too deep to stop. Another swipe, and she trembled. He slipped his hands under her bottom and lifted her hips. His mouth covered her pussy.

A lick, a kiss, a slow parting of her swollen flesh, he slid his tongue into her vagina. In and out, deeper and deeper, he ventured along the moist hot cavity, tasting her tangy juices.

The sweet rich dragon candy from her breast mixed with spice of her sex and elongated his tongue. Back and forth along her tight channel, he searched for the opening of her uterus. The tip of his tongue brushed a wall.

She whimpered and flexed her hips. He gripped her ass cheeks. Muscles jerked, and she tried to buck out of his hands. Firmly, he held her in place, not letting her change his course. His tongue found a small pulsating opening.

"Jake!" she screamed.

A hot stream of moisture flooded his mouth. A lightning bolt sped through him, and fire gathered in his balls. Every nerve ending on his body tingled to life.

Unable to hold back his desire any longer, Jake rose to his knees, grabbed his thick cock and settled over her. The pulsating obsession forced him forward. His aim true, he plunged into the clamping walls of her pussy.

Her orgasm drove him along the tight channel to the opening of her womb. A small kiss brushed the end of his rod.

He shoved a little deeper, felt the tight lips circle the head of his penis. An inferno of lust raged over his skin. Fighting hard to keep from plunging deeper, he traced his hands along her arms to her hands, giving her body a chance to adjust to the invasion of her womb. Her fingers worked their way through his. She wrapped her legs around his waist, rocked her hips, and arched her back.

“Jake,” her heavy breathing made her words raspy. “You’ve got to move.”

The grip around his cock tightened, and then loosened. A rhythm started that milked his erection. His baby needed the life fluids to survive.

Baby...what the...

A pulsating beat vibrated down his engorged shaft. His mind numbed with only the steady beat of his heart hammering in his head. He struggled to remain still, but the erotic dance playing against his staff tugged him deeper. He withdrew slightly, and then plunged forward. Instinct took over and he started a breakneck pace.

Sarah groaned, then thrust her hips to match him stroke for stroke. His cock bumped back and forth over those seductive lips of her open womb. Jake’s control shattered. He stifled the scream rising into his throat, drove one last thrust forward, and

poured himself into her.

She shifted beneath him, caught in the same storm. Her inner muscles convulsed around him and plowed him up the next steep hill. Strung out to the end of his limits, he rode the peaking crest of her eagerness for more. The next wave caught him in a swift vortex.

His cock swelled.

Her hips pumped.

He kept pace.

Higher and higher, they climbed.

A scream rang from her or him, which one he couldn't be sure. He sank into a passionate abyss and collapsed to his elbows. Sated and exhausted. Her long silky legs fell from his waist, and the realization that Sarah was pregnant hit him full on.

Fighting to catch his breath, Jake wondered what was different this time. For years, he'd been told he would never be able to impregnate a woman without special help. With all the unprotected sex he'd had, he didn't doubt the truth of the statement.

Yet now, without a doubt, he knew Sarah carried his child.

How?

He gathered enough strength to lift his head off her shoulder and tease his lips across the lobe of her ear. "Are you going to live?"

"Yes, but can you release me now?" Sarah lifted her hands to show him the cuffs still on her wrists.

"First I want to know why you didn't tell me you were pregnant."

Chapter Six

Sarah closed her eyes to hide from the accusation in his gaze. “I guess after the dragon kiss you know I’m pregnant?”

“Yes, but why didn’t you tell me?” Jake worked his hands along the line connecting the cuffs.

As soon as Sarah felt the wire release its hold, she shoved against Jake’s shoulders. He rolled onto his back, and she rested for a moment beside him, breathing in the relief of freedom.

“I thought you’d know. But then when you didn’t say anything, I realized I hadn’t warned you about my being in a very fertile period last night.” Tears gathered in her eyes. How could she explain she hadn’t planned to trap him? She rubbed her hand over her face, wiping at the tears on her cheeks. “With the aroma therapy the company continuously pumps into the ventilation system, we are lucky to have slept at all.”

After a brief moment, he muttered, “I’ve always wanted children, but being cursed with gold dragon blood, I thought it was impossible.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t warn you last night, but I didn’t think about it at the time. I thought I was dreaming at first.” She stared at the ceiling. Would having his baby be enough to make him love her, or was she deceiving herself?

“Doesn’t matter. Even if I’d known you could get pregnant, I wouldn’t have stopped.” He turned on his side, and his large hand slid over her stomach, gently caressing her. “It just means we’ll sign the marriage agreement now instead of later.”

Her mind rebelled at the idea of forcing him into marriage. "But the only scientific reason for a woman to marry a man when she's pregnant is for the regular doses of semen the baby requires to be healthy. I won't force you into marrying me."

Jake's hand rest against her thigh. "It doesn't matter. Whether you're pregnant or not, I still planned on marrying you."

"What?" Sarah rolled to face him and rose onto her elbow. Her hand landed in the middle of his chest, and she stared into his face, searching his expression for the truth. "William told me you'd never wanted a wife."

He lifted an eyebrow and soothed a wayward hand over her shoulder. "And when, may I ask, were you discussing me with your brother?"

"I just asked him if he thought you'd ever get serious about anyone." Unwilling to admit the true depths of her feelings for him, Sarah shrugged. "At the time I thought about tempting you into making love to me."

"Well, you succeeded. Now, you'll also be my wife." His smug statement and broad grin irked Sarah.

"And what if..." She sat up, apprehension racing through her. She stared at his chest, trying her best to address her concerns logically. "I know you won't relent on this point. But, well, what if our careers don't mix?"

He shook his head. "I don't see how that's a problem. As of today, you're unemployed. And for a while now, William has been after me to change my role at the DC center to be more of an administrator. I can do any job I want."

"But I'm also going back to work." Sarah studied his face to see if he opposed the idea. "Just not for Syndetic International."

"Fine, but the next few months will be tough."

His fingers played along her spine. "A baby will drain your energy." A silly grin formed on his face. "But tying you to bed probably helped."

"Is that why you cuffed me to the bed instead of to you?" She marvel at how being tied to the bed was hotter than she'd imagined in her fantasies.

"No, at the time I didn't know you were pregnant. I just thought it might help you recover some of your energy. Both William and Scott used the technique to help Amanda and Dee."

She shook her head amazed at this piece of information about her brothers and their spouses. "Are you telling me they both restrained...?"

"Yes, and I must say I like how excited you got." Jake applied pressure to her back and drew her closer. "We might want to try it again."

"Only if you'll let me tie you to bed next time?" Other erotic dreams flashed through her head.

"Maybe. If you behave and don't try to run away."

Jake's words shocked her. Could he be serious? Would he really let her restrain him? But he had suggested cuffing their hands together. "You're teasing me."

"No, the need for space is a side effect of the technique. You're probably already making plans to leave me, but I can't let you go. We don't know who might have followed us from the compound. And I promised William I'd return you safely back home." He took her wrist and toyed with the cuff. "So if you promise not to run, I'll let you tie me up."

"Really?"

"But..."

"I knew there was a catch."

"Not until after we're at home. I can't be restrained right now. I need to be able to protect you."

Sarah didn't feel like she had a choice. "So I'm

the only one who can be tied to the bed?”

He grinned. “Well, the technique seems to have restored some of your energy and we could still try connecting our wrists.”

A few bongs later, Jake exited the misting chamber. Sarah's reason for not telling him about the baby bothered him. Did she not trust him to take care of her, or did she care more about her freedom than his child?

Dragon women were known to resist the bonds of matrimony. Or was there another reason?

He wondered for a brief moment about her dream lover—what he looked like, who he might be, where he lived—and walked back into the bedroom. They'd delayed long enough. Time to take Sarah home.

“So why don't you tell me where we are?” Sarah sat on the side of the bed. Her long smooth legs stretched out seductively in front of her forced the question of whether or not he should dress.

“This place can't be yours.” She turned and stared out the window as if the trees in the distance held her attention. “It's in the middle of nowhere.”

The sight of the untamed wilderness and the rustic atmosphere of the cabin probably didn't set her mind at ease. She'd lived her whole life in an ultra modern city. The early dragon era design complemented the primitive setting. Not many forests remained on their planet.

“I thought,” her gaze raked his body, and a pink tongue moistened her lips, “you had a place in Centerville near the main Dragon Center.”

“I do. I share part of the house where Scott used to have his studio.” Jake forced his focus away from her and turned. His cock swelled. She tempted him without trying. He hit the button to open the storage area and dug out a dark blue suit.

The point of the assignment is to return Sarah to her family.

“I bought this place while on assignment in the area. I decided to keep the cabin after the job ended to have a place to relax on holidays or while on leave.” Jake hit the magnetic release on the suit so he could step into the leg holes.

“What kind of job were you doing in the middle of nowhere?” Already in her skin-tight dress, she crossed her ankles. The black clingy material rode high on her thighs, outlining her hips, the curve of her waist, and the full, luscious weight of breasts. No underclothing covered her pussy. She sat on the bed like a wet dream, waiting for him to strip off her clothes and slide between her legs.

His mouth watered with longing to taste her moist heat. The sweet flavor of her wet juices excited his senses.

“A few dragon-blooded artists turned up dead. The man, we suspected of murdering them, has a warehouse a short ways from here.” Jake stepped into his suit. He didn’t want to tell her about the old investigation.

“Is that the same case Scott and Dee worked on together?”

“Yes, one of the victims was a friend of Scott’s.”

“That’s right.” Sarah stared out the window. “The man committed suicide, which was strange considering his level of dragon blood.” She turned her gaze to scan the length of his form. “Did you ever find out why?”

Using a bored tone, he tried not to raise her interest in the case. “We believe the artists were being paid to test a new drug. It caused extreme depression in some of the subjects. But we couldn’t prove anything.”

He retrieved his messenger, checked the screen, and pushed a button to read the stored message.

*Stay away.
Trouble here.
William.*

A little surprised, Jake tapped in a return note and hit the send button. He wondered about their escape from the compound. *Easy, maybe too easy.* This proved the company knew Sarah was gone, and they weren't please about her leaving.

"So are you ready to go?" Sarah stood and snuggled next to him. Her right breast brushed against his arm.

"We've been instructed to delay for a day or two." He switched the screen back to William's note and let her read it. His gaze ran over the swell of her breasts. "I think we'll just stay put."

"But why? What kind of trouble is he having?" Sarah's forehead wrinkled in confusion.

"Not him, you." Jake placed his messenger on the table. She didn't understand the unethical practices of the company she'd been working for. Syndetic produced the drug the artists were testing. Unwilling to worry her, he withheld the fact.

She shook her head, and her short dark hair danced around her face. "Me? I haven't done anything."

"Yes, but Syndetic International won't like the fact you skipped out on them. The Dragon Center has a large volume of data on them." Jake studied her closely. "Syndetic doesn't let any of their top interns go, or should I say leave."

Sarah placed her hand on his bicep. The heat of her touch sent desire racing through his blood. "But I only signed on for their work and study program. I recorded the required time I needed to. Now, I'm free to work wherever I want. They don't own me."

"Yes, but they think they do." He laid his hands on her waist and drew her closer. "From what the Center has learned, if an intern doesn't agree to

continue working for them, the person either disappears or reconsiders their decision.”

“What are you saying?”

At Sarah’s shocked look, Jake wrapped his arms around her waist. “Don’t worry. I won’t let anything happen to you.”

“But I’ve known people who’ve left.” She placed her hands on his chest, but her eyes didn’t meet his. Doubt and confusion swam in the depths of hers.

Jake glided his hands over her hips and tugged her deeper into his embrace. His hard erection rode against her pubic bone. Tired of talking about Syndetic, he imagined plenty of other things for them to do. “You know, since we’re not leaving, why don’t I build a fire in the hearth? I like the idea of making love to you in front of it.”

She stared up at him. For a moment, her dazed eyes appeared out of focus then she glided her hands over his chest and around his neck. “A great plan for diverting my attention from the problem with Syndetic. But do you really see them trying to harm me?”

“Not if I have anything to say about it.”

Her eyes narrowed, and he wondered about her thoughts, but she smiled before he could say anything else. Her hips rocked against the bulge in his pants. “The fire sounds like a lot of work. The bed is much closer.” Her hands dug through his hair, and she drew his lips to hers.

He moaned at the miracle of having an intelligent woman in his arms. She devised the most efficient plans for satisfying his needs.

Chapter Seven

After two days of being stuck in the cabin, Sarah wanted to at least escape for a walk through the woods. Her favorite fantasy took place in a forest, but Jake wouldn't let her step outside the cabin. She'd tried cooking, but the tedious task didn't absorb her interest like working in the lab. At her job, she'd worked for days without going outside, but here she felt confined.

Jake, bored too, set an easel by the front window and painted several times a day. His skill as an artist amazed her, and she stared at the tranquil landscape he'd created. Twinkling highlights danced over the leaves as if the wind were blowing through the trees.

"Sarah, we have a problem."

"No joke," Sarah whispered to herself and strolled into the bedroom. She needed to get out of this cabin.

Jake stood by the bed, dressing after his misting. She hated to see him cover his broad chest with the fabric of his dark blue suit. He looked best naked.

"What's going on?" She swallowed her desire and stepped closer.

"William sent a message for me to drive into the Dragon Center in Madisonville."

"Great, I'm ready to leave." Sarah tugged at the bottom of the old-fashion button shirt Jake had found.

"No, not you. Just me." He hit the device to reconnect the magnetic strip on his suit.

“But you can’t leave me. You’re supposed to be guarding me.” Sarah didn’t believe she was in danger, but Jake had been using the excuse for the past two days to keep her inside. Now, she figured she should gain the same advantage from the argument to win her freedom.

“I know. That’s why I’m planning on placing an active tracer on you.”

“But I already have one, how many do I need?” Sarah rubbed her hand over the device in her forearm, a small bump that most people didn’t even notice.

“The one they placed on you at birth is a general area device. It can’t pin point your exact location without spending a lot of time and effort.” He tapped a button on his messenger. A hidden compartment opened. He turned the device upside down to dump something in his hand. “This one will tell me where you are at all times down to the spot in the room where you’re standing. An alarm will also go off if your heart rate increases so I’ll know if you’re in any type of danger.”

She leaned closer to see the small dot in his left hand. The size wasn’t much bigger than the micro dot she’d placed on his chest. “And what if I refuse to wear it?”

“You won’t.” He attached his messenger to his wrist and squatted in front of her.

“And why not?” She took a few steps backwards.

“Because we have a deal. If you behave, then I’ll let you tie me up.” His right hand caught her left ankle. Warm fingers skimmed the outline of her dragon art.

Suspicious of what he wanted, Sarah skidded into reverse. The edge of the bed hit the back of her knees. “What if the price is too high?”

He lifted her foot, causing her to teeter on one leg. She grabbed for his shoulders, but he

maneuvered her in such a way she fell onto the bed.

She glared at him and struggled to break free. If he wasn't going to take her with him why should she cooperate with anything he wanted?

He tightened his grip on her ankle and placed the tracer in the middle of her dragon art design.

"Don't Jake. I'll just pull it off." She laid her right foot on his thigh and tried to shove him away.

He grabbed her other ankle and stepped between her legs. Shoving her legs into the air, he leaned over her chest. The fierce anger in his eyes alarmed her, and she raised her hands in defense.

"You're won't remove it because you know I'm trying to protect you." The legs of his suit brushed against her inner thighs. "The messaging system is not secure so I need to go to the nearest DC location to talk to William. We don't want Syndetic to know where you are, so you have to stay here and behave." His eyes narrow into small slits. "You'll leave the tracer alone."

"And if I don't? What will you do, shoot me?" she yelled, angry at his high handed manner. He'd been bossing her around for days. She grabbed hold of his suit, ready to fight.

His grip tightened on her ankles. "Don't push me, Sarah. I'm only doing my job."

"Right. And your job is to protect me, which means you can't leave me."

"I'm following William's orders." He growled. "I don't want to leave you behind."

The rich scent of his temper, more potent than the arousing smell of his sex, hit her senses. The muscles of her womb contracted, and blood roared in her ears. She twisted her hands into the fabric of his suit. "Jake, please don't leave me here alone."

His nostrils flared, and he blinked. The hot green fury in his eyes morphed into a burning emerald flame. The pulse of Sarah's heart increased.

A beep sounded from Jake's pocket.

He grinned. The wicked smirk told her naughty thoughts filled his mind.

"Maybe we should talk about this later." His gaze raked her breasts where her shirt gaped open. Her nipples peaked at his hot stare. His vision fell lower.

His lips parted, and a wet tongue traced the outline of his lips. She read his thoughts, identifying with his agonizing obsession. Her hips tipped forward, anxiously anticipating the touch of his mouth on the lips of her sex.

Her hands released their hold on his suit. He turned his head and created a wet trail of kisses down her right leg. The raw lust in his eyes, along with his tongue licking lightly over her thigh, drew a moan for Sarah.

She longed for his pounding cock to thrust deep inside her and plunge her into a blissful orgasm before he left. "Jake, you don't have time to play around. I want you inside me now."

Jake tasted the silky moisture of her skin and guided his mouth lower. His hands cupped her knees and drove her legs farther apart, which provided him easier access to her wet center. His cock swelled, and his gaze skimmed the dark curls of her mound. The sweet apple scent of her sex filled his lungs. A flick of his tongue raced along the seam of her heat. Spicy flavor tempted his taste buds and sparked a fire in his loins he fought to control. He wondered briefly how he'd ever found any pleasure before he made love to Sarah.

Jake took a quick peek at her face and kneeled beside the bed. Her eyes wide, she bit her lip in anticipation of his next move. Unwilling to disappoint her, he swirled his tongue over her swollen flesh until he discovered her most sensitive spot. His tongue fluttered against her clit,

encouraging the sweet bud to blossom. He closed his teeth over her, almost taking a bite, and then suckled her tender skin.

The long moan whispering through her lips excited him, and he increased the rhythm of his strokes. She wove her hands through his hair, dragging him closer, begging him for more.

"No, Jake, you have to..." She sighed, and his tongue slid into her vagina. He busied himself with pleasing her, tasting her, enjoying the sweet fragrance of her pussy.

She wriggled restlessly beneath him, trying to catch the bold strokes of his tongue. Her legs shifted over his shoulders. The heels of her feet rode against his broad back. Her hips arched.

Without the help of dragon candy to lengthen his tongue, he couldn't delve as deep. To add to her pleasure, he nudged a finger into her wet heat. Her greedy muscles clamped down, causing his cock to demand its own release. But he ignored the call.

"Oh, please stop." Her breathing labored, her words didn't rise above a whisper.

Her hands gripped his hair so tight his scalp tingled. He slipped another finger into her, massaging the hot passage with long, steady strokes. She bucked and squirmed, rocking her hips to increase his pace.

Thrilled with her response, he drove her higher and higher up the steep slope to ecstasy. Her scream marked the summit view. A hot gush of liquid rushed into his hand. He lapped at her wet heat, savoring the pulsating rhythm of her quivering flesh against his lips.

When he lifted his head, her dark half-opened eyes burned a hole through his heart. Black and hungry, her lust for him hadn't diminished with her first venture over the edge.

Jake stood, hit the release for his suit and

withdrew his cock. Without a word, he positioned himself against her wet entrance and pushed home. He gripped her knees and bent her legs back along her torso. The added tilt of her hips sent his erection deeper, slamming hard against her womb.

A shrill animal howl of pleasure broke from her lips. She swayed her head back and forth against the bed. Her eyes scrunched closed. Her face glistened with sheer bliss.

The pressure building in his loins forced his hips into a pounding rhythm. Her pussy held him in a hot snug vice and milked his cock for more.

Desperately, Sarah gripped his wrists. His stance over her spread her wide, and his cock thrust deeper. Her knees bent against her chest, she savored the long length of his penis. His balls rocked against the curve of her buttocks.

Raw pleasure sped through her blood. Her muscles convulsed. She bit her lips to hold back the scream gurgling at the back of her throat.

Her mind took a wild trip through the galaxy like the spirit comet. Skylar lights exploded, and foreign planets spun into the abyss. Her world wobbled on its axel, thrown off completely when Jake drove home one final thrust.

She fell.

Her eyes refused to open. The world outside of Jake's arms didn't offer any appeal. The wooden walls, the tin roof, the mundane items would tell her she'd left the peaceful haven where only he could take her.

His cock slipped from her wet pussy. He shifted her legs together and rolled her into the center of the bed. A soft kiss brushed her cheek.

She couldn't help but smile.

"Be good while I'm gone," he whispered in her ear. "And don't step outside. I'll bring you a present when I return." He slipped away.

Chapter Eight

Jake examined the bare essentials of the office—a scarred desk with a communication box sitting on top, two dull metal S-chairs, one on each side of the copper desk, and gray tin walls bare of any art. The tarnished room fit his no-nonsense mood.

He hoped to return to Sarah quickly, but each tick of the time veil dragged by.

Twirling a long metal scribbler through his fingers, he tried to understand the problem. “William, how can Syndetic claim she stole information? She didn’t take anything with her but her coat when we left.”

The door to the office slid open. Scott VanHorn, Sarah’s other brother stepped in and hit the button to close the door.

Jake nodded a greeting and set the scribbler to work on a sheet of tin. The tool dug thin lines into the metal. His mind full of Sarah, he worked on a quick sketch of her face.

William’s voice rang through the receiver. “They might not have grounds for their accusation, but they can still demand she be arrested. That is, if they find out where she is.”

