

Zena Wynn



Cyn's Dragon

FANTASY ISLAND



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Fantasy Island:

Cyn's Dragon

By

Zena Wynn

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Chapter One

Cyn stood on the floating dock staring dubiously at the mist-shrouded island and in front of her.

“Miss, you change your mind?” her dark-skinned escort asked with his musical island accent.

“Nooooo,” she slowly answered.

“Your fantasy cannot begin until you step off of the dock and onto the shore,” he reminded her.

This she knew, but still had difficulty forcing herself to willingly step into the pea soup not an arm’s length in front of her. Maybe if she could see something—anything—in the ever-changing blanket of fog...

“Miss?”

“I’m going. I’m going. I just need another minute.” Or two, or three.

“You know it’s perfectly safe. We would not allow any harm to come to you,” her helpful guide assured her.

Taking his words to heart, Cyn took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. “Wish me luck,” she told him.

“You’ll be fine.”

Casting a last glance in his direction that displayed more confidence than what she was actually feeling, she stepped off of the floating dock onto the shore and was instantly swallowed.

“Just keep moving,” she heard him say.

Easy for you to say, she thought. She was blind in this stuff. She raised her hand before her face. She could see it, sort of, but not much else. Even sound was slightly muffled, like she was underwater. She forced herself to keep walking forward, one baby step at a time.

Like stepping through a curtain, the mist parted and she found herself standing in a small clearing in the woods. Feeling strange, she looked down to see the simple jeans and t-shirt she’d been wearing was now a coarse, peasant-style blouse of an indeterminate color and a flowing loose skirt that gathered at her waist with a rope. Her feet were shod in some type of animal hide material. Definitely not leather. Bye, bye Nikes.

Her shoes weren’t the only things that were gone. So was her bra and panties. Stupidly, she turned her head from side to side, looking for her missing items as though they’d be lying folded on the ground. Of course they weren’t. They’d vanished.

She turned to look back at the way she’d come and something swung

against her back. Reaching a hand behind her, she realized her previously shoulder length hair now came to her butt in a thick fall of spiral curls. Okay, not something she'd requested but she could deal.

Cyn supposed she shouldn't have been surprised to find both the beach and the mist had disappeared. Instead of the rocky shoreline she should be seeing, there was nothing but trees. At least it was daylight and the sun, though weak, was shining.

There was nothing for her to do but keep moving forward as instructed. She did so, wondering what other surprises were in store.

She turned around and placed her feet gingerly on the ground, watching closely for rocks and other sharp items. She needn't have bothered. Though soleless, the hide was extremely tough and resilient.

Sighing, she continued on her way. The air was a bit warm and humid, and the rough material of her top soon had her itching. Cyn scratched absently as the clearing gave way to a wooded path. She followed the winding footpath until the path changed to a rutted dirt road, which led to a small village.

It was like stepping back into time. There were no cars, no telephone poles or electric wires leading to the homes. No screens in the windows. Instead, wooden shutters hung open, allowing passerbys to see inside. Goats bleated in pens. Chickens and the occasional stately rooster ran loose, as did cats and dogs of vary-

ing sizes. Small, neatly rowed gardens bursting with produce were to the side or behind each house, along with wells with buckets for water.

As she neared the center of town, she could tell something was happening. The villagers were standing around a man who stood heads and shoulders above them, speaking in loud, angry voices. Some waved large sticks. Or maybe they were staffs. It was hard to tell. Others had pitchforks and other farming instruments. Children clung to their mother's skirts and the women stuck close to their men.

"There she is," the guy in the center yelled.

As one, they all turned and looked in her direction. Cyn automatically glanced behind her to see to whom they were referring. There was no one there.

"Get her!" several voices rang out.

Get who? Me? Before she could take off running, they were on her.

Cyn fought but was quickly overwhelmed. They were determined, and the women were viscous. She'd have a few bruises before this was all over with. She was bodily lifted into the air and carried to some unknown destination.

The guy who must be their leader was saying something but Cyn was cursing and kicking too much to hear him. After they'd traveled a distance from the town, she was none too gently set on her feet.

"What the hell are you doing?" she screamed at them as they trussed her up

like a Thanksgiving turkey and tossed her onto a flat, raised surface.

She squirmed, trying to get to her feet. She didn't know what was going on, but it couldn't be good.

"Stay still, dearie. It will be over quickly, you'll see, and it's for the good of our village. Think of your poor dear parents," an old crone told her.

"What will be over quickly?" Cyn demanded to know.

Another sun weathered, wrinkled-face woman, with graying hair held back by a brown headscarf shoved through the bodies surrounding her. "My darling daughter, if only you'd have accepted Johnny's proposal like I urged, you wouldn't still be a virgin."

Cyn's mouth dropped open as things clicked into place. "Dear God! I'm being *sacrificed*?" she shouted.

"Of course, dear. All the other girls were smarter than you. As soon as they became of age, they married just to prevent this sort of thing from happening. If only you'd listened—"

A deafening roar sounded in the distance, and some of the villagers crossed themselves. "It's coming." They began to melt away, one by one into the trees, until Cyn was alone.

The sound of wings flapping could be heard drawing near. She looked up as a shadow crossed over her. Like a buzzard circling its prey, the dragon flew in

loops over the slab where she lay. Suddenly it dove and did a flyby, letting loose a stream of fire as it did. All around her the forest was suddenly ablaze.

Cyn groaned and thumped her head against the slab on which she lay. “Great, I can burn to death or get eaten by a fire-breathing dragon. Some vacation this is turning out to be.”

She closed her eyes as deadly looking claws came nearer and nearer, until it blotted out the sky. As she was snatched off of the slab, she thought to herself, *They screwed up and gave me someone else’s fantasy. Damn.*

Chapter Two

Cyn supposed she should have been scared, flying high above the ground with only a set of claws between her and sudden death, but she was too pissed. She'd paid five thousand dollars for this 'fantasy' weekend. Five thousand! That's a lot of money. She could have booked a cruise for a whole lot less and actually been enjoying herself right now. Talk about vacations from hell. She didn't hold out much hope on it getting any better. Once again she wondered if it was too late to demand a refund.

They rose above the burning trees and banked sharply to the right. The slight rise and fall of the dragon with each flap of its wings, under right circumstances could have been soothing, or nauseating as hell. It reminded her of a boat bobbing up and down on the sea.

Finally they began their descent. He alighted softer than she would have imagined had she given it any thought and lowered her gently to the ground. She immediately began to wriggle, turning this way and that until the ropes around her hands loosened and she was able to tug and pull the rest of her body free. All of that work gave her a headache. She was hot and sweaty, and a fine layer of silt cov-

ered her body when she finished.

Throwing the mass of curly hair over her shoulder, she cast a baleful glance at the dragon to find him staring at her like some unknown species. She bit back a scathing remark. It wasn't the dragon's fault the Fantasy Island people got her fantasy wrong. Taking a deep breath to calm her fraying temper, she said, "I'm here. Now what?"

Not really anticipating an answer, she glanced around the deep, cavernous opening in the mountain. "Not much to this place, is there? I thought dragons hoarded gold and other riches. This place is nothing but dirt, rocks, and more dirt. Well, what I can see of it. I'm sure your eyesight is much better than mine."

Finally she sighed and turned back to the dragon with her hands on her hips. "Isn't this supposed to be the part where you shape-shift into a mortal and ravish me? Well... I'm waiting." Her foot began silently tapping as she continued to watch and nothing happened.

After a while, she threw up her hands and stormed off towards the back of the cave and darkness, muttering to herself. "It figures. There was a possibility—albeit a slim one—that I was wrong and this really is my fantasy. I mean, they could have thrown in a little something-something extra. You know, creative license and all that? But noooooo, I'm stuck here with a big, dumb creature that can't understand a word that I'm saying. He probably speaks French, or Chinese,

or some other language I've never heard of. Dragon-speak?"

"Actually I understand English quite fine, thank you. Your words, however, make no sense."

Cyn spun around at the sound of the deep, meticulous voice. "You can speak?"

"Of course, and I'm very well educated, too. Not quite the big dumb creature you accused me of being, am I?" the dragon asked, managing to look and sound quite offended.

"Look, sorry about that, but I'm not exactly having the best day here. Being tied up and left on an altar as a virgin sacrifice for a fire-breathing dragon tends to bring out the worst in me," she griped. After slowly spinning around yet again in a complete circle, she bellowed, "Is there no place to sit in this freakin' cavern?"

"How rude of me. My apologies. Here, have a seat."

She heard what sounded like something heavy swinging toward her right before it hit her in the back of the knees, toppling her off-balance. She fell onto her back, skirt flying up to land around her waist. Cyn shoved her skirt down, propped up on her elbows, and glared at him. "Evil bastard," she muttered under her breath.

"I'm sorry. What was that? I didn't quite hear you."

"Make that polite, *sardonic*, evil bastard." In a louder voice she said, "So nice

of you to allow me the use of your tail. Please, don't be offended if I decline." Two could play this game.

She 'accidentally' kicked his tail as she scrambled to her feet, yanking at the piece of her skirt that snagged on its spine. It may not have hurt his tuff hide but it made her feel better. *There, take that.*

"Do you have a name or should I call you 'Hey you,' or the always popular 'Hey Dragon?'" she asked as she shook out her bottom and top, checking for creepy-crawlies that may have jump on her during her unexpected tumble to the ground.

His head drew back. "Of course I have a name. I expect all sentient beings do."

Cyn waited expectantly. When none was forthcoming, she sighed deeply and making signing motions, spoke like she was deaf. "Mah name ith Cyn. What ith *your* name?"

The dragon's eyes narrowed and a small puff of smoke escaped his nostrils. "Allister the Mighty."

"Allister?" she repeated. "Allister the dragon?" There was a heartbeat of silence, and then Cyn collapsed onto her back and rolled on the ground laughing. She couldn't help it. This big, fierce, admittedly scary-looking, fire-breathing dragon with his iridescent green skin and purple wings was named *Allister*?

The dragon uncoiled his neck and his massive head with its rows of razor sharp teeth came to hover over her body, which was still convulsing with mirth. “If you’re quite done...?”

Awww, now she’d gone and hurt its feelings. “I’m sorry.”

He swung his head away, his entire manner conveying offended pride.

Well, hell, now she felt like shit. “Really, I am. It’s just that you don’t look like an Allister. It seems too...nerdy, for such a fierce dragon like you. I was expecting something a little tougher sounding.”

“Yeah, like what?”

“Uhm...” She thought quickly. “How about Conan, Brutus, Magnus, Garth, Ike...something.”

“And those are so much better,” he snarked. He swung back around to pin her with an irate stare.

She frowned. “Granted I don’t know too much about dragons, but even you have to admit that your name doesn’t exactly scream ‘manly.’”

“And your name says *what* about you? Maybe there’s a reason those villagers left you as a meal for me,” he suggested.

Cyn’s back stiffened as she caught his inference. “Cyn—C-Y-N, not S-I-N—is short for Cynthia. Cynthia is a very feminine name.”

“Hmph, your parents didn’t do such a great job with your name either.”

“Oh...you...” she sputtered. She bit her lip so hard she tasted blood. Giving him one scathing look, she spun on her heel and headed for the entrance.

“Where are you going?” he called out.

“Back to the village. Even the idiots there have to be better than staying here with you.”

“Come back,” he ordered. “You can’t go there.”

She held her hand up and shot him a bird. “Bite me.”

Cyn heard a roaring sound and turned to see a wall of flame shooting towards her.

Chapter Three

Cyn didn't have time to scream, flinch, or even blink before the flames engulfed her. Stoically, she closed her eyes and braced herself, waiting for the excruciating pain to hit. Fiery warmth filled her body. It was...nice. Better than nice. She felt all tingly inside. She relaxed and lifted her head, letting the soothing warmth flow through her.

It stopped as suddenly as it began.

"Why aren't you burnt to a crisp?"

Cyn opened her eyes and eyed the irritated dragon standing before her.

Assuming nonchalance she wasn't feeling, she stated, "It's your fire. Shouldn't you know?"

He muttered something under his breath that she didn't catch, turned his massive body, and started lumbering in his lizard-like walk to the back of the cave.

"It was nice meeting you," she called out cheerfully to his retreating form.

