UPSIDE
DOWN
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by Jenna Hilary Sinclair

“Incoming!”

The missile shrieked over their heads as Union of Planets Commander Jefferson Langley and Third Advisor Paco Delacruz ducked behind an upended sidewalk bench. It provided but meager protection against the sudden barrage of stolen armament that the rebels were throwing at them, but the XEL-3 portable launcher, wherever it was, hadn’t acquired their range yet.

Langley grabbed the advisor’s arm, because Paco wasn’t used to action like this; he mainly stayed aboard the ship in orbit. “This way!” he shouted.

They dodged across the city street and dived behind a cement barricade. It was wedged across a deep storefront doorway and so provided excellent protection. The barrier must have been used for riot control by the Union of Planets-backed government of the planet of Nobel, for which they were fighting. Those riots had taken place weeks ago, before the frightened lawmakers had sent a frantic plea across the parsecs to the UP for help, and before the city center had become a true battleground when the violence had started in earnest.

Another missile rocketed across the sky and lodged high in one of the skyscrapers that ranged up and down the central downtown thoroughfare. A shower of glass rained on the sidewalk two hundred meters south; it was no danger to them.

Langley whipped out his comm unit. “Rell!” he yelled. “Can you hear me? I need coordinates for that launcher!”

Only static answered.

“Damn it!” Delacruz shouted over the din. “We’re going to be pulverized before that genius Caldun figures out where—”

Fire rent the sky, and they ducked. Another explosion half a block away carved a ten-meter-wide hole in the street.

“That was close,” Delacruz breathed. He held his beamgun tightly, but for the moment at least there was nothing to shoot. His eyes searched the sky, alive with wispy clouds of smoke. “Tell me again why we can’t just take one of the ship’s tenders and fly right out of this hellhole.”

Langley snorted and checked the charge on the weapon that he cradled in both hands. He carried a particle rifle with enough power to blow up half a small city. It’d been years since he’d been forced into action like this in support of the marines, since way before he’d been made commander of the *Churchill*. But he wasn’t going to stand by and watch the SpaceForce marines or the civilians of this city get blown to kingdom come without doing something. He’d taken a tender to where the shelling was taking place and jumped into action. “We can’t risk it, and you know it, at least for another half a day. The radiation flux of the ion stream is just too unpredictable until—”

Delacruz waved a hand. “You sound like Rell. Mister Precision. I get the picture.” He glanced out across the street and

pointed with his weapon. “And speaking of your favorite Caldun, there he is.”

Someone in the UP Marine brown fatigues disappeared behind a subway entrance fifty meters away, and Langley had his comm unit out and open a second later. “Rell, what are you doing here? You’re supposed to be back at base getting a fix on the launcher.”

Over the crackle created by the jamming efforts of the rebels, Rell’s voice could barely be heard. “…no possibility of pinpointing…believe close-range obser…cessful.”

“I’ll run cover for you,” Langley shouted into the grid, but he doubted the leader of the marines stationed on the *Churchill* heard him.

“You stay here where it’s safe,” he ordered Delacruz.

“Like hell,” defied the older man, and he followed as Langley ran down the broken sidewalk.

The screech of the missile slicing through air announced its coming, fast and right on target. Langley threw himself to the ground, his hands over his head, his weapon stuffed up inside the field jacket he wore, and he prayed to whatever deities looked over Union of Planets spaceship commanders and those they loved. Then he was up a moment later and threw himself down again, only this time squarely on the sprawled body of his advisor.

Delacruz’s “umphf” mingled with the overwhelming roar of the blast. They rode the heaving ground like it was a living, breathing thing, then debris pelted them. Glass shards tore into

Langley's legs, his back; a chunk of what must have been concrete took dead aim at his kidneys.

All his breath was pushed out at once, and he couldn't help one convulsive shudder as pain racked him. When silence settled over them, he knew they had been very, very lucky. Stifling his groan, he pushed himself up, took one look at a wide-eyed and obviously intact Delacruz beneath him, and stared across the street at the steps leading down to the subway.

There was no entrance anymore; it had been ground zero. How close had Rell been to it?

The wreckage of what had once been a vibrant city lay in bits and pieces all about them, but Langley scrambled across it at top speed, scanning every chunk of twisted metal, every buckled span of sidewalk for some trace of camo fatigues.

"Come on," he commanded under his breath as he checked under a tattered awning. It'd been blown from a sidewalk café to flutter limply on the street. "Come on. You've got to be here. You're—"

No matter how many times he saw it, blood was always a shock. A smear of bright red led him around the wreckage of what might have been a motor scooter to the marine colonel. Encircling his portacomp as if it were precious, life-giving, Rell was curled up in a ball on the ground.

Long ago Langley had acknowledged to himself how much more he cared about Rell's safety over any other being's on his spaceship; it had been a hard-fought, private battle and an almost

humiliating realization of weakness and vulnerability. Commanders should have no favorites. That's what the mythical book said, the one that governed leaders of men and women who patrolled the UP space, kept it safe for their citizens, those who'd been fighting the Lindotian war now for decades.

But commanders could not always be the perfect beings expected by their crew and by SpaceForce, and it was the merely human man who darted toward the crumpled body of his friend, his heart pounding.

Gently Langley reached for one shoulder and pulled Rell toward him so the Caldun could lie flat on his back. That was when he saw that the left side of the dark head was an open wound. Not a minor cut, not an injury that could be easily repaired—gray-brown brain tissue was clearly visible, some of it bulging from the fractured line of missing flesh, and shards of white bone torn from the skull dotted the pulsing, bleeding mass.

Langley had seen too many battlefield casualties to allow the bile that suddenly seethed into his throat to have any effect on his actions. He was reaching for Rell's limp hand and feeling for a pulse even before he was able to clamp down on his nausea. The quiver of life beneath his fingers powered his desperate cry: "Paco!"

Life: hope.

But a head wound like that—for a Caldun…. Especially for a Caldun, and even then, especially for Rell, who was such a different Caldun….

His face scraped and swollen but his hands steady, Paco arrived seconds later. “My God,” he whispered as he reached for the medical kit hanging from his belt. Delacruz’s secondary job on the *Churchill*, the one he stepped into in times of emergency or when a backup was needed, was medtech in the medical ward. He wasn’t any doctor, but he was far more competent to handle this injury than Langley was, and they both knew it. “My God. Rell .”

Langley did not allow himself to think. He relinquished his hold on the tumultuously pulsing wrist and stood to survey the ominously still street. If the bombing did not start again soon, the rebel foot soldiers would return with their effective mix of beamguns and projectile weapons. Either way, they were out in the open with no protection.