“Hey, William, sorry I’m late.” Scott took the chair across the desk from Jake.

“No problem, we’re working on a strategy to help Sarah stay out of jail.”

“Why don’t we shelter her under the custody of the Dragon Center? We’ve used similar plans before for other people.” Scott rested his ankle on his knee and leaned back in his chair.

Jake could tell Scott wasn't any more excited by their meeting than he was. "I asked him the same thing."

"And I told Jake," William paused, and a rustling noise whispered through the speaker. "With the new elections only a few months away, Cornerman will be looking for any activity at the Dragon Center to ride into office. You know how he likes to blame all the problems of our society on people with dragon blood. And his favorite target is the Center. It'd be best to avoid the bad press."

"Tough, I want my baby home." The voice of Martha VanHorn broke through the communication box on the desk. Her tone indicated she wouldn't tolerate any objection to the plan. "I don't care what it takes, bring her home safely."

A wide smile blossomed on Scott's face.

"Hi, Mom, Jake Ramsey is here with me. He won't let anything happens to Sarah," Scott assured his mother.

Throwing down the scribbler, Jake checked his messenger. The steady beat of her heart called to him. The growing ache in his groin demanded he hold her in his arms and pound out some of his frustration. "Believe me, I'm watching her every move. She has on an active tracer."

"Jake, dear, I know you're an excellent agent and a wonderful friend. But from what William *hasn't* been telling me, I know she's in danger. She needs to be under the Dragon Center's safety net."

Scott made a fist and punched the air in victory. "William, can't you find another way to deal with Cornerman?"

"I guess I'll have to," William's voice came back through the box full of resignation to his mother's will. "Jake, you'd better go collect Sarah. I'll leave in a few moments and meet you at the Madisonville center. We'll fill out the paper work there. After a

few days, we'll then transfer her to the main office."

"I'll leave right away." Jake shifted the growing bulge in his pants and stood. He needed to inform them of Sarah's and his news before he left. "She didn't like being left behind. Her energy level is low, and she, uh, gets kind of cranky when she..." He remembered Sarah's mother on the other end of the line. "We need to file for a marriage license with the government."

Scott jumped to his feet and darted around the desk to slap Jake on the back. "Wow, what great news."

"Are you saying she's pregnant with your child?" William's tone held a note of doubt. "I thought..."

"Yes." Jake pushed to his feet.

"That's wonderful, Jake." Martha sobbed. "Now retrieve my baby and bring her home."

"I'm heading out now, Mrs. VanHorn. We should be back in a few bongs." Jake smiled and checked his messenger to reassure himself she was still all right.

The throbbing in his cock demanded he hurry. If her body burned the way his did, they'd require some time to work the edge off before heading back to town.

Sarah paced the floor and watched the shadows from the trees dance across the bedroom's floor. It felt like an eternity since Jake left. He'd promised to return as quickly as he could.

He didn't understand the definition of the word quick. Otherwise, he'd be back by now.

She settled on the bed for a moment. The idea of trying to nap tickled her thoughts. But with her body strung out on need and her mind full of Jake, she couldn't relax.

Her gaze raced to the awful green color of the rubber jumper she'd found while rummaging through his clothes for something else to wear. The

tight fit caused her to wonder if he ever wore the suit. The legs hit the top of her knees, and the sleeves ended at her elbows.

He said he'd bring her a surprise. Well, she had one for him, too. Wait, until he saw her in this outfit. The jumper must have been used in some type of training exercise.

A loud squeak sounded from the front porch. She jumped off the bed, glad he'd finally returned. In a rush, she hurried to the bedroom door and caught movement outside the front window. She paused.

Why had he changed clothes? His size and shape appeared wrong, too. The dark reflection didn't resemble Jake.

Uneasy, Sarah shrank far enough back into the bedroom to observe the actions of the stranger. The dark figure stopped in front of the window. Blood pumping through her veins drowned out all sound. The intruder touched the window. With only the moonstone glowing in the cabin, he wouldn't be able to see her.

His calculated steps sent warning bells off in her mind. Jake warned her she might be in danger, but she didn't believe it. Could he be right?

A small pop rang through the cabin, and Sarah jumped. What was he doing? He shoved something through a hole in the window, a strange tool that helped him undo the security latch. Fear pumped through her system.

Easing further back, she mashed the device to close the bedroom door and hoped the man couldn't hear the low buzzing sound. She searched for some type of locking device but none existed.

The acid bite of panic sapped her mouth of fluid. She tried to swallow but couldn't gather any moisture.

Now what?

The window beside the bed offered the only

means of escape, under the bed a place to hide. But what if he found her? Then she'd be stuck. And if he didn't find her, would he think she left with Jake? Or was the man after her at all? The thief might only be looking for a few things to steal from an abandoned cabin.

It didn't matter. She had to get away. Her feet rushed to the window. She wanted out of the cabin anyway.

With the shades up, she hit the security release and pushed the button for the window to slid open. The pounding of her heart rang in her head. She crawled onto the table by the bed and rushed through the opening.

A light wind hit her face. The sweet smell of freedom heightened her senses. She used the frame for balance and hopped to the ground.

A low squeak echoed from the front room.

Sarah started to turn away, then remembered the window. Better to cover her tracks so the thief didn't know she'd gotten away.

Sticking her hand through the opening, she hit the button and jerked her hand out of the way of the closing panel. With a quick step, she dashed to the side of window and pressed her back to the rough wood of the house.

The light in the bedroom clicked on. Shadows shifted through the window, telling her he'd entered the bedroom. Slowly, she worked her way along the wall. At the corner of the cabin she studied the area for the best way to head. The dark forest waited as a place to hide, while the bright sunlight glowed with the smile of the afternoon heat in the opposite direction.

"Hey," rang a voice from behind her.

Glancing back, Sarah saw a man's dark head sticking out the window. His frown and stern expression sparked a queasy sensation in the pit of

her stomach. She raced for the safety of the trees.

“Come back, I just want to talk to you.” His rough voice heightened her fears, and she picked up speed.

A beep rang through the interior of his Zeppelin.

Jake jerked his thoughts away from Sarah to check his messenger. Her heart beat sped at a rapid pace. The reading indicated she stood near the cabin. Yet, some instinct told him she'd gone outside.

His anger flared. She'd promised him she'd stay put.

He reviewed the reading on the dashboard to see the distance to the cabin.

Another beep sounded, and he blinked at the swift change in the numbers. Speeding upwards, her heart rate indicated she had to be running.

But why?

Fear soaked him in a cold sweat. He hit the autopilot release, revved the engine, and raced for the cabin at maximum speed.

A spongy carpet of discarded leaves covered the ground. Yet, twigs and sticks crackled under her hurried feet. Not far from the cabin, a loud pop sounded through the trees. She ducked under a limb. A small piece of bark flew at her from the tree trunk, bounced off her rubber suit, and fell to the ground.

She stared at it. He'd shot at her.

The man fired again.

Another bullet whizzed by, and she darted to the right. Her rubber suit protected her from the flying debris. The ugly color would also make it harder for him to see her. She hoped.

Dashing around a tall birch tree, she worked to catch her breath and forced her feet forward. After a few strides, she cut to the left. If she could be less of a target, then he wouldn't be able to track her. Her

black dragon blood increased her speed and agility to outrun most people.

Taking a zigzag path, she distanced herself from the sounds of her assailant. Her gaze sped from one tree to the next. Large, small, thin, fat, they all looked alike.

Right, then left, she slowed her pace. For a quick moment, she stopped to rest against a large tree trunk. Beads of sweat ran down her face. She shoved back her hair and peered over her shoulder.

She couldn't see him. *Good.* Her lungs burned for oxygen. She gulped in air.

The heavy beat of her heart drowned out the sound of his footsteps. She struggled to calm her racing pulse and glanced at the tree tops. Briefly, she wondered if the sprawling limbs might provide her a place to hide, but bare of leaves, they offered no coverage.

A noise sounded to her left. She jumped up and hugged the nearest tree, the rough bark scrapping against her palms.

"Sarah, where are you?" the sound of Jake's voice surprised her.

She turned to see him step out from a grove of pines. His loving green eyes caught hers. She smiled.

An instant later, a pop echoed through the trees, and he stumbled backward a few steps then fell to his knees. His eyes widened, and shock registered on his face.

Stunned, Sarah stepped forward. Her mind marked each tick as a red dot on his chest blossomed into a flow of blood. He covered the stain with his hand and sank to the ground, lying awkwardly against a tree. "Jake!"

He stared at her, his concern for her apparent. His heat gaze warned her of danger.

Her bare feet scrabbled in his direction. Dirty and tired, bruised from stones and forest trash, they

sped to him without conscious thought. She didn't care anymore if she might be a target.

She kneeled next to his thigh. Pain marked his face. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words whispered passed his lips. His eyes fluttered closed.

"Jake." She leaned closer and touched the hand streaming with blood. Tears clouded her eyes. Worried by the quantity of blood he'd lost, she feared he might already be dead.

Footsteps rustled the leaves on the ground. "Move away from him," a rough voice demanded.

"Sarah." Jake opened his eyes and relief flooded through her. He shifted, and cold metal bit into her ribs. Her gaze lowered to the gun in his hand.

"Move," the man behind her ordered. "Or I'll shoot you, too." He kicked the bottom of her heel, a zing of pain raced up her leg.

Her right hand gripped Jake's gun. For once in her life she thanked her brother for forcing her to learn something. They'd taught her how to fire a gun.

"But we need to call the medics for Jake," she cried in a meek voice, trying to distract the man.

"Right, like I care if he lives."

"Oh, but—" Sarah rolled away from Jake. Her fingers fast on the trigger, she sent a spray of bullets through the air toward the assassin. Again she experienced the shock of seeing a man thrown backward by the force of a gunshot, but this time her thirst for blood marveled at the deadly impact.

"Now, *you* might want to rethink the idea of a medic," she yelled at the dying man. Adrenaline pumped through her as she rose to her feet. If he'd only move or fight, she'd love to blast a few more holes into him.

She kept her eyes on him as she collected his gun. Blood spilled onto the floor of the forest, filling the air with the stench of a fresh kill.

Black Dragon's Heart

“Sarah,” Jake’s feeble whisper jerked her back to his side.

She cupped his face in her hands. “How can I help you?”

“Call the medics.” His soft order catapulted her into action.

Chapter Nine

“Sarah.” Scott rushed across the large waiting area of the Dragon Center hospital. William followed a few steps behind him.

Sarah wrenched herself out of the blue funk she’d fallen into since she’d arrival at the center.

“Where did you find such an awful green jumper?” With Scott’s words, she stood and posed for her brothers to help curb some of the tension she felt. “Well, my dear brother, I’m wearing the latest attire for running through the forest. The vomit green color is the rage of ages.”

“No, it’s not,” William shook his head. “That’s a standard issue swim suit for Dragon Center agents. Why would you be wearing it?”

A sheepish grin touched her lips, but she couldn’t admit she’d been reduced to stealing the jumper from Jake. “I chose this outfit because I thought it set off my eyes.” She batted her eyelashes at him, a playful gesture, but a few tears fell onto her cheeks.

“And you didn’t have any other clothes, did you?” Scott’s arms circled her in a big hug.

“Well, yes, my wardrobe was limited.” She slipped her arms around her brother. The haggard flight with the meds to the Dragon Center, Jake’s torn flesh, the large mass of blood covering his suit—the day’s events suddenly registered and her knees wobbled. She tightened her arms around Scott to keep from falling. Her whole body ached with worry for Jake.

What if he didn’t survive?

Moisture clouded her vision, and she buried her face against Scott's chest. The familiar smell of home and family drew her further into his arms. Her brothers, strong and supportive, would help her through this.

Scott soothed his hands over her back. "Now, now, don't worry. The Dragon Center has the best doctors available attending to Jake. He'll be fine."

"Hey." William laid his hand on her shoulder. She turned and read his concern. "I talked to the meds. The splatter bullet missed Jake's heart. The doctors decided to operate to remove all of the shards, so they don't cause any more damage."

"But he could die William. You didn't see all the blood. It was horrible. He has this huge hole in his right shoulder." She shuddered, remembering the sight of his torn flesh and massive quantity of blood on his chest when the medics stripped away his dark blue suit.

Scott's arms tightened around her waist. "You know Jake. He won't let a little thing like a bullet keep him from marrying you."

Stunned, Sarah couldn't believe Jake had already told her family about the baby. "He told you!"

"That reminds me. We better have you see a doctor, too. You need to start taking supplements right away." William stepped to one side and directed her out of the waiting room. "We don't want anything to happen to your baby."

Her heart lunged at the thought. She'd forgotten all about what would happen to the baby if Jake didn't live. Tears fell like rain down her cheek.

"Great job, Will." Scott swept her into his arms. "You're just determined to brighten her day."

"I didn't—"

"No, William." Sarah shook her head, not wanting him to worry about hurting her feelings.

“I’m very glad to be back with my family.”

“So Sarah, why don’t you tell us about the micro dot you placed on Jake?” William walked into her private suite the Dragon Center had assigned for her to wait in. Scott strolled in behind William and closed the suite’s door.

“No, not until I see Jake.” Sarah shook her head and turned from her place by the window. Just another sitting room, nothing in the room drew her attention.

The nurses told Sarah it wouldn’t be long before she could see Jake. She turned back to the window and stared at the red streak of the spirit comet glowing in the night sky. Most of the day had passed since they’d last made love. How much longer could she endure?

The smell of him tickled her senses, making the hunger in her womb contract with need. He must be nearby, but no one would tell her where.

“*You* need to tell me what I want to know.” William took a seat on the sofa and drew her focus back to him. The wicked grin on his face ignited her anger. She clutched her hands by her side, restraining herself from stepping forward and taking out her frustration on him. He knew how her body burned for Jake. Right now, the impatient longing inside her burned so much she wondered if she could die from lack of sex.

“Then we have a Black Dragon standoff, because I’m not talking.” Sarah crossed her arms over the red robe and glared at William. Yet she refused to meet his eyes. If she did, she’d lose. He always won the dragon’s eye game.

“Why can’t she see Jake? He’s right through the bedroom door.” Scott stood next to the end of sofa and pointed to a door on the other side of the room.

Sarah hurried toward the door. She’d only been

in the room for a few moments before William and Scott joined her. She'd noticed the gray panel when she'd first entered the room, but figuring a bedroom lay beyond, she avoided it. Strung out on lust, she couldn't even contemplate resting at the moment.

She slammed her hand against the button, and the door slid open. Jake lay propped in an iron bed. Black sheets highlighted his blond hair and dark green eyes.

"Hey there, I'd hoped they'd let you in to see me." He held out his left hand. His right arm was tied to his side.

"Are you all right?" She rushed across the room to his side. With his chest covered in white bandages, she didn't touch him for fear of hurting him more.

"I'm flying high right now with the medical patch the doctor administered. He says I have a little task to attend to before I can rest." Jake's fingers closed around her hand, and he tugged her closer. The door, she'd come through, closed.

"What? You just went through a major operation." She turned to the doorway, infuriated by the idea of anyone wanting anything from him in his current condition. "I'll kill him. If William thinks he can..."

"Sarah," Jake kissed the tips of her fingers. "You're the task I need to take care of."

"What? I don't..." She saw the spark of lust in the depths of his eyes.

"You do. Your body has been calling for mine. I'm so hard I'm on fire." His hand dropped to her waist. "How do you think I found you in the woods?"

"But you're not well enough to..." She surveyed the length of his prone form and zeroed in on the tented fabric hiding his straining cock. She swallowed and threw back the sheet.

Her knees felt weak. The beautiful sight of his

thick rod sent a shot of desire through her blood. Hot fluid flowed between her legs. Her mouth watered, her hands shook. She touched the hard warm silk of his staff with her fingertips, and he groaned.

“But Jake, are you sure this won’t cause you more pain?”

“Sarah, I’m in pain right now.” The hand on her waist directed her closer.

She placed a knee on the bed. Her robe caught around her leg and threw her off balance. “Wait.”

Jerking the tie loose, she shoved the fabric off her shoulders and let it fall to the floor. Unencumbered by clothing, cool air brushed her skin. Her breasts peaked. She straddled his lap and sank down slowly over the long length of his rod. The incredible sensation of him slipping deep inside her robbed her of her breath.

He moaned and threw back his head. His back arched. He lifted his hips off the bed, filling her to the brim, claiming her with a heated fever that wiped her mind clear of everything but their raging passion.

He forced her legs wider and opened her up for more pleasure. He thrust hard, which started her hips moving. The fingers of his free hand toyed with her breasts, pinching her nipples with a tugging caress.

Fast and furious, she rode his cock. Each thrust rushed her along the trail to the sharp edge of delirium. She greeted it, craved the dark excitement with every fiber of her soul, the moment when sanity shattered into dust.

A quiver snaked its way down her spine and started a rippling effect in her womb. An explosion erupted. She choked back a scream and felt the first sharp blade of completion.

She fell forward, bracing on her arms to keep her weight off Jake. Her panting breaths matched

his grunts and groans. His fingers bit into her ass. After a few additional thrusts, he trembled and sank back on the bed.

Sarah collapsed to her elbows in exhaustion. His arm wrapped around her and held her close. Her breasts nuzzled the soft hair on his chest. Their wet skin clung together from the waist down. Her hand lightly touched his right shoulder, and he flinched in pain. She eased more to his left side.

“Jake, you can't be comfortable.” She shifted her hips.

His left hand slid over her slick back and stopped her departure. “No, not yet. That took off the edge, but I'll need a lot more before I'm satisfied.”

She lifted her head to search his eyes. They glittered like emeralds. “What type of drugs did the doctor pump into you?”

He grinned and pointed to the clear medical patch on his arm. “The wonderful kind that provides me with the strength to last one or two more rounds. Afterward, we can rest if you want.”

The next morning, a loud knock sounded at the door. Sarah glanced at first one door in the bedroom then the other. One led to the corridor to the nurse's station, the other to the sitting room of their suite. She left her chair beside the bed and surveyed the room. No clutter lying about or clothes on the floor, she appreciated the dark metal tones of the décor. A black iron bed with simple lines and a rust-colored floor reflected an element of strength to the room. The bold red chairs added a splash of contrast to create a pleasant homey atmosphere.

She shuffled her feet to step away from Jake, but he wouldn't release her hand.

“Come in,” he said and tugged her back to his side. Both her brothers walked into the room and

laughter rumbled through Jake's chest. "I should have known. You're probably bursting with questions. Aren't you, William?"

Sarah brushed her free hand over the yellow dress the Dragon Center had provided. The simple shift clung to her curves like a second skin and fell to the middle of her thighs. Jake assured her she looked fine. But she couldn't help but worry about what her family thought about her being with Jake?

"Hey, guys," Sarah hugged her brothers, then sat on the bed beside Jake. She placed her hand back in his. "If you'll hit the release latch on the wall, a chair will swing out for you, William."

Scott took her seat, while William pushed the button to setup the chair on the other side of bed.

"Do you want to tell us about the micro dot, now?" William asked the moment he took his seat.

"How did you find it?" Sarah felt Jake's hand tighten around hers.

"The doctors found it on Jake not long after he arrived at the Dragon Center." William leaned against the back of his chair.

"What micro dot?"

"The one I hid on you, the morning before we left Syndetic's campus."

"What? Why didn't you tell me you stole information from Syndetic?" Jake's eyes narrowed. "I wouldn't have argued if you'd told me."

Shamed by his comment, Sarah stood and paced away from the bed. She glanced at Scott. He smiled and offered his hand. Needing his support, she walked over to his side.

"You didn't steal anything, did you?" Scott drew her closer and guided her onto the arm of his chair.

She shook her head. "Well, some people might call it stealing. They wanted to rob me of my research. I spent hours working on those results. I couldn't leave it all behind."

"Is that all you took?" William's dark stare drilled a hole through her heart. "Syndetic is claiming you took more than your research. They're saying you stole data on a wide variety of projects."

"That's not true. I worked on a lot of programs. Each one applied to my field of study. I only took documentation on the experiments I worked on." Sarah studied the stern expression on her brother's face. The muscle over his cheek bone twitched. "I'm not going to sell it or use it against them."

William clenched his hand by his side and fought to control his anger, but she couldn't see any cause for him to be upset. Her leaving Syndetic when she did meant she'd lost weeks of valuable research. She's the one who should be upset, not him.

"You don't understand. Syndetic is saying you don't have the right to your research. First, you're required to finish your internship with them." William gripped the rail lining the footboard at the end of the bed. His large knuckles turn white. He might be the oldest male member of the family, but he had no right to treat her like a child.

"In truth, I finished all of the requirements listed in my contract last week." She fidgeted on the arm of Scott's chair.

"Then why in dragon's lair, didn't you just come home?" he barked. "Then you wouldn't be in this mess."

His irritated tone hit a chord that spiked her anger. She rose and pointed a finger at him. "Because I had important work to do, and I couldn't afford to abandon it. I know you weren't happy with me for not calling every week and for delaying my visits home."

"But don't you see—"

"No, Syndetic wasn't forcing me to stay. I was under a great deal of stress and was frustrated

because I couldn't find the answers they wanted." She lowered her hand. "But I knew the moment Jake arrived, that you sent him and I'd have to leave. I let him sneak me off campus so I could avoid the exit interview and length of red tape with my advisor. Madame Blake hates me." She stepped forward until she was almost nose to nose with William. "If you want to blame someone. Blame yourself."