Cyn shook her head and continued merrily on her way, only to be snagged by his tail as it wrapped around her and lifted her off of her feet. She pounded on it and struggled to be free.

“Resistance is futile.”

“What are you...a Borg? Resistance is futile,” she mimicked his deep, gravely voice. She beat upon his tail a few more times before finally giving up. Even if he loosed her now, it was too dark for her to see anything. The dragon must have eyes like a bat. Wait, bats were blind, weren’t they? She pondered that for a minute. She couldn’t think of any other creature she could liken the dragon to that could see in this inky blackness, and trying was turning her headache into a migraine.

Riling the dragon had temporarily taken her mind off of her problems, but now they all came rushing back. When she’d won money on a lottery ticket in the parking lot of a convenience store, her mother had urged her to use the cash to pay bills. God knows, Cyn had enough of them, but the bills were always there. They never went away. She paid one and another accumulated. Such was her life.

For once, she’d wanted to do something solely for herself. She was tired of doing the responsible thing. Cyn wanted one weekend, just one weekend—two days—to put her needs, her wants, her desires first. She was so weary of being the sensible one. The one everyone depended upon.

With one thing or another, she hadn’t had real sex in over two years. The closest she’d been to a man were the heroes in the erotic romances she devoured. When she’d first stumbled across the advert in the back of one, she’d thought it the answer to her prayers. She’d get a safe, fun-filled, hedonistic weekend in which

to indulge her every desire. Best of all, since none of it was real, she didn't have to suffer from a guilty conscious after it was all over with, nor worry about stuff like pregnancy or life-threatening diseases.

Surely finding the winning lottery ticket like she had was a sign from heaven— “Ow! Hey! Watch the head. It's attached,” Cyn snarled as she rubbed her aching scalp.

Make that hell, she thought, 'cause the damn dragon was certainly a minion from the depths of it.

Her eyes narrowed in anger as Allister let out something that sounded like a snicker, but the tail immediately lowered so that she wasn't so high in the air. Cyn cursed him under her breath. She might not be able to be killed while here—can't have paying customers ending up dead—but, she could darn sure get banged up and bruised. She had the aching scull to prove it. Even after being lowered, she was scraped up against and had her hair snagged by several more unseen objects until finally she laid her head on his tail and tucked in as tight as possible.

Gradually, the space around them opened and brightened until she could see her surroundings, and what she saw made her breath catch.

This cavern was huge. Sunlight beamed down from an opening so high she had to crane her neck to catch a glimpse of it, bathing the surrounding rocks and calcite formations in shades of reds, golds and browns. Massive, towering columns

of varying heights held the ceiling aloft, giving the space a natural grandeur. To one side a small waterfall gushed out of the rocks above, feeding into a pool, which gradually narrowed into crystal clear stream that flowed through the cavern's floor to disappear through a narrow dark tunnel.

Cyn strained, twisting this way and that, trying to take it all in. There were ledges and other tunnel openings that led who knows where, and rock formations that looked like mini-mountains. All in all, it was a rock climber's vision of heaven.

Allister set her on her feet and with a flap of his massive wings, took to the air. She watched while he soared high and then swooped and played in a dizzying display of aerial acrobatics. Finally, noting the angle of the sun, Cyn decided she'd better get herself situated for the coming darkness.

As she walked toward the stream she'd noted earlier, she was happy that she'd given into the Fantasy Island staff's prompting and consumed a large quantity of the welcome feast they'd laid out for the guest. In her excitement, she'd originally declined, anxious to get on with the fantasy. Now, seeing as how she didn't know when or where her next meal was coming, she was glad she'd listened to their wise counsel and eaten her fill.

Leaning against a massive boulder, she unlaced her shoes and tugged, and tugged until both of them came off. Then she waded into the water, stepping gingerly on the large river stones until she reached the center of the stream and sat.

Seated, the water came to her shoulders and was much warmer than she'd expected, letting her know it must be spring-fed. She played with her clothing until the worst of the dust and dirt washed away, then immersed her head underwater and did the same with her hair. When she surfaced, Allister was on the bank watching her.

"You're wet," he stated unnecessarily.

"Really? Your powers of observation are simply astonishing." Cyn stood, gathered her hair over one shoulder, and wrung out the vast majority of the water as she waded to where the dragon stood.

"It gets cool in here at night," he stated with what someone else might have thought was concern for their well being. Cyn knew better.

"Figures." She took her shirt off and twisted it to get the excess water out. Looking around, she spotted a semi-flat surface and crossed over to lay her top on it. Then she took off her skirt and did the same. After another glance at the sky, she figured she had maybe another hour or so of sunlight, and promptly headed for the stream.

It wasn't a bubble bath but it was the closest she'd be getting to one, anytime soon. Walking around, she found the perfect spot. The flowing water created a natural seat in the swirling water, almost like a hot tub. Cyn lowered herself into its cradle, leaned back so that only her face was above the water and closing her

eyes, relaxed for the first time that day.

Chapter Four

It was staring. She could feel it. Even with her eyes closed. She tried ignoring it, hoping it would go away. It didn't. After a while, her scalp prickled and her nerves twitched. She couldn't take it anymore.

She popped open her eyes to find Allister barely an arm's length away, his breath gently stirring the water. "*WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?*" she shrieked as her heart tried to jump out of her chest.

"Watching you."

"Well, quit watching me!" she shouted and splashed him with water, aiming for his strangely colored blue eyes with their cat-like, slitted black pupils. Those eyes were really creeping her out, up close and personal as they were.

Allister's neck coiled back like a snake, his massive head cocked to the side as he continued to eye her.

Cyn's eyes narrowed. "Don't you have something to do?"

"No."

"Find something."

"Why, when you're so fascinating?"

Just ignore him and he'll eventually bore and go away, she counseled herself. Closing her eyes, she settled back again, trying to return to her former state of relaxation. It was no use. The mood was broken. Now that he'd startled her out of a year's growth, her body refused to settle. Maybe if she meditated...

Counting down silently from one hundred, she slowly emptied her mind of every thought. Inhale, exhale. Inhale, exhale. *In with the good energy, out with the bad. Feel my body going lax, starting with my toes. I'm light as a feather. I'm nothing. A puff of air—*

“What are you doing?”

Her legs immediately sank to the bottom of the stream. *No, no, no. Ignore him!*

Cyn resisted the all-consuming urge to glare at him, and instead, focused on her breathing the way she'd been taught. *Once more from the beginning.* Taking deep breaths to slow her heart rate and relax her body, Cyn focused her mind inward again, loosening each muscle group, one by one until she reached a state of total relaxation.

Maybe the dragon...no, no, don't think about him. You're tensing up again.

Inhale. Exhale. Inhale. Exhale.

Water good. Dragon bad, she mentally chanted with each lung full of air. Using her imagination, she pictured each stressful thing that had happened to her today as a stone, weighing down her body. One by one she examined them and tossed them off.

The last minute rush to the airport with her mother still griping about how she'd wasted her money...tossed.

The metal detector that kept beeping for no discernable reason...gone.

The crowded airplane with the screaming toddler to one side and the snoring businessman on the other with no concept of personal space...chunked.

The choppy boat ride to the island that made her sick...cast away.

Crazy villagers wielding primitive instruments of torture...out of there.

"Is your skin supposed to be that particular shade of gray? And why is it all wrinkled? That's not an attractive look for you," the dragon stated.

And then there was the huge boulder named Allister weighing her down. Her whole body sank under water and she came up sputtering.

"I do believe I'll keep you. You're quite amusing."

"Gee, thanks," Cyn muttered sarcastically as she waded out of the stream.

"You really should be quite honored. I've never had a human before," he continued.

"Aren't I the lucky one?" she smarted.

She glared. Allister stared.

Finally, knowing she'd regret it, she asked, "And why not?"

He smirked, allowing her a peek at razor sharp teeth. "My mother taught me never to play with my food."

Cyn rolled her eyes and turned to where her clothes lay, checking to see if they were dry enough to put on. The shirt was but the skirt wasn't. Fortunately, the top fell to mid-thigh, so she was decently covered. Not that it mattered. If Alister the Mighty (snort) were going to do any ravishing, he'd have done so by now.

"You're not afraid of me, are you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"You can't hurt me," she stated firmly. She shivered. Her shirt, though mostly dry, was rapidly soaking up the water from her hair, leaving her back damp and clammy.

His head tilted to the side. "How can you be certain?"

"Because you..." she waved to encompass the entire cave system, "...none of this is real."

Both eyes rose and he sat back on his haunches. It was amazing how humanlike his expressions were. "You believe I'm a figment of your imagination?"

"No." She held her hair away from her shirt and turned her back to the dragon. "Hit me with some of that fire, will ya?"

Cyn waited, and waited, and waited some more. Finally she glanced over her shoulder. "Well?"

“You’re truly not concerned,” he mused. “Why is that, I wonder?”

“Look, it’s not like you haven’t blasted me before. I’ll admit, the first time was a little scary, but once I got over the initial shock, it felt good. So...” She motioned to her hair. “Can you help a sistah out?”

As she heard him inhale, she called out, “Wait!”

She ran over to her skirt and tugged it on, grimacing at the feel of the clammy material against her skin. Once again in position, she said, “I’m ready.” No sense wasting heat.

He blew on her and once more she stood in the center of the flame. This time it felt even better than before, almost sexual. Her nipples tingled and tightened, but that could be due to sudden change in temperature. However, there was no mistaking the gathering dampness in her core.

She let loose her hair and spread out her skirt, spinning slowly in a circle so that the whole thing would dry, coming to a stop facing the full force of the dragon’s fire. She lifted her head, closed her eyes and ran her fingers through her hair—real, not weave—as she basked in the warmth. Gradually it slowed and fizzled to a stop.

She sighed as the heat dissipated and looked at him. “Run out of juice?”

The dragon shook its head. “You’re a strange creature.”

“I’m human. What do you expect?”

He studied her intently. "You never did answer my question."

"Which question might that be?" she asked absently as she gazed around.

By the deepening shadows, the sun was fading. Soon it would be dark. She needed a place to sleep. Not to mention a bathroom. Though beautiful, her surroundings were still primitive. Cyn was a city girl at heart. She didn't do the camping thing. Give her a bed and a bathroom with all the appropriate plumbing fixtures. Maybe she should have been specific about those particular items when she was drafting her fantasy.

"You think I'm a product of your imagination?"

"I did answer you. I told you no. No is an answer."

"But you didn't explain."

"You didn't ask me to." She continued to study the various ledges until she found one that might make an acceptable sleeping surface.

"I think you lie. Why else would you be so certain I'll not hurt you? Most villagers would be quivering with fear by now, certain they were on tonight's menu. You've done anything but."

Totally disregarding him, she asked, "Are there animals in this cave? Besides you, I mean. Although technically, I'm not certain you qualify as an animal. What is your genus? What about bats?"

"I'm not a bat!"

Cyn rolled her eyes. “I didn’t call you a bat. I asked about bats in the cave. Pay attention.” She picked up her boots, held up her skirt so it wouldn’t get wet, and crossed to the other side of the stream.

“Where are you going?” Allister bit out in an annoyed tone of voice. “I’m talking to you.”

“It’s getting dark. I need to find a place to sleep.” The ledge she’d spotted was about six feet higher than the ground on which she stood. It was wide enough that she didn’t have to worry about rolling off in her sleep. The question was how to get up there?

She examined the rock from all angles, searching for an easy way to climb up. Two large talons clamped around her waist, lifting her off of the ground. Before she could thank him, Allister leapt into the air and took flight. Her shoes dropped from her grip and she clung to him as the ground fell away. So much for thinking he’d seen her dilemma and decided to give her a hand.

Chapter Five

As soon as Allister placed her on her feet, she spun around with her hands on her hips. “Must you do that?” she demanded.

“Do what, precisely?” he asked, head cocked to the side.

“Snatch me around as though I were your personal possession,” she remarked.

“You prefer sleeping on the ground?” In seconds, his tail wrapped around her and Cyn found herself dangling over empty space.

Automatically she braced her hands, nails digging into his leathery hide. “You wouldn’t dare,” she challenged him, eyes narrowed, mind already calculating how she would get even, provided she survived the fall. The dragon had to have some weakness, didn’t it? No one was invulnerable.