“We have to get to cover,” he said. The white winter sun cut through the downtown canyon, exposing it, exposing them.

“We can’t move him.” Paco gritted through his teeth as his hands roved urgently over the broken body. “Jeff, this is bad. Moving him might—”

“I’ll carry him. We’ll go back to where we were before. You can work on him there.”

“Jeff! He might die if—”

Langley swung around at a sudden movement, his weapon ready. But no enemy threatened, just the downed awning shifting in the cool breeze. His voice cracked. “I hear you! But it won’t do Rell any good to be blown to bits by the next missile. And we can’t help him if we’re dead.”

“All right, all right.” Paco gave way. “We’ve got to do something about….” He carefully touched the top edge of the wound, inched a loose flap of skin down. “Goddamn it, not even a sterile field, the worst place for contamination…. Not enough here for even a suture….” Decisively he rocked back on his heels, shrugged out of his field jacket and then pulled his white advisor’s shirt over his gray-haired head.

Langley didn’t say a word as Delacruz wrapped the fabric around the Caldun’s head and face.

“There,” Delacruz muttered. “At least there shouldn’t be any further rupture. If you’re careful.” He put his jacket back on. “Let’s move it!”

“Take this.” Langley thrust the rifle into the advisor’s suddenly awkward hands, then hunched low over the strangely headless body of the marine colonel. He could hear Rell breathing heavily through the cloth, a frightening, very physical sound coming from a man who had denied the kind of body and brain his people wanted him to have.

Langley jerked away from the thought even as he carefully worked his arms under knees and shoulders, as he extended his elbow to provide support for the awful reality of what was unseen under Delacruz’s shirt. With one controlled heave he was up, staggered once, then picked his careful way across the rubble of the street to relative safety.

Delacruz paced him every step of the way, in dead silence that scraped against Langley’s nerves. Finally, within the shelter of the storefront, Langley laid his burden down. Before the advisor could

do it, he moved to unwrap the tunic, which was soaked to a dark, purplish color on one side. Rell drew in a harsh, difficult lungful of air as it came completely loose, and though Langley cringed before the indication of pain, he couldn't help but think *Thank God—still breathing.*

Resting a hand on one tension-less knee, Langley shuffled to the side as Delacruz worked in the chill shadows. Maybe the Calduns had it right: bodies and brains were machines and should be treated that way, augmented, improved, raised to their optimum level, and the ways of the heart and the mind should be thoroughly understood, dissected, and, above all else, controlled. If only they had a spare part they could get off a shelf, fix this like the Calduns probably would. But he couldn't give in to the fear pounding in his gut, the dryness of his mouth, or his worst imaginings. He had a duty to perform, regardless of what had happened.

"Paco, you work on him here while I try to get to the launcher." Another rocket shrieked down the street over their heads, but it landed blocks away out of their sight, and it seemed so insignificant in the face of the personal tragedy before them that neither man reacted to it at all. "I'll pick you up on the way b—"

But Delacruz cut him off even as he picked out a hypo from his kit. "No, you can't do that." The instrument hissed as he shot the contents directly into the carotid artery.

"I've got to. Everybody's pinned down until—"

Delacruz's hand, with gentle, sure fingers spread in support, rested just under the Caldun's chin. He didn't spare a glance for Langley. "I can't deal with this. This is way past my abilities, and

he needs a real doctor. I think he's hemorrhaging, but I'm not sure. He must be…. At least I've got to talk to Doctor Carney on the ship. Now, Jeff!"

"We can't cut through the interference to call Carney. We can't transmit that far."

"Then Doctor Ferguson at base camp."

"You heard it yourself, we can't get through."

"We've got to," Delacruz insisted stubbornly. "There's no other choice. I have no idea what to do next. This is an injury way past my—"

"You'll have to do your best here until we can neutralize—"

Delacruz rounded on him, his eyes blazing. "I can't perform miracles, Jeff!"

"Neither can I," Langley snarled, but he was up on his feet with the comm unit open before his lips. "Langley to Nobel base." He shook the static-filled answer before Delacruz's face in impotent rage. "See? See?" He turned away and stared blindly out at the street, where duty called him to be.

A long moment of silence stretched. Then a rustle of movement behind him, and a stained-red hand rested on his shoulder. "I know," Delacruz whispered. "God, Jeff, I'm so sorry."

Langley turned. "No chance at all?" he asked bleakly.

"I don't know! I think…. He's Caldun, for God's sakes. I know human brain structures, at least a little, what to do with them.

Not this…. And he's not augmented! Every elementary text I ever saw assumed all Calduns are augmented. I have no clue. I'm not even sure Carney would have a clue, but at least he could try. Here, all I can say is that if Rell's hemorrhaging, and I think he is, then the pressure in his brain is building, and that's not good for any being. If it's not relieved soon…."

"How soon?"

Delacruz passed a hand over his five o'clock shadow. "Half an hour? Twenty minutes? An hour?"

Langley drew a breath, looked past Delacruz to where the body that housed the spirit he loved was fighting a losing battle. "All right," he said. "All right. Worst case is twenty minutes. We've got twenty minutes to think of—the portacomp!"

He dashed out into the street, and in a minute he'd returned with it. Breathlessly, he announced, "Rell protected this more than he did himself when the missile hit. It's why he was injured. There must have been a reason—he never does anything without a reason."

For four years Langley had been the commander of the *Churchill*, in charge of the ship that transported the marines from one military engagement after another, and responsible for the success of each attack. But before his promotion he'd climbed through the ranks. Portacomps might have changed since he'd last operated one, but he still knew how to extract and interpret the data stream. He sat, propped it on one knee, and set it to disgorge its most recent readings. Rell wouldn't have had time for correlation or analysis; whatever he had been protecting must be in the raw

data. Langley was conscious of the passing minutes, keenly aware of the labored breathing coming from the corner. He wouldn't look at Rell, didn't want to look at him. He had to think.

Got it!

"He figured out the jamming frequency."

Delacruz looked up from his post on the floor. "How does that help us?"

"It's a variation on tachyon transfer technology…never mind. Let me…."

Three minutes to run the computations, using formulas he hadn't thought of in years, another four to establish a wireless connection between comm unit and computer, and he was ready. "Langley to Nobel base. Langley to Nobel base."

"Commander!" It was Ludwig's clear, competent voice. "Sir, where are you? Nobody's managed to cut through the jamming except you."