"Sarah," Jake's tone raked against her nerves. He didn't believe her, so she ignored his plea. Why did they think she wouldn't fulfill her obligation to Syndetic?

She shoved passed William and started for the door, but he grabbed her arm. "Sarah, this isn't a game. They're talking about having you arrested."

"For what? I haven't done anything!" she yelled back.

"How about murder?" a voice said from the doorway leading to the corridor.

Chapter Ten

“What?” Jake tried to sit up, but a sharp pain lanced through his shoulder. He fell back against the cushions and took a deep breath. William’s tall form blocked his view of the man by the door. Sarah took a step back, and Scott laid his arm around her waist. She swayed on her feet, and he supported her for a moment.

Jake silently cursed the policeman who had entered the room. Where did he get off accusing Sarah of committing murder?

“Perkins, how can you accuse her of murder? She was trying to protect herself and Jake.” William took charge and confronted the police chief. “The gunman had already shot Jake. How could she know he wouldn’t shoot her, too?”

“That’s your story. Some people believe there’s a different one.” Perkins walked into the room. The door closed, and Jake caught a glimpse of the police chief’s bulky form. He stood next to the group at the end of his bed.

“Who? Cornerman? You know the man as well as I do, he loves to find faults with anyone who has dragon blood.”

Jake listened to William’s argument but turned to Sarah to check on her reaction to this interrogation. Scott guided her back to the chair and directed her to sit. The crisp sweet smell of apples teased his senses, sending him an erotic message of lust his loins couldn’t ignore.

“Yes, but the man pleads an excellent case. Jake’s shooter, Charles Shore, worked for a security

firm. They claim Syndetic International hired them to track down your sister and return her to her job. Syndetic reported to them Sarah had been abducted.”

“So what you’re saying is it’s our word against theirs.” William turned and asked in a soft voice, “Sarah, did the man chasing you through the woods tell you he was there to help you?”

Jake’s chest tightened with rage. Charles Shore hadn’t tracked Sarah through the forest to save her from a kidnapper. He’d been there to kill her. Jake knew a professional killer when he saw one.

“He didn’t give me any warning,” Jake said before Sarah replied.

She turned. Her dark brown eyes stared at him without focusing. A frown marred her face, and a muscle under her left eye twitched. The grisly events of the day before were taking a toll on her.

“Sarah,” Jake held out his hand.

She blinked and turned to glare at Perkins. “After he broke into Jake’s cabin, I escaped out the bedroom window.” She paused, eyebrows furrowing together as if trying to recall the sequence of events. “I got to the corner of the house, and he started yelling at me. But I don’t remember what he said. He fired a shot and hit a tree near me. I panicked and ran.”

“What happened after you started to run?” Perkins drew out a pad and jotted a few notes.

“Well.” Sarah lowered her head. Her raven hair fell over her face, blocking her features from Jake’s view. Her high level of anxiety filled the room with a unique fragrance. His cock swelled, and a shot of longing pulsed through his system like a live wire.

He shifted in the bed, wanting to be closer to her, to reassure her, to touch her, to have her relieve the pain building in his loins. A low whisper of agony slipped from Jake because she sat too far away.

Scott laid a hand on her shoulder. "Sarah, after you took off into the woods, where were you planning to go?"

"I wasn't sure where to go. Jake left, and I didn't know when he would come back. So I just ran."

Jake clutched the sheet under his hands. Guilt and need twisted in his gut. His failure to protect her had almost gotten her killed. The current distance between them sent a different type of dragon's fire through his blood.

"I wove through the trees, hoping the man chasing me wouldn't get a clear shot." Sarah gripped her hands together in her lap. "I stopped for a moment to catch my breath and..."

He remembered when he first caught sight of her in the wood, how she'd dove behind the tree. The scent of sweat from the chase, plus her need for him, led him right to her location. He'd said her name, and she'd turned. He'd seen the relief on her face. Her hero, her lover, her future husband, he'd wanted to make love to her on the spot. Then he'd been shot.

"I heard a noise, and then Jake called my name." She looked at his chest. "I saw blood, and Jake stumbled backward." Her eyes filled with tears. "I...thought he might be dead."

"Sarah," Jake groaned, shamed by the pain he'd unwillingly inflicted on her.

"Did you see Charles shoot him?" Perkins drew her attention back to him.

Sarah shook her head. "I didn't know where he was, I could only think about getting to Jake. I kneeled beside him, and then the man walked up behind me. He told me to stand or he'd shoot Jake again."

"I gave her my gun," Jake spoke up. He resented the way the police chief accused her of something that was clearly self-defense.

"You did? I thought you were out." Perkins

turned to Jake.

“He rammed the gun into my ribs.” Sarah turned to Jake. Her heated gaze held his. The room shrank to the two of them. “If I had done what the man told me, the shooter would have killed Jake. I couldn’t let him do that.”

His mind transported him back to the moment when he had released his gun, and her hand covered the handle. The need for revenge pumped through her system and resonated through his head. Her fast reflexes furnished her with the ability to turn and shoot before the man knew what hit him. Jake recalled the man’s startled face, blood blooming on his chest. He fell backward with a thud. Jake felt no sympathy for the man.

Sarah broke the connection between them and glanced back to the police chief. “I grabbed the gun, turned, and fired. The man fell to the ground. I took his gun and called the meds for Jake. That’s all there was to it.”

“How did you find her?” Perkins addressed Jake.

An almost bored look marked the man’s face, but Jake wasn’t buying the act. Perkins, a slick interrogator, could garner information from anyone.

“We had an active tracer on her.” William spoke to the police chief. “I assigned Jake the task of retrieving my sister from Syndetic. His job was to do whatever necessary to protect her.”

Perkins’ gaze met Jake’s. “Then why did he leave her in the middle of nowhere alone?”

“I told him to come in so we could decide how best to proceed,” William answered, not allowing Jake the chance to answer.

The police chief raised an eyebrow. “So tell me Jake, why did Sarah care whether you lived or died?”

Jake grinned and turned to Sarah. Her brown eyes full of her concern, she appeared lost without

him. He extended his hand to draw her to his side. She stood, scooted over to him, and took his hand. "It must be my natural good looks and charm."

She smiled. The desire shining in the depths of her eyes sparked his resolve to win her heart. Renewed energy sped through his blood. Her soft touch fed his craving to hold her closer. The few moments he'd gone without physical contact felt like an eternity. He drew her onto the bed, half listening to the talk going on around them.

"And she's also carrying his baby," Scott added and moved to the end of the bed.

"That gives her a very strong case for wanting to protect him," William said.

Jake sank into the warm velvety depths of her eyes. She placed a hand on his chest, not letting him pull her down on top of him. Her rich scent teased his mind with wicked idea of plunging deep into her wet center.

"Gentlemen, we should probably let Jake rest." Sarah placed a hand on his forehead. "Let's give him a break and come back later."

Jake smiled and guided his hand over her back. He could see the group behind her moving to the door. His cock rose and tented the covers.

"I still need to question both of them," Perkins said.

"They're not going anywhere. I have them under protective custody of the Dragon Center." William opened the door and led the way out into the corridor. "You can talk to them any time you want."

The door closed.

She leaned over him, her full breasts brushing his chest. "Now, they're gone. Should I leave you alone to rest?"

Jake caught the mischievous twinkle in her eyes. His arm tightened around her waist, and he drew her closer. "No, you have exactly what I need to

feel better.”

“Really, what can I do to help you?”

He smoothed his hand over her ass. “Why don’t you tell me where you hid the micro dot?”

“What?” She rose off his chest and stared at his chin, not meeting his gaze. He’d surprised her with the comment. She’d expected him to demand she cover his cock and pound out a hurried release. A worthy request he’d make in the not too distant future.

He smiled and guided his hand to her thigh. “I think it’s only fair you tell me since I was your unknowing carrier.”

Her hand rubbed his chest, and she traced the brown circle of his nipple. “I put it next to your heart.” Her fingers toyed with his chest hair.

Flesh against flesh stoked the fire in his loins. He swept a hand under her dress to caress her inner thigh. Her legs parted at his touch. The wet lips of her sex brushed his fingertips. He loved the way she didn’t bother with under clothing.

“You should’ve told me about the information.” He pushed one finger into her slick pussy to arouse but not satisfy. She moaned and opened her legs wider. “Don’t keep things from me in the future.”

He played on the edge.

“Jake, would you please quit? Or I’m going to tease you, too.” She jerked back the blanket. His stiff erection stood up, begging for her attention.

She laid her hand on his leg. Her gaze burned with a feverish glow, and her tongue dampened her lips. Need coursed through his veins. Her hands circled his cock, and he groaned.

He rammed his finger deeper into her ready heat. She covered his rod with her lips, and he added a second finger to the party.

Her tongue flickered over the tip, driving him insane with the need to come. The suction of her

mouth forced him to increase the rhythm of his fingers plunging between her legs. He ached for her blood to boil like his and added a third finger to spread her wider and drive her higher.

"Jake," she gasped. Her heated breath brushed his sensitive skin.

He grabbed for her to shove her back down on his cock, but pain ripped through his shoulder. A groan escaped, and his left hand dropped from her heat.

She turned to him immediately. "Jake, are you all right?"

"No, I want to lick your pussy while you're sucking on my cock."

She blushed. "But—"

"If you move your leg," he directed her leg over his chest, "and raise your ass so I can..." He sighed at the sight of the wet petals of her sex. Her dress bunched around her hips outlined the erotic picture. "Oh, yes, now take me back into your mouth."

Once more, the heat of her breath blew against the tip of his cock. He arched his hips. Her lips closed over him, sucking him deep. "That's it."

Her fingers played with the full sacks of his testicles. Never still, her mouth placed little love bites on the tip of his penis. Her tongue stroked around and around the head. Then she covered him with her mouth and slid down the shaft. Sucking hard, she released his rod to slip to the tip. Again and again, she repeated the process.

Pressure built in his cock. He lifted his head to trace the seam of her pussy with his tongue. She moaned and drew him deeper into her mouth, creating a sucking motion that jerked an explosive need up from his toes.

"Sarah, I'm...uh...com..." He groped his free hand along her hip and shoved her dress to her waist. His entire body convulsed with his fiery release. Her lips

didn't slow. Hot fluid rushed into her mouth and dribbled over his cock. His head fell back against his pillow, his eyes closed, and he trembled at the sheer pleasure her lips could give.

Drawing a deep breath, he inhaled her scent. Her tongue lashed against his penis. He opened his eyes. A new hunger grew at the beautiful sight before him. She lapped at him again. He leaned forward and licked her heat.

She groaned and wriggled her hips.

His hand fumbled over her ass and clutched the front of her thigh to tug her closer. He inhaled deeply, then flicked his tongue against her clit again and again, teasing her with long lazy strokes. His mouth closed around the sweet bud, and she screamed.

With a gentle touch, he tugged the sweet bud into his mouth, sucking on her the same way she had sucked his cock. She fell to her elbows, her nails biting into the muscles of his calves.

"Jake." She swallowed. "Please. I'm so close."

He let his tongue penetrate the wet channel leading to her womb. He wished for dragon candy so his tongue could venture even deeper.

Tender muscles convulsed with her release, and a hot flood of juices flowed into his mouth. He lapped her up, drinking in her sweet flavor.

Her warm panting breath grazed his rod. The lust in his blood gathered once more and called for the fast pace of pumping his cock into her heat.

"Sarah, come here." He lifted one leg and pulled her around to lay over his chest. The wicked smile on her face told him she wouldn't move. "Don't even consider the idea of getting any rest. I need a whole lot more of you before we're through."

She smiled and snuggled closer.

The material of her dress slithered over his hand, and he tugged at the hem. "Why don't you get

rid of this?"

She lifted the fabric, and he jerked her dress free from her body and threw it on the floor. Adjusting her hips, he slammed his rod into her cunt. "Now, we can go on to round two."

"How many rounds are we doing today?" The hot tight walls of her pussy clamped around his cock.

He cupped her cheeks and wondered if a man could die from loving a woman this much. "As many as it takes."

Chapter Eleven

Deep concentration vibrated through the large room. Sarah breathed in the rich scent of discovery going on in the lab. She sighed at the thrill of belonging, and her muscles relaxed for the first time in days.

With her move to the main Dragon Center four days ago, she now had easy access to their well-equipped facility. She'd argued for days with William, Scott, and Jake to let her return to work, and finally they agreed.

Her gaze traveled along the long tables filled with scientific equipment, hand-held devices, chemical compounds, tubes, folders, and a can of scribblers. Here she felt at home.

The people around her might be different from the ones at Syndetic, but the tasks they performed were the same. Everyone at the center treated her like a visiting guest, except Walter. The old guy reported every little irritant to William. Walter didn't like the way she dressed, or her very presence in his lab.

She pulled out a stool and took a seat. The lab leader wasn't unfair, but over the last few days, she'd felt out of sorts with everything. The baby growing inside her demanded all her energy, making her tired, irritable, and unhappy with the smallest things. Jake claimed her moodiness was normal, but she wondered.

Reviewing the tests she started yesterday, she compared the results against the ones she'd gotten at Syndetic. They were the same.

She smiled and glanced around the room again. With the police still gathering information, her new home inside the DC building kept her out of jail and gave her a chance to work.

But the inability to leave the Dragon Center complex for any reason gave Sarah the stifling feeling of being held captive. The increasing demands of being pregnant added to her moodiness. Sarah now required sex with every bong of the time veil. At times, she almost wished she could deliver her baby without Jake's assistance.

Maybe Jake wanted out, too. He appeared to enjoy the sex, but he hadn't mentioned getting married since they'd left his cabin. Had he changed his mind?

Her chest tightened, and Sarah pictured him sitting behind his large metal desk. Cleared of any wrong doing, his doctors had let him return to work in an advisory position only, no active duty.

"Good morning, Sarah," a voice spoke from behind her right shoulder.

She turned and shoved thoughts of her affair with Jake to the back of her mind. A dull pain pulsed in her lower back. The police chief smiled and crossed to the table.

"Hey, Perkins, if you keep visiting me every day, Jake might grow jealous." Sarah liked the police chief. After all, over the last few days, she spent quite a bit of time with him. He reminded her in a small way of her grandfather—gray hair, round belly, soft spoken. No matter what she told him, he never seemed rattled.

"Good point. Jake isn't someone I'd want to cross, but I only have a quick question today." Perkins fingered a few items on the table. "You told me the other day you completed all your time with Syndetic International and could take copies of your research with you."

“Yes,” Sarah lifted the black hand-held device lying next to cultures she’d been examining.

“Do you have proof? The company says you’re still lacking about twenty bongs.”

Sarah punched in a code and showed Perkins her data screen. “I’ll send it to your office, but I assure you I checked the numbers many times before I left. I even put in extra time so there wouldn’t be any question about my having completed my required term.”

“I’m sure you did.” He studied her computer for a few ticks before he inched back. “Just send me the file, and I’ll check it against what Syndetic sent.”

“Sure thing.” Sarah set aside the device, and a spike of pain stabbed along her spine. She stood to ease the ache. A gush of fluid flowed down her thighs. A musky scent rose and sickened her stomach. She grabbed the table with an unsteady hand.

“Sarah, are you all right?” Perkins laid a protective hand on her arm.

“I don’t know.” Her mind raced with possibilities, none of them good. Her legs felt weak. Every brain cell in her head decided to panic. She took a deep breath. *Dragon drool*. “I should go to my suite and lie down.”

“Great idea, I’ll help you.” He wrapped an arm around her waist and half carried her to the door.

Walter started for them. “What’s going on?”

“Sarah isn’t feeling well. I’m helping her back to her room.” Perkins guided her out the door, not letting the lab leader stop their progress.

After a few steps, Sarah couldn’t hold back the hysterical giggle that bubbled through her terrified thoughts. “You know Perkins, Jake will probably deck you if he sees you leading me back to our suite. He’s already a little jealous at all the time I’ve been spending with you. Maybe—” Sarah’s stomach

contracted. She stumbled. Perkins caught her and kept her from landing on the floor.

"He'll be a lot more upset if I let anything happen to you." Perkins steadied her then took a small step forward. "Why don't we call a medic?"

Jake appear in front of them. "What wrong?"

The worried look on his face reflected Sarah's fears. The possibility of her losing their child hit her in the chest. She wanted to deny she had a problem, but her legs trembled. Her eyes clouded with tears. "I don't know, Jake. I'm having a problem with the baby."

The noises coming through the closed door of their bedroom didn't reassure Jake. After he'd called the medics to help Sarah, they kicked him out of the bedroom.

He paced back and forth across the sitting room floor. The light slap of his heels hitting the metal surface echoed through the room.

The door to the suite opened. William entered. Marked with worry lines, his best friend's face didn't reassure him. "Do you know what happened?"

"I have no idea." Jake shoved his hair back on his head. He'd been running over the events of the last couple of days to remember anything to indicate there could be trouble with the baby.

"She's been tired and a little cranky, but I blamed it on her being pregnant and stuck inside. I told her to talk to her doctor, but he couldn't find anything wrong." Jake tracked William's antsy movements. "What did they tell you?"

The disturbed expression on his friend's face hit Jake. He took several steps back and bumped into the back of the couch. William reached out to place a hand on his shoulder, but Jake shrugged it away. "Tell me."

"She lost the baby." William's voice broke with

emotion.

Jake couldn't absorb his best friend's words. He stumbled backward and grabbed his chest. The pain lancing through him hurt worse than the bullet he'd taken in his shoulder less than a week ago. William grabbed his arm and led him around the corner of the couch. "The doctor said he doesn't know what happened. The baby appeared to be fine the last time he checked."

Jake sat, stunned at the news. People with high levels of Dragon Blood didn't lose their babies. In an accident, yes...because the father died, yes...but because of some unknown reason...no.

Jake dropped his head into his hands. He hadn't thought it possible to impregnate a woman a short time ago. Then after he'd manage to accomplish the feat, and with the woman he loved, she lost his baby after only a short time. "What about Sarah? Is she all right?"

"The doctor says she'll be fine. They're still working with her at the moment and will let you know as soon as you can see her." William knotted his hands into fists. "I'm sorry, Jake. I know how much you wanted a baby."

Yes, but along with the baby he could be losing so much more. He looked toward the bedroom door. "With Sarah locked up here, we haven't even managed to fill out the marriage forms yet. She might not agree to marry me now."

William laid his hand on Jake's shoulder. "That's not true. Sarah has been in love with you for years. She won't let you go easily."

Confused, Jake stared at his friend. "What are you talking about? Sarah loves her job. Add the hurt of losing our baby, and she'll probably dump me."

"Wrong, she loves you. That's why I sent you after her?" William leaned against the arm of the couch. "No one else would have gotten her to leave

Syndetic.”

“What?” Jake sat up straighter. “Are you telling me, you set me up?”

“No. I didn't tell you to sleep with my sister. You decided that on your own. But I'm telling you, Sarah loves you.” William walked over to the door and turned. “Right now, I need to tell the rest of the family what happened. My mom will be crushed.” He straightened his shoulders and laid a finger on the button to open the door. “I'll tell the nurses to let you know when you can see Sarah.” He walked through the doorway.

Jake sat staring at the wall. Was William right? Would Sarah still want to marry him? Or would she blame him for the loss of their child?

He dropped his head back into his hands. Losing their baby hurt enough, but losing Sarah would devastate him.

“Sarah,” Jake's voice beckoned her to open her eyes. His warm hand caressed her shoulder.

The torture of what happened ate at her emotions, and she rejected his touch. “Go away.”

“Why?” The hurt in his voice lanced her heart, and tears leaked from the corner of her eyes.

“I killed our baby.” She rolled onto her side and buried her face in her pillow. She wished for the hundredth time since the doctors told her about her baby that she'd had died instead.

Jake's hand gripped her shoulder with a firm touch. His hips bumped hers, and he sat beside her on the bed. “No, the doctors said it's something that happens sometimes.”

She shook her head, knowing the doctor didn't know everything. Her job created the problem. Her passion for a career ruined her future with Jake.

“It's not your fault.” Jake pinned her shoulders to the bed with his hands.

“You don’t understand.” She tried her best to wiggle free of his hold. Her own misery tore her heart to shreds. She couldn’t deal with his, too. Not when all the blame lay on her. “If I didn’t work with chemicals, this never would’ve happened. Because of my job, I poisoned our baby.”

Jake shook his head. “No way. You wanted our baby as much as I did.”

The pain in his eyes caused her chest to ache, and tears blurred her vision. “But it’s a side effect of the research I do.”

“Says who?” He questioned her as if he didn’t know it was an established fact for women in her profession.

Sarah lifted her hands and placed them against his chest. “I’ve known other women who’ve lost their babies. The doctors at Syndetic said it’s caused by the chemicals we work with.”

“What?” The blast of his anger hit her. She cringed and closed her eyes, afraid for a moment he’d hate her forever. “Sarah, tell me which chemical is causing the problem? We’ll have it restricted so other people won’t have this happen to them.”

“I, uh...” She opened her eyes, confused by his question, and caught the green fire burning in his, anger and hurt battling in their depths.

She’d never asked any of the women what projects they’d been working on after she found out they lost their babies. She dropped her gaze from his. He would never forgive her for the mistake. “I never asked.”

“Then how do you know your job is to blame? Syndetic could be doing something to make sure the interns won’t deliver?” Jake eased the pressure off her shoulder but didn’t let her turn away. “I remember you telling me they were scenting the air with something to heighten everyone’s sex drives. Maybe it also has a negative effect on the embryos.”