His tail dipped and an involuntary screech left her mouth.

“Oh, pardon me. You slipped. Here, let me help you back onto the ledge.”

In her mind, Cyn called Allister every name she could think of but kept quiet until she was safely on her own two feet. Glaring at him the whole time, she found a narrow corner and wedged herself into it lest he decide to snatch her

again.

“That’s a ferocious look on your face. Were I a puny little creature such as yourself, I might be afraid.” The dragon’s arrogance was reflected on his face as well as in his tone.

Cyn narrowed her eyes at him, turned up her nose and pointedly turned her face toward the rock-faced wall.

She could feel him watching her. After a few minutes of silence, he let out a snort and stated, “Such an amusing little creature. I do believe I’ve found a new toy.”

At his words, Cyn jerked around in time to see the dragon launch himself off the ledge and once more soar into the air. Once she was assured Allister was otherwise occupied, Cyn directed her attention to exploring her new surroundings.

The ledge, more like a mini-plateau, was more than large enough to accommodate two full-grown dragons. It was long rather than wide, and curved upwards in a gradual slope before disappearing. Curious as to where it led, she cast one more look at the dipping, soaring, and swooping dragon before following it.

As she climbed, the path gradually narrowed and vanished into an opening into the rocks. Cyn rounded the corner and found herself in a room of sorts. There was a series of built in shelves on which she found some necessary supplies: towels, wash clothes, paper supplies, and more. Hmm, where there were toiletries

and towels there was sure to be a bathroom.

Turning about, she eventually noticed a small crevice like opening in the north wall. Stepping quickly inside, what she saw made her heart sing—a working bathroom, fully functional. The toilet, which she made immediate use of, was cleverly camouflaged to fit in with its environment. The tub was hewn out of the rocks and filled with steaming, mildly flowing water. A closer examination revealed that it was spring fed, probably the same source as the stream below. She could smell minerals and a hint of sulfur, making her wonder if this mountain was actually an active volcano and the spring an underground river heated by it. Cautiously, she dipped a couple of fingers in the water. The water felt silky-smooth, and was a little hotter than she liked her bath water to be, but she was sure once she adjusted to the temperature, it would feel wonderful.

Still rubbing moist fingers together, Cyn continued her search until she found the spa-quality, all natural bath products left by the Fantasy Island folks, sitting out on shelves screwed into the rock wall. Opening the nearest bottle, she hummed in pleasure as the heavenly scented fragrance filled the air. There were toothbrushes and toothpaste, deodorants and lotions, and every other beauty and health product she could think of. The only thing she didn't see in the softly lit room (the source of which she still couldn't locate) was a mirror.

Okay, she took back every evil thought she had about the people who orga-

nized this vacation for her. Maybe they weren't the spawn of Satan, after all. It was amazing how much she was willing to forgive for a working toilet and toilet tissue.

Cyn turned slowly in a circle to see if there was anything she'd overlooked. Unnoticed was another opening. Again curiosity directed Cyn's actions. After all, this had turned out to be a wonderful surprise. What other discoveries were waiting for her?

It turned out to be a stairway. With one hand braced on the wall, Cyn climbed the narrow passage, up, up, and around until it opened into a fairly large, circular room, which on one side, opened into the cavern she'd just left. She could see Allister still flying around. A huge, canopied bed dominated the center, complete with silk curtains tied back to form an opening. On one wall were hooks holding several changes of clothing, more skirts and tops like the ones she had on, another pair of shoes, and no underwear. A tall, antique, beveled mirror stood nearby and hurricane lanterns filled with wick and oil were mounted on the walls. Cyn lit all three of them with the matches she found and turned up the wick so that a bright glow filled the room.

It was then she noticed what was lying on the bed—a nightgown fit for a princess. It was baby blue and blended in perfectly with the thick comforter on the bed, which is why she hadn't noticed it before. Wasting no time, Cyn shed herself of her dirty clothing and slipped on the gown.

Turning toward the mirror, she caught her breath at the sight that met her brown-eyed gaze. The blue was perfect with her brown complexion. The top of the garment was made out of lace before falling to the floor in a shimmer of figure-hugging satin. The cups molded to her smallish breast like a second skin, while the scratchy lace played peek-a-boo with her overly large nipples, causing them to stand to attention. The silk was thin and light enough that the dark hair covering her mound was visible.

Cyn spun around so she could see her back, scooping her hair to the side. It was completely bare, with the exception of two micro-mini straps that crossed in the center and attached low on the sides near her small waist. The entire curve of her spine, including the little indent where the swell of her butt began, was revealed by the gown, which clung to her lean, but shapely hips and thighs as if by magic.

This was an outfit meant for seduction, and not a male in sight.

“What are you doing in there?”

Except Allister, of course. She sighed.

Cyn walked over to the opening where Allister hovered in mid air. Framed by two of the massive columns she’d viewed from outside, the base of the calcite met the floor of the man-made cave, forming a natural window. Cyn settled in the opening, making sure not to get too close to the edge, though she was sure if she

fell, Allister would catch her.

“I found a bed and a bathroom. All the comforts of home,” she told him.

“What’s that you have on?”

“A nightgown. You like?” She stood and twirled in a circle, running her hands down her body as she did so.

“It’s impractical. You’ll be cold once the temperature drops.”

“Must you be so...so logical?”

“I’m a dragon,” he told her, as if that said it all. And indeed, for Allister, it did.

Cyn sighed heavily and returned to her seat. “I know. Are you sure you can’t shape-shift into a human?”

“Why ever would I want to do that?”

“What about a rider?” she asked a bit desperately as she plucked at her gown. “Do you have a male dragon rider stashed away somewhere?”

Both of his eyebrows shot up. “Allow some human to ride me as though I were a horse? I think not.”

Cyn groaned, closed her eyes, and wailed, “This fantasy sucks. I want my money back!”

Chapter Six

There was a heavy thud that shook the ground and Cyn's eyes popped open. Allister had disappeared. She looked up and didn't see him. That only left down. Crawling carefully to the edge, she peered over. A good twelve feet below, Allister lay in a crumpled heap on the ground. His wings were at an awkward angle and his body was twisted in a manner that had to hurt.

"Allister, are you all right?" she called down.

He let out a pained moan.

Cyn thought about running down there. The ledge where he lay looked like the same one they were on earlier, the one that led to this room. But what could she do? Allister was huge. It's not like she could help him back onto his feet.

"Allister, speak to me!"

One of his massive wings fluttered and there was sign of movement. The dragon muttered something she couldn't make out and slowly struggled to his feet.

"Be careful. You're near the edge. You might not survive another tumble," she called out in concern as she watched him inch closer and closer to the drop off.

When he'd untangled his body from his wings and laid breathing heavily

with his eyes closed, she asked, “What happened? One minute you were in the air and the next, thud!”

Silence.

“Allister?” Maybe she needed to go down there and check on him after all.

He mumbled something.

“What did you say?”

One eye opened. “I said, I fell.”

“You...fell?”

“Yes,” he hissed.

“How on earth did you...?”

Both eyes, now opened, focused on her in a fierce glare. “I forgot to flap my wings.”

“You...” She couldn’t say the rest. If she did, she’d laugh and he was embarrassed enough. Face straight, she asked, “Are you alright?”

“Yes.”

“Are you sure? You hit the ground pretty hard.”

“I said I’m fine,” he snarled.

“Okay, no need to snap.”

Cyn eased back until both feet were on the thick Oriental rug and returned to her seated position. The sun had faded from overhead and now moonlight filled

the cavern, casting silver glow over everything. It was beautiful, in an eerie way. She could hear movement, that of water and the creatures that called the cavern their home. The serenade of nature, like being in the woods at night only without the trees. Very peaceful.

Allister's head slowly rose into view, his neck almost fully extended until he was barely three feet away. "That's it? You're not going to tease?"

Cyn looked at him, having no choice since he was blocking her view. "Too easy," she dismissed. "It would be like kicking a dog when he was already down. I'm not totally heartless."

He studied her, waiting, she thought, for the other shoe to drop. When she said nothing more on the subject, he must have realized she meant what she said and relaxed. How she could tell, she wasn't exactly sure, but he didn't appear to be as tense.

"You said something about a fantasy?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"What about it?"

"What about what?"

"The fantasy!" he snarled, smoke curling from his nostrils.

“You know, you really need to do something about that temper of yours.”

“I don’t have a temper,” he snapped.

Cyn let her eyes speak for her.

“Look, would you just answer the question?”

“And what question would that be?”

Allister closed his eyes and she swore he was counting under his breath. She bit back a smile. He was so easy.

“You’re doing this on purpose,” he growled.

“I didn’t know dragons could growl. Can you howl, too?”

The dragon bared his teeth.

Distracted, Cyn asked, “How do you keep your teeth so clean and white? Do dragons have dentists?”

Allister let loose a ball of flame.

Cyn coughed and waved the smoke out of her face. “You know, you’d better be happy that I’m immune. That wasn’t nice.”

The dragon turned and thumped his head on the nearby wall a few times. It had to hurt, you know, with those horns and all, especially after the tumble he took, but then again, Allister had a pretty hard head. Still, she supposed it wasn’t nice, teasing him so. Maybe she should quit.

Nah.

“Cyn-thee-ah, would you *please* tell me about this fantasy you referred to earlier?”

“Oh that,” she said with a dismissive wave. “I paid for a fantasy weekend, which is not at all going as planned, I might add.”

“That’s what you meant when you said none of this was real?” Head tilted to the side, Allister appeared to be extremely interested in her answer.

“Yes. This is all part of the package. Everything, including you.”

“You asked to be captured by a dragon?” Now that she was answering his questions, he’d calmed.

She pressed her back to the wall and drew up her legs, wrapping her arms around them. Then Cyn rested her chin on her knee. “No, I think they threw that in there for fun. What I wanted was a romantic weekend with a dragon shifter.”

“Why?”

Cyn shrugged. “Why not?”

“Why not a werewolf, or some other type of shifter?”

“I read a lot of romance books, specifically dragon books. They’re my favorites. Dragons are so magical, mystical, and depending upon the author, the strongest of all mythical creatures. I really can’t get enough of them. Some of my favorite authors are Katie McAllister, Shelley Laurenston, Jory Strong, and Bianca D’Arc. They create the best heroes. When I saw the ad, I realized this was my

chance to live my fantasy, so I sent in my request to be a dragon's mate," she told him.

"A dragon's mate," he repeated slowly.

"Yes."

Allister's gaze was very intense, very focused. "I thought you wanted to mate with a dragon shifter?"

"They're one and the same," Cyn said with a dismissive wave of the hand.

Allister arched his left brow at her. "Apparently not. Case in point." He looked down at himself. "Need I say more?"

Cyn stared at him in stunned dismay. "B-but," she sputtered. "I told them what I wanted. Even gave them books to reference," she protested. This mess could not be her fault. It just couldn't.

"Did you use the words 'dragon shifter' at any time in your correspondence with them?" Allister asked, ever the logical one.

Cyn thought hard. Had she? Damn it, she couldn't remember. She'd been so excited at the time. "I don't know, but darn it, they knew what I meant. In every single one of the books I listed, the hero was a shifter. Well, except for Bianca's books. She has dragon riders and dragons that shift, but still..." Why would the Fantasy Island staff have instructed her to list her favorite books on the fantasy request form if they weren't going to use them as a reference to create her dream

vacation?

“If you didn’t specify a dragon shifter, they gave you exactly what you asked for—me.” He sounded smug and Cyn didn’t appreciate it one bit.

This couldn’t be happening to her. Not after all the money she’d spent, money she’d probably never see the likes of again. However, that wasn’t the worst of it. Ever since she received her confirmation letter, she’d been anticipating two days of hot, sweaty, mind-blowing sex with a man like the ones in her books who knew how to do it right. Looks like she could kiss that dream goodbye.

“But I wanted sex,” she wailed. “I can’t have sex with *you*.”

The dragon, unbelievably, took offense. “I’m a male. I have a penis. Dragonesses vie for my prowess, my superior genes. I can give you fine hatchlings.”

She stared at the dragon in shocked disbelief. Surely he didn’t think...