"Never mind that. I'm sending a squirt of how to get through the interference. There. Got that?"

"Got it. I'll share this with everybody right away."

"Good. Now put Doctor Ferguson on the line. Immediately."

"Aye, sir."

Langley handed the unit to Delacruz, then heaved a sigh of relief when Doctor Ferguson came on and started talking. The

advisor rattled off a series of numbers that came from the diagnostic unit he had strapped to Rell's arm, and Ferguson came back with some advice on a new dosage for another injection. At least now there was a chance.

But Delacruz suddenly tensed.

"Jeff!"

"What's wrong?"

"The worst," Delacruz said grimly. His liver-spotted hand clenched and unclenched. "Even I know this is bad. Jim," he said into the comm unit. "There's a spike in the HP reading. That's a rupture in the medulla transmatus, isn't it?"

"Jesus Buddha."

"What do I do?"

"Paco, there's nothing you can do without the equipment on the *Churchill*," came the doctor's voice. "He needs the stasis system to start with, and life support, just to stabilize him so we can maybe…. Tell Jeff I'm sorry."

"How long does he have?" Langley asked, leaning in to speak into the grid.

"Your guess is as good as mine, but it won't make any difference in the end if we don't get him to the ship."

Langley transferred his gaze to his advisor, but he was thinking frantically; he was not going to allow this to happen. Not

to Rell. Not to his love that never was and never would be. Not to that brilliant mind and free spirit and that determined, lost soul.

Langley had been called ruthless by friend and foe alike, and ruthless he was. In the nighttime hours he'd sometimes confronted the question—what was he willing to risk for Rell?—and never had been able to provide an answer. Now, in less than a second, he knew. "Could you…. You're rated to pilot the tender. If we could get Rell to the *Churchill*…." He left the rest unsaid, an eerie, guilt-ridden determination washing over him.

Delacruz gulped. Langley saw the fear in his eyes right along with the decision. "You heard Ferguson. Then there'd at least be a chance."

"Taking the *Pankhurst* through the atmosphere to the ship is dangerous in these conditions, not impossible. Rell talked last night about making some changes to the screening mechanisms so we could try it. This tender's enabled that way already."

Delacruz stood up, and to Langley's eyes the old man looked unnaturally calm. Didn't he realize what his commander had just asked him to do? Even at age seventy, with more years behind him than in front of him, the remaining years were still precious.

"Just what I always thought I'd be," Delacruz said with a small smile. "An experimental animal."

"Paco, you don't have to go," Langley offered urgently, already knowing what his third advisor and friend would say, wanting him to say it, but needing to give him an option if only to salve his own guilty conscience.

“Yes, I do have to go, because the tender won’t get there on its own. You’re needed here on the planet to direct operations. Besides, the *Churchill* can’t do without you. Me?” He shrugged. “Let’s get going. Will you carry him to the *Pankhurst?* It’s, what, down that block? Come on, let’s go. There’s no time.”

“Paco, are you sure you want to do this?” But even as Langley asked he was wrapping Rell’s head again, working his hands under him and picking him up. He refused to acknowledge the warmth of the body in his arms, the body that he’d always wanted to touch.

“No, but if I don’t,” the advisor said evenly, “I’ll never be able to live with myself. How much of a chance do you think we have?”

“I don’t know,” Langley choked.

He counted the minutes as they made their way around all the debris and down to the innocent-looking postage-stamp park where they’d landed the small craft that had brought them from the base camp. It was capable of the flight out into space under normal conditions, but with the radiation….

Delacruz activated the ramp, and Langley carried Rell inside and strapped him into one of the front seats, wincing as the cloth-covered head lolled to the side. He touched Rell’s shoulder. He was still breathing.

Paco gave him a crooked grin and then he sat in front of the controls. “Go,” he said, without looking at him again. “I’ll see you later. Go.”

Langley left and retreated to stand under one of the trees that bordered the small swath of green. Most of the grass was gone, but

some still survived. He watched while the tender's engine engaged, as it lifted off with a whoosh of air, as it rapidly ascended into the sky.

Six thousand, four hundred and eleven kilometers out in space, the medical ward of the *Churchill* waited. The trip should take maybe five minutes. Would Delacruz even be able to steer into the docking bay? When the tender door opened, who would be alive inside?

That morning, what felt like days ago on the ship, he'd given orders that the planet-to-ship transports not be used except in extreme emergency; he clearly remembered thumbprinting the official file. Until conditions changed, it was just too dangerous to send anyone anywhere.

His heart in his throat, Langley watched the transport carrying the two people for whom he cared the most in all the worlds fade from view. He stared down at his open comm unit in the palm of his hand and tried not to think at all. He should be back on the job. He should be hustling down the street, trying to take out the launcher, finding the enemies of the government of Nobel and by extension the enemies of the Union of Planets that he had pledged to protect.

Instead, he stood under the motionless tree limbs and did none of that. He thumbed the control on the unit so it showed ship-time passing, and his world narrowed to the numbers changing, slowly changing. Two minutes, three, four. Five minutes. Paco should be back now, hovering outside the mother ship. The bay doors on the side should be opening, and he should be steering the way in. Settling to the deck. The giant room pressurizing. Yes, six minutes

now. Why didn’t the ship call him? They’d broken through the interference now, so surely…. And now the crew who worked in the bay should be rushing out with a medical team to the tender, opening the door and finding….

He started counting. Slowly. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven.

Oh, God.

Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven.

Speaking into the grid, asking what was going on: that was impossible. He might hear what he couldn’t tolerate hearing.

Nineteen. Twenty. Twenty-one. Twenty-two.

Something inside him froze. He walked away from the park into the chaos of the street: the abandoned vehicles, the looted goods, the twisted metal, a loose sign flapping in the westerly breeze. He thought about how clouds were building up overhead, and how maybe there would be a storm before sunset.

Twenty-nine. Thirty. Thirty-one. Thirty-two.

He thought about the people who had worked and lived in this part of the city, who’d been driven out by the kidnappings and torture and threats, the tools of terrorists everywhere. Where were the innocent people tonight? He thought about what had driven the rebels to do what they had done, and what propelled them to put their own lives in jeopardy. There was always a reason.

Thirty-eight. Thirty-nine. Forty. Forty-one.

“Rell,” he whispered. “Paco.” His third advisor had been with him for all four years as he commanded the *Churchill*, and they’d known each other for years before that, too. He was trusted, steady, invaluable, a part of Jeff’s life. And Rell was….