“But why would Syndetic do such a thing?” Sarah struggled to think clearly, but...if the company knew the chemicals were responsible, why didn't they take protective measures to protect female interns?

“I'm not sure, but I don't trust them.” Jake slid his hands down her arms and gripped her hands. “How many others lost their babies?”

Sarah bit her quivering lip. There hadn't been a lot. “Two or three, most of the other girls were using birth control patches.”

“Why didn't you?” Jake's question drew Sarah's attention back to his face. A lock of blond hair fell over his forehead. Her hands tingled with the urge to brush it back, to absorb his sorrow. If only she could bury her own in his arms. But her guilt wouldn't let her off so easily.

She shook her head and took a deep breath. His unique scent filled her with longing, and her hands trembled at the idea of never making love to him again. “By not taking birth control, I could refuse to let a man in my bed. I didn't want any of them to be the father of my child.” Tears filled her eyes. “I should've never made love to you either.” She covered her face with her hands.

“Don't cry, Sarah.” He gathered her into his arms, but the warmth of his body didn't touch the cold chill circling her heart. She couldn't forgive herself for what she'd done to her child, and the pain she'd caused Jake. She'd lost everything because of her job.

Chapter Twelve

“Jake, go talk to Sarah. You’ve been out of the office for the past few weeks. If I hadn’t sent you a message, you wouldn’t be here now.”

“I’m busy working on this case. I promised her we’d find out what’s happening at Syndetic and what’s causing dragon women to miscarry.”

“Yes, and you’re also avoiding my sister. I know you’re out to prove Syndetic is behind Sarah losing your baby, but...”

Jake’s chest tightened. The pain hadn’t eased since he’d first heard William say those words. Now, determined to carry out William’s orders, Jake marched down the hallway leading to their suite.

He’d dropped by last night, but finding her asleep in their bed, he’d left.

He pictured Sarah lying across the sheets. Her hair scattered across her pillow, eyes close, her naked form hidden under the blankets, and the rich scent of her sex screaming for him to relieve the hunger in her rich black dragon blood. He’d wanted to crawl in bed and spend the night making love to her, but he hadn’t. He’d promise himself he’d find her answers first.

Jake clenched his hand into a fist and hit the hallway’s metal wall. Frustration burned through him as he forced himself to continue to their suite door.

He’d talked to every woman who’d been pregnant while working for Syndetic, but he still couldn’t identify the chemical responsible for the problem. Instead, he discovered a larger issue.

He stopped in front of the door to their suite. Sworn to protect people with dragon blood, he'd not been there to safeguard the one person he loved more than life itself.

Sarah walked around the suite, touching objects along the way—a vase of flowers, a glass dragon, a small cloth toy. Her family had showered her with some of her favorite things. One of Scott's dragon sculptures sat in the middle of table behind the couch. A bright gem between its claws reinforced the myth that only a diamond's beauty held the strength to kill a dragon.

The door to the suite squeaked opened, but she didn't turn. The one person she longed to see wanted nothing to do with her. No one else mattered.

In her heart, Sarah didn't blame him. If she could avoid herself, she would. Her misery like a cloak, she drew it tight around her to shield herself from the person who'd entered the room. If she let anyone close, when they learned the truth, they'd reject her, too.

"Sarah." Jake's hand captured her waist.

She jumped away from him and hurried around the couch to put some space between them. If he touched her again, she'd shatter into a million pieces. "What are you doing here?"

"I live here remember." He swerved to the end of the couch to follow her.

Turning, she drank in the sight of him—the tired lines around his eyes, the wide berth of his chest, and the easy fit of his black suit. He'd lost weight over the last few weeks. But his pain couldn't soften her resolve. She needed to be strong.

Stepping farther away from him, she stiffened her back and stared out the window. For him to leave now would be best for both of them. She refused to drag the pain out any longer than

necessary. He'd be better off without her in his life.

She gathered her strength and pointed to the tin-plated walls of the suite. "That's not true, Jake. You have a nice house outside of the Dragon Center where you store your clothes and sleep at night. I'm being held captive. You're free to leave."

"You're not a prisoner. We're restricting you to the center's compound so you won't spend time in jail. The police reviewed the micro dot you hid on me, and Perkins received the document showing how much time you spent on your job with Syndetic. The company no longer has a case." He edged closer. "The reason you're still required to live at the center is because of the murder investigation. It takes a little longer to sort through all those details." He offered his hand to her, trying with a soft smile to draw her closer. "Why don't you come over here?"

Sarah fought the desire to run to his side. Instead, she stepped backward and gripped her hands together behind her back. "No, thanks. I'm fine right where I'm at."

His hand fell to his side, and he sat on the couch. "I guess I shouldn't be surprised you're upset with me. I haven't exactly been here for you in the last few weeks. I've been trying to track down leads as to why you..."

The blank expression on his face told her he hadn't recovered from their loss. Her heart bled, and she watched his gaze shift to the fireplace to avoid having to look at her.

"I—we believe one of the products Syndetic produces maybe causing the..." He again stalled, as if he couldn't find the right words. "I've discovered a large number of women who've experienced similar problems."

"What?" Sarah's stomach clinched. How couldn't this be true? As a chemist, she understood how her job might expose her to harmful chemicals, but not

someone of the general population.

"It appears to be a problem that has developed over the last few years. William has made it a priority for the Dragon Centers to find the cause." He rattled on. "We're talking to everyone involved to see if we can determine the reasons behind the problem. I'm helping with the interviews, so I'll be away for the next few days"

"Wait. Are you telling me other women outside of Syndetic have lost their babies?"

Pain flashed across Jake's face. She wasn't the only one who had guilt as her constant companion.

He nodded in answer to her question.

"And they have high levels of dragon blood?"

"Yes. That's why William has devoted resources to investigate the cause."

"And is Syndetic responsible?"

Jake's jaw tightened as he rose to his feet. Evidently, he didn't like her questioning him about the case. "Look, Sarah. We don't have any answers yet. Right now, we're reviewing the situation to see if we can find a pattern to explain the trend." He walked back around the couch toward the door. "I'm interviewing a number of women so I'll probably be busy for a while." Why didn't he tell her to get lost? Was William forcing Jake to stay with her?

His finger touched the button next to the door. "If you need me, send me a message."

The door slid open.

She stared at him for a moment and suddenly realized Jake didn't blame her for their baby's death. His love just wasn't strong enough for him to want to stay with her if she wasn't pregnant with his child. Hurt and anger fought a rapid battle inside her chest. Anger won and a wildfire of rage lit her blood. She'd wasted a lifetime loving the wrong man.

Her feet sped across the floor, and blessed by black dragon blood, Sarah stood behind Jake before

he could exit the door. She curtly touched his shoulder. He turned, and her fist connected with his jaw.

He stumbled back against the wall. His hand covered the left side of his face. He stared at her as if she'd lost her mind.

"I can give you my message right now. Don't bother coming back." Sarah turned and raced toward the open bedroom door.

"Why you—" Jake's voice rose into a roar of fury. "I should..."

His footsteps echoed behind her, tracking her across the room. She slapped her hand against the wall to close the bedroom door the moment she crossed the threshold. Two steps into the room, she turned to see the door reverse its progress. Jake stood in the doorway, blocking her exit.

The door to the corridor stood a few steps away. She rushed to freedom. Her hand missed the button to open the hall door as Jake's body slammed against hers, shoving her against the wall.

His chest pressed against her back, and his hard erection nestled between the cheeks of her ass. His thighs guarded hers. The sound of his heavy breathing sounded in her ears, and his rich scent invaded her senses. Unwanted desire flamed between them.

"Let me go." When he didn't respond, she scrambled for something to say. "Jake, I know since I lost your child, you don't want me. So let me go." The agony of the hurtful admission infused her muscles with strength. With her hands, she shoved against the wall to break his hold.

He only shifted closer. His hands caught her wrists and tugged them down by her side. The unique scent of spice pears tickled her taste buds. Sex-deprived for weeks now, her pussy wept with tears of passion. Her blood pumped a hunger

through her veins she couldn't deny. Unwilling to bend to her body's demands, she fought the lust rushing through her. He deserved more than she could give.

"Jake, holding me captive is not proving anything. We both know it's over between us." She tried her best to turn and look at him, but he held her tightly.

"No, Sarah, it's not over." He nibbled his way along her neck with his lips and rubbed his hard rod against her ass.

"It has to be. I'm not allowed to have both." She laid her cheek against the cold metal of the wall. Tears spilled from her eyes.

"What are you talking about?" Jake eased back and turned her around in the circle of his arms.

She stared at her hands, flat against the center of his chest. "If I have you, I can't keep my job. I've worked for years developing my chemist's skills; it's my life. What I've always dreamed of doing." The heartache of having to give him up hurt as much as losing her child. She looked into his heated emerald gaze. "I can't have both you and my job."

He shook his head. "Wrong. I thought you understood what I was telling you earlier. It's not your job that's the problem. It's the company you worked for."

His large hands caressed her from the round curve of her shoulders to the top of her thighs. On the return journey, his fingers found the release to her dress and tugged the fabric loose. His gaze fell to her exposed breasts, and his eyes narrowed with longing.

"Once we find out what chemical is causing the problem. We'll arrest the people responsible for manufacturing it." His hands slid over the line of her shoulders and jerked the plain green dress from her arms.

“But Jake, what if I can’t get pregnant again?” Sarah stated her biggest fear. The one whittling away at her soul from the time she found out she’d lost their baby.

He cupped her breasts, judging the weight of each in the palm of his hands. His legs and hips pinned her against the wall. “That’s not a problem. We’ll ask the Dragon Center doctors to give us a little dragon serum. After all, that’s how William and Scott both conceived their first child.”

“Dragon serum?” Sarah didn’t recall ever hearing about the drug. Could it be useful for her research? She gripped his biceps to keep her mind focused on the subject. “What does it do?”

A smile lit his face. He stroked the rough pad of his thumbs over the tips of her nipples. “From what I understand, the drug opens a woman’s womb to her lover. She becomes more excited than if you tied her up and made love to her for days.”

“No, Jake. Not again.” Her words sounded weaker than she intended as a deep moan escaped her throat. Her skin tingled everywhere his body touched her. Every muscle stood on alert for his slightest move. “I, uh, want to know more about the dragon serum formula.”

He traced his hands down the length of her arms once more and held her wrists. Large fingers soothed the fast beat of her pulse. “But my cuffs are in my pocket.”

“No, Jake, you can’t. I won’t let you restrain me again.” Fear raced through her at the idea of being at his mercy. She tried to break free, but he merely used his body to keep her wedged against the wall, and his strong hands, free to roam, took possession of whatever he fancied. On fire, hot liquid trickled between her thighs, making her hungry for his touch.

His eyes met hers. An emerald blaze burned in

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their depth. He lifted her hands to his lips and kissed first one palm, then the other. "See just the mention of me putting my cuffs on you has you excited. I can smell the hunger growing in your pussy. You need me to make love to you."

"Jake."

Chapter Thirteen

Jake released Sarah's wrists and crowded her against the wall of their bedroom. He nuzzled her throat and rubbed his lips over the fast beat of her pulse. "Easy, Sarah. I'm not using my cuffs today, though the very idea has your blood screaming through your veins."

His hands shifted to the creamy swell of her breasts. He toyed with the rose tips and stroked his thumbs over her nipples until they both hardened into cherry buds. She moaned, and his mouth watered with anticipation of sucking on the tasty treat of dragon candy.

No doubt clouded his mind. She loved him.

"Jake, where does dragon serum come from?" Sarah shoved her hands against his chest.

He licked his lips. How could she talk when he wanted only to sample her heat?

"William learned about the serum not long before he met Amanda. Her first husband developed the formula but sold it to a disreputable man. With her help, William retrieved the solution. Now, the Dragon Center doctors prescribe the drug to couples who need help getting pregnant." He lowered his head.

"But why..."

He covered her nipple with his lips. The pain she'd inflicted on his jaw earlier with her punch didn't stop his pursuit of enjoying her breast. He sucked the tight berry deep into his mouth and savored the sweet flavor of her breast.

His cock pulsed, and he ground it against her.

Thirsty for more, he switched to her other breast, but found he craved the delectable juices seeping between her legs more. Once his tongue elongated, he'd be at the edge of heaven. Her womb might not open to accept his seed, but he loved the sizzling heat burning for him.

A moan for mercy escaped from her lips. The helpless sound broke his control. His plan to tease and tempt her with a soft prelude to lovemaking shattered under the urgent demands pounding through his blood. He lifted his head. Her eyelids fluttered open. He read the searing passion, and suddenly fell into the dark pits of hell when he'd envisioned his life without her.

His hands rushed over her to consume, take, devour. His hungry mouth fed on the gentle swell of her breasts while his hands slid past the curve of her waist to the apex of her thighs. He widened her stance. His knees hit the floor, and he licked the wet petals of her sex.

"No, Jake, not a dragon's kiss." Her nails bit into his shoulders.

His gaze met hers. "Oh, but you don't understand. I need to taste the sweet flavor of your pussy and feel you pulse against my mouth."

With an irresistible urge, he nuzzled closer and sent a single swipe of his tongue over her tender skin. She wove her hands through his hair and held his head tightly against her needy flesh. "Jake, please, I...can't take anymore."

He ignored her pleas and continued to caress her with long wet strokes. His tongue blazed a trail through the tight cavern of her pussy. But no matter how hard he tried to slide his tongue deeper, he couldn't touch the wall of her womb.

"Jake," she screamed. The first shockwaves of her release crashed down on her, but he refused to let up. Tender muscles pulsed against his tongue,

but with no chemical enhancements, no brush of heat escaped her womb. His efforts useless in creating a baby, he answered the call to bury his cock deep inside her warm pussy.

He stood and shrugged his suit off of his shoulders, then maneuvered his fingers back along her moist flesh, and his fingers played with the clit.

Her eyelids fluttered but didn't open. He couldn't resist her and didn't want to try. She belonged to him—his mate, his lover, his future wife. He lowered his mouth to hers and started an erotic dance with her tongue. She gripped his waist and staid against him. He nudged his cock between her thighs, and she rocked her hips forward.

So close to the entrance of her heat, a fire burned through his loins. He forced his mouth from hers and wrapped a hand around the solid girth of his penis. He slammed home, and the cold chill around his heart melted into an urgent need that boiled in his veins. He set a frantic pace, ramming his cock hard and deep into her wet channel.

Her head fell back against the wall. The white arch of her throat tempted him. He wrapped his lips around the rhythmic beat and matched his thrusts to the pounding of her pulse.

On a furious ride to the edge of insanity, he welcomed the moment when he couldn't tell where she ended and he began. As one, they each answered the primitive lust of their dragon heritage. She fell, and her core throbbed with her release. Shoved over the edge, he trembled in her arms, streaming hot semen into her body.

His knees weak, his body spent. He used the wall to keep them both upright while he struggled to catch his breath. Her arms wove their way around his neck. She cuddled, soft and willing in his arms. He hoped to spend the rest of his life with her by his side.

The moment her intelligent mind clicked back into gear, she shifted and created a small space between them. He thrust his erection deeper reminding her in his not so subtle way of their connection.

“Don’t even think about it, Sarah.” He lifted his head to study her face, and dark brown eyes stared at him. An unspoken fear echoed from their depths. He shook his head. “I can’t let you go.”

“But Jake...”

He covered her lips with his finger. “Let’s not talk about what could happen. Right now, I only want answers to what did happen.”

She peered over his left shoulder. Her hands curved into knots on his chest. She appeared to want to discuss the subject to the nth degree, but he’d be raw and screaming for mercy before she quit.

To divert her attention, Jake withdrew from her sweet heat and stepped back, then quickly lifted her into his arms. He carried her to the bed and laid her in the center. His gaze lingered on the full swell of her breasts and slid lower to the tapered line of her waist. He guided his hands over the silky texture of her skin. The thought of how close he’d come to losing her tightened the muscles in his chest. He sat beside her and bumped her hip.

She touched his face, and a sharp pain shot through his jaw. He jerked back from her probing fingers. “Ouch.”

“You’re going to have a bruise.”

“No joke. Why did you hit me?”

Again, she tried to build a wall between them, but he adjusted his weight and placed his hands on her shoulders. She didn’t answer, and her gaze rested on his chest for a long moment.

“I...know you don’t want to talk about what happened, Jake.” She lifted her sad eyes to his. “But I can’t go through this again.”

“Meaning?”

“I don’t like the idea of getting pregnant again.” Her eyes narrowed with the conviction of her words.

“What?” He couldn’t believe she would willingly forgo her ability to bare a child. Or was she saying she didn’t want him either?

Sarah pointed to a small patch on her arm. “I won’t take the risk of creating a new life until we know for sure we won’t run into any more problems.”

“Wait, you need my approval to use any type of birth control.” He reached for her arm with the intention of removing the offensive device.

“No, you don’t.” She jerked away from his grasp and tucked her forearm with the patch against her chest. “We’re not married so you don’t have a say in what I do.”

Anger rose in his chest. “Just because we haven’t been through the government’s red tape, doesn’t mean you don’t belong to me.”

She smiled. The wicked little smirk knocked his heart rate into overdrive. She believed she had the upper hand. He’d pay in some way or another.

“Sarah, I’m not playing around.” He leaned over her, but not far enough to limit his access to her. “We’re still getting married.”

Her arms slid around his neck. “I’m not saying I won’t marry you. We should just wait until we discover a few more answers before we start working on having a baby again.”

He understood her reasoning and in some ways shared her concerns, but it could take a long time for her to get pregnant again. His dream of having a child had come so close to becoming a reality. He ached for the chance to have his baby growing in her womb again.

He wedged a knee between her legs and forced them apart. She shifted, and he rubbed his hand from the top of her knee to the wet heat of her sex.

Her sweet scent enticed his senses. She made him burn so easily.

“How long?” His voice sounded rougher than he intended. He studied her face to judge her reaction. Her eyes were closed. She didn't appear to be listening. Her mouth slightly parted. A light sigh of lust escaped her lips.

“What?” Her lids fluttered.

The moist heat under his fingertips enticed him to slide a long finger inside her vagina. He stroked her slick folds and teased her with deep thrusts. “How long do you want to wait?”

She arched her back and shook her head as if she couldn't recall what they were talking about. “I don't know. At least until you've finished your investigation.”

“No.” He found her clit and skillfully fondled it until she grabbed his wrist.

Sarah gasped for breath. “We don't know the residual impact of the chemicals I was exposed to.”

“Well, from what I've gathered from the women I've interviewed, it can't be too long. One just delivered a baby.” Jake lowered his gaze to Sarah's breasts. The soft swells lay within easy reach of his lips.

If she wouldn't let him play between her legs, he'd switch to another point of interest. He lowered his head and kissed each tip of her breasts.

“Jake, I can't think. Please stop.”

He hid a smile and licked her nipples.

“Can't we give it a few days, and then...” She continued to debate the point.

Wanting to end the argument, he clamped his lips around her nipple. She released a long moan and rose off the bed to force her breast deeper into his mouth.

He marveled at the way she responded to his touch. If he kept her busy enough, maybe she'd even

forget what they were talking about. He might even be able to convince her to remove the patch, but he'd give her a few days.

Right now, the fire twisting through his groin needed a release. He altered his position and slammed his cock into her moist center. They would hammer out the exact number of days they should wait at a later time.

Chapter Fourteen

"I might have the answer." Jake walked into the lab and set a box on the table near Sarah's experiments. "See all these products. There's something in them that is causing the problem."

Sarah glanced at him before lifting a bottle from the box. "How do you know?" She scanned the label. "The chemicals listed are found in most cleaning products." With her thumb, she flipped up the lid and poured some into a shallow dish. "Boy, their fragrance is familiar."

The scent reminded Jake of the first time he made love to Sarah. He pointed to the insignia on each product. "I know, and as you can see, they're all produced by Syndetic. Almost everyone I've talked to started using one of these items before getting pregnant. There has to be some connection between the two events."

"But how can we prove it." Sarah shoved the box out of her way.

"Well, that's where you come in. You've worked at Syndetic and know their products." Jake pulled a nearby stool over to the counter and studied the smooth line of her neck. This morning seemed like a long time since they'd last made love. Maybe, he could convince her to take a break. "Also I've been wondering. Why would a company that produces drugs want to sell cleaning products?"

She shook her head, and her raven hair danced around her neck, tempting him. "It's not uncommon for chemical companies to use their studies to develop a variety of products. The additional items

help them fund the cost of their research.”

“I know, but it sounds like they’re mixing their solution for multiple purposes.”

“They’re not doing this on purpose.” Sarah stared at him for a moment. “They might not even know their products are causing a problem.”

“I don’t believe that. All the girls I talked to said the Syndetic doctors told them they’d lost their babies because of working with chemicals. How could they make such a claim if they didn’t know for sure what the problem was? And why is it only women with high levels of dragon blood are experiencing the side effect?”

“You sound like you think this is a direct strike against people with dragon blood.” Sarah stared off into space. A puzzling frown marred her forehead. “It just doesn’t sound plausible.”

“See once you start pondering the problem, you begin to see how it could be a possibility.” Jake had contemplated the situation a lot over the last few days and believed a covert attack was being waged against his people. The Dragon Center had enemies, and some held jobs in high places.

“Over the last few years with the help of the dragon serum, we’ve been able to increase our birth rate. If this alarmed a certain sector of the population, they might be working to reverse the trend. What better way than to kill off our young?” Jake stood and paced across the floor.