Nah! The whole idea was laughable and given the size of the dragon, his penis was probably as big as she. No way would it fit, even if they could copulate. Not to mention he’d squash her like a pancake if he tried to cover her, and from what she’d read, dragons mated in the air, while in flight. She didn’t possess wings and couldn’t fly. It was impossible, any way you looked at it.

“Allister, look at me, and then look at you. We’re two different species. Besides, I didn’t come here to get pregnant. I came looking for pleasure, the kind a man gives a woman,” she explained, inwardly shaking her head.

“Dragons mate to produce young.”

“Well, humans mate because it feels good. Really good, when it’s done right,” she added.

“There’s a wrong way?” He appeared surprised by the information.

“Yes, most definitely.” Cyn nodded to emphasize her point.

“Is this why you don’t have a mate?”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “How do you know I don’t?”

“You wouldn’t be here if you did,” he stated simply.

“True. I had a mate, a husband, once. In the beginning he did everything just fine, but later, he got sloppy, careless. He was more interested in pleasing himself than making sure I was satisfied,” Cyn admitted, though she didn’t know why. She didn’t like to think of that period of her life. There were a lot of reasons why she and Brad were no longer together. Horrible sex was only one of them. Her wanting children and him being totally against it was another. He was also immature, irresponsible, and impossibly vain. Characteristics she’d been too blind to see initially, caught up as she was in the fantastic lovemaking.

“And you hoped this dragon shifter...”

“Would ring my bell, curl my toes, send me into love spasms? Yes, absolutely. For a few days at least, then it would be back to reality,” she finished with a dreamy, lustful sigh.

The dragon looked thoughtful. "If all you need is a human male I can..."

"What?" Cyn interrupted. "Get me one?" She shook her head. "It doesn't work like that. I could have one of those at home. Men are a dime a dozen. You're missing the whole point. I wanted someone special, someone different. Someone larger than life. A memory so absolutely incredible, I could look back on it years from now and smile at the remembered pleasure."

Allister tilted his head to the side, eyes slightly narrowed. "I don't understand."

"I know." She tried to explain. "A lot of people think romance books are about sex. They're not. They're about this incredible connection between a man and a woman. A love that absolutely refuses to die. The knowledge that there is at least one person in the world who loves you totally and completely. That's what I want. For one weekend, I wanted to be the center of someone's world. I know it isn't real, but for a couple of days I could pretend it was. Pathetic, huh?"

Allister was silent as he digested her words. "No, I don't think so. To love and be loved in return is the greatest gift of all."

Cyn smiled, glad he understood.

"So what are you going to do now?"

"Well, I may not have the dragon shifter I wanted but I do have you. How often does a girl get to say she met a real dragon?" She shrugged her shoulders. "I'm

not going to waste any more time gripping about what I don't have, and didn't get, and simply enjoy my vacation. God knows, I paid enough for it and who knows when I'll be able to afford another one."

The dragon nodded as he stated, "That's very wise of you."

"Yeah, it is, isn't it?" A large yawn overtook her. "Sorry. It's been a long day. I'd better hit the sack. You going to be comfortable out there?"

"Yes."

"Alright, I'll see you in the morning."

While Allister watched, Cyn went around the room, cutting all but one of the lanterns off. The last one she cut down on low, leaving just enough light for her to maneuver in the unfamiliar surroundings. As she climbed into the bed and pulled the cover over her, she called out, "Good night, Allister."

"Good night, Cyn."

Chapter Seven

A large, smelly hand covered Cyn's mouth, waking her out of a sound sleep. A rough, masculine voice spoke gruffly in her ear. "Be very quiet. I've come to rescue you from the dragon."

Instantly alert and a bit disgruntled from being wakened out of the best sleep of her entire life—she really had to do whatever it took to buy one of these mattresses for herself when she got home—she shook her head at her would-be rescuer.

Ignoring her, he tossed her covers back stating, "We don't have time to grab your things. Let's go while the beast is sleeping. I don't want to kill it if I don't have to." Despite his big talk, the glance he cast over his shoulder towards Allister's lair was nervous.

As soon as he removed his hand from her mouth she told him, "I'm not going anywhere." Cyn rolled onto her side away from him. "Feel free to see yourself out. I'm going back to sleep now."

"Oh miss, bewitched you, he has. I prayed it wouldn't come to this," he said in a sorrowful tone of voice.

Before Cyn understood his intentions, he was on her. His big, burly body covered her kicking and struggling one, and in no time he had her subdued, bound up tight with rope and a gag shoved in her mouth. “Wouldn’t want you screaming for the beast,” he said as he scooped her up and tossed her over his shoulder.

She landed on her stomach and the air rushed out of her body. Pain erupted and she struggled to breathe. Pushing the nasty tasting gag out with her tongue—thank God he hadn’t secured it—she raised her head and tried to see. Her captor was making for the stairs. She might be trussed up like a Christmas goose but she wasn’t going to make it easy for him.

Cyn wiggled like a worm on a hook. She squirmed so much that he lost his grip and she fell to the floor. “Ouch! That hurt like a...” She bit off the rest of words.

He looked down at her with his hands on his hips. “Look, princess, we don’t have much time. I’ll get you out of here and return you to your people. They’ll be so happy to have you back they’ll pay me a handsome reward. Once that dragon’s spell wears off, you’ll thank me for rescuing you from a fate worse than death.” His expression said she should be thanking him.

“Who the hell are you and what are you talking about? I’m no princess. I think you have the wrong girl.” Those damn Fantasy Island people were at it again. She was no princess Fiona, though the homely dude did kind of remind her of Shrek, poor thing, minus the green skin and horns. Cyn shuddered in distaste.

He heaved a deep sigh, the kind that said she was trying his patience. “Trust me on this. You’re the one for which I’ve searched. Now let’s go, before the dragon awakes.” He reached down and snatched her to her feet by her bound hands. Yikes, he’s strong.

When he bent over to pick her up, Cyn hopped backwards like she was on a pogo stick, making it as difficult for him as possible for him to capture her legs. With an angry mutter, he jerked her forward again by her rope bound hands and she lost her balance, falling to her knees.

“Damn it, this floor is hard!” First her head, now her knees. How much more abuse was her poor body going to suffer on this so called dream vacation?

“Be quiet,” he commanded in a harsh whisper. “You’ll wake it.”

Cyn heard a noise and glanced over her shoulder. “Too late.”

Allister’s glowing, angry eyes glittered at them through the opening. He took a deep breath, and WOOSH! A wall of fire came streaming toward them. It passed over Cyn’s head like a warm, balmy breeze. She held her hands up and the rope binding them burned free, magically leaving no mark on her skin.

She heard a scream and turned around to see her rescuer’s clothing erupt into an inferno. Looks like her kidnapper didn’t have her same immunity to Allister’s fire. He took off running for the stairs, beating at his clothing as he went.

“Stop, drop, and roll!” she cried out. “STOP, DROP, and ROLL!”

She heard a thud, and then a series of thumps and bumps as something heavy rolled down the stairs. Cyn winced. “Not on the stairs, stupid.” She shook her head. Some people...

Cyn turned back to find Allister glaring at her. “What?”

“This is all your fault,” he declared.

“You’re blaming me?” she asked, outraged.

“Your fantasy. Your fault.”

“Hey, I didn’t tell them to do the whole princess in the tower routine,” she complained.

“You didn’t tell them not to either,” he fired back.

“Well, I blame you. I wanted a dragon shifter, and what I got is *you*.”

“Then you should have asked for one,” he snarled.

“I thought I did!” she yelled, hands on hips.

“Well, obviously you didn’t.”

They glared at each other, although Allister’s was more impressive since all she could see of him was his eyes through the calcite formation.

The ridiculousness of the situation struck Cyn’s sense of the absurd and she snorted. Then a giggle escaped. She remembered the startled and frankly terrified expression on the guy’s face when he realized Allister was awake, and the giggle became a chuckle. By the time her mind fast forwarded to the series of bumps and

thumps as the man fell down the stairs and she got a visual, Cyn was collapsed on the floor, holding her stomach as she laughed until tears fell down her face.

“Glad this amuses you,” Allister stated dryly.

“Did...you...see...his...face,” she managed to get out. “I bet he peed his pants when he saw you.”

“He’s lucky I didn’t eat him.”

Cyn wiped her eyes and sat up. “Burning him wasn’t very nice,” she mildly scolded.

“He touched what is mine.”

“And dragon’s don’t share,” Cyn finished for him, rolling her eyes as she said it.

“No, we don’t.”

She went to stand and remembered the rope binding her ankles together. Sticking them out in front of her, she leaned back on her elbows to help balance herself and asked, “Can you undo this like you did the other?” She nodded, indicating the rope.

“Take off the gown and lay it to the side.”

Cyn raised an eyebrow at this odd request, but did as instructed. The gown rose, slowly revealing knees, thighs, pelvis, and breasts before she pulled it over her head and tossed it in the direction of the nearby bed.

“Now lay on your back like you were before, but stretch your arms over your head.”

Cyn lay stretched on her back, hands over her head, together like they were bound, her roped ankles snug against her butt. She didn't know why the dragon wanted her naked and in this position, but right now he was in charge. “I'm ready.”

The fire came again, quickly burning through the rope. Her thighs fell naturally to the sides, baring her sex to the flame. “Ooooo,” she moaned as intense pleasure shot through her core.

It instantly stopped.

She rose to her elbows. “Hey, turn it back on.”

“You made a sound. I thought I was hurting you.”

He'd heard her moan? “Oh...*oh*, well, uhm, you weren't.” She cleared her throat before asking, “So, can you do it again?”

“Why? The ropes are gone.”

Why is he questioning me? she fumed. “It felt good, okay?”

“Good?” he asked, as though he'd never heard the word before. “In what way?”

“Allister...”

“Are you turning red?”

“Never mind.” No way was she confessing to the dragon that what he did

turned her on. One, she wasn't sure she could explain it. Two, he'd never let her live it down. "I'm going back to bed."

"You're embarrassed. I gave you pleasure, didn't I?" he crowed.

Chapter Eight

The look in Allister's eyes was very male and very knowing.

"Good night, Allister." Cyn rose to her feet and turned away.

"Running?" he asked in a silky smooth voice that sounded all too human, too sexy.

She glanced over her shoulder suspiciously, hair swinging about her hips.

"Are you sure you aren't a dragon shifter?"

"You're naked and," the dragon sniffed delicately, "aroused. If I could shift, don't you think I'd do so by now?"

She studied him for a moment longer before conceding the point. Allister was still a male, and if there's one thing she knew about the male species, they didn't turn down sex when it was offered up on a platter to them. Spotting her nightgown out of the corner of her eye, she stooped down to get it.

"I can still give you ecstasy," the dragon stated, his voice pure temptation.

Cyn paused mid-crouch, hand extended.

"I can give you my flame," he continued in that same, silky-soft voice. "All you have to do is lie down and open to me."

Frozen in position, Cyn debated. It had felt really, really good before. And that was by accident. What would it be like if the dragon did it on purpose? She slowly dropped to her knees, her hands settling on her thighs as her mind debated.

“I can make you feel goooood,” he tempted.

Almost in slow motion, Cyn turned her head until her gaze met the dragon's. His eyes had changed color. They were darker, deeper with a kaleidoscope of starbursts, twirling inside. She found herself captured, unable to pull free. As she lowered herself to the rug, Cyn thought Disney got it wrong, or else they kept it PG for the kids. Belle might have been drawn to the Beast's kindly nature, but she'd been seduced by his voice and the delight of his touch. That's what sent her running back to the castle.

As her back touched the rug, Allister commanded, “Spread your thighs. Let me see where that delicious aroma is emanating from.”

Like an automaton, she blindly obeyed.

“Wider. I want to see all of you.”

Knees raised, feet flat, she spread her legs as wide as they would go, Allister's gaze still holding hers captive.

“That's right. Just like that. Look at those pretty lips. Spread them for me.”

Cyn glided her right hand down her flat belly, over her mound, stopping briefly to play with her clit, before spreading her labia as requested.

“Use both hands. Show me all that pretty pink flesh.”

Her left hand joined the right one, and she gently pulled until she felt the tender skin stretch. Cyn should have felt exposed but instead she felt decadent, sex incarnate. Who needed a man when she had a sexy dragon?