He thought about the configuration of the XEL-3 projectile launcher, how much energy it took to operate it, where it must be hidden. If he could just get close enough, the particle rifle would destroy the outpost easily. Paco had brought the rifle with them, had propped it against the tree behind him.

Fifty-six. Fifty-seven. Fifty-eight. Fifty-nine.

The message he wanted to hear wasn’t going to come. Why did he always expect miracles?

The weight of the weapon was satisfying as he swung it over his shoulder. Langley needed movement, action. *Watch out, rebels, Jefferson Langley is going to blow your weapon launcher to kingdom come.* He finally closed the comm unit with a snap.

And then it beeped, and by reflex he snapped it open, and an excited, triumphant voice was saying, “They did it, Commander! They did it! They’re here!”

Jefferson Langley got down on his hands and knees and was violently sick. Then he wiped his mouth on his jacket sleeve, told the tech, “Good job. Carry on,” and went to do his duty.

On the night before the ship made orbit around the planet Nobel, where rebels were protesting the duly elected government with force and the situation in the capital city was critical, the commander of the Churchill said good night to Marine Colonel Rell Bakinee, watched him leave, and prepared for bed.

The nights were the worst. After the tasks of the day were accomplished, after a last check-in with the command center, when he lay down for rest, he could not stop the yearning.

If only Rell were beside him. If only he could reach for that warm body and mold their nakedness together, if only Rell would press against him and join their lips, if only they could talk in the warm intimacy of afterglow. A hundred *if onlys* that would never be.

After almost a year of wanting, he was familiar with the sadness, the ache in his heart and in his empty arms, but he never got used to it. Like an open wound that never scabbed over and healed, his love for Rell was always there, throbbing.

Jeff pulled down the SpaceForce-issue coverlet and the sheet, slid under them, and stared at the shadows that washed the ceiling of his darkened cabin. In the beginning, he had been so shocked. He, Jefferson Langley, seduced by the subtle smile in a trooper's eyes? Desiring another man? He'd never even contemplated making love with a male; the female form had always stirred his body, if not always his heart.

But it was his heart that had stirred, and his body had followed, he knew that. For weeks he had tried to analyze away his fierce attraction, thinking that if only he could understand why the time

spent with Rell was so precious, why even the simplest words Rell said made Jeff's stomach clench with tenderness, why the fierce compulsion to share his nights as well as his days with a strange, rebellious Caldun was as necessary to him as food or air, then he could reason himself back into a state of equilibrium.

Jeff shifted under the sheet and laughed hollowly. The run-of-the mill Calduns, practically all the Calduns in the whole galaxy except the one on his ship, said that any life unshaped and uncontrolled was a form of insanity. Maybe they were right. His passion for Rell had only grown.

It had been Rell's integrity that had been Jeff's undoing: it shone like a bright light in the darkness. Rell could not betray himself or that in which he believed. And he believed in everything Jeff held dear: honesty, loyalty, effort, intensity, the search for truth and the desire to do good in a capricious universe. His convictions were what had led him to reject the self-centered, turned-inward philosophy of the Calduns, and probably what had turned his steps toward a career in the military, too. Jeff could no more resist him than a moth could turn away from a flame.

It had been Rell's honesty that had been his undoing: the Caldun might hide how he felt, might try to protect himself from a universe that hadn't been kind to him, that had isolated him, but Jeff saw behind the shield. A look of concern before the young marines in his care went into battle, fierce concentration during the planning of a mission, quiet amusement shared at some of the games played by the younger crewmen and crewwomen—all of it was essential and undiluted, and Jeff had been entranced at the beauty he glimpsed. It made him thirsty for more.

He didn’t know Rell as much as he wanted to—deeply, completely—but he could see the isolated world he’d lived in. He’d adjusted well to living with humans—after all, Calduns were just one step away in appearance from the average Union of Planets citizen, with only their neck implants showing at first glance how different they were in other ways—but Rell had never entered fully into human society. He lived a step apart, with others only cautiously admitted to the periphery of his world. His role as commander of the marine unit attached to the *Churchill* made that easy; leaders were by definition set apart. If Jeff was a friend—yes, they were close friends, he knew it, they’d shown that to each other a hundred times over the past year—he suspected he was the only friend Rell had ever really had.

It had been the undercurrent of sadness in Rell that stirred Jeff’s heart with the desire to turn it into joy. This supremely competent soldier, this seeking mind, this mystery who enriched his days: deep down inside, Rell was lonely and searching for something to complete him.

For a long time Jeff had hoped that something was him. He lived with the image of the two of them side by side in all things. He’d searched for ways to get closer to Rell and had succeeded. Jeff was technically Rell’s commander, too. On some transport ships that meant an uneasy alliance; everybody knew that SpaceForce regulars and marines only tolerated each other. But not on the *Churchill.* Not between Jeff and Rell. Their friendship flourished, maybe because of how close to equals they were despite the ten-year age gap, or because they both understood the sacrifices necessary to lead. It was a sweet pain to Jeff to see how easily Rell accepted his company. Sweet because it was a small

taste of what he wanted—all of Rell, all his time, and his seductive body—and pain because it wasn't enough.

He remembered the first time, months before, he'd tried to make it real. The words had been so difficult to find, and so he'd tried to hint.

"Do you ever wonder," he asked one afternoon as they worked on weapon requisitions for each of the marine squads in one of the administration rooms, "why we don't have more committed couples on board the ship? Either among the crew or your marines?"

He could tell Rell was surprised, saw the interested look as Rell examined the question. "I haven't thought about it much. The uncertain nature of our professions, the dangers associated with it—"

"—would seem to me to encourage intimacy, not discourage it."

With a trace of humor quirking his lips, Rell said, "I can't speak for your people, but there sure are some troopers shacking up together on board the Churchill. You can't stop men and women from doing it, and I wouldn't want to. It'd be bad for morale. "

"I know, but that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about love. Not temporary liaisons but true commitment. For people who work and live together all the time, who learn to trust one another, to value one another, doesn't it seem to be a natural

thing to happen?" Jeff didn't even try to keep his tone impersonally curious; he was aware his voice was earnest.

"Well, if that's what you mean, we've got Calhoun and M'Sengo in a formal, committed relationship and one registered group marriage of four."

Jeff didn't care about numbers and statistics. He was after feelings, and though Rell revealed more of himself to his commander than to any person on board, still he guarded his inner self. It was the inner Rell, barely glimpsed but tantalizingly desirable, that Jeff wanted to share. But it couldn't be shared unless Rell opened himself first. Paradox. Jeff pursed his lips in frustration.