His blood heated at the physical pain and mental cruelty toward young women. They needed to find answers. He didn’t want anyone else hurt by losing...” And we still don’t know what type of drug Scott’s friends were testing for Syndetic. Who knows, they might have planned to make those men sterile?”

Sarah blinked. “What? I thought you had no proof in that case.”

“We don’t, but I plan on checking into the owners of Syndetic. None of them have a record of supporting our opponents, but you never know what else they might be involved in.”

Sarah lifted the dish with product sample in it. “It might be one of their suppliers.”

“Good idea. I’ll also research their investors, too.” Jake surveyed the quiet lab and wondered if anyone would notice if he stole Sarah away for a while. Or better yet, he could lift her up on to the lab table and make love to her on the spot. His cock pulsed in reaction to the erotic fantasy.

His gaze caught a figure from the corner of his eye. Walter, the leader of the lab, strolled toward them.

“Well, I guess I better get back to work.” Jake shifted his stance to hide the bulge forming in his pants.

Sarah whirled her finger through the sticky product. “Jake, the smell of this—”

“Hello, Jake.” Walter brushed a hand over her shoulder in a soft caress as he walked by. “Doesn’t Sarah look nice today in her pretty new lab cover?”

Caught off guard, Sarah blinked and observed the wide smile on her boss’s face. His eyes sparkled with merriment, and his gaze zeroed in on her breasts.

“Sarah is always beautiful.” Jake stepped closer and took hold of her arm.

“Yes, that’s why we enjoy having her in the lab,” Walter said and then walked away.

She studied him for a moment, then scanned the jovial actions of other technicians in the lab. A strange buzz circled the room—talking, laughing, joking. The silent professionalism earlier in the day had disappeared.

“Sarah?” Jake slid her arm around her waist.

She noticed the serious expression on his face

and recalled what happened at Syndetic, after the company started the aroma therapy in the air system. She sniffed the air. The lemony fresh odor transported Sarah back to her dorm room. The plain white walls and the small single bed teased her memory. She couldn't hold back a smile as she smoothed a hand over Jake's chest. The bed had proved the perfect playground for sex.

"Jake, I think there's a problem." Her mind raced with possibilities. Could something in the products Jake brought in be heightening everyone's sexual awareness?

Could it also be the real reason behind Syndetic changing their policy of more sex for the interns? Sarah struggled to recall the sequence of events.

Jake leaned closer and whispered in her ear. "I know if I don't make love to you soon. I'll explode."

Confused by his comment, Sarah remembered the new commandant at Syndetic, telling the employees sex would help relief their stress levels. But was that the truth?

The project to find out how to increase a person's sex drive created the formula for the aroma treatment. But the group working on the assignment received a new task, and the project ended. The cleaning fluid change could've happened at the same time without anyone being the wiser.

But why would they want to add the chemical to their cleaning products for the mass population? What would it achieve?

Her mind full of endless questions, Sarah became aware of Jake's lips running down the side of her neck. The hard line of his body held her prisoner against the lab table.

"Jake, we have to get out of here."

He lifted his head, "You must be reading my mind."

"No, I—"

Not giving her time to finish her sentence, he grabbed her hand and headed for the exit.

Pulled along behind him, she tugged him to a stop once they made it into the hallway. "Jake, listen to me. We need to go see William and have him setup a special lab for me."

"Why?" He drew her back into his arms and shoved her against the hallway wall. "Right now, I only want to ram my cock deep into your pussy until I explode."

The heat his words generated deep inside her body warred with her desire to protect the other workers in the lab. "As much as I'd agree with your course of action, our job is to make sure everyone in the lab is using birth control. Those cleaning products you just brought in generate a wicked effect." Sarah placed her hands over his wrists to keep him from ripping open her lab coat.

"What are you talking about?" He didn't look happy about her hampering his hands. Undeterred, he squeezed her breasts through her clothes instead.

Unable to keep from responding from his touch, Sarah sighed. The alluring embrace ignited passion and sent shivers of awareness down through her stomach to her womb. She released his hands. "Didn't you notice the way Walter looked at me?"

"I should've decked the man." He flipped the magnetic lever for her lab coat.

It parted, and cool air hit her chest, restoring her resolve. "No, the man hates me. He wouldn't have made those types of comments if something wasn't stimulating..."

Jake's warm hands slid over the thin fabric of her dress.

"The products you brought in must..."

He tweaked her nipples and rolled them between his thumb and forefinger.

"Jake, I'm afraid someone in the lab will get

pregnant without knowing.” Sarah cupped her hands around his face and examined his eyes. “We need to restrict the area, so no one will be hurt.”

“But we don’t know if the products are the problem?”

“True, but it’s not a risk I’m willing to take.” Sarah moaned with regret when his hands slid to her waist.

“You know it’ll take a long time to build a case against Syndetic.” Jake tugged her closer and ground his erection against her heat. “We have a few ticks of the time veil.”

With him wedging her hard against the wall, she closed her eyes to hide from the world around them. The fantasy of making love right here, right now, sang through her blood. She wrapped her arms around his neck. “Maybe, but not everyone is aware of the problem.”

He shifted his head until the warm sweep of his breath teased her lips. “I’m willing to go tell William about the problem, but as soon as I’m done, I’ll meet you in our suite.”

The agony of waiting opened her eyes. Fire burned in his eyes, scorching a path through the heart of her sex. “And if I can’t wait?”

A wicked smirk flashed on his face before he whispered. “Then I’ll fuck you right here in the middle of the hallway.”

“Oh.” Her breath whooshed from her lungs. The excitement of getting caught escalated her lust to an even higher plane. “I...uh...”

“Want me inside you, don’t you?”

She nodded.

“Good, because, I can’t wait either.” He grabbed the skirt of her dress and lifted it to her waist. The predatory look in his gaze inflamed her dragon blood. The hard line of his erection hit the apex of her thighs.

She closed her eyes. *Insanity.*

Yet, she wanted to make love to him more than she needed her next breath.

Jake leaned closer and whispered against her lips. "Remember, you have to be quiet or we'll be discovered." He captured her bottom lip and tugged it into his mouth, sucking it in and out.

"But..." She arched her back and tightened her arms around his neck. "Don't you think..."

His fingers ran along the waistband of her panties, and then he worked them down to her knees. Cool air brushed her intimate skin, and heat curled through her blood.

"No, don't think. Just enjoy the rush." He laid his forehead against her and held her gaze as he slipped one finger into her pussy. She gasped for air.

"Oh, you're hot." He nudged her clit, and she bit her lip to hold back the moan that wanted to erupt.

Need shot through her, and she forced her hands down his chest to unlatch his suit. Once open, she dug inside and captured his engorged cock in the palm of her hand. She squeezed and then worked her hands along the hard flesh.

He let out a groan from deep in his throat. The door beside them creaked, and he paused. "I think we better get to it."

Heat curled through her blood. Sarah lifted onto her toes, the band of her panties keeping her knees together. She wiggled.

Jake edged back enough to place his foot between her legs and forced the restrictive material to the floor. She spread her legs, and he caged her against the wall. His cock drove deep and filled her completely.

Sarah clenched her teeth together to muffle the sigh threatening to escape. Jake clasped her ass and lifted her off the ground, using the cold wall behind her to hold her in place. She wrapped her legs

around his waist as he once again surged into her pussy.

A low purr stole past her lips. He tugged her closer and opened her wider for an even deeper penetration. His mouth covered hers, his tongue and erection both thrusting into her in a mind-blowing invasion of her senses. He shoved her to the edge of her control and kept her there, hovering until every cell in her body burned with a passionate explosion.

She melted into his arm, remaining upright only because he held her against the wall.

“Do you know how beautiful it is to watch you climax?”

Amazed by the compliment, she stared into his face. “Are you telling me you’re done?”

He thrust into her again, and the aftershocks bouncing around in her womb reignited her lust. “No, I’ll never be done with you.”

She glanced down the hall and wondered why they hadn’t already been caught. “But shouldn’t we...”

The rest of the sentenced vanished from her mind when Jake slammed into her again, filling her to the hilt. His frenzied pace shoved all thoughts of being discovered from her head and replaced it with a bolt of need so strong she groaned at the intensity.

“Are you hoping to get caught?” He pulled her closer, his cock plunging hard and harder into her pussy. The slurping sound of their lovemaking echoed in the silence.

The reminder increased her sexual appetite, and her body answered his call to mate. With one last thrust, he propelled them over the edge. Spasms vibrated through her body, and she tightened her legs around his waist.

For a few moments, they remained locked together. Their breathing labored, their bodies linked. Then Jake eased back and smiled. “We better

get back to our suite before we get another whiff of that Syndetic formula.”

She grinned and lowered her feet to the floor. Her skirt fell back to her knees when he stepped back to reconnect his suit.

Footsteps sounded farther down the hall. Sarah glanced up to see a young gentleman walk around the corner. A fellow mineralogist, he must have been heading back to the lab.

Jack shuffled his feet beside her and drew Sarah in front of him. “I’m sorry, Sarah, but I really don’t have time to meet with you at the moment. William wants to see me in his office.”

Sarah followed Jake’s lead. “I might be able to see you later this afternoon.” Jake caught her arm. “Let’s say around one.”

Sarah caught the eye of the intruder. “Hello.”

“Good morning, Ms. VanHorn.” The young man nodded then opened the door to the lab and walked inside.

After the door closed, Jake released her then stepped back before bending to retrieve something from the floor. “Do you want to meet up later?” She eyed the object dangling from the end of his finger and groaned.

He laughed and backed a few steps down the hall. “Might be a good idea if you want to get your panties back.”

Chapter Fifteen

“Sarah, I talked to William, and he’s filing a case with a judge to pull the products from the stores.” Jake closed the door to the suite and turned to see Sarah in the bedroom doorway. His jaw dropped. Liquid need formed in his mouth. He forced himself to swallow. His suit shrank, and blood sped through his veins.

Dressed in a red piece of fabric that hugged every sinful curve, the erotic heat of her delectable body scorched his eyeballs. He couldn’t budge and stood gawking like a dragon in water.

“Hi, Jake,” she whispered in a sexy voice and leaned back against the wall.

He choked out her name. “Sarah.”

“How did it go with William?” She played with the tie of her dress. The thin strap kept the low cut top together with the high split of the bottom of her dress. If she took a few steps toward him, the item would part and reveal her luscious curves.

“He’s also going to talk to Walter and work out a solution.” He took a few steps closer, not wanting to rush whatever plans she’d made. The quickie in the hall had worked off some of the edge, but he yearned for a lot more before they’d be done for the day.

She licked her bright red lips and ran her long fingers along her neck and down between the creamy globes of her breasts. Again she toyed with the knot holding her dress together. “Are you still feeling the side effect of the products you gave me?”

A breathless quality in her voice invited him closer, but Jake smiled and leaned against the end of

couch.

“Why don't you step over here and kiss me.” She wiggled her finger back and forth to draw him forward.

“A nice idea, but why don't you show me what you'd like me to do to you first.” His gaze fell on the gentle swell of her breasts.

“But Jake.” She glided her hands along the inside of her thighs and showed him the moist petals of her sex. The red frame of her dress against the dark hair of her sex set him on fire. “I'm so wet. Can't you help me relieve the lust burning in my blood?”

“Sure, why don't you slide a naughty finger inside your pussy and play? You enticed me into your bed the first night we made love by giving yourself pleasure.”

“But I ache for you to be inside me.”

“And it pleases me to watch you play with yourself.” He followed the path of her hand with his eyes. She brushed her fingers over the dark curls of her mound and parted the pink lips blocking access to her sex.

A long finger ventured in and out of her pussy. Once, twice, she closed her eyes and rocked. After a brief moment, she stopped and pushed away for the wall. Her gaze locked on him, and she stepped forward.

He put up a hand to stop her progress. “Wait, if you step any closer, I won't be able to perform past ramming my cock inside you and taking you over the edge hard and fast.”

She bit her lip. “But that's what I want.”

“No, you don't. We played that game in the hallway. Now, you'd like me to suck on those beautiful breasts of yours and taste the wet juices dripping from your hot pussy.” Jake's tongue tingled in anticipation of the sweet feast.

A moan of longing slipped from her throat. She swayed on her feet. He couldn't stop himself from grabbing her waist as she fell into his arms.

"Jake, I need all of those things. But they don't have to come in a certain order." She rubbed her wet mound against the fabric covering his rod.

He gripped her hips to keep his cock from exploding. "I should remove my suit, and you need to shed your dress. Then we have to move this into the bedroom."

She smiled and hit the magnetic release button for his suit. The material parted. Tearing at his clothes, she didn't stop until the pile fell to his knees. She swept her fingers over his chest then dove lower. The muscles in his stomach quivered with anticipation. Her fingers closed around his penis, and he lost all the air in his lungs. His knees buckled, and he sat on the arm of the couch.

"Yes." She untied her dress and surged forward. She placed her knee on the couch and mounted his rod before he had a chance to catch his breath. Her hot, wet heat jerked him under. He lost his grip on reality. Only she mattered. He wrapped his arms around her and fell back onto the soft cushions of sofa.

She landed on top of him, her hips pumping frantically. "Please, Jake. I can't wait any longer."

Adjusting their position, he let her set the pace. Fast, furious, she beat out a rhythm that drove him to the edge of insanity. He wondered if the top of his head would blow off when her tight channel pulsed and milked his cock. His control broke.

"Sarah, I'm com..."

She shuddered and melted over his rod.

On a long groan of satisfaction, he drove his erection deep and exploded. She tightened her arms around him, and he trembled. His body pulsed to the same beat as hers.

His feet dangled off the edge of the couch, his shoes still on, his suit around his ankles. A few moments passed before he recovered. He skimmed his hand along the silky fabric covering her back. "You know, Sarah, you could've waited until we were both undressed."

She lifted her head off his shoulder. "I couldn't wait any longer." The motion of her hips started a new rhythm. "I'm not sure I can wait for the next time either."

"Oh, no, you don't. My feet are already beginning to tingle." He slid out from under her and sat up. She slipped off the couch and reconnected her dress while he rid himself of the rest of his clothing. She walked away to stand by the hearth and stare into the fire.

"Sarah, what's wrong?"

She turned, and the loosely tied connection at her waist hid little. He could see the swell of her breasts and the peaks of her rosy nipples.

"You know if I start working with these chemical, we'll need to wait even longer before we start trying to have a baby. I don't want to risk having another miscarriage."

He registered the fact and let his gaze roam over the split in her dress. She stepped forward, and the tie slipped. He caught sight of the downy triangle between her legs. "Then I'll have William take you off the project."

"You can't do that." Sarah slammed her fists onto the curve of her waist, drawing his attention to the tie. The knot loosened.

"Wrong, your brother knows we're getting married the moment you leave the Dragon Center. He'll listen to me." Jake could count on his best friend to remove Sarah from the project. William knew how much Jake longed for a child. She belonged to him, and he wouldn't let her slip away.

“But Jake, you’re not being fair. You know how much I want to help find the answers to this problem. You can’t ask me to give up my research.” She shifted her legs wider. He could see the moisture clinging to her dark curls. The smell of her tempted his taste buds.

“Then we’ll set a deadline. If you don’t discover the answers within a month, then you’re off the project except in an advisory position. No more exposure to chemicals.” He licked his lips, mesmerized by the tiny drop suspended where his tongue longed to be.

“Come here,” he murmured when she didn’t move.

“That’s not enough time.” Sarah drifted closer. “We both know it’ll take more than a month.”

“Then we’ll end it now.” Jake caught hold of the tie for her dress and undid it. “Because I don’t want to wait. I love the idea of my baby growing inside you, and the sooner I can make it happen the happier I’ll be.” He maneuvered a hand around her hips and cupped her ass. Her exotic scent ignited his passion, and his mouth watered with longing. Over the last few weeks, he’d developed quite an appetite.

“But Jake...”

He pulled her forward and breathed in her unique aroma. “No, Sarah, you need to decide right now which way you want it, a month or not at all.”

“I can’t find the answer in a month.” She wove her fingers through his hair, tugging on it she tried to tempt him into raising his head.

Nothing could distract him from the tasty treat of her pussy. “Good then it’s over right now. No more lab work for you.”

He buried his face between her thighs, and his tongue discovered the sweet flavor of her sex. A moist confection dripped on his tongue. He lapped it up and dove for more.

“Jake.” She turned his name into a moan of pleasure.

He found her clit and bit down softly, then sent a long lick along her wet slit.

She thrust her hips forward, begging for more.

The rapture of tasting her sweet juices launched him close to the edge, but he wanted to coax an orgasm from her before he found his own pleasure.

She rocked her hips to the rhythm of his strokes, and her thighs trembled. Her nails scored his shoulders. She whimpered, and her pussy convulsed against his mouth. He didn't let up but lapped at her greedily, wanting her to come again.

Shoving away from him, she forced him against the back of the couch. With her leaning over him and her breasts within easy reach of his mouth, he licked one rosy tip. It peaked with desire.

“No, Jake, it's my turn.” She sank to her knees, and her hands caressed his thighs.

His throbbing cock begged for her attention. She teased him with one finger. Bright and provocative, the red color of her nail played down the length of his shaft. He groaned. “Sarah, I can't stand this type of torture.”

A wicked grin stretched across her face. She bit her lips and released her grip. She reached for the belt around her waist. “Would you rather I tie you up?”

Rage, lust, anger, need—a cocktail of adrenaline bolted through his system. His hands clutched the cushions of the sofa to keep from bruising her with his crushing grip. “That's not funny.”

“Yes, but it's got you excited. And you promised back when we were staying in your cabin I could someday tie you up.” She wrapped one end of her belt around his wrist. He didn't fight.

“There's nothing for you to tie me to.” The red splash of color around his wrist sent blood rushing

through his veins. He fought to appear calm, but his cock swelled with dragon lust.

“Oh, I don’t know. I bet I can find something.” She stood and took hold of the other end of her belt.

He paid no notice to the busy work of her hands, not with her breasts bobbing invitingly in front of his face. Enticed by her beautiful shape, he cupped his hands around her firm flesh and sampled the sweet flavor of each nipple. Crisp apple spices danced over his taste buds.

She grabbed his other wrist and toyed with his hand while he sucked on first one then the other of her breasts. Dragon candy pumped desire to his loins. Ignoring the primitive call to mate, he rolled her nipple against the roof of his mouth.

A soft moan escaped through her lips.

The ache between his legs demanded some type of relief. He shifted his arms forward to guide her onto his cock, but his hands stopped short. She slid away and stood.

He glared at the bright red tie around each wrist. “Sarah, what have you done?”

A devilish smile graced her lips, and her eyes twinkled with delight. “Nothing, Jake, that you haven’t done to me.”

Chapter Sixteen

Jake searched over his shoulder to see what Sarah used to restrain his hands. The red tie secured against the metal curve of the couch's frame held him in place.

"Dragon drool, you can't be serious. I used my cuffs to help you recover your energy after getting pregnant. You don't have a reason for doing this." He struggled to break the hold of the ties binding his wrists.

"That's not true. I have a very wonderful reason for tying you up." She rubbed her hands over his thighs.

"And what is it?" he roared. His loins on fire, he fought to hear her explanation over the pounding beat in his ears.

"You said I could." She kneeled between his thighs, and her hands circled his shaft.

He wanted to scream, or yell, or explode into a million pieces. The exquisite pressure building, not only in his mind at being held captive but also in his balls from the agonizing wait for her mouth to cover his cock, made him so hard and hot, he figured he'd ignite the sofa.

"Sarah, you have..." His breath caught when her breasts caressed the inside of his legs.

"It makes you a little crazy, doesn't it? Knowing I can do anything without your being able to stop me." She grinned as her hands stroked up and down his rod.

"You're driving me wild." The mournful sound of his moan surprised him and revealed how much he

needed her. "Please release me."

A smile bloomed on her face. She lowered her head, and the tip of her tongue licked his penis.

He jumped and gasped for breath. The ties around his wrists bit into his skin. He forced himself to relax. "Sarah, I—"

She brushed her tongue against his stiff rod again. He lifted his hips and said in a strained voice, "Close your mouth over my cock."

After a few more swipes of her tongue, she slipped her lips over the mushroomed head and down his throbbing staff. The pleasure jolting through his loins drove him out of his mind with the need to come. He held on by a thread, waiting until she sucked him deeper into her mouth.

She tortured him by cupping her fingers around his tight, full balls, then rolling them in her hand like a pair of dice. At the same time, her mouth sucked his rod deeper.

His control shattered. He tightened his legs around her, and his hips surged forward. The fountain of his cum spilled down her throat. Electricity ricocheted through every cell in his body.

Light headed and spent, his head fell against the back of the couch. He closed his eyes while she licked him dry. The moment she lifted her head, his eyes met hers. The look in her eyes told him she wanted something else.

She rose and shifted onto his lap.

Jake waited for her to untie his wrists.

Continuing to tease him, she slid her hand over his chest but didn't free him. "Sarah, what's going on?"

"I have an idea of how I can find the answer we're looking for faster." She peeked at him from under her lashes. "If I go back to work for Syndetic."

"No!" He jerked his hands forward and snatched her hands off his chest. "You can't."

"But we both know it could take years to find the chemical responsible for causing this problem." The dark misery in her brown eyes begged him to consider her plan.

"No."

"Just listen." She twisted her wrists and jerked her hands to free herself from his grip.

He grabbed for her again but missed his target. She slid off his lap and walked away.