“Hold it; don’t move. Look, see how pretty you are.”

Cyn dragged her gaze away from Allister’s and looked down. Unable to see, she raised her neck and sucked in her stomach. What she saw caused more moisture to leak out. Her hands perfectly framed her sex, her fingers held the labia open against the crease of her inner thigh while her thumbs cased her mound. Her clit was exposed, the little nubbin erect. Moisture clung to her curls and her slit was completely open, showing the dark pink interior and the wet, shiny opening to her vagina.

“If I were a man, I’d run my tongue all around and lap up all that cream.”

Her hips jerking reflexively in response, she felt another trickle leak out.

“Be still while I do this...” He gently blew air on her sex.

“Oh...” Her breath caught. It was cool when she expected heat. It had been so long since her sex had been on the receiving end of someone else’s attention that she didn’t quite know how to respond. Three miserable years, in fact, and last contact was with her slimy, cheating ex-husband. Allister was a vast improvement and he wasn’t even human.

Her musings were interrupted by a growing warmth, centered at her core. Cyn's focus sharpened and she realized that while her thoughts had drifted, Allister switched to flame, but it wasn't like any she'd seen from him before. This was streamline, concentrated, like a torch, and it was centered on her slit.

The fire covered her from anus to clit and then narrowed to center on her opening. Then Allister did something that absolutely blew her mind. He sent the flame in pulses that sank deep within. The color of the fire changed from a deep reddish-orange to blue-green. It throbbed like a pulsing vibrator. The sensation shot through her vagina and into her womb as the heat exploded in her clit and nipples.

Cyn came with a scream, back arched and fingers digging into her thighs so hard she knew there'd be bruises later. Vaguely she heard Allister comment, "So this is what dragons do with all those virgins."



A heavy, naked male body covered hers, pressing her into the soft mattress. Cyn willingly and eagerly spread her thighs, canting her hips to get the hard, throbbing length of his erection right where she wanted it, deep inside her sex. He penetrated her slowly, oh so slowly. Impatient, Cyn dug her short, blunted nails into the flexing muscles of his buttocks, urging him to a harder, faster pace, but this was his show and he was running it his way.

His cock, thick and long, stretched her as it sliced through her quivering vagina. It gradually filled her to the brim, but as she looked between them, she realized he had more to spare. He slid his large, calloused hands beneath her body and down to her butt, lifting and tilting her cradle so that his penis slid in another inch. Then he paused.

What is he waiting for?

Cyn clenched her sheath around him, flexing vaginal muscles and he hissed out his pleasure, but otherwise remained still. Determinedly, she wrapped her legs around his waist and used her stomach muscles to thrust up. She moaned loudly when the head of his penis butted against the sensitive nerve endings of her cervix, and his pubic bone finally made contact with her clit.

Removing his hands from beneath her, he rose to brace his weight on his forearms, a large shadow looming over her. The movement caused his shaft to flex inside of her and she sighed in appreciation. Cyn turned her head to the side to give better access to his questing mouth, which nuzzled a path from her shoulder to her neck. While his kisses were nice, she was more interested in that large part of his body buried within her own that wasn't moving.

She opened her mouth to complain but all that emerged was a whimper. She beat on his back, a silent demand for satisfaction, which he ignored. Her lover seemed more intent on licking and tasting every inch of her flesh that he could. The solid weight of his lower body limited her range of motion, but by alternating micro-thrusts of the hips and kegel squeezes, she managed to give her needy sex a bit of the attention it cried out for.

His marauding lips reached her breasts and lavished them. Nibbling, licking, and suckling the puckered nipples and areoles, while squeezing and massaging the rounded mounds until she writhed beneath him. Desperately, she wiggled a hand between them, trying to reach her achy clit. She wanted to come, needed to come, by whatever means necessary. He flattened his stomach upon hers, denying her access.

Furious and fed up, Cyn snatched her hand away and dragged her nails up the length of his back, gouging the skin. He flinched and a deep rumble emanated from his throat. Cyn finally managed to find her voice.

“Fuck me, damn you! Quit playing with me.”

He froze. The skin beneath her hands heated till it felt like living flame. The eyes he slowly raised to meet her own reflected that same fire within. Hell’s eyes. Demon eyes.

Or dragon eyes, she realized.

He pulled out, rising to his knees.

“No!” she protested, frantically trying to hold on to him, but her strength was no match for his. “I’m sorry,” she cried out.

Swift hands flipped her onto her belly before he lifted her ass up into the air. Then he covered her, like a stallion covers a mare, and his cock nudged her opening and thrust home. Her midnight lover paused a second to plant his hands on the mattress by her head, caging her in, and then he rode her hard. The force of his pounding shoved her shoulders into his forearms, which kept her

locked into place. The heat of his skin burned into her back. Cyn loved every moment of it. She wrapped her arms around his and held on, and when the pleasure became too much, she bit down on his muscled bicep as her orgasm swept her away.

He lifted one hand and shoved her hair to the side before locking his teeth into her nape, right on the spine. Then Cyn swore he breathed out fire. The reddish-orange glow of it lit the dark room and it burnt a path down her spine before radiating outward. Seconds later, his cum erupted like lava from a volcano, scalding her vagina and setting off another violent climax. It tore a scream from her right before everything faded to black.

Chapter Nine

Cyn stretched and scratched sleepily at her stomach. She dreamt of food. Bacon, pancakes, and a steaming hot, cup of coffee. So real, she could almost taste it. She rolled over onto her left side and the scent grew stronger. Strong enough to open her eyes.

It wasn't a dream. The food was real. There were waffles instead of pancakes but a crock of maple syrup sat beside a plate loaded with bacon and waffles, butter still dripping off the bread. A glass of orange juice with frost on the container along with napkins and cutlery lay on a tray, which sat on a little stand.

She glanced around cautiously. No one lingered in the room that she could tell. Cyn eased the covers back, surprised to find herself dressed in the blue nightgown. Her cheeks heated as a memory of the last time she'd seen it floated through her mind.

Another thought surfaced that had her flipping the covers aside, jerking up her nightgown and spreading her thighs, checking for cum. Nothing. She yanked the outfit over her head, scrambled off the bed and over to the mirror. Her breasts looked the same, with no tell-tell redness or tenderness. A search of her body re-

vealed no dark smudges of fading fingerprints, and even her sex felt normal. Though her back itched like fire ants crawled over it, the skin showed not the slightest hint of irritation.

Was it a dream? All of it? Her would-be kidnapper, the dragon's seduction, her midnight lover?

Losing her appetite at the thought that the best sex of her entire life had been nothing more than a figment of her imagination, Cyn went downstairs into the bathroom. She sniffed the various products lined on the shelves until she found the one that appealed the most, then carried them over to the tub.

The water temperature was just as perfect today as yesterday. Cyn sank down into the tub with a sigh. Too bad last night was only a dream. She could use some relief.

Well, she might not have a hunky man at her beck and call, but she still had her fingers and hands, which she put to good use. She lazily tugged and pulled on her nipples, having all the time in the world and nothing to do with it. Then she went lower, stroking her clit and fucking herself with her fingers, bringing her body to peak several times before finally allowing herself to climax. It wasn't as satisfying as being with a man, but it took the edge off and left her body pleasantly sated.

A long while later she returned to her room, wrapped in a towel, to find the

untouched waffles and bacon had been swapped out with a club sandwich, a bag of chips, what appeared to be Otis Spunkmeyer cookies, one bottled soda, and two bottles of water. Cyn glanced around suspiciously. The only way into this room was through the bathroom, and no one entered while she'd bathed. So how did the food get here?

When another slow visual examination of the area revealed no lines in the wall forming concealed entrances and no security cameras disguised as innocent devices, Cyn reluctantly dropped her towel and moved to one of the skirt and top outfits hanging on the peg. Donning it quickly, she unwrapped the towel from around her hair and found a comb. In front of the mirror, she worked through the tangles, then secured her hair at the nape in a low ponytail. By this time, her stomach was growling, so she returned to the bed and ate every item on the tray, including the cookies.

Hunger satisfied, she grabbed a bottle of water and drained it, then grabbed the other, wondering where Allister was. Surely he wasn't still asleep. Granted, Cyn had no idea what time it was, but it seemed late in the day, definitely time for him to be up and about.

She wandered over to the window and peeped over the side down to the ledge below to find the dragon fast asleep. Oh, this wouldn't do. She was stuck on this island with no man, no sex, no cable, satellite, or regular television of any kind,

and no computer, so that she couldn't even surf the web. The least Allister could do is entertain her.

She ran lightly down the stairs to inform him of his new duties.

Allister lay curled much like she'd seen dogs do, with his head tucked close to his body and his tail wrapped around him. Cyn climbed gingerly over his tail, mindful of the spines and wings, and eased up beside the dragon's massive head.

"Allister," she called in a low voice. She didn't want to startle him. With his size, one wrong move and she would be toast.

No response. She moved closer and called him again. Still no reaction.

Cyn backed away and considered the sleeping dragon. He's kind of cute, she thought. Like a big, prickly pet, she thought as she studied him. He snored. Well, more like snuffled and snorted. Obviously the dragon slept deeply.

A wicked grin crossed her face. Time to have a little fun.

Cyn set her water bottle out of the way, against the wall. Then as carefully and lightly as she could, Cyn climbed on top of Allister, pausing frequently, certain he'd awaken at any moment. When she reached the horns atop his head, she rested, breathing deeply but quietly. Not from exertion, but from the excitement of what she planned to do.

Cyn had a moment's hesitation. Did the dragon still sleep? Was he toying with her, waiting to turn her prank back on her? Surely his tough, leathery hide

wasn't so thick that he couldn't feel her on him. She took a deep breath. Only one way to find out.

Grabbing his left horn, she leaned over until her mouth hovered inches away from the dragon's ear and yelled, "ALLISTER!"

He jerked awake, his head swinging to and from as he looked to both sides of his body for the source of the disturbance. Biting back a scream of fear, Cyn wrapped her arms around his horn and held on for dear life as her body whipped from side to side, finally coming to rest between the dragon's eyes. Maybe she should have given this idea a bit more consideration before carrying it out.

"What. Are. You. Doing?" Allister asked in a measured and precise tone.

She gulped. He didn't sound like a happy camper. Time to face the music. His claw came up and circled her waist. He pulled, and her lower body dangled in his grasp.

"Let. Go."

"Oh." She released his horn like it burnt her.

He held her in front of him, so close that his eyes, which were narrowed in anger, almost crossed. Thin trails of smoke escaped his nostrils. Uh-oh.

"Mind telling me what you hoped to accomplish?"

"I'm sorry, Allister. I didn't mean to scare you." Well, she did but Cyn hadn't meant to make him mad with her. She thought he'd sulk a bit then get revenge.

From the expression in his eyes, she could tell he didn't believe her. "I could have squashed you like a bug."

She closed her eyes, remorse hitting her right in the heart. His concern was for her safety. When she focused her gaze on him again, he looked at her like he saw something distasteful. It hurt. It shouldn't, but it did. When did Allister's opinion of her become so important?

In a rush she said, "You're right. I didn't think. I wanted to play, but you were sleeping. I called you twice with no response." She swallowed. "It won't happen again. You have my word."

Allister continued to glare as he lowered her to the ground. Once her feet touched down, he released her and stepped back.

"Are we cool?"

Allister retreated another step, then launched himself into the air, wings flapping furiously as he headed for the opening at the top of the cavern. Too soon, he was nothing more than a dark spot in the sun.

"I'll take that as a no."

Chapter Ten

Cyn sat forlornly in a corner, staring at the stitches on her rawhide shoes. Allister had been gone, well, seemed like forever. Knowing he was justifiably angry with her didn't help matters one bit.

Adding to her misery was the fact that she was trapped on this ledge, at least two stories above the cavern floor. There had to be another way down, otherwise her would-be rescuer wouldn't have found his way to her room. Provided she hadn't dreamt the whole incident. She was still undecided.

In no mood to get up and explore, she continued to sit, hoping her dragon would return soon. No doubt about it, Allister belonged to her. Just when she'd come to that conclusion, she couldn't say, but the Fantasy Island folks gave him to her and for while she was here, she intended to keep him.