"And there's one marriage among the crew. That makes eight people out of five hundred and twenty. And we've been out here for more than four years. I don't understand it."

"I think it might be smart to talk to one of your advisors about this," Rell said. "They understand humans. Me, I hardly understand myself."

"I don't want to know what they think, I want your opinion."

Unruffled, Rell tilted his head and asked, "Why are you so interested in this all of a sudden?"

There, the opportunity to be blunt, the chance to say: because I want us to be one of those committed couples. What do you think about joining our lives and our hearts and our bodies, Colonel Bakinee? You are my nighttime fantasy and my heart's desire combined. Come, live with me. I want to fall asleep in your

embrace, to waken in your arms, and to plumb your body as deeply as I can.

If Rell had given him the slightest encouragement, he would have said it.

But innocence regarded him from the brown eyes. It hasn't even occurred to him, Jeff concluded, that I might be talking about a specific couple. About us.

Or perhaps it was just fear of what the answer might be that caused him to retreat. Jeff shrugged. "I was just wondering. I would think there'd be more. Because it seems reasonable."

"Reason," Rell countered, "has never been a big part of the way humans have sex. At least from what I've observed. Now, I think the blue squad requisitions are finished with. Want to keep going with the red?"

Jeff nodded, noting how far Rell had gone with him. Was Rell's change of subject an explicit warning? Or was it simply discomfort with the topic? Neither possibility gave him hope.

In the months that passed, hope warred with doubt. He and Rell shared responsibility and danger and an occasional meal during leave. Jeff moved their once-a-week Go games from the ship's public areas to their quarters, and Rell followed willingly. During the quiet minutes between moves, when Rell was contemplating his strategy, Jeff would feast his eyes on Rell's whipcord leanness, his hawk nose, even the two-inch scar to the side of his right eye. He walked like a tiger, or maybe a panther, because he wasn't a big man, though he gave the impression of

suppressed strength with every move he made. When Rell looked up at him across the board, Jeff saw a man's man, tough enough to turn his back on everything he'd grown up with and what was expected of him by the Calduns, but he could also see open trust in his eyes, what Rell gave to no one else, and maybe affection, too.

There were days when he felt so close to Rell, when he relied on him for advice even more than he relied on his council of four advisors, when it was Rell's conversation he sought out and the comfort of his presence that he needed. It seemed inconceivable that the Caldun didn't see how Jeff felt about him. How could Rell not notice that Jeff loved him?

Others began to notice that there was something different about their friendship, and Jeff was glad that they did. Paco joked and started to call the marine colonel "Your favorite Caldun." Rell had pointed out that since Jeff was not personally acquainted with any other Calduns, this statement didn't mean much. But he hadn't really objected, and the advisor kept saying it.

His favorite Caldun. Jeff sighed in the darkness and turned over onto his side. Little enough on which to base his hopes. Or his fantasies.

The sexual fantasies had bothered him the most. He'd felt they were a betrayal of his friend and a lapse in his self-discipline. He never allowed thoughts of the two of them together to intrude on the daytime hours—he was too committed to his crew and his ship to indulge in adolescent behavior—and he tried to strictly control his daydreams at night as well. Most of the time he succeeded. But sometimes he was so tired of keeping up the pretense that his thoughts took flight on their own. He wanted more from Rell, and

he needed more for himself. His body cried out for release in the arms of a true lover, and his soul longed for understanding and comfort. He was necessarily isolated with how Central Command had set up the hierarchy of the ship, with his close advisors, with the middle ranks and then all the crew. And the marines, who were the real reason for the ship. The *Churchill*'s medical personnel were always too busy, and the morgue too full.

There were times, when he was weak, that he gave in to images of what he longed for: Rell in bed next to him because that was where he belonged, turning over toward him, inviting him with a smile. Lips seeking his, a probing tongue he sucked into his own mouth. There would be just enough light so he could look down between their bodies and see Rell erect, wanting him. Rell would suck on his nipples, then Jeff would kiss the flat puckers on his chest. Rell would grow impatient, he'd pull his commander over him, and Jeff would slide into what was sure to be the lush, hot, safe haven of his ass.

And then to bring Rell the ultimate joy of the body. His lover would arch up under him, would clutch at his back and groan because he loved what they were doing. Rell in the midst of orgasm, his head thrown back, his mouth agape, his muscles frozen in the moment before climax—he wanted to give that to Rell so much, partly because Rell allowed himself so little.

His accelerated breathing sounded harsh in his solitary quarters. Jeff turned over onto his back and reached down to lightly touch his hardness through the fabric of his briefs. Not tonight. Not tomorrow night. Not any night.

Tonight, before they arrived at Nobel, Rell had told him devastating news. Over the black and white stones of their Go game, he'd said that he'd been in contact by subspace messages with a woman recently widowed. She's human, he'd said. A chemical engineer. She doesn't have any objection to….

One elegant hand had motioned toward his neck, where there were no implants. Every other Caldun in the Union of Planets wore them proudly, what connected them with the Caldun grid and made them so different, but which no human really understood.

Rell had convulsively swallowed then, something Jeff had never seen him do before, because Rell never, ever showed discomfort. She doesn't mind that I'm not normal, Rell had said.

Rell had paused as if giving Jeff the opportunity to speak. But Jeff was paralyzed inside, and no words came to him.

I haven't made the final arrangements yet, Rell had said, *but I thought you should know that my circumstances might be changing. So you'll know. For my records.*

Slowly Jeff leaned back in his chair. He felt like he'd been sucker-punched. *Is this what you want?*

Rell had looked down to the floor. *I wouldn't be doing it,* he said, *if it wasn't what I needed.*

Unspoken: Calduns at my age are always pair-joined.

I'm lonely.

Jeff despaired. There had been so many opportunities in the past year, so many instances where silence and companionship must have relayed the song in his heart. But Rell hadn't heard.

I'm lonely, too.

As he watched Rell walk out of his office, Jeff had known that he would do what he must. He would take his love and wrap it 'round with friendship, tightly, so that no part of it would ever show. He would not force himself on Rell.

He turned over on his side again and resolutely willed his erection away. Tomorrow they would finally make orbit around Nobel. The situation there was critical, and he needed his sleep.

But he could not stop the yearning.

Forty-seven hours after the miracle that had brought Rell and Paco Delacruz safely from Nobel to the Churchill , the Gandhi settled in the ship's tender bay, bringing with it thirty-eight marines and one begrimed, bewhiskered, drained commander.