"Sarah, untie me!" he yelled. Her idea bordered on insanity.

"No, not until you listen to my idea." She turned her back to him.

He fought to calm the fury raging through him at her suggestion. If she returned to her job with Syndetic, he'd never be able to free her again. How could she even consider doing such a crazy thing?

"Sarah, they'll kill you."

She shook her head. "Do you remember the guy who accosted me in the hall?"

What did that guy have to do with anything? "Bruce?"

"Yes." She turned, and her hands held her dress together. "He's the only person who worked on both the cleaning formula and the sex drive projects. He might be able to provide me with the answers we're looking for."

The pounding against his skull dimmed Jake's ability to think logically for a moment. One of the women he'd talk to mentioned a guy named Bruce. Jake missed the connection at the time, but maybe Sarah was onto something. Right now though, he wanted her to untie his wrists.

Keeping his voice low, he tried not to reveal the rage churning through his gut at her suggestion. "Sarah, you know how it drives a person with dragon blood wild to restrict their movement. Release me so I can think about something besides fucking you."

Then we'll talk about it."

"I can't, Jake. You don't know how guilty I feel about us losing our baby. And the thought of Syndetic doing this to other women infuriates me. I have to stop them." Sarah walked toward him and bent in front of him. She pulled something out from under the couch.

"No, Sarah. We'll find another way." Jake's mind rejected cognitive function with the tension in his cock screaming for another heart-stopping orgasm.

She laid her hand on his thigh. He studied the medical patch she spread over his skin.

"What are you doing?"

Sarah's tears ran down her face unchecked. But it was the only way to save other couples from the pain they'd suffered. "I found this patch left over from your surgery. It'll calm you down, so you won't hurt yourself. I need to leave soon."

He blinked, and his eyes grew glassy. The drug appeared to be working. "Leave? Where are you going?"

"No where special now. I'm heading to the bedroom to put on some clothes. You can relax for a while, and I'll be right back." Sarah leaned over and placed a light kiss on his mouth.

When his lips lingered, she let him deepen the kiss. The painful ache in the region of her heart begged her to reconsider. If she stayed with him and forgot about the harm Syndetic's drug might inflict on other innocent women, then maybe...

Guilt twisted in her gut. She'd worked for Syndetic and might've contributed to the problem. With so much anger burning through her blood, she couldn't let it go.

If Jake would only listen, he might understand how she felt. But no, he refused to see past his need to protect her.

All her life she'd wanted to be a chemist to help

people and save lives. Now, possibly responsible for others' pain and the death of her own child, she had to rectify the situation.

She closed her eyes and inhaled his scent, memorizing it just in case...

She tugged away from him and rushed from the room. Her red dress landed on the bed, and with a push of a button a closet opened. She chose the black dress she'd worn the day she left Syndetic and the same red air-heels. From another hidden compartment, she drew out a lacy underwear wrap. The teaser would cover the center part of her body and hopefully trap her scent.

Sarah slipped on her clothes and walked into the other room. Motionless on the couch, his head cocked to the side, his eyes closed, Jake appeared totally relaxed. She picked up his suit off the floor and searched for the Zeppelin's sensor in his pockets. If she planned to return to Syndetic, she had better get there quickly, before she changed her mind.

After finding the device, Sarah retrieved the extra patch she'd left on the floor and stashed it in her pocket with the sensor.

The one patch worked so effectively on Jake. She decided to stash the second one in her pocket in case she needed it.

She covered Jake's wrist with her fingers. His steady pulse reassured her. He'd be incredibly angry when he woke. He would not only be furious with her for tying him to the couch, but also for leaving him behind.

She untied the knot around his right hand and kissed the red mark around his wrist. The drug would help him sleep, and she'd be back at Syndetic by the time he woke.

He moaned and shifted on the couch.

Stepping back, she circled behind the couch and undid the strap from the metal lattice work. She

walked back around the couch and, for a brief moment, stared at his beautiful naked form. He'd never trust her again. No marriage, no future, her life with him was over.

Blinded by her tears, Sarah left their suite and hurried down the hallway to the exit of the building. Rounding the corner that led to the foyer, she heard voices and paused.

The large glass dome area had several paths leading past tall trees and flowering bushes. The fragrance of wild flowers scented the air. A group of pine trees blocked her view of the front entrance.

A flashback of her speedy trip through the forest ran through her head. The gun, the blood, Jake almost dying. Her chest tightened, and her palms grew sweaty. She checked over her shoulder to see if anyone stood behind her.

"Look, Cornerman," William's stern tone suddenly rang through the area.

Sarah caught sight of him walking through the inlet with a short pudgy man beside him. The stranger appeared vaguely familiar, but she couldn't recall where she'd seen him.

"You won't get away with this, William." Cornerman's face turned red. "Syndetic International is a respected company who has been in business for years. They are not guilty of the crimes you're accusing them of."

William stopped and turned to the man. "You must have fast informants. I filed that request with a judge only a short while ago."

"It doesn't matter who told me." The volume of Cornerman's voice rose with the level of his agitation. "This is just another ploy by Dragon Center to ruin our society with cruel propaganda." The short pudgy man shook his little finger, a rude gesture that mocked her brother. "I will not stand by and let you falsely accusations Syndetic. Once I'm

re-elected, I'll organize a committee to review all DC policies. You can't file charges against an honest company like Syndetic without stronger proof."

William glanced at the guard standing nearby. The man stepped forward. "Cornerman, it's very nice of you to drop by, but I'm late returning from lunch. I have a meeting to attend. You'll need to arrange an appointment to see me."

The guard took Cornerman's arm.

"But I'm not..." the man sputtered.

William walked toward the aisle where Sarah stood. She quickly wiped her tears from her face, so he wouldn't see. He stopped beside her. "What's wrong, Sarah?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering about the man you were talking to." Sarah continued to trace the guard's steps as he forced the round man from the building. "He looks familiar."

"Do you mean Cornerman?"

"Yes, I've seen him at Syndetic." Sarah searched her memory. Where exactly had she met the man?

"Why would he be there?" William laid a hand on her shoulder. "Did he take a tour of the place or was he visiting someone?"

Sarah shook her head, trying to work past the heartache of leaving Jake. "I don't remember. Who is he?"

"He's the politician I've been complaining about for years. I know you've heard me mention his name before. He's the one who hates anyone with a drop of dragon blood. It took us years to remove him from public office. But he couldn't stand the lack of power and has decided to run again." William's eyes narrowed. "Where are you going?"

"Nowhere. Jake ran out for awhile so I thought I'd walked down here and wait for him." Sarah rushed on to explain. "I figured I could use some fresh air."

William nodded and took a few steps. “Just remember, you’re not supposed to leave Dragon Center’s property. You still haven’t been cleared of those murder charges yet.”

“Right.” Sarah walked to the exit, checking over her shoulder a few times to make certain William didn’t return.

After strolling through the door, she smelled freedom.

No one could stop her now.

Chapter Seventeen

"Where's Sarah?" Jake barged into William's staff meeting.

The smell of smoke hit Jake in the face. His queasy stomach rolled. Five heads turned. Each man's expression held a different level of concern.

"What?" William shoved back his chair and released his hold on his smog tube. "She told me she planned to meet you in front of the building over a bong ago."

Jake stumbled forward. His head, thrown off kilter from the drug Sarah gave him, spun in dizzying circles. He grabbed for the doorframe. A shot of bile hit the back of his throat. He swallowed the acid taste and stiffened his resolve.

He released his hold on the wall and straightened. If he hadn't rolled off the couch, he'd still be asleep in their suite. The patch she'd drugged him with might slow him, but he wouldn't let her get away with such a stunt.

"Well, she lied. She told me she wanted to head back to Syndetic." According to procedures, Jake needed William's official approval to track her down.

"Why?"

"Because she wants faster answers for the Dragon Center. She thinks if she goes back and talks to..." Jake couldn't remember the person Sarah mentioned, but he didn't like her heading anywhere near the place.

"Who?" Eyes narrow, clenched jaw, flaring nostrils, each feature reflected William's high level of tension.

Jake stepped to the desk. His gut churned with frustration, but he lowered his voice and said, "I don't know, but she said she had to go back there."

"But I told her not to leave the grounds." William slammed his fist against his desk and stood. "What's your plan?"

"I'm going after her, but I need your authority to use the special tracer I placed on her a few weeks back." Jake pulled out his messenger and punched in a code. A light blinked on the screen, showing her exact location.

"You've got it." William leaned forward to study the device. The other men in the room rose to their feet.

"It looks like she has a lengthy lead on you," Murphy said from beside Jake.

"She should. She has my Zep. That's also why I'm still here. I need a DC unit."

"Henderson," William addressed one of the men gathered around his desk. "Go down and arrange for Jake to take one of the new 405 Zeppelins you've been bragging about."

"Cherry red and ready to fly," Henderson said and walked out of office to carry out William's orders.

"All right, Jake. I'm counting on you to bring her back. If we're lucky, we'll find her before the authorities do or else she'll end up in jail." William turned to the other men and retrieved his smog tube. "This meeting is over. I'm in no mood to talk about the short falls of our budget."

Jake left, glad to be away from the nauseous smell of their smoke. His stomach groaned, reminding him to stop by for a quick bite to eat before he took off after Sarah. A long night lay ahead.

Sarah drove along the ground-level road next to

Syndetic compound. If she parked in the vehicle structure, they'd ask for her company ID at the entrance. Not a good idea.

She'd reviewed her plan of going back to work for Syndetic on her trip to the compound. Jake was right. It wouldn't work because she didn't want to work there the rest of her life. But if she could talk to a few of the interns or find Bruce, she might still be able to acquire some information.

Driving into the little town near the campus, she checked the time on the dashboard. The afternoon session was over for the day, and the small shops were full of people. She slowed the Zeppelin and searched the crowds for someone she knew. At a crossroad, she stopped to wait for traffic.

A rat-a-tat on the passenger's window startled Sarah. She turned her head to see Bruce opening the door. He jumped in.

"What are you doing?" Sarah gasped in surprise.

A horn beeped behind her in response to her lack of motion.

"You better move." Bruce pointed to where she should go. "If you turn at the next street, we can be out of the area in no time."

"How did you know I'd return?" Confused, Sarah wondered how Bruce found her.

"Luckily, I just finished lunch or I might have missed seeing you." He scanned her legs "But I knew you'd be back."

"Why did you think that?" She shoved her dress a little farther down her thigh.

"Syndetic is your life. The same way it is for all of us. You ran off because you were so sexually deprived you couldn't stand another day without sex." He lifted an eyebrow. "I could've helped you with the problem if you would've let me."

"I had a very particular craving I needed to satisfy." Sarah wanted to avoid the subject of Jake.

The on-ramp ahead drew her back to the present. Sarah guided the vehicle into the take-off lane. "It didn't work out like I'd hoped."

"Yes, I heard you were locked in the Dragon Center because you murdered a man. I take it your lover didn't satisfy you the way you longed for him to." Bruce lowered the console between the two seats. "You'll find you'll be much happier with me." Bruce turned in his seat and laid his large sausage fingers on her thigh.

Sarah flew to the cruising lane and turned on the autopilot. His cold hand slid between her legs, trying unsuccessfully to arouse her. She caught his arm with her hand to stop him.

"You know, Bruce, I'm beginning to tie all the loose ends together. Your father is the politician who hates the Dragon Center. I saw him today, talking to my brother."

"Yes, my father has his passions. It's a wonder, with the way he feels about people with high levels of dragon blood, he ever screwed my mother. But then sex can cause a man to act strangely." Bruce placed his other arm along the back of Sarah's seat. He leaned into her, pinning her against the door. She forced herself to endure his advances.

"I've always found you extremely hard to resist." His lips brushed along the side of her neck. The pungent smell of his breath hit Sarah. She wanted to gag.

"I know you have very hot dragon blood running through your veins. You need a man between your legs, pumping hard and fast into your pussy to make you explode." His teeth tugged on her earlobe.

Sarah veered a little to the side and turned to face him. "Before we forget where we're going, I should set a course for our destination." She pointed to the controls. "Any ideas?"

"Oh, I liked the cabin you went to last time you

left.” He grinned and leaned slightly away so she could input the data into the guidance system.

“How do you know about the cabin?”

“I followed you.” Bruce’s hand played with the lace of her underwear wrap. He shoved the hem of her dress high to reveal the red lace that danced between her thighs. “Oh, but you did want to toy with me.”

“Did you have a tracer on me or the vehicle?” Sarah wondered if the device alerted him to her close proximity to the Syndetic compound. She’d found him much quicker than she’d anticipated. Or did he find her?

“I’m lucky you decided to wear my favorite little black dress. You know how much it turns me on.” He used one hand to toy with the lace at the apex of her legs. The other hand hit the release for her dress.

“Why don’t you slip this off and let me see your scarlet teaser?” He jerked on the clingy fabric over her chest.

Sneaking a peek at the gauges to judge the distance to the cabin, she let him tug her sleeve off her arm. They still had a long way to go, and she needed to keep him busy until they landed in front of the cabin.

“What about you? Don’t you have on way too many clothes?” She faked a shy giggle and leaned closer to draw the first-aid box out from under the passenger chair, then tugged the other sleeve of her dress off.

Bruce drooled over the red confection hiding her nipples and grabbed her breasts with his large rough hands. She grimaced.

“What? Am I not good enough to touch you?” He squeezed her flesh harder.

Sarah slipped her hands over his blue suit. “No, you’re just being unfair by not letting me see your sexy body,” she purred in whinny little voice that fed

his vanity.

A want-to-be stud, he wore the latest trends and participated in sex with any woman who would fuck him. He relished the idea of women fawning over him.

“I know how clever you are.” Sara opened the front of his suit and forced her hands over his hairy chest. Unlike Jake’s, Bruce’s body was soft and fleshy. He probably never exercised a day in his life. “You arranged for the commandant to add the stimulants to the air system, didn’t you?”

“Among other things,” he said and shrugged out of his suit. The silky purple fabric fell to his waist.

“Did you also have it added to the cleaning products?” Sarah stroked her hands past his pudgy stomach to loin wrap at his waist. She suddenly realized Jake didn’t like to wear underwear any more than he liked her to.

“Oh yes, that’s a special mixture to keep me from being tied to any one woman.” Bruce leaned back in his seat and shoved his clothing down his legs.

His thick erection stood at attention. Sarah bit her lip. The huge club resembled a warrior’s mallet. Some women might be turned on by the size, but it repulsed her. Jake filled her to brim. Bruce would split her into.

She leaned forward pretending to enjoy the sight of his body and opened the lid of the medical kit. After palming the medic patch she’d stored in it earlier, she hid it under her knee.

“I can tell you like what you see? Here, I’ll let you play a little.” He took one of her hands and laid it on his penis. “I like a light steady stroke.” With a sigh, he rested his head on the back of the seat and allowed her to fondle him.

She kept both of her hands moving. One caressed his cock while the other slid along his

calves and thighs.

His legs wide, his eyes closed, he guided her with his voice. "Yes, baby. It feels so good. If you like, you can even lick me." He lifted his hips to encourage her to comply.

A long stroke along the inside of his leg provided the extra time to remove the backing from the patch. With a quick slide of her hand, she placed the thin sheet over his calf muscle and swallowed her disgust. "I'll never be able to suck all of you in my mouth. But I have an idea of how to please you."

"Yes, why don't you slide your hot pussy over me and take a wild ride on my cock?" He offered and rocked his hips.

She glanced down at the first-aid box between them. "Oh, no. I don't want to rush things. The lubricant in here should help me take you over the edge with just the touch of my hands."

Sarah lifted a package of natural jelly, and Bruce smiled.

She squirted the ointment onto his penis.

"Hey, that's cold." He wriggled his hips.

"It won't be for long." Sarah blew a steady stream of air over the thick head. A bead of moisture formed on the tip of his rod.

"Oh, yes, I forgot how the hot breath of a dragon woman could stir a man's blood."

She massaged her hands over him and waited for the medicine to take effect.

"Oh, but you have great hands." He sent her a lecherous grin and settled against the door. "I bet your pussy is wet and dying to feel my cock inside it." He sighed. "But...I feel completely relaxed now."

After a few more ticks, his head fell back, and he let out a loud snore.

She sat back and reviewed the readings on the gauges. They had a while before they arrived at the cabin. She needed to devise a way to drag him inside

Anita Philmar

and tie him to the bed. Then after the drug wore off, she would be able to question him about the formulas he had developed for Syndetic.

Chapter Eighteen

Jake's messenger beeped.

For some reason Sarah's heart rate increased. He examined the screen closely. The tracking history showed her moving away from Syndetic and toward him.

What happened? Should he continue going after her or stop and let her come to him? He stared at the screen. The rate dropped within the normal range, but her flight path didn't change.

He glided out of the fast lane and took the next exit to the ground level streets. Familiar with the interchange ahead that led to his cabin, Jake pulled off the gravel road and studied the scenery. The bare trees and red dirt reminded him of Sarah's race through the forest.

Was she heading into trouble again? Or had she changed her mind?

For a moment, he toyed with the idea of catching her and holding her captive at his cabin. This time he would keep her cuffed to the bed for a week. He wouldn't let her escape him again.

He struggled with why she ran away. Was her guilt over losing their baby the only reason behind her current escapade? They hadn't really talked about it. But...

He refused to think about it, much less talk about it. At least not until he discovered some of Syndetic's secrets. Could that be her justification for wanting to return to Syndetic? Because *he* needed answers? Could she be trying to help him?

With her still a good distance away, Jake

decided to take a moment and check out his cabin. He hadn't been back since he was shot and could wait there. Once Sarah drew closer, he'd pick up her trail and regain his pursuit.

If he caught her some place close by, they'd take a break at the cabin before heading back to the center. His thoughts raced with ideas of what he'd discover first. The sweet nectar of her lips, the dragon candy of her breast, the spice heat of her pussy. Or perhaps he'd just pound out the building tension in his cock. He would prove to her he wanted to spend the rest of their lives making love to her until she learned he wouldn't compromise on this point. She would be his wife.

Following the dirt path, Sarah drove the Zeppelin past the empty parking area and across the lawn to the front porch. Bruce couldn't walk too far before he'd need to lie back down. Hopefully, the cabin was unlocked. They'd left in such a hurry the last time, she should still be able to get in.

Carefully, she maneuvered the vehicle a short distance from the door. To stay in control, she had to make sure he remained under the influence of the drugs.

A lit breeze brushed against her skin when she opened her door. She drew in a cleansing breath. The crisp fresh scent of the trees welcomed her like a homecoming. Her mind flashed pictures of her earlier stay at the cabin. She glanced around the stone path leading away from Jake's cabin. If she'd only known to run this way when the gunman had been chasing her, Jake might not have gotten shot.

Shadows, dancing across the ground, depressed her. The sun would fall from the sky soon. Thoughts of Jake assaulted her. The way his blond hair fell over his forehead, his spicy pear scent clinging to his skin, and the gentle touch he used to caress her. She

bit her lip to keep from crying. He'd never touch her again.

The pain of that inevitability dogged her steps since she'd left him tied to the couch. She stiffened her spine and pressed the button to shut the car door. *I can't go back.*

Forcing her feet forward, she walked around the Zeppelin to open Bruce's door. Still under the influence of the patch, he appeared to be sleeping and unaware of his lack of clothing. She needed to rouse him long enough to walk inside.

She nudged his shoulder. "Bruce, we're at the cabin. Do you want to come inside with me?"

He turned his head and opened his eyes. "Oh, I must have dozed off." He grabbed for the material covering her breasts.

Sarah caught his arm to help him out of the vehicle. "No problem, I'll help you into the house."

Following her guidance, he swiveled in his seat to place his feet on the ground and stood. His lecherous gaze fell on her breasts. He slid an arm around her, and his other hand covered one of them. "Yes, and we'll head straight for bed. You're probably on fire to make love by now."

She wrapped her arm around his waist to keep him from falling when he swayed on his feet. "Oh, but first, Sugar Plum, we have to get into the cabin."

He grinned and fell against her chest. His pungent odor slammed into her along with most of his weight. Her knees threatened to buckle. She gathered her strength and stepped forward to start him moving.

"Can your wet pussy wait?" His large hand squeezed her flesh.

She groaned at the rough treatment and forced him to take the steps onto the front porch.

He banged his toe on the railing's post, and his pace faltered. "Ouch."

“If you keep moving, we’ll be in the cabin in just a moment.” Panting from his extra heavy load, Sarah hit the button to open the door.

Relief at the door opening hit before Bruce’s weight shifted. He rammed her against the wall of cabin. Air rushed from her lungs. She fought to catch her breath. He dropped his head to her shoulder, and his lips nibbled on the sensitive skin of her throat.

“You must be on fire,” he whispered next to her ear. “I can smell your hot pussy. It’s screaming for release, isn’t it?” He ground his groin into her mound. The thick probing of his penis felt like a hot lance between her legs, cutting a raw wound through her soul. His mouth slobbered wet kisses over her neck.

How could she let him touch her? He was vile and disgusting.

Her blood ignited into an inferno she found hard to control. A furious anger to retaliate, to punch him in the mouth, lay him out on the porch, land a few choice kicks, do something to convince him to back off rode her hard. Instead, she reminded herself why she’d lured him here.

“You better have the answers I’m looking for,” she grumbled and worked her hands over his chest to gain some breathing room.

“What?” he asked after a few more kisses.

“Please, Sugar Plum,” she ground out between her teeth. “We just need to step through the door.”