To be honest, Allister possessed a lot of the qualities she looked for in a man: intelligence, witty repartee, unafraid to speak his mind, and best of all, the dragon didn't take any of her mess. Instead he matched her word for word, and action for action. In him she found a male she could trust. Allister shot straight from the hip, telling it like it is whether she liked it or not. She respected that about him. Hell,

she respected him.

If her dreams were any indication, part of her found Allister sexy. Or maybe it was the sexual deprivation coming out. It had been a long time since she'd been intimate with a man. Even longer since she'd found herself attracted to one—sexually or otherwise.

After the number her ex-husband did on her, she'd been firmly in the 'all men are bores, jerks, or liars' camp. No one she'd met in the interim had convinced her to change her mind. It figured that the first decent guy she found turned out not to be a man at all. If nothing else, this vacation was proof that when she returned to reality, it was time to get over the past and move forward with her life. Surely there had to be a nice, faithful, and reliable guy out there somewhere. Finding him might be a problem but if she never bothered to put forth the effort to try, the results were guaranteed. She'd be alone for the rest of her life. The thought depressed Cyn more than she already was.

Her morose contemplation was interrupted when Allister landed lightly on the ledge and dropped something a few feet in front of her. She managed to make out blood, meat, and hair before a blast of flame engulfed the whole thing. Soon, the smell of cooking meat filled her nostrils. He flipped the thing over and barbecued the other side. The...she looked closely...hindquarter of what might have been a cow, still sizzled and had plumes of smoke rising from it when Allister offered it

to her in an extended claw. “Here. You need to eat.”

After what happened earlier, the last thing she wanted to do is offend and further anger the dragon. Especially when he was being so sweet and considerate, thinking of her well being when he’d been so obviously put out with her, but there was no way that she was eating...*that*.

“Uhm, thank you, but I’ve already eaten. Someone left food for me in my room.” She held up her second empty water bottle as proof.

“Someone dared enter my lair?” There went that smoke again, drifting out of his nostril in little puffs and curls.

“Uh...” Cyn thought fast, not liking the way the dragon’s narrowed eyes glinted. “Maybe not. I didn’t actually see anyone. The food simply appeared. They might have teleported it in,” she offered. Dragon’s believed in magic, didn’t they?

His neck craned in one direction and then the other as he looked around suspiciously. His gaze came back to rest on her. “As the male, it’s my responsibility to provide for you.”

The side of Cyn’s mouth tilted up into crooked smile. “In my world, a female had better know how to provide for herself.”

Allister studied her a moment. “I’ve seen humans in the village. Males care for their females, much like dragons care for their dragonesses—hunting to provide food and building shelters for protection.”

She sighed and shifted to a more comfortable position. “Here things may operate like that, but off this island, in the real world where I live, they don’t.”

Allister sank down onto his haunches. “Your mate didn’t provide for you?”

She snorted. “Brad? Hell, no.”

“And this is why he’s no longer your mate?”

“You really want to know?” Cyn stretched and then rolled onto her stomach. The ground was hard and she’d been sitting on it in one position for way too long.

“Yes.”

A single look revealed Allister to be serious. He really wanted to know. Cyn debated. It was doubtful that he’d understand much of what she said, not being real and all, but maybe this was just what she needed. Therapy of sorts. She’d look at the whole ugly mess one last time, then dismiss it and move on.

“In the beginning, we split the cost of everything. We both made fairly decent money. I work for Disney World in Orlando.” She eyed him up and down. “They’d absolutely love you, Allister.”

He preened briefly under her appraisal. “This... Disney World?...has good taste.”

Cyn laughed briefly. “Yes, they do.” There was no need to tell him that Disney would take away his freedom, cage him and display him like an animal at the zoo. And in between shows, scientist would dissect and study him. No, he didn’t

need to know that at all.

On a more serious note, she continued, “Anyway, Brad had a good job, too, working for one of the other amusement parks as an engineer. We were going along, fairly stable. Our marriage wasn’t great and the sex was ho-hum, but it was okay, you know?”

The dragon nodded.

“We’d been married about five years and had recently bought a house when my cycle skipped.”

At Allister’s blank look, she explained, “I thought I was pregnant and told Brad my suspicions.”

The dragon perked up. “You have young?”

“No, it was a false alarm. I’d always wanted children. Turns out Brad didn’t. Said he had two already and didn’t want any more. This was a total shock to me because when we married, Brad was childless.” Cyn swung her feet absently as she thought back to that dismal day.

Allister lowered his head to see her expression better. “Your male had young with another female while mated with you? This is allowed in your world?” The dragon’s eyes were rounded in shock.

“Two females. He got two women pregnant. And hell no, it’s not allowed. I didn’t know he was cheating. I don’t know how I missed it. The signs were all

there.” Cyn shook her head at how stupid she’d been.

“I filed for divorce. At first, Brad tried to talk me out of it. He didn’t see what the problem was. When he realized I wasn’t going to back down, things got extremely messy. He cleaned out the joint account, ran up the credit cards, hid assets, fought me for possession of the house...” She sighed before continuing with, “You name it, he did it. I had to get a lawyer and hire a private investigator to straighten the whole mess out.”

It took over a year but she eventually got her name and her money back, and managed to break even on the sell of the house. However, she owed attorney fees out the wazoo and thanks to Brad, her credit was trashed.

Cyn shook off the funk thinking about the past always put her in. “That’s why I no longer have a mate,” she told Allister.

“That is no longer an accurate statement. You have me,” he answered.

The grin she gave him this time was real. “That’s sweet of you to say so, but the fact remains that you’re a dragon and I’m not.”

“How do you know?”

“What?”

Allister sat back and studied her. “How do you know you aren’t a dragon?”

Cyn rose to her knees, staring at the dragon like he’d lost his marbles. “Because I know.”

“You asked to be a dragon’s mate, did you not?”

“Yes,” she said slowly, trying to see where the dragon was going with this.

“I cannot become a human male.”

“We’ve already established this,” she reminded him.

“Who’s to say they didn’t give you the power to become a dragon?”

Chapter Eleven

Cyn sagged completely onto the ground, her body limp with shock. “Me, a dragon?”

“You got something against being a dragon?”

“No, I just—”

“You wanted me to become human,” he reminded her.

“That’s different, I—”

“So, it’s okay for me to become human like you but not for you to become a dragon like me?”

“Whoa!” She held out a hand in a “stop” motion. “Hey, where’s all this coming from? I like dragons, remember?”

“No, you like *dragon shifters*,” he mocked.

“I like you,” she argued. “And I didn’t say I wanted you to become human. I said I asked for a dragon shifter.”

Allister focused his narrowed eyed gaze on her until Cyn began to fidget. “And that’s different how?”

She sputtered before finally managing to spit out, “It just is.”

“So it’s okay for me to be a shifter but not you?”

“That’s not what I said,” she denied hotly as she rose to her feet.

“It’s what you meant,” he snarled.

Cyn stamped her foot on the ground. “No, no, no! Stop putting words in my mouth.” Hands on her hips, she matched Allister glare for glare.

“So tell me, what exactly do you mean?” he asked after their staring contest had gone on for an extended period.

Cyn took a moment to calm down and think. The dragon had her so rattled, her thoughts were one big muddle. “I think being a dragoness would be kind of cool, especially if I can fly and shoot fire out my mouth like you. But if I am a shifter, wouldn’t I know? Wouldn’t something about me feel different?”

“Why would it? Do shifters feel different from other humans?”

“How the heck would I know? I’ve never been one before,” Cyn burst out, frustrated.

“My point exactly,” Allister said with the satisfied air of someone who’s won a debate. “You won’t know until you try.”

Cyn shook her head in exasperation. “The problem is, I don’t have the first clue on how to proceed.”

“And here I thought you were the dragon shifter expert. What about all those books you read?” Sarcasm fairly dripped from his tone.

She narrowed her eyes and tilted her head to the side. “Are you trying to pick a fight with me, ’cause if you are, now is not the time.”

“You’re absolutely right. Pardon me.”

She continued to eye him suspiciously, but the dragon remained quiet, allowing her to think. Actually, his idea had merit. In some of the stories she’d read, the author described the shifting process. Granted it was all fiction, but what if something in one of the scenes worked?

Mentally she flipped through her entire library of dragon stories. One of them had to work. The trick would be finding the right one. *If* the dragon was correct, and she had a nasty feeling he was. It made sense in a convoluted sort of way. If he couldn’t shape-change into a human male, they must have given her the ability to become a dragoness. It’s the only way her fantasy could be fulfilled. Again, not the method she would have chosen but doable.

“Well?”

Cyn realized she’d been staring blankly at Allister while thinking. Bringing him into focus, she asked, “Well, what?”

“Have you figured it out?” he asked impatiently.

“I’m thinking,” she snapped.

“That explains the pained expression on your face,” he murmured.

What was this, payback? She glared at him. “I hope I *can* turn into a dragon just

so I can fry your scaly hide.”

Allister sighed. “Cyn, I’m only teasing. Like you, earlier,” he reminded. “Now seriously, they can’t have made it too difficult. It has to be something you would figure out fairly easily, or else, why bother?”

“I agree, the question is, which dragon book did they pull from?” She’d listed several by name, more by author, and from cross-genres—fantasy, romance, and science fiction.

“Again, you won’t know until you try. Pick one and go from there.”

“All right, I will, but you have to be quiet. I can’t concentrate with you jabbering at me.”

Allister huffed and rolled his eyes, but otherwise refrained from commenting. She walked away from the dragon towards the opposite end of the ledge, facing the rock wall.

One book in particular stood out in Cyn’s mind. In it, the author referred to a spark, that inner awareness or piece of her soul that housed the beast. All the hero had to do was tap into it. So, she closed her eyes and searched inwardly with her mind’s eye, searching for something that felt different, for that hint of “otherness.”

Frowning ferociously, deep in thought, she felt the skin of her forehead scrunching.

“What are you doing?”

Partially distracted from her task, Cyn answered absently, “Searching for my inner beast.”

“You look like you’re constipated.”

At that she opened both eyes and glared at the dragon. “Shhh!”

He sighed heavily.

Closing her eyes to block Allister out, she began her search again. Once she thought she’d located it, she called on her beast. First, mentally, then aloud. Nothing. Okay, so maybe that spark she thought she saw was indigestion. Moving right along, she mentally scanned each and every one of the books she could remember, doing what the heroes and heroines did to change into their counterpart—standing, sitting, even going down on all fours.

Nothing.

“Why don’t you try—”

“You, quiet!” she demanded, index finger pointed at his face.

“But I—”

“When I want your opinion, I’ll give it to you,” she snarled.

Highly offended, Allister glared at her before looking away. “Fine.”

Cyn shouldn’t have snapped at him and would probably apologize later, but right now she needed total concentration. She couldn’t do that with him chatter-

ing. This wasn't as easy as books made it seem and while she was by no means an ignorant person—under normal circumstances, that is—trying to figure this out was beginning to get the better of her. Now it was personal. She'd figure this out or die trying.

Frustrated, she called on her knowledge of Disney. After all, they were the magic experts. From “Bibbidy-Bobbidy Bo” to clicking her heels three times, she tried it all. At one point she spun around to see Allister lying on his side, his head propped on his hand, examining the talons on the opposite hand. Cyn faltered, a bit stunned to see him in such a pose. Shaking it off, she went back to summoning her inner dragoness.

The next time she spotted Allister, he had the hunk of cow in his hand, holding it the way she would a chicken drumstick. Look at him, eating while she was over here working her tail off. She gave a disdainful sniff and turned away again, racking her brain for something, anything that would work. She wasn't quite willing to admit defeat or ask the dragon for suggestions, which in her mind was the same thing.

Damn dragon! Probably laughing his head off at her on the inside. ‘*How do you know you're not a dragon,*’ she mimicked. Fool! I should have known better, but no, I allowed him to persuade me that he might be right. Joke's on me.

Exhausted, angry, and humiliated that she'd made a fool of herself, she final-

ly threw up her hands. "This is useless. I'm going to take a bath and see if some more food was left in my room," Cyn muttered under her breath.

The dragon rose to his feet as she stalked past. "Giving up so soon?"