Langley ignored the ramp and jumped down from the side to the deck instead. The Pankhurst was just loading up for another run to the planet's surface, so he spent a few minutes briefing the sergeant in charge of the detail about conditions on Nobel and encouraging the rest of the marines. So far the ship had sustained four casualties from the fighting, with Rell being by far the worst. No one mentioned the danger below, and Langley lifted his hand in

silent farewell as the door hissed closed and the tender prepared to take off.

In the elevator Langley rotated his tired shoulders, then shrugged out of the jacket he still wore and rotated them again. The jacket was filthy, torn, and stiff with dark bloodstains; it dangled from his fingers because he was momentarily too tired to sling it over his shoulder. He needed a status report from First Advisor Mendez, a shower, a shave, a meal, a few minutes to dictate their progress in recovering the Nobelian hostages to SpaceForce Command, and ten hours of sleep, in that order.

But Langley straightened as the elevator decelerated and stopped at deck eight: medical.

Medical always had a certain air about it when critical patients were being cared for; perhaps it was the level of the lighting, or the odor of medicines, or the focused bustle of doctors and nurses. The commander stepped through the doors into the quietly intent, antiseptic atmosphere he never wanted on his ship but saw all the time.

The head nurse looked up from her place next to a patient in the outer ward, murmured a word to her assistant, and then went over to Langley.

“Good afternoon, Commander,” she said in a quiet tone, and steered him, by the simple expedient of taking his elbow, to the corner of the room farthest away from the patients.

Langley went with her willingly. Sometime in the past several days he’d lost track of ship’s time; he’d thought it was early

morning. “I need information on our casualties,” he said bluntly, too tired for diplomacy.

She didn’t seem to notice. “Marine Sergeant Bashwan has been released and should be back on duty tomorrow. Corporal Harriday, as you see,” she gestured behind her, “is sleeping but doing well. Her wounds will heal without further surgery. Corporal Shah, however, is scheduled for surgery in an hour and is being prepped now.”

“His leg?”

“Should accept the graft with no problem. Fortunately we have an excellent match.”

“And Commander Rell?”

“Is in the isolation room with Doctor Carney, Commander. I’m sure the doctor wants to see you.” She led the way in silence.

Iso was tucked in the back corner of the ward, next to the stasis center. The nurse gestured forward so he could stand under the decontaminating rays at the entrance, then she palmed the lock, and he opened the door. A wave of heat thickly embraced him; he took a breath and stepped in.

Although Carney looked up from examining a printout of some readings, the doctor didn’t say a word as Langley slowly walked up to the bedside. The jacket, forgotten, he trailed on the floor.

Langley hated the medical ward and he knew that Rell, in his quiet, understated way, did, too. Medical exposed weaknesses and

subjected patients to humiliating indignities, although Carney would hotly argue that he was saving lives. That was true, but often at the expense of dignity.

The narrow bed, with rails up on both sides, cradled an ominously still figure draped loosely by a white sheet. Tubes trailed from beneath the bedding, and machines hummed on either side, so close to the biobed that there was barely room for Langley as he moved up and stared down at the Caldun. His favorite Caldun.

Though Rell had been positioned on his back, his head was turned to the right to expose the dressing that draped in a crescent arc around his left ear. Disturbingly, almost a quarter of his head had been shaved, and Langley didn't want to remember why that had been necessary. Carney had already reported they'd been in surgery for seven hours the day before. Touch and go, he'd said. Not a good prognosis, he'd said.

Rell's alabaster arms rested over the sheet, straight at his sides, disturbingly like a corpse's.

For almost two days on the planet below, Langley had done what he'd had to do to help resolve the impossible situation on Nobel, in which SpaceForce shouldn't be involved at all, in his opinion. He hadn't joined the fleet to fight police actions on a planet that revolved around its sun so far from the center of the UP it was practically in unexplored space. He'd joined the fleet to fight the Lindotians, but he did understand that the long conflict with the UP's mortal enemies sometimes took strange forms. Langley did know how to follow orders. On Nobel he'd fought, he'd coordinated, he'd negotiated, he'd eventually directed a group to

storm a small house on the outskirts of the capital city, where they'd recovered four of the five Cabinet ministers who'd been held hostage by the rebels. The rescue hadn't ended the conflict—far from it—and the skirmishes continued even if a rudimentary government was back in position. There'd been no place for weakness or emotion or sentiment in any of his actions, and so he'd allowed none of it to exist.

But now, in his own ship's medical ward, he could permit all parts of himself to be. He stared down at the pale, still face, and for a moment he wasn't strong at all: he was just a man with a secret, helpless love that gnawed him from the inside. It hurt. Damn, it hurt.

He hovered at the top of a tidal wave of feeling—helplessness, despair, anger—and with no effort at all he could slide down that wave, tumble in it, succumb to it, drown in it. He choked, imagining what it might be like, facing the moment when—but no. He wouldn't face it. No.

With an effort, he straightened and, while gripping the bedrail, he could control again.

After a while Langley reached over the cold metal railing and carefully rested his hand on the slightly curled fingers. Rell's hand was warm to the touch, the outline of bone hard against soft skin. He'd known that's how it would feel, if their hands ever touched for any other reason but duty.

"Any change?" he asked, his eyes roaming the masculine face: the whisper of short eyelashes, the arch of brow, the slightly parted lips he had never kissed and never would.

“Nothing good.”

He glanced up at his chief doctor but kept his hand on Rell’s. “Tell me.”

Carney sighed wearily. “Like I said in the report I sent down to you, I did the best I could. He’s an unaugmented Caldun, for God’s sake; nobody’s operated on someone like him in two hundred years. I repaired the fracture; we took a bone graft from his hip for the replacement, did some recombinant juggling, and it worked pretty well. Well enough, anyway. I stopped the bleeding as best I could, cleaned up the mess that had blown into his…well, I cleaned it all up.”

“That sounds good.”

“Jeff, it’s not. Not near enough. He might look human, but he’s not. His blood’s red, but it’s not human blood. And his brain….” He took Langley by the arm and pulled him over to where there was a lit screen on the wall. The doctor pressed a button and scans of a brain appeared. “Look. Here. And here.” Carney’s finger pointed. “That’s where the receptors for the augmentation are. The outside leads in his neck, he had those deactivated when he left the clans, and skin grafts cover up the sockets. But deep inside, he’s still got what they put in him just weeks after he was born. There’s part of his system that’s empty.”

“What does that mean?”