She turned her head. The door beside her stood open. “See we’re almost there.”

He wobbled back enough for her to slip out from under his weight. She walked through the cabin door while he leaned against the outside wall.

“The bedroom is right through that door.” She pointed to the opening and took a few steps. To encourage him to follow her, she slipped off her dress

and then threw it on the arm of the couch.

His gaze skated down her form. He licked his lips and pushed away from the wall then staggered into the cabin. He used first the doorframe, then the couch, for support. Sarah stayed just out of his reach to coax him across the room.

“Once we are in the bedroom, I’ll slip off my teaser. Then you’ll be able to see all of me.” Her sexy warble grated on her nerves. If he didn’t provide her the answers she wanted, the price of dealing with him just might cost too much. She forced a smile to encourage him to step closer.

“Yes, and I’ll feast on your luscious tits until you scream.” He stumbled forward and caught the edge of the bedroom doorframe with his hand. She walked to the bed and sat.

“You don’t have too far to go now.” She puckered her lips and sent him a kiss. He appeared to be in a trance with his gaze locked on her breasts.

“Not yet,” he gasped and took a shuddered breath. “I want you out of that wrap first.” He snaked his way around the doorframe and leaned against the bedroom wall. “Why don’t you strip it off?”

Repulsed by the idea, she envisioned him tied to the bed. The only way her plan would work was by giving him a little of what he desired. Once he stepped closer, then she’d secure him to the metal frame and never touch him again.

With a smile, she slid her fingers over the end of the wrap and tugged it free. The long strip of material would provide an excellent rope to tie him up.

She stood and yanked the lacy fabric forward. The red teaser fell away from her breasts.

Bruce groaned. “You’ve got my mouth watering already. Why don’t you let me taste you?”

“Oh, no,” she purred and leaned forward to give

him a better view. "You said you'd meet me by the bed."

She wove the teaser from around her midsection while he decided. The material released its hold on her legs. She paused.

"You're not going to disappoint me are you?" She pretended to pout, and her hands worked the fabric free. One end, she held over her stomach. The rest of the lacy material fell between her legs so he couldn't see her dark mound. "You still want to have a little fun, don't you?"

He didn't budge. His sleepy gaze remained glued to the space occupied by the red fabric.

She enticed him closer by spreading her legs apart and toying with the wrap. "Why don't you come over here and give me a ride?" She rocked her hips and rubbed the lace over her sex, seducing him. "You're planning to disappoint me again, aren't you?"

"No way, I can already taste the sweet juices of your pussy." He shoved away for the wall and lumbered forward. "I want to spend the rest of the night fucking you." He loomed over her, and she quickly stepped aside to avoid him falling on top of her as he fell onto the bed.

She took the end of her wrap and tied it around his feet. Working quickly, she wove the material through the iron foot frame and jerked his legs farther onto the bed. He rolled over on the bed, and she captured his wrists, double tied his hands together, and stepped back.

"What are you doing?" He tugged on the wrap, but the knot held his hands in place over his stomach.

Finished, Sarah leaned against the night stand. "I thought you might be more willing to answer my questions if I had you strapped to the bed."

"A clever idea," a stranger's voice spoke from the

doorway. Sarah whipped around. A tall, dark skinned man with a shaved head leaned against the door. He held a gun.

Sarah grabbed for something to cover herself and found a pillow. He looked familiar, and she scrambled for a clue to his identity. "And who are you?"

Chapter Nineteen

“Eric, old man, what are you doing here?” Bruce said from the bed. “Oh, I know. You want to share in the fun? I should have sent you a message to join us.”

The man raised an eyebrow and scanned Bruce’s naked form. “That sounds like a tempting offer. You and I have had some real fun over at the Syndetic compound, but that’s not on the agenda for today.”

“But she’s hot. She has black dragon blood running through her veins. We can fuck her all night.” Bruce twisted his head to leer at Sarah. His wild eyes showed he was still high on the drug she’d given him. “Show him, honey. You should see her tits. A man could gag on such a mouth full. Go on, Sarah. Show him your beautiful body.”

She shook her head and stepped back. The bitter acid taste of fear hit the back of her throat. The stranger didn’t look in the mood to party. He appeared dangerous, a killer, a man who planned to silence them both.

“I, uh, don’t think Eric wants to play around, not with that gun in his hand.” The back of her legs hit the table next to the bed. Her knees threatened to buckle.

Eric grinned, a nasty smile that caused the blood in Sarah’s veins to run cold. His lecherous gaze raked up her legs. She shivered with disgust.

“Oh, that’s just part of the game.” Bruce stretched out over the bed. His thick erection jutting into the air, he appeared excited by the other man joining them. “He likes to see how hot you’ll get with

a gun being pointed at you. Women with high levels of dragon blood are extremely amorous when you raise their anxiety level. First, he'll watch you ride me, and then we'll switch places. Tell her, Eric. The gun adds to the excitement."

"Sorry, Bruce, not today. Your father has decided you're too much trouble and is paying me to get rid of you." Eric pointed the gun at the center of Bruce's chest. "And this little lady has given me the opening to take care of the problem."

"What are you talking about?" Bruce asked in disbelief. "My dad needs me to achieve his goal. How else could he have altered the formula Syndetic used for their cleaning products? With my help, we've been able to kill a large mass of unborn babies with dragon blood." Bruce shook his head and turned to Sarah. "What else does he want?"

She stared at the man lying on the bed. "Why would you do such a thing? From what you said your mother possessed dragon blood, which means you have some in you, too."

"Right, like it's done me any good. My father didn't claim me or my mother. She became a street mistress and died not long after I turned fourteen. My father contacted me only because he wanted me to help him with his cause." Bruce frowned and stared at Eric. "Now, I guess he's decided he doesn't need me after all."

"I'm sure it's nothing personal." Eric continued to leer at Sarah. "The Dragon Center has decided to bring charges against Syndetic."

His dark eyes burned with a black lust. A thick pink tongue brushed his lips. Her stomach rolled with dread at the nauseating thoughts of what he had in mind. She laid one hand over her mouth and clutched the pillow with the other. She had to escape.

"The authorities are looking for answers." Eric's

gaze landed on Bruce. “Your father feels you are the weak link in the chain.”

“So that’s why you followed me? To kill me?” Not upset by the idea, he closed his eyes, as if waiting for the end. The drug must still be dimming his view of reality.

Sarah could only stare in disbelief. Her heart started pounding in her chest, and she felt faint. Any moment now, Eric would kill them both.

“That’s the plan.” Eric pointed the gun at Sarah. “This little girl is the sister of the leader of the Dragon Center. Your dad likes the idea of pinning your murder on her. He says it’ll be payback for all the problems the Dragon Center has caused him through the years.”

Bruce opened his eyes and glared at the other man. “Come on, Eric. You can’t think this is a smart idea. With me dead, the authorities will have trouble tying the tainted formula back to me? And if they do, won’t that lead them back to my father? With me still alive I can testify that my father knew nothing about the new chemical mix. It’s a bad plan.” Bruce squirmed on the blankets. His penis waved like an unsteady post in the wind. His own anxiety levels heightened his desire.

“You’re not seeing the whole picture,” Bruce reasoned. “There’s a lot of potential in this setup to have some fun. I know your cock is rock hard. Why not relieve a little tension? Not only could we enjoy an afternoon of sex and fun with Sarah, but when we’re done we can blame her for the mess at Syndetic.”

With his hands still tied, Bruce took the extra red fabric dangling from his wrist and wrapped it around his erection. “I’m tied to the bed and ready for action. We’ve played similar games before, and you know how much it excites me. I’m hard and need a good fuck.” He stroked the silky wrap up and down

his rod, arousing his friend with the evocative sight. "If you want to kill me, I can't stop you. But why pass on an enjoyable screw first?"

Sarah turned to Eric. He licked his lips and tugged at the bulge growing in his pants with his free hand. She wondered about the relationship between the two men.

"All right, Eric. If you don't want one last taste of me. Then for old time sake, could you please tell Sarah to fuck me. You can just as easily kill me while her pussy is sucking on my dick." Bruce continued massaging his penis with the red lace. "The smell of her rich sex is driving me wild."

Sarah swallowed the lump in her throat at what he planned. "I..."

"Come on, Eric, if you mount her from behind, we can both fuck her at the same time." A sly grin marked Bruce's lips and lifted his hips. "You know you're eager to. And with my cum all over her, it'll give her a better reason for killing me."

"Drop the pillow."

Sarah jumped and gawked at the man pointing the gun at her chest. "What?"

"I said drop it." His tone allowed for no opposition.

She slowly forced her fingers to release her grip. The pillow fell and landed at her feet.

Eric's dark gaze ravished her breasts, stomach, legs and stripped her down to a simple sex object for his pleasures.

"See, I told you she has a great body. Can't you imagine sliding your cock inside her?" Bruce smacked his lips together. "Not counting how creamy she'll taste after I've sprayed my seed in her pussy."

"Move." Eric stepped farther into the room.

Sarah sidled closer to the side of the bed. Bruce reached out his hands and grabbed hers. "If you don't kill her, I could even get her pregnant with my

child.”

“But I’ll lose the baby.” Sarah’s brain scrambled to discover a way to escape the deadly game. Bruce forced his hands into hers.

“No, the effects of the chemicals only last for a few days.”

Sarah gripped his hands. “Bruce, I can’t do this.”

“Oh, Eric, did you hear that? She needs you to lick her pussy with your long luscious tongue. After a few swipes, you’ll have her screaming.” Bruce stared at the man behind her and shoved his wrists against her fingertips. “We both know what a very clever tongue you have.”

“Yes, but—”

“You know the limitless possibilities of a threesome, Eric. Do you want to watch her suck my dick while you’re slurping on her love syrup? Or slam your cock deep into her first?”

The lacy fabric scraped against her palm, and she studied the red sash. Her body hid his hands from Eric. If she untied Bruce, would he help her or work against her?

“You know, Bruce, I’m going to miss you,” Eric said in between the rustling sound of removing his clothing.

She glanced at Bruce’s face to read his reaction. He licked his lips, and a horny grin marked his mouth. “I agree, Eric. I always enjoyed our time together.”

Sarah tried not to vomit.

“You always picked the best piece of ass at the Syndetic compound,” Eric continued. “And I could count on you to share or provide me a release.”

Footsteps met the floor behind her back. The stretchy lace slipped from her fingers. The knot didn’t budge.

“That’s far enough.” Jake’s voice washed over her in a wave of relief. She turned to see the gun in

his hand pointed at the large armed man between them.

Eric lunged forward and knocked her onto the bed and across Bruce's abdomen.

"Back off, or I'll—"

"Oh, yes, Sarah. Now suck me?" Bruce lifted his hips like he thought she'd comply and bucked beneath her while Eric rammed his gun against her side.

Bruce's putrid scent hit her nasal passages, and she jerked back to avoid contact with his cock. Her head slammed into Eric. The crack of his jaw bounced around her head with the pain of the impact. The weight of his body eased off her. She turned to see Jake ram Eric against the wall.

The man groaned at the abuse. All business, Jake didn't say a word as he secured the cuffs onto Eric's wrists.

Sarah caught the feral glint in his eyes when he threw her black dress at her. "Thank you, Jake. For saving me."

"Don't thank me yet. We still have some unfinished business to take care of." He turned to Bruce still lying prone across the bed. "But you might want to dress. The police are due to arrive any moment now."

Jake stood by the bedroom door listening to Sarah and Police Chief Perkins talk. They both sat on the couch going over the facts. Thanks to Perkins, the local police weren't taking Sarah to the main police station with the other two men.

The soft glow of Sarah's raven hair drew Jake's gaze. Tension mounted between his shoulders. He couldn't keep his eyes off her, not after finding her with two naked men. He'd heard everything they'd said. His self control stretched to the breaking point, he'd wavered close to killing Eric and Bruce for the

abuse they'd planned for Sarah.

But now, with them secure in the custody of the police, he couldn't help but worry about her. Her crisp apple scent revealed her inability to take much more. Her mind and body required a release from all her pent up emotions. He opened his stance to ease the pressure building in his loins, the ache to make love stronger than ever. He clenched his fists at his sides and resolved to never let her out of his sight again.

"We dropped the murder charges, but you'll need to tell us what happened today." Perkins patted Sarah's hand and stood up. "You can come in tomorrow. I know you're exhausted right now."

Perkins took several steps toward the door then stopped and addressed Jake. "She's lucky you caught up with her when you did, or this case would've had a different ending."

Sarah shifted uneasily and glanced over her shoulder then lowered her head. She hadn't said more than two words to him since he told her the police was coming. His arms ached with the impatient urge to hold her close, to drive thoughts of anything but him from her mind.

"Yes. And of the two guys you have in custody, one would be dead, and the other would've gotten away with murder." Jake shuddered. And what would they have done to Sarah before Eric killed her?

"Not a happy possibility, if you think about it." Perkins strolled to the door. Jake followed glad to rid the cabin of the last of the police.

"Don't be too hard on her, Jake. I know she scared you with the situation she put herself in, but she did find us answers. A little extreme in her method, but she achieved her goal." Perkins stepped onto the porch. "Think now, the Dragon Center won't have to worry about Cornerman being re-elected.

After this mess, the ex-representative will be lucky to be allowed to stay in the country.”

“Hey, I guess.” Jake said his fare-wells and watched the police chief walk through the dark to his vehicle.

Jake turned back into the cabin. The door to washroom clicked close. He fought the conflicting emotions churning in his gut. Not only had she almost gotten herself killed, but she'd also left him tied to the couch. He needed relief from the ache in his soul. He'd come too close to losing her and wanted to reconnect with her in the most basic of ways. He walked toward the washroom unwilling to wait any longer.

The cleaning wash of the misting stall didn't help. She couldn't force herself to talk to Jake. He might have saved her from Bruce and Eric, but she still felt dirty.

Her mind replayed the scene in the bedroom. She hadn't planned to be caught in such a mess, but....

The results of her actions sifted through her mind. Bruce, now in the custody of the police, admitted he'd toyed with the formula of Syndetic's cleaning products. He'd also agreed to provide them the answers they needed. No one else would suffer the loss of a child because of the tainted items again.

Then why did she feel so horrible?

“Sarah, come out? I'm turning off the unit.” Jake hit the button on the wall next to the stall. The water stopped running. Warm air blew against her skin. She reached through the doorway to grab the dry rag on the rack then closed the door without stepping out.

Jake jerked the door back open. “You can't hide in here forever.”

She caught the angry blaze in his eyes. Upset by

what happened, he'd probably never want to touch her again, especially after finding her in his bedroom with two naked men.

The long rag wrapped around her body, she kept her gaze averted from his. Instead, she studied the tight line of his waist down to his thick thighs. It reminded her of what she'd lost. She stepped around him and opened the washroom door.

A fire burned in the hearth. She started toward it, but he caught her by the shoulders and turned her around. "Quit giving me the silent treatment. I'm not the one who ran off without backup."

The anger churning in Jake's gut for the last several bongs, died quickly when he saw the tears spilling onto her cheeks. Her face crumbled, and she covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, Sarah." He pulled her against him as heart-breaking sobs broke from her chest. He soothed his hand over her back and whispered in her ear, "It's over. No one can hurt you now."

He tried to calm her, but she shook with the strength of her misery. He lifted her into his arms and turned to carry her into the bedroom.

"No, Jake. Put me down. I'm not going anywhere near that room again." She wiggled and squirmed in his arms until he had to set her on her feet for fear of dropping her. The rag around her gorgeous body slid to the floor.

He drank in the sexy sight and latched onto her wrist when she bent to retrieve the wet cloth. "Forget it."

After leading her to the couch, he sat and drew her onto his lap. She cuddled into him and hid her face in the curve of his shoulder.

"Nothing happened, Sarah." He rubbed his hands over the soft, velvety skin of her back. The sweet scent of her hair excited his senses. He wanted to shove her down onto couch and work out the

pressure building in his loins, but first he needed to sooth her disturbed thoughts. "I was right outside the door the whole time."

She jerked back to stare at him in disbelief. His arms tightened. "Then why didn't you step in sooner?"

He cupped his hand over her cheek. "Believe me I wanted to, but I couldn't. Eric's position gave him the advantage of seeing into the living room. If I made a move, he would've seen me. I had to wait until he moved away from the door to get the drop on him. I couldn't take the chance of him shooting you before I unarmed him. As it was, he still came closer to you than I planned."

Sarah shook her head. Eric planned to use her for multiple pleasures before he killed her. And Bruce wouldn't have bothered to help her, even if she'd been able to untie his wrists. She shivered in reaction to the pictures flashing through her head.

"They didn't lay a hand on you, did they?" Jake wiped away the tears falling from her eyes.

"Well..."

Chapter Twenty

The thought of Bruce's hands on her body repulsed Sarah. His rough touch left bruises, and she examined the marks. "Bruce was..."

"A lecherous hound. I saw the way he drooled all over you when you were helping him into the cabin." Jake wrapped his hands around her breasts, and she blushed. "That's one of the reasons I kept him tied to the bed until the police arrived." He grazed his fingers over the small purple abrasions.

"But why didn't you show yourself earlier? You could've helped me tie Bruce up."

"I couldn't," he grumbled and gently toyed with the tip of her nipples. "Eric arrived a few ticks before you did. I had to wait for him to make his move."

Her breasts responded to his caress and grew heavy. She fought not to melt into him. She couldn't allow herself the luxury of total submission.

With her head bowed, unwilling to admit she'd even touched Bruce, she remembered Jake saying they had unfinished business. Did he want to officially tell her they were through?

Jake placed a finger under her chin and lifted her head. "What happened on the way from Syndetic? Did you have sex with Bruce?"

"No." She tried to slide off his lap, but he kept her from moving by circling one hand around her waist and the other over her thigh.

"Then what happened?" He leaned closer and stared into her eyes. "I want to know."

Sarah met Jake's gaze. "I...had to buy time." She looked down at her hands resting on his arm. How

could she admit what she'd done without making him hate her more? "I took one of those medical patches with me." She ventured a quick peek at his face.

"So that's why he was so lethargic. He even fell back to sleep on the bed before the police arrived." Jake brushed his hand back and forth along her inner thighs until he'd worked his fingers between her legs. "How did you pacify him?"

She rushed her words to help relay what he wanted to know. "I had on a red teaser so I let him take off my dress, but he started touching me."

Jake shifted his hands closer to her heat, and his fingers brushed the wet petals of her sex. "Here."

The muscle in her legs tensed. She gulped in a breath and nodded. "I...no, I didn't care for his touch so I asked him to undress."

"And Bruce agreed, because he was naked when you got here." Jake encouraged her to finish her story.

"Yes, he, uh, wanted..." Sarah placed a trembling hand over her throat and tried to judge Jake's reaction. "But I couldn't. So I worked my hands over him until I could get the patch on then I waited for us to arrive at the cabin."

The hand on her waist drew her forward. He stroked her back, but the sharp blade of his unspoken accusations lay against her throat and filled her with dread. Why didn't he tell her they were through?

She couldn't rest. The suspense nudged at her nerves, making her uneasy. "It's all right, Jake." She shoved away from his chest. "You have your answers. Now what..."

"Not yet, how did you find Bruce so fast?"

"Bruce actually found me. I decided not to go back to Syndetic. Instead, I drove through the small town near there. Bruce said he attached a tracer to

the black dress I wore the day I left. I happen to have on the same dress.” She paused a moment then continued. “That reminds me, how did you find me?”

Jake glided his hand down her leg to her ankle. “Your dragon’s heart told me?”

“What?” Sarah scanned the dragon art marking her skin.

“The tracer I put on you before I left for Madisonville. I placed it where the dragon’s heart should be so I could find you.” He brushed his fingers over the sensor and back up her calf to her knee.

“But after I started living at the Dragon Center you said you turned the tracer off.”

“I did, but I reactivated it when you ran off.” He wedged his hand between her legs and fingered her inner thigh.

“Why? You had to be furious with me for tying you to the couch and leaving. I thought you’d never want to see me again.” Sarah stared in his eyes. The emerald flame in their depths confused her. Desire? Anger? Or did he hope to extract revenge in another way?

His job was to protect her, but...

“Did William send you?”

“No, I wanted to see you. In fact, I had to see you. You need to understand something.” His fingers brushed the wet folds of her sex.

She swallowed against the hot desire only he could satisfy. The space between her legs grew. She gave him easy access to core of her being. Her hunger too great to deny, she longed to make love to him one last time.

She worked her hands over the curly hair on his chest to the solid line of his shoulders. “Jake, I know you’re upset, but I...”

He found her clit and circled it with the tip of his finger. Every cell in her body melted with red hot

desire. She drove the ends of her nails into his skin and fought the urge to slam her hips forward and demand he relieve the pain in the center of her soul.

A beep sounded from the kitchen.

Jake grinned. His messenger told him her heart rate had increased. Her face reflected the dragon fire coursing through her blood. She yearned for him as much as she ever did, but she wouldn't ask him for what she needed.

"I should drive you to the brink of insanity and not satisfy your hot lust for the stunt you pulled back in our suite. You knew when you tied me up you were leaving, didn't you?"

"Yes, I..."

He slid his two fingers into her wet pussy.

"That's why I had the medic patch under the couch. You..." She moaned, trying to straddle his lap. "I can't..."