She stopped, hands on her hips, ready for a confrontation. "Soon? I've been at this for *hours*. Did everything I could think of, including that stupid rain dance you found so amusing."

Allister cleared his throat. "Yeah, well, uhm, you have to admit, you did look ridiculous. Chanting and jumping, twisting and twirling as you were."

Cyn flipped him a bird and continued toward her room.

"You know, if you'd have asked me I could have—"

She spun around and pinned him with a glare. "What! What could you have possibly suggested that I haven't already tried?"

"How about wishing aloud?"

Her mouth gaped for a handful of moments before Cyn snapped it shut. She closed her eyes and counted to ten. "Of all the asinine... You think simply by saying, 'I wish I were a dragon,' that somehow, magically..."

A tingling began in her legs, strong and mildly painful, like when your foot falls asleep, catching her attention. The room spun and her vision wavered, expanding and contracting in waves that dizzied her. "Oooo, I don't feel so good."

She fell to her hands and knees. Allister said something, but it sounded like

he was speaking through deep water. Cyn closed her eyes and put her head on the ground. This place was going to be the death of her yet.

Chapter Twelve

“Cyn!”

Someone was calling her name. Cyn ignored the voice, more interested in sleeping.

“Cyn-thee-ah! Cyn-thee-ah!” Persistent. Annoying.

Allister. Of course. She should have known.

“What?” she asked groggily. She was exhausted and her body felt strange.

“I was right,” he crowed.

“About what? And why are you pestering me? Can’t you tell I’m tired?” The words were slow. The effort of speaking left her drained.

He didn’t answer. That was strange enough to have Cyn opening her eyes. Allister quiet? No snappy comeback?

“How do you feel?” he finally asked, sounding concerned.

“Exhausted, like I ran three miles full speed. Everything feels heavy, weighted down.” As she became more alert, Cyn realized something was wrong. She shouldn’t be feeling this way. Though her eyes were open, she couldn’t seem to focus properly on anything, and what little she could see looked strange. “What

happened?”

“You fainted.”

“I’ve never fainted in my life,” she told him.

“You’ve never become a dragon, either.”

Cyn froze, every muscle locking into place. “Did you say dragon?” she asked after a stunned moment.

“You don’t remember?”

She blinked. “Noooo...”

“Hmm...”

She remembered getting angry. Remembered the argument with Allister and then...nothing. The rest was one big void.

Cyn blinked rapidly a couple of times and the film covering her vision cleared. When it did, some of the tension eased from her body. She glanced at the dragon. “You shrunk!” she told him, shocked.

“No, maybe you got bigger,” he suggested mildly. “Why don’t you stand?”

“You mean I’m not already?”

He leaned in closer. “Are you sure you’re okay?”

“A bit disoriented. My head feels huge.” Slowly Cyn pushed to her feet. She wobbled a bit, especially when her wings made their presence known, but eventually found her balance.

“Try walking,” Allister instructed.

She took a few hesitant steps. Allister shuffled out of the way to give her room. Growing more confident, she walked the length and breadth of the ledge a couple of times while Allister offered helpful advice and suggestions.

Finally she came to a stop beside him. “You’re bigger than me. Way bigger.” He was almost twice the size of her.

“I’m a male.”

Twisting her neck this way and that, Cyn looked at herself. “You’re prettier, too,” she complained.

Where Allister’s scales were a luminous purple and green that shimmered and sparkled in the sunlight, hers were brown. Plain, boring brown, although her underside was a pretty golden color.

“I think you’re *very* attractive.”

Something about the way the dragon said it caught her attention. She glanced at him to find him watching her and the expression in his gaze made her feel warm. “Well, uhm...” She cleared her throat and turned away, flustered. “Thanks.”

“Ready to fly?”

Her gaze swung back to him. “Fly? Really?” she asked excitedly.

He arched his left eyebrow. “You are a dragon.”

“Yes. Yes, I am. Let’s do this. How do I start?” Pumped full of sudden energy, Cyn almost bounced in place.

“Crouch down and as you push up with your legs, flap your wings like so.” He demonstrated, launching into the air.

“Piece of cake,” she said, watching him.

She bent her knees and then jumped high, flapping her wings as she did. She stayed aloft for about thirty seconds before crashing to the ground.

Allister landed lightly beside her. “Try again.”

“Okay. Give me room.” Waiting until he moved, Cyn leapt into the air. She flapped furiously and gained a bit of altitude before she dropped to the ground in a tangle of wings and legs. Groaning, she untangled herself and shook her head hard, shaking off the dizziness. “This flying business isn’t as easy as it looks.”

Allister tilted his head to the side, considering her. “Launching straight into the air is tricky,” he admitted. “Maybe if you leapt off the edge? We’re high enough. It should give you time to get some lift action going.”

Sounded simple enough. She walked over to the edge and peered over. The ground seemed to be miles away, or maybe it was because she was taller in her dragon form. Either way, Cyn hunched down closer to the ground as vertigo set in.

“What are you waiting for? Jump.”

“Maybe flying isn’t such a great idea,” she said in a shaky voice. Cyn closed

her eyes and waited for the cavern to stop spinning.

“What’s wrong?”

“It’s too high.”

“This? This is nothing. Wait until you’re soaring in the skies above the island. It’s wonderful.”

“Oooo,” she moaned and tucked her head under her wing as nausea welled up inside.

“Are you...” his voice came closer, “...*afraid of heights?*”

“I’m not, but apparently the dragon is.”

There was a brief silence, then he said, “Cyn, you *are* the dragon.”

“No, I’m not,” she mumbled.

“Come out from under there,” he commanded. “I can’t hear you and talking to your spine is annoying me.”

With a sigh, she slowly unfolded herself.

“Now, what did you say?”

“I said, I may be in the dragon and the dragon in me, but we are not the same.”

Allister stared, blinked, and stared some more. Finally he burst out, “What utter rubbish!”

His complete and total dismissal of her reasoning stirred her anger, and she

forgot her fear. “It’s not rubbish. How else do you explain my sudden acrophobia? I’ve never been troubled by it before.”

“You’ve never tried flying before, either,” he reminded her.

Cyn opened her mouth, aimed, and shot a stream of fire at the irritating dragon. Or at least, that was her goal. Instead she ended up gagging and coughing like she was hacking up a fur ball. What she spit up resembled one, too.

Looking at the mess on the ground with both eyebrows raised, Allister asked, “What was that supposed to be?”

“My flaming ball of fire,” she answered in a hoarse voice.

“Hmph, some flame,” he stated in disgust.

Cyn looked back out over the air space, this time careful not to look down. “I don’t think I can do this,” she confessed.

“You will,” he said determinedly.

“Why do you care?” she asked crossly.

“Because if you can’t fly, we can’t mate.” With those words, while her mouth was still open, he shoved her off the ledge.

Chapter Thirteen

Cyn screamed as she fell. It emerged as a roar.

“Spread your wings.”

Allister’s voice in her mind broke through the terror and she instinctively obeyed. With merely a thought, her wings snapped open to their fullest extent. She instantly caught an air current and began to glide.

“Good job,” Allister praised. *“Now flap your wings and fly.”*

Following his instructions, she made a few, tentative flaps and immediately picked up speed. *“I’m flying!”*

Growing bolder, Cyn flew faster and swooped through the cavern. *“This is great,”* she called out, looking back at Allister who was flying behind her.

“LOOK OUT!”

“Whoops!” She turned sideways and skimmed past a massive calcite column. *Note to self: Pay attention and look where I’m going.* Cyn felt the draft as Allister veered off, his larger size unable to fit.

Drunk on her newfound power and agility, she taunted, *“You can’t catch me.”*

“We’ll see about that.”

Cyn saw a blur out the corner of her eye. It was Allister streaking by, his speed impressive. With his larger wingspan, she didn't think she could out run him. Her best bet was to out-fly him. Suiting thought to action, she darted between calcite formations, around columns and through waterfalls.

After a few close calls in which she narrowly avoided crashing into something, Allister cried out, "*Crazy female! You're going to kill yourself.*"

Cyn laughed. Having the best time of her life, she could do nothing else.

"*Let's go out where there's more room,*" Allister stated and went toward the opening of the cavern.

She switched directions and headed up, shooting right past him. "*Race you!*"

Cyn burst out of the cavern—make that volcano—with Allister hot on her tail. After a quick glance around, she darted to the left and toward water. Over the beach and ocean she completed a series of barrel rolls, then alternately swooped and soared. Allister remained by her side through every maneuver.

"*Remain close to the island in case you get tired and need to land, but stay away from the village,*" he instructed.

"*I feel great!*"

"*Now. It's your first flight. Your muscles will weary after a while,*" he counseled.

"*Well, before they do, I'm going to do this...*" A mating call, which came from the depths of her soul, trumpeted the air as Cyn flew as fast and as high as she could.

Allister quickly gave chase.

After only a few minutes of aerobatics, she began to tire. The dragon caught her, wrapping his wings, tail, and all four claws around her. Cyn grasped Allister as well and they fell from the sky in a dizzying rush. So caught up was she in the exhilaration of free falling, she barely felt the dragon's penis penetrating her.

When it seemed certain they'd crash, Allister pushed her away. "*Glide!*"

Cyn skimmed the ground with a joyous, "*Whoopie! Let's do that again.*" She flapped her wings hard, trying to gain altitude.

"*Cyn! Not that way!*"

"*What?*" She glanced over her shoulder.

"*The village. Stay away from the village!*" he commanded urgently.

"*Oh, yeah.*" She faced forward in time to see a barrage of arrows flying towards her from the field below. "*ALLISTER!*"

There were hundreds of men on the ground, scurrying around like ants. Yelling and shouting obscenities at her and Allister. The archers reloaded and another hail of arrows came at them, too close for her liking.

"*Fly high!*"

"*I'm trying.*" And she was, but just as Allister predicted, her energy was fading fast. She couldn't stop now. To land would mean certain death.

"*I'm coming in!*" Shooting out a stream of flame, Allister swooped low to give

her time to get away. Billows of smoke and the sounds of men screaming in pain immediately filled the air.

The field full of men and trampled crops gave way to rocks, and up ahead was the forest. If Cyn could make it there, she would be safe. As she slowly rose out of the range of arrows, she looked down and what she saw made her heart stutter. *“Allister, they have a catapult. Be careful!”*

No sooner had she spoken than a human slashed the rope that held the bucket and it shot forward, flinging its deadly contents with a force no simple bow and arrow could match. A combination of stones, javelins, arrows, knives, and axes that glinted in the sun came hurling at them.

Cyn managed to dodge and avoid most of it, although a few of the stones made contact. Allister, however, let out a pained cry. He’d slowed to fly directly beneath her, protecting her from the army on the ground. *“Allister, your wing!”*

“Go! I’m fine. Fly for the cavern!”

“But you’re bleeding,” she protested, able to smell the blood. She automatically decreased her speed, trying to get a better look at his injury.

“For the love of God, it’s just a scratch. Now go!”

Projectiles were still flying. Cyn realized the best thing she could do to help Allister was to do as he said. As long as she was in danger, he would be too. No way would he leave her unprotected.

She strained, tapping into reserves of energy she barely knew she had. Managing to pick up the pace, Cyn finally reached the trees, out of range of the airborne weapons. The skyward opening of the volcano in sight, Cyn focused all of her attention on making it to safety.

Breathing a sigh of relief, she glanced quickly behind her to make sure Allister was still with her, then darted inside. A few minutes after landing on their ledge, she looked up to see the dragon clear the opening.

Cyn realized he was flying funny. One of his wings wasn't fully extended. As she watched, Allister seemed to crumple. He dropped like a rock, landed on the edge of the ledge, then tumbled over. She could hear the impact of him hitting several rock protrusions on the way down.

"ALLISTER!"

Tiredness forgotten, Cyn raced after him, landing less than gracefully beside his prone, bloody body. His wings appeared to be broken. Helpless, she could do nothing but call his name, and pray that the damage wasn't as bad as it seemed.

"Allister, speak to me." She paced restlessly beside him before hesitantly reaching out to gently straighten his head. "Please be okay," she prayed. It went against the grain to sit there and do nothing, but what could she do? She couldn't call for help. The cavern didn't have any medical supplies and even if it did, she wouldn't know what to do with them, having never tended to a dragon before.