The doctor mopped at his face even though he wasn’t sweating. Maybe on the inside he was. “With you or me, with a wound like that and surgery like I had to perform, it’d be a few weeks at least

before we'd be up and about, but with Calduns and the control they have over their minds and bodies, they could have that damage healed in almost no time. Their medical techniques are so different from ours. It's like putting a tender up on the blocks down in the bay and tinkering inside. They don't call them body mechanics for nothing. Half their brains aren't natural."

"The highest level of Caldun society, what Rell was headed for, they're half-machine, half-living being. They're more like walking computers."

"Exactly," Carney agreed. "And their bodies are so super-charged, with the regimen they follow, it's like they're super athletes, all of them, the best they can be."

Jeff glanced over at the bed. "I know. Rell had all those years growing up when he went through their training, and he's still got a lot of those habits. All the workouts…. Even at age thirty-five, he's in better shape than the twenty-two-year-olds in his unit. That's got to count for something for his recovery, doesn't it?"

"Absolutely. But it's not his body that's the problem here; it's the brain. His brain was wired, set up from birth to be something he's not, since he rejected all that when he came of age. The contacts are all in there, the metal pathways, too, but nothing leads in to them."

"And?"

Carney moved up to the bed and looked down at the motionless figure. Frustrated, he said, "And I don't know what else to do. I've fixed all I can see. For you or me or any other humans

on this ship it would be enough and he'd be healing. Since he's Caldun, he'd probably be jumping out of bed already asking for breakfast and his beamgun. But there must be more damage than is obvious, or maybe I just don't understand how his brain works. I think…I think something must have been fundamentally damaged."

Langley swallowed hard, the tidal wave threatening again. "Damaged? As in brain damage? Rell ?"

"I don't know! Yes, I think it's possible. Maybe…likely."

"Irreversible? If he regained consciousness, would…." Langley couldn't even finish the sentence, didn't know how to find the words.

Carney's shoulders slumped. "I just don't know enough to say. There've been four spontaneous hemorrhages in just the past twelve hours. I don't know where they're coming from, I don't know why they're occurring, and each one has been worse than the one before. The edema's getting critical. There's just so much the VCS can do," he glanced down at an instrument on one of the tables, "and then it's got to be more open surgery. But I won't know what I'm doing, and with the hemorrhaging that will likely kill him."

"I thought just getting him up here would kill him," Langley said quietly. "So we've beaten the odds once already. You're a good surgeon, Brandon, and—"

But Carney was shaking his head. “Not this time. I just don’t know enough about the Caldun brain. I can’t fix what I don’t even understand.”

“But you could—” Langley began, but Carney cut him off again.

“No. Besides, it’s more than that. It’s what he isn’t, I think, that’s the problem.”

“I wouldn’t want him to be one of them,” Langley said with heat. “Hard-assed, uncompromising bastards. They shunned him! When he wouldn’t be what they wanted him to be, wouldn’t let them complete that final implant and hook him up to their—”

“I know, I know,” Carney calmed him. “Rell’s your friend; of course you’d feel like that. Well, nobody likes the Calduns, but they’ve got the right to do things their own way, even if none of the rest of us understand why they’d do it.”

“It’s like they’re barely people,” Langley whispered, looking down at Rell’s still form. “Rell’s not like that.”

“No, he’s not.”

With an effort, Langley bit down on the emotion coloring his voice. “What do you propose to do?”

Carney worried his lower lip. “Stasis is out of the question. You can’t do that with a Caldun. I was thinking an emergency medical transport, get some sort of specialist here and then send them both off to a major medical center, maybe near Caldus where a UP physician might have more of a clue of how to treat him. But

Rell’s condition is so unstable, I’m not sure we’ve got the time for that. But it’s our only option.”

“Brandon,” Langley objected, “Nobel is at the far end of Union of Planets space. Do you know how long it will take an EMT to get here?”

“Yeah, I had your command center check for me just an hour ago, after the last hemorrhage. Four and a half days.”

“Does he have that long?”

“I don’t know. But I don’t know what else to try. I’m no good to him, so we’ve got to get him to someone who is. If there is such a someone.”

Langley gripped the rail with tight fingers and looked straight into the doctor's craggy face. He tried not to sound accusing. “That’s not a good option.”

Adamantly, Carney shook his head. “There’s nothing else we can do.”

“Not good enough, Doctor Carney.” Langley was conscious of his temper flaring, knew he was taking out his emotions on the physician who was trying to save Rell’s life, but he couldn’t stop his words or tone.

“Come up with something better!” Carney punched the air with one clenched fist.

“You’re the doctor. I don’t know the options!”

his lips found them, the buds were hard. Nothing like the soft breasts of Jeff's many women, more exciting because of that, and because Rell liked his head bent in service to the breast. "Yes," Rell whimpered, and gripped the back of Jeff's head to keep him there, suckling.

But not enough; there was still more to explore. Jeff wrenched away and planted a quick row of kisses down the heaving belly, past the neat navel, and then farther down.

Rell's thick, sturdy cock. Sometime soon, perhaps later that night, it would command him as he gave Rell every gift that had been given to him. Now it bobbed before him with each shuddering breath Rell took, and it wept in need. One clear drop glistened at the opening. When he gripped the shaft at the base, Rell moaned and threw his head back against the pillow, then Jeff tasted with just the tip of his tongue.

Sharp bitterness, not salty: a strong and commanding flavor that forever Jeff would associate with his lover, thrusting into the air, wanting….

Not another minute wasted. He got to his knees, reached over to the bedside drawer, and fumbled for the lubricant.

"Is this all right with you?" he panted as he squeezed the cream directly onto his own cock. "Do you know what I—"

"Yes! Do it!"

Then Rell did something that shook Jeff's determination not to come until he was embedded deep in Rell's body: he spread his

legs and took his own cock in hand. His fingers played down his erect length, then rested cupped around his balls.

“Oh, God!” Jeff couldn’t get between those legs fast enough. They were up and over his shoulders in a flurry of movement. He took a deep breath to try to calm himself. He didn’t want pain to accompany the pleasure, and that meant some preparation.

He pulled back just enough from the hot contact between his groin and Rell’s ass, leaned forward with one hand braced against the mattress while the other sought between Rell’s buttocks. And he captured Rell’s gaze. Brown eyes, wide with arousal, stared up at him with trust.

“I can’t believe we’re really doing this,” he whispered, just as his lubricated middle finger found the tight opening it sought and pushed inside. “Are you okay?”

“Fine,” said Rell with a quick nod. “If you don’t get going soon….”

“All right,” Jeff breathed.