Jake smiled and used his arm around her waist to push her down on the couch. He leaned over her and examined her face. Determined to drive her closer to the edge, he curled his fingers and stroked the sensitive spot to add to her pleasure. "You didn't have any problem thinking when you were driving me insane by keeping me tied up. You had to know the idea of your returning to Syndetic would spike my anger. I burned for your touch. That's probably why I fell off the couch."

He took a deep breath. "Your crisp spicy scent has been eating at me since you arrived with Bruce in the Zeppelin."

"I can't imagine you'd even...Oh, Jake, I'm so close." She rocked her hips against his hand, and her inner muscles pulsed with the release of her orgasm. Her eyes tightly close, her mouth fell open on a soft sigh, and she glowed with a pink blush.

Scooting from under her, he let her recover while he stood and removed his clothes. For a brief

moment, he considered carrying her into the bedroom, but he didn't want to fight that battle at the moment.

One knee between her silky thighs, Jake scrutinized her expression. "Do you understand yet Sarah? What's going on here?"

Her eyes wide, she shook her head.

Amazed how such a smart person couldn't understand such a simple concept, he covered her body with his, gathered his cock in his hand, and drove passed the wet lips of her sex into heaven.

He sighed at the incredible warmth that settled around his heart. "It's very simple. I love you. I will always love you." He sank deeper until he completely filled her wet channel. "If it's still not clear we belong together, then I'll repeat myself for the thousandth time. I'm not letting you go. Understood?"

Sarah wrapped her arms around his neck and drew him closer. The wonderful feel of his firm body against hers lightened the burden in her chest. "I loved you so much. I never dreamed you really cared."

Tears blurred her vision. Her heart swelled with joy. "At first, I thought you stuck around because of the baby. Then I wondered if you felt sorry for me, or if you blamed yourself for me losing the baby. I never dreamed you could actually love me."

"Why not? I kept telling you I wanted to marry you, and I couldn't let you go. Why was it so hard to believe?" Jake thrust his hips forward.

Sarah's mind played over all the time she'd wasted as his thick rod slid deeper, filling the lonely hole that developed when she'd considered living the rest of her life without him. "William always said you'd never get marry. From the first time, I met you he tried to discourage me from fantasizing about you. I loved you, but you never noticed me, so I thought

he was right.”

He rotated his hips and started a slow rhythm. “Oh, you had my attention.” The soft caress of his hands swept along her side until he cupped her breasts. “I could smell you every time I visited your brother.” His tongue licked her nipple. “I wanted a taste of the sweet nectar of your pussy and the dragon candy from your breasts. But I figured William would kill me if I got too close, so I stayed away.”

“Oh, if I’d known, it would’ve saved me years of only having you as a fantasy lover.” She wove her hands through the silky blond strands of his hair. “I can’t tell you how many times I made love to you in my mind.”

He increased his pace.

She arched her back.

He lifted his head. The emerald spark in his eyes glittered with lust. “Just like the first night we were together?”

“Oh, yes, that was one of my favorite daydreams.” Her core heated with need, but she kept talking. “You had on a sexy caveman’s shirt...and riding pants. And the snaps...over your crotch were...oh so much fun to undo.” She panted for air. “But the...best part...”

He lowered his head, and his mouth covered her breast. He sucked on her nipple and rolled it against the roof of his mouth. A red, hot sword of passion lanced through the center of her body.

“Jake,” she screamed, not sure if she’d ever be able to think again with the way her brain cells were short circuiting. “You have to marry me...”

A wave of pleasure erupted, knocking the air from her lungs and all thoughts from her brain. She rode the crest, and a gush of air broke over the swell of her breasts. Jake’s cock knocked against the wall of her womb, and his whole body convulsed. He

slammed her into a peaceful world of bliss where only he existed.

He sank onto her chest.

“Sarah?” his voice whispered beside her ear minutes later.

She rejected the urge to move or open her eyes, or do anything but lay there and enjoy the aftermath of great sex.

“Yes.”

He stroked his finger down her cheek. “Why do I have to marry you?”

She smiled and imagined the expression on his face. “Bruce told me how long we have to wait before I can get pregnant again.”

“And?”

She massaged the slick skin of his back with her hands. “In a few days, after I remove this patch, we can start working on making a baby again.” She peeked out from under her eyelids. “Technically, you don’t need to marry me until then. But I’m sure William would prefer if we sign the marriage tins first.”

“But that’s not the sole reason, is it?” Jake trailed his fingers over the tip of her breasts.

“Well, I’m planning to take a few days off and I’d love to explore some of my favorite fantasies with my dream lover.” She squeezed his tight butt with her hands and rocked her hips. “If a certain party plans on joining me, he—”

“Just let me know the time and the place, and I’ll play whatever game you want.”

“Why are you being so stubborn? It’s been four days since the police took Bruce into custody.” Jake sat in the chair across from William. The desk between them kept Jake from grabbing his best friend by the throat and shaking him. “Sarah and I were married two days ago. Now, I want some time

off to spend with her.”

“Well, we’re still finding things out from Bruce. He admitted to being involved with the test group that killed those artists. The police say it’s the first solid lead we’ve gotten. You can’t just leave. We’re in the middle of an investigation.” William checked his messenger for at least the tenth time. “It won’t hurt to wait a few more days.”

“What? Do you have another meeting?” Jake’s anger undone, he slammed his hand against the desk. “Because if you do, I’ll be more than happy to leave. After all, you’re the one who called this meeting.”

“No, no, I’m trying to decide if I should attend Cornerman’s press rally. He’s suppose to announce he’s withdrawing from the race. You know, it might be fun to see him under the gun instead of him pointing his weapon at us.” William leaned back in his chair. “Do you want to go?”

“No, William. Sarah and I are still looking for a place to live. Bruce gave us the answers to the chemicals that are causing all the problems. Syndetic International has agreed to pull the current cleaning products, and Cornerman is resigning.” Jake stood up. “I’m taking a few days off.”

William grinned and lifted a folded piece of tin. “All right, but you can’t leave until you’ve read this.” He handed a note to Jake.

“What is it?”

“I’m not sure. Sarah said to give it to you before you left my office.”

Jake drew the sheet apart. He read the message and smiled. After refolding the note, he slid it into his pocket and fingered his secret weapon for making sure Sarah got pregnant.

William lifted an eyebrow. “So what did she say?”

“Not much, she just gave me instructions as to

where to meet her.” Jake turned for the door then hit the button to open the partition. “Oh, and thanks again for the vial of dragon serum. I plan to put it to use really soon.”

“No problem.”

Jake dashed to the end of the hallway before he paused to reread Sarah’s note.

A fire burns in a cave in the middle of a secluded area. A sexually deprived woman dressed in a black leather wrap is waiting for the one man who can make all her fantasies come true. Her black dragon’s heart will show him the way to fun, happiness, and a lifetime of heart-pounding sex.

About the author...

Anita Philmar likes to create stories that push the limit. A writer by day, and a dreamer by night, she wants her readers to see the world in a new way. With the influence of her children's sci-fi programs, she likes to develop a place where anything can happen. She brings erotic moments to life in a great read.

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Also available

Banished Hero

by

Anita Philmar

With no memory of her past, Faye Lynn Berton clings to a father who curses her ability to shape-shift, then uses her special skill to scam local villagers. The only freedom she knows comes as she soars through the sky in falcon form. A chance meeting with another changling turns her world upside down. Beyond satisfying the powerful sexual cravings that follow transformation, he reveals a surprising dimension of sex between their kind...one to unlock the secrets of her soul.

Havyn Westmore has questions...Faye Lynn holds the answers. Determined to unravel her secrets, he strives to gain her freedom and trust. Teaching her the finer techniques of transformation keeps her close while sex strengthens their bond. But on the trail of discovery, Havyn must confront his own past. Accused of a heinous crime, he was banned from his homeland. Now, he must choose between returning to face certain execution—or robbing Faye Lynn of her birthright and a life in Paradise.

Chapter One

“Grrrrr.” A deep throated growl sounded beneath the large tree where Faye Lynn Berton perched.

Only a wolf has such a deep voice.

Her falcon vision searched the ground below and found the largest beast she'd ever remembered seeing. His muscles bunched in knots. He stood ready to pounce. His lips outlined sharp, white, canine teeth. His black piercing gaze held a young doe in her tracks, pinned in place just a few paces in front of him.

Fear rippled over the doe's coat. Without mercy, the wolf would devour the deer for his dinner.

Faye Lynn glanced back at the wolf, admiring his hunter's skill. He edged closer to his prey, his strong legs ready to spring into action. Saliva dripped from his teeth, eager for the sweet taste of fresh meat.

In a flash, he leaped onto the doe, bringing her to her knees with his weight. He slit her throat with one lash of his sharp claws. Bright red blood flowed from her wounds like a rich wine.

The smell excited the hunter in Faye Lynn. She dug her razor talons into the branch where she sat. The tree moaned at her abuse. She loosened her grip and cooed her apology at the tree.

After an exhausting day of hunting, she'd used all of her talents to display her victims on someone else's table. Her father fed her a few morsels for her own hunger but never enough to satisfy.

Shifting on her perch to work out the stiffness in her right wing, she let out a low sigh. Human,

dwarfs, wizards, or thieves, her father sold her skill to the highest bidder. He didn't appreciate her special talent. He only used her to make money.

Money, he spent to buy himself a drink or a place in some woman's bed.

The sound of flesh being ripped from the bone drew Faye Lynn's attention back to the beast. The rich scent of blood filled her beak. Her stomach growled with longing. She watched him devour the deer, feeling the glory of his victory over his prey. She again admired the sleek lines of the wolf.

Oh, what a creature. I wish I could transform into such a lovely beast.

His dark coat glistened where the sunlight caressed the smooth pelt. Her gaze slid along the hindquarters of his legs to the heavy sacks of his testicles. He would be hungry for sex after his kill.

Faye Lynn wondered about his skills as a mate. She imagined his toned body covering hers, pounding into her with a passion only she could satisfy. Her heart pulsed with eagerness to enjoy him as a lover.

A soft coo whispered through the air.

Oh, feather ticks. Her weak bird frame required rest. Only by changing back into her human form could she reenergize her muscles and bones.

The colors of the sky were changing. The red brute in the west fought for a toe hold on the horizon while the sun raced in the other direction to escape the monster.

If she hurried, she might get back to her clothes before the sky grew dark. Her gaze stroked the wolf's coat one last time. She shouldn't have hung around, drooling over the sexy creature. His mate back in his den probably filled every one of his lustful cravings and provided him with plenty of pups to play with.

With a small hop, she spread her wings and glided for a moment. Her flight path carried her

above the greedy wolf devouring his kill.

His head turned. His black eyes tracked her course. She pumped her wings to avoid his sharp teeth. He looked ready to add her to the menu and sent an evil glare in her direction. A snap of his jaw warned her not to stop for a parcel to eat. An updraft carried her to the tops of the trees and away from the beast.

The sights from air always amazed her. The tranquil scenery soothed her nerves and calmed her fear of the wrath her father would inflict if he found out she'd defied him and snuck out. Only by breaking free from him for a moment could she relax and enjoy herself. He treated her like a prisoner and locked her in her room or a small cage. She couldn't do anything without his approval.

Rich green grass spread out beneath her, beckoning her back to the ground. Crystal clear water sparkled in the river. Over the last few days, she'd used it as a marker to guide her back to town. A stone fence sat ahead that outlined the path she must take.

The first pangs of the transformation process slammed through her body, twisting the muscles in her shoulders, and the truth hit her. She couldn't make it back to her clothes before dark. Her wings collapsed. She lost altitude. Scanning the ground for a place to hide, she forced her wings wider and let the air gather beneath them. With the last of her energy, she glided closer to the ground. Her right wing dropped.

Her course changed, and she fell in a half-swoop, half tumble to land on a patch of thick grass behind a large rock near the river bed. Her feet took a couple of hops, then her muscles convulsed.

Tendons stretched, bones twisted. Moving, shifting, her frame took a new shape. She rested for a moment, gasping for breath.

Sweaty with the scent of her transformation, grass and sand coated Faye Lynn's body as she crawled to the edge of the lake. Splashing water over her clammy skin, she shifted farther and farther away from the shore. The ache in her muscles eased, and the hunger in her womb grew.

Transforming had a price. Now, she needed hard, heart-pounding sex to satisfy the ravenous greed of her lust.

It's been too long since I've had a man.

The cool compress of the water applied against her heated pussy calmed her sensitive skin, and the dark fog of desire clouding her brain lifted. She dug her toes into the muck at the bottom of the lake and used the buoyancy of the water to stretch her legs and stand. Water dripped from her hair and ran over her breasts, but instead of soothing her taut nipples, they peaked into tight buds.

"What are you doing here?" The angry male voice spoke from the bank of the river.

Water lapped against Faye Lynn's skin with a warning of danger. She squatted deeper into the cold water and peeked over her shoulder. A quick dip in the lake, and when it got dark, she'd planned to sneak back to town.

Now, caught by a stranger, she hoped he couldn't see her naked form. "I'm sorry. Does the river belong to you?"

"Yes, and all the land around here. You're invading my territory." His rough tone sounded as if he planned to haul her off to jail, which didn't happen often in this part of the human world. More criminals lived in the surrounding area than law abiding citizens.

"Is that the reason for the tall stone fence around your property, because you don't like people on your land?" She wiggled around to observe his granite expression. Her feet sunk a little deeper into

the soft muck at the bottom of the lake.

A tall mountain of a man, his wide shoulders and bulging muscles told her she wouldn't escape this man easily, if at all. She considered the amount of time she'd been in human form. The ability to shift from one form to another quickly wasn't a skill she could achieve easily.

Too soon to even try.

"So tell me, how did you get onto my property?" He leaned against the rock where she'd transformed.

His nostrils flared. He turned his head. His dark hair caught the light of the falling sun and sparked with the same red highlights from the night beast. The fabric across his chest expanded, displaying strong, well-defined muscles.

"What?"

He turned and nailed her with a piercing black stare. "You're a shape-shifter, aren't you?"

Uncertain if she should speak the truth, Faye Lynn shook her head. "Why would you say such a thing?"

"Because I can smell you." He stepped forward. His rubber boots splashed in the shallow waters of the river. Each step drew him closer.

If she knew how to swim, she would've turned and swam away, but alas, she didn't. "What? What smell?"

A lustful smile passed over his lips. His white sharp teeth looked ready to feed on her flesh. He licked his lips and stopped a few paces from her. "An alluring scent of a shape-shifter. After changing form, they burn with a hunger that can only be satisfied in one way."

Her heart jumped into high speed at idea of this excellent example of a man knowing her desires. She studied him again, taking in his narrow hips and powerful legs.

Oh, what a superior lover he'd be.

Faye Lynn swallowed her yearning to mate and denied his claim. "I have no idea what you're talking about. I just decided to take a quick dip in the lake so I could cool off after the walk I took through the forest."

His gaze examined her, and she shifted lower into the lake, wondering if he could see her naked body under the clear water.

A flame lit his eyes. "Then where are your clothes?"

"I left them over there behind that rock." She pointed to the boulder he'd been leaning against.

"Well, they're gone now." He held out his hand. "Why don't you come with me, and I'll see about getting you some clothes."

The wind shifted. The rich hungry scent of a man hit her womb. Quivers ricocheted down her limbs. Her knees wobbled. Her hands shook. An insatiable hunger raced up from her toes and pooled in the cavity between her legs.

She wanted this man, right here, right now. Instinct forced her to move. Her feet stuck in the muck on the floor of the lake, and she plunged forward. He grabbed her to keep her from falling face first into the water.

He tugged on her arms, and the mud released its grip. She landed against his chest. His hands cupped her hips, and the center of her heat embraced the engorged shaft outlined by his pants. The primal lust to mate consumed every cell.

Faye Lynn wrapped herself around his large form. Her arms circled his neck, and her legs found their way around his waist. She clung to him, kissing and licking any available skin she could reach. The thick column of his neck tasted like a sinful treat. A hot flame shot through the center of her, and liquid desire gathered in the heart of her core. The roughness of his beard abraded her tongue.

Her head spun in a slow circle when he lowered her gently to the ground. Dark eyes met hers. His chest covered her breasts, giving her no room to wiggle away.

“You’ve been denying your desires for too long. Your young body requires a release from the transformation.” His growl of disapproval revealed that the depth of his cravings matched hers.

The compulsion to rip the material from his back provoked her to curl her sharp nails into his shirt. He grabbed her wrists and placed them above her head.

“Please help me,” Faye Lynn begged. She didn’t recognize the needy voice. All her senses were alive, tingling with awareness, demanding attention. The moisture from the lake dried instantly from the heat radiating from her skin. The soft bed of grass tickled her back. “Can you please make love to me?”

His dark onyx gaze caressed her face and followed the length of her neck to her breasts. His thick tongue stroked his lips, an erotic invitation to invoke pleasure.

She’d made love before, but the overwhelming craving to mate with this man ruled her actions. On fire, she tightened her legs around his waist and rubbed the center of her heat against the coarse texture of his pants. She begged him to give her relief. “Please satisfy my hunger.”

His weight settled more firmly over her, not allowing her any room to escape. Most times, she didn’t like such a big man lying on her chest.

Yet at the moment, she welcomed him, his mass, his fire, the hard line of his frame pinning her down.

He shifted her hands into one of his, and his fingertips stroked the line of her jaw, tracing the outline of her mouth. She nipped at his fingers, attempting to catch one with her teeth. He smiled at each of her attempts, but his reflexes were too quick

for her to win her prize.

“Patience little one, I’ll give you what you need.” He glided his thumb over the seam of her lips. She opened her mouth and licked him. His eyes glowed with a hot desire. His nostrils flared.

She closed her lips around his finger, stoking it lightly with the tip of her tongue. The salty taste of his skin lit her desire, and her stomach contracted with a lustful appetite.

He allowed her to sample the flavor of his thumb for a few moments before he tugged free.

She sighed at the loss.

“Easy.” The heavy tone of his voice resonated with an eagerness that pumped through his blood and called to hers. He could no more deny her urgency for sex than he could his own.

His large hand stroked her neck. She tilted back her head, allowing him access to the most vulnerable spot for a kill. Hunter eyes flashed, and he squeezed her throat lightly with his hand. He could snap her neck so easily.

A smile flirted over his lips. His hand glided lower. She read the male glint of control in his eyes. Prey or lover, she would give into his cravings for the moment because they matched her own.

He cupped her breast in his hand. Her breath backed up in her throat. The callused pad of his thumb rubbed her nipple. Electric shock waves vibrated through every nerve ending, and the hairs on her head tingled.

“Please, I...” Her mind flirted with insanity. Her eyelids dropped to capture the pleasure.

He covered her breast with his lips. After only an instant, he lifted his head and blew on her skin. Her nipple peaked. Sparks of lust sang through her chest. His hot mouth again met her skin, and a sizzle of longing raced to the ends of her toes and fingers until they tingled with awareness.

His tongue swirled around her stiff nipple. The hand holding her wrists shifted to her other breast. He kneaded one plush mound while sucking and licking the other. Her body sang with desire.

“I, uh, can’t...” Her hips gyrated. She rocked and wiggled, convulsing with her release.

Breathless and sated for a moment, her legs fell from around his waist. Her hands cupped the curve of his shoulders, and he shifted slightly. She opened her eyes to find him scanning her face.

“Are you in the fertile period of your cycle, rich for a man’s seed, hungry for a child in your womb?” His tone was accusing, as if she were trying to trick him into getting her pregnant.

She shoved at his chest, but his position didn’t alter. “No, one man already dominates me. I don’t need another one or a child to tie me down.”

Dangerous beams of anger nailed her to the ground. “Are you married?”

“No.” She tried again to shove him away. “My father forces me to eat pounds of lust weed every day. No man in his book will ever lay claim on me. He’ll forever hold me under his thumb.”

“Yet,” his gaze didn’t leave her face, “I bet he’s also the one who finds the men to satisfy your desires, isn’t he?”

The quietly asked question heated Faye Lynn’s face. She lowered her gaze and stared at the dark hair on his chest.

Her father used her in a number of ways to make money. But she didn’t care to explain her life. A stranger, she’d probably never see this man again, and he had no right to judge what she did or didn’t do.

She stiffened her back and glanced at him. “It’s time I leave.”

The fierce glare in his eyes scared her for a moment. “Where is your father?”

“In town. Why?” She couldn’t imagine why he would care where her father was.

“Does he know where you are?”

Again, Faye Lynn blushed.

“I can see that he doesn’t. When he finds you gone, what will he do?” He brushed his hand over the bruise on her right shoulder.

“He won’t find out, because I plan to join him by tomorrow morning.” She raised her chin ready to defy her temporary lover should he try to deter her.

A hint of a smile touched his lips. “And what are you planning for the rest of the evening?”

Her gaze locked with his. The glint of the lust she’d noticed in his eyes earlier returned. She wanted him, too, but instinct warned her to proceed with caution. He wouldn’t be an easy man to forget.

“Well...” She eased off on the pressure of her hands against his chest. The idea of spending a night in his arms teased her mind. Could she enjoy the pleasure of sex with a man not of her father’s choosing? Or would picking her own sexual companion be stepping over the line drawn for proper ladies?

She rubbed her feet along her lover’s calves. The rough texture of his pants tickled her arches. “First, I need to find some clothes,” she studied the stiff tips of her breasts, “and then I should head back to town. After that, I probably should find something to eat and somewhere to rest.” Her hands slid along his chest to the curve of his shoulders. “Why?” She added an innocent tone to her voice. “Did you want to join me?”

“No, I’m planning a different course of action for the evening.”

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