Even her beloved books hadn't prepared her for this scenario.

She didn't know how long she sat beside him. The afternoon sun slowly sank from the sky as Cyn watched each breath Allister took. As long as he breathed, he lived. Time was measured by the rise and fall of the dragon's chest.

She zoned into a trance-like state, only to snap to attention when she heard a weak, "Cyn, my mate."

"I'm here, Allister." She crept even closer.

"Need you...to do...something...for me," he wheezed out.

"Shh! Save your breath. Let your body heal," she murmured. Surely dragons had the power to heal themselves. Other supernatural beings did.

"Im...por...tant," he gasped.

Cyn laid her head beside his own. "Okay. What is it?"

"Flame."

She moved so that she peered directly into his eyes. "*Don't speak aloud. Save your breath. Talk to me like you did before in my mind. Now what about your flame?*"

"Give it to you."

"Give it to me *how?*"

"Open mouth."

Cyn didn't waste time asking why. She could see how important this was to him. He seemed almost desperate. "*All right.*"

Allister lifted his head a few inches off the ground, took a deep shuddering breath, and shot out a long stream of fire directly into her waiting mouth. It blasted through her body before settling deep inside. The flame ended abruptly and Allister collapsed on the ground with a thud.

“Allister? Allister!”

Cyn placed her face directly in front of his nostrils. No air stirred. She backed away to watch his chest. No movement. She leaned in closer to his chest, careful of his broken wings, trying to hear his heartbeat. Nothing. Gently, she nudged his body and it flopped over onto its side.

Then she saw it. The bloody, splintered remains of a javelin, directly where the dragon’s heart should be. The impact of the fall must have shoved it deeper, causing it to pierce Allister’s tough dragon scales.

Cyn roared her fury and pain to the sky. *“Noooooooooooo!”*

Chapter Fourteen

Cyn lay on the bed in her beach cabana, garbed in a white satin robe and nothing else. The sliding glass door and the two side window shutters were open, allowing a cross-breeze to cool the room, and still she burned. Mostly with anger at the jacked-up vacation she'd received, but her skin and insides felt hot like she ran a fever.

She didn't know how she'd gotten back to the main island. Her last memory was of lying beside Allister, her wing gently covering his body as if she could somehow keep his rapidly cooling flesh warm. It seemed vitally important to her that the dragon not be alone.

But she'd awakened in this cabin as though the last two days never happened. Her luggage was on the rack in the corner, her personal items spread neatly on the dresser and in the bathroom as if she'd placed them there herself, and her clothes either hung in the closet or were folded neatly in dresser drawers. Problem was, before waking here, she'd never seen the room. She'd gone straight from the arrival get-together brunch to the boat, which had taken her to the island where she'd met the dragon.

Just thinking of Allister caused her heart to ache, even knowing he wasn't real. Damn Fantasy Island people. She'd asked for an Ellora's Cave erotic romance and gotten Pixar film instead. And there was no chance of Disney's famous happily-ever-after ending happening with the plane arriving in a few hours to take her home.

Cyn sighed, flipped over onto her stomach, and dragged the pillow closer.

She'd really let them have it on the customer survey someone had unwisely left in her room. Cyn took comfort in that thought since a refund wasn't possible. She was lying there debating on taking yet another tepid shower to cool her down when a knock came from the door.

A tall, deliciously built white man stood in the glass doorway. He wore pleated black dress pants and a white dress shirt with a single breast pocket. The buttons were undone, exposed a length of tanned, muscular hairless chest. His dark, wavy hair was pulled into a ponytail at the nape of his neck. Big hands with strong looking fingers that were long and lean rested on his hips. "Cynthia Simmons?"

"Yes," Cyn responded warily. Feeling very naked, she rose to her knees, clutching at her robe to make sure she didn't flash him.

"You have something that belongs to me," he stated in an accented voice.

Cyn slowly and repeatedly shook her head. "I don't know you. What could

I possibly have that belongs to you?”

“Don’t you, Cyn?” He slid open the screen door and stepped inside. “Allister St. Claire, at your service.”

Prepared to scream for help, she paused instead. “Did you say Allister?”

“Yes, Allister.” He came to the foot of her bed and she promptly scrambled backwards on her knees until she was against the headboard. “And you, my lovely mate, have something of mine. Something I asked you to safeguard for me. Something very precious.”

Still stuck on his name, Cyn barely noticed him bending over to take off his shoes, then shrugging his shirt off his shoulders, allowing it to fall to the floor. “My dragon, Allister? The one I watched die? You’re *real*?”

“Yes, love.” He crawled onto the bed, coming to a stop in front of her. On his knees, Allister reached out and caught her by the nape, tugging her close. Cyn fell forward and landed with her hands on his chest, her mouth beneath his.

“Now, return my flame like a good little mate.”

Their gazes locked. Hers a deep brown, his smoky gray. He lowered his head and their lips touched. Then he kissed her.

That burning pit in her stomach shot up her throat, out her mouth and into his. If she thought his kiss something before, it positively incinerated her once Allister received his flame back.

The hand holding the back of her head tightened and he wrapped his other arm around her waist, plastering their bodies together. Cyn slid her arms up to circle his neck as a needy moan escaped. The world seemed to tilt on its axis as Allister lowered them to the mattress.

With their heads on the pillows and their legs tangled together, Allister drew back, allowing them space to breathe. "I knew you were the one," he murmured, nuzzling her neck. "As soon as you sassed me the first time, I knew it was you."

His words made Cyn's brain kick into gear and she realized she was lying intimately on the bed with a stranger, both of them barely clothed. She scrambled off the mattress, adjusting her robe and tightening the belt. Nervously tucking a strand of her real, much shorter hair behind her ear, she told him, "Well, uhm, you got your flame. You can leave."

His smile came slow. A predatory showing of teeth. "No, love. See, my flame wasn't the only thing I gave you." He rose to a seated position then scooted to the edge of the bed.

For every move he made, Cyn took another step back until the dresser halted her progress.

Allister came smoothly to his feet and took one step forward, stalking her. "I gave you my respect." Another step. "I gave you my trust." Step three. "I gave you

my love.”

Her heart jumped. *Love?*

His last step brought him directly in front of her. He slid his right hand inside her robe and laid it on her stomach as he leaned forward and whispered in her ear, “I gave you my children.”

Shock caused Cyn’s mouth to gape.

Taking advantage of her surprise, Allister lifted her by the waist and set her on top of the dresser. She automatically clutched at his shoulders as her feet left the ground. It never entered her mind to stop him as he unbelted her robe and lowered the top half to her waist.

“Most importantly, I gave you my mark. The mark of a dragon’s mate. See?” He indicated the mirror behind her.

Cyn glanced over her shoulder and what she saw stole her breath. A tattoo of a dragon that looked exactly like Allister covered her back. “How...when...?”

He met her gaze in the mirror while palming her breasts and tweaking her nipples. “The night you let me love you as a dragon, I came to you in spirit form and joined our souls as one.”

She twisted around. “That wasn’t a dream?”

One side of his mouth crooked up. “It was real.”

“Why couldn’t I see it before?” she asked, puzzled.

“You weren’t supposed to,” he said simply. “Not until it was time.”

Cyn glanced in the mirror again, remembering yesterday how tender and itchy her skin felt when she’d awakened. With all that happened afterwards, she’d forgotten.

“This isn’t part of the fantasy, is it?” she asked suspiciously. Technically, her vacation wasn’t over and she was still on the island.

He slid his forefinger under her chin and brought her face around to him. “This is also real.”

“And you really are a dragon shifter?”

He shook his head and the pupils of his eyes changed until they looked exactly like Allister the dragon. “No, love. I’m a dragon. One who hasn’t been able to take dragon form in over a century. Thank you for holding and returning my flame to me.”

He kissed her while she was still adjusting to the shock.

Chapter Fifteen

“You know, only a dragon’s mate can handle a dragon’s fire.”

As realization struck, Cyn smiled. “That’s why you were so shocked that your flame didn’t hurt me.”

“Um-hmm.” Allister rained kisses on her neck and shoulders and gently pushed her legs further apart, making space for himself between her thighs.

“Taking dragon form again was wonderful, but I hated not being able to do this.” He dropped to his knees and placed his mouth directly on her sex.

What followed were several long minutes of glorious ecstasy. When Cyn’s senses returned, she was slumped on the mirror. Her knees were over Allister’s shoulders, and he was licking her juice from his mouth and eyeing her sex like he wanted a second helping.

“Mmm, now that I know what I was missing, I also hate that you couldn’t do this,” she murmured.

Allister rose smoothly to his feet. “When the plane arrives, I’ll follow you back home to Orlando.” He undid the button of his pants and lowered the zipper. “We’ll pay off your bills and pack up your belongings.” He shoved at the waist-

band of his pants until they dropped to the floor. “Then we’ll go to the courthouse and get married in the human way with as many of your family and friends in attendance that can make it on such short notice...”

More interested in the unveiling that was slowly taking place, Cyn barely paid attention to a word Allister was saying.

He paused with his hands on the waist of his boxer-briefs, waiting until Cyn’s raised her gaze to meet his. “Afterwards I’m taking you home to Australia to live with me.” Allister pushed the underwear down his legs and stepped out of them, kicking them to the side.

“I never said I’d marry you,” she told him as she reached out a hand to capture his bobbing erection. “Who says I want to, or that I’m in love with you?” She gave his cock a firm squeeze and glanced up with a taunting smile when he hissed in reaction.

Pushing her hand away, he took his penis and lined it up with her vagina. “You will.” He thrust deep. “You do.”

“Yeah,” she agreed with a gasp, “but I never said it.”

Allister slowly withdrew, then thrust deep again. “Yes, you did.”

Cyn gripped his shoulders. “No, I didn’t.”

Another slow withdrawal. “You said it when you let me make love to you in dragon form while you were human.” Deep thrust. “You said it when our souls

connected.” Inch-by-inch withdrawal. “You said it when you worked so hard to become a dragon.” Deep, forceful thrust that made her catch her breath. “You said it every time you took my flame.” Another aching slow withdrawal that had her wrapping her legs around him to keep him inside. “Most of all,” he paused there at her entrance, “you said it when you refused to leave my dying body.”

Allister braced her hips with his hands and proceeded to show Cyn how a dragon loves his mate in return—on the dresser, the wall, the floor—and everywhere their passionate fire burned, they left scorch marks behind.

Later as they lay in a tangled, sweaty heap on the bed, Cyn told him, “The only person important to me is my mom. A courthouse wedding sounds fine.”

“Good. Maybe she’d like to come with us. We’ll need the help when the hatchlings arrive,” he said languidly as he stroked her hair.

Cyn jolted upright. “My God, you were serious about me being pregnant?”

A grin crept across his face until even his eyes smiled. “Very. I smell at least three.”

“But how is it even possible? I mean, you’re a dragon. I’m not.” Cyn wasn’t upset. She just didn’t believe it was true.

He propped his head on his hand. “The fire I blew into your sex the night of the kidnapping attempt prepared your womb to accept my seed. When we made love in your ‘dream,’” Allister made air quotes with his free hand, “our souls con-

nected, completing the bond. In dragon form, one mating is all it takes, especially when the gold color of your underbelly declares you to be a female ripe for breeding.”

She slumped onto the mattress beside him. Triplets? Her mother was going to have a cow. Then she grinned. The grin became a chuckle. For all her bitching, Fantasy Island had given her everything she ever wanted in life—a man who loved her like no other and children of her own.

Cyn jumped off the bed and tore up her survey, then came back to Allister and straddled his waist. “I love you so much, and I’m so glad I came to Fantasy Island. How else would I have met you?”

He looked smug. “We would have met. A dragon always finds his mate. Besides, I’m the world’s foremost dragon expert. Who do you think Disney calls when they need help creating dragons?”

So Cyn got her happily-ever-after after all.

The End

www.zenawynn.com

About the Author

Romance Author Zena Wynn is the multi-published author of several books. Most know for her paranormal, erotic romance series, True Mates, she also writes Inspirational, Contemporary IR, and Sci-Fi/Fantasy. She loves hearing from readers and can be contacted at zenawynn@yahoo.com. Or check out her website: www.zenawynn.com.

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