But he couldn’t take his eyes off Rell’s face. He grabbed his own cock, fumbled as he sought for the right location, the best angle, and all the while he was being eaten alive by Rell’s intent gaze, watching as his commander did this thing, this obscene, intimate, wonderful thing to his virgin body. There! Jeff gasped. The puckered hole opened the tiniest bit to his cock, so good, he pushed with one sure, insistent thrust, and the secret channel opened, welcoming him. He slid all the way to the base, wildly throbbing.

They were one.

The difference between bread and ambrosia. Between darkness and sunlight. Between yearning for what was impossible and finally being granted your deepest desire.

Yes.

A moment of adjustment, of experiencing the tight fit of his cock in Rell's slick ass, a moment to reach down and wrap his fingers around Rell's hardness, and then he had to move.

One thrust toward what he needed, two, three—

He'd never thought it would really happen.

Seven, eight, nine thrusts into the hottest, best home Jeff's cock had ever found, its only home from now on—

Rell was making whimpering sounds, he'd thrown the back of his hand over his mouth, he was pushing with his elbows and shoulders against the mattress to ensure that each penetration went all the way in.

Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen times he pushed into Rell's body—

Rell's penis so hard in his hand, jerking, a quick ripple down its length—

Jeff stilled his movement, pumped the cock vigorously, watched—

Rell stiffened, arched, the legs over Jeff's shoulders tensed—

“Rell!”

—the fine mouth opened in a soundless cry—

“Come for me!” Jeff demanded.

—and hot Caldun cream jetted over Jeff’s fingers.

Rell’s eyes squinted shut in the short ecstasy of orgasm, his mouth worked open and closed, his cheeks tensed and froze: Jeff, entranced, would never forget the sight. He’d given his love the ultimate pleasure of the body.

And taken it himself. Too much. One more thrust and he was lost.

He couldn’t help himself, he lost sight of Rell as orgasm rushed through him. He had to push all his spurting cock as far up as possible, to prove how right this was.

Rell caught him as he collapsed forward in helplessly shivering aftermath. Jeff had just enough energy to pull out, and then his lover rolled them both over onto their sides. Jeff couldn’t seem to breathe enough air into his lungs, but he thought that beloved hands on his body, gentling him, soothing him, were enough to keep him alive forever.

Finally his heart calmed, and he opened his eyes. Rell was right there gazing at him. Their heads shared the same pillow.

Jeff didn’t know what to say, so he grabbed Rell’s hand in his and squeezed. Rell didn’t speak, either, but deep inside Jeff the psychic touch opened for an instant, like a flower.

I love you.

I love you.

“Do you know,” he asked quietly, “that your soul shines in your eyes?”

Predictably, the intercom chose that moment to shrill loudly from its bedside station. Although Jeff was Rell’s lover, he was also commander of the Churchill . With a sigh and a quick kiss, he slid across Rell, maximizing their body contact, and activated the audio only.

“Yes?”

“Jeff, it’s Paco. I know it’s a little late, but you keep late hours with the best of them. You weren’t asleep, were you?”

Jeff settled himself more comfortably across Rell’s chest. He smiled at the look in Rell’s eyes. “No, Paco, I wasn’t.”

“Good. I thought you’d be interested in some news that just came in about the Emergency Medical Transport.”

“You mean the one that never showed up?”

“The same. They’re claiming engine trouble and are all apologies. They say it’s a good thing that we managed to take care of the problem on our own. I think there’s a good chance they’ll be reimbursing you for our expenses in, uh, getting Rell back on his feet. You won’t be destitute after all.”

He was rich beyond his dreams, with a warm Caldun breathing beneath him, the echoes of their lovemaking sounding in his heart. Jeff said earnestly, “It wouldn’t have mattered.”

“I know that.”

Jeff cleared his throat. “You know, Paco, I never did say thank you.”

“What for?”

“For taking Rell back to the ship.”

“I had to do it.”

“I know, but it was still—”

“I couldn’t very well deprive you of your favorite Caldun, now, could I? Good night, Jeff.”

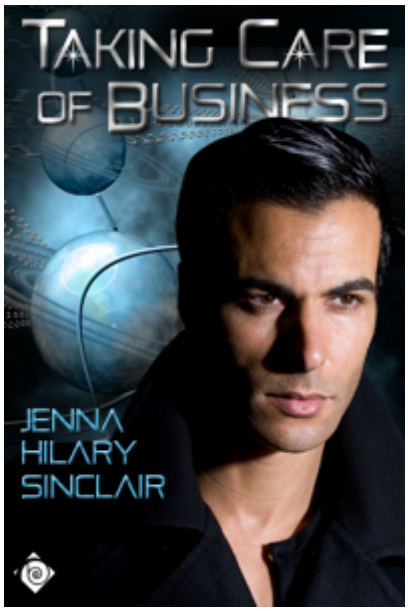
“Good night, Paco.”

Jeff closed the connection, then rolled back next to his lover. Rell came into his arms, and the wonderful reality of his weight, his skin’s warmth was like a homecoming.

…breathing in your essence, living in the same space you inhabit….

“Mine,” Jeff whispered, kissing the top of Rell’s head. “My favorite Caldun.”

Don’t miss these other titles from Jenna Hilary Sinclair…



Jenna Hilary Sinclair is married to a man she greatly loves. She has two kids. She lives in the suburbs. Dutifully, she has been a room mom, a theater mom, and a band mom. As seems a prerequisite for anyone who got her start in writing through fandom, she shares her home with two cats. She’s been a commercial banker wearing starched suits and has sold Tupperware to the Ladies-Who-Lunch (please, forgive her).

Boy, is she ever vanilla… to the uninformed outsider.

On the inside, though, Jenna is a seething cauldron of passion; her imaginative interior life sets off firecrackers in her stomach. Over

the last nineteen years of her writing life, all done strictly for the pleasure of it, she has dedicated herself to defining the elusive emotion of love… as seen through the lens of two attractive men having sex, that is. Just when she thinks she's almost got it, it's almost within her grasp… it slips through her fingers, requiring her to write yet another male/male romance. Darn.

Jenna seeks equality for all beings under the law, including green-skinned fellows from Mars and, oh, yeah, all peoples of non-hetero-norm sexuality. She recently attended her local Marriage Equality march and is anxious to start shouting at another. She believes in honesty, loyalty, effort, intensity, the search for truth, and the desire to do good in a capricious universe.

And she loves writing sex scenes.

Visit Jenna's Blog - http://jenna-hilary.livejournal.com/

Upside Down

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