



Alien Bond

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Chapter One

Caleb weaved in and out of traffic, mashing the break only when necessary. He spared the rearview mirror a glance. They were still on his tail. *Damn it!* He had to shake them. For the last two miles, the black SUV had stayed up with him. The Volvo was decent, but no match for the vehicles driven by the government agents.

Catching sight of an exit, he took the off ramp. Maybe he could lose them in the city with more turns, back alleys, and people to get between him and them. The first ping past his open window alerted him that they'd started shooting. Caleb gripped the steering wheel harder and pressed the gas. Another bullet shattered the rear window. He ducked as low as he could and still see where he was going.

A red light loomed ahead. He sped up and took the turn at almost a ninety degree angle. Horns blared all around him. Two other cars swerved to avoid a collision. One grazed a light pole and rolled to a stop.

"Sorry, man. Can't stop," he muttered.

A quick check showed his weaving through city streets was a good move. The lead time he had on his pursuers grew. He allowed himself a small grin. He was going to make it. In a little while, night would fall, and he'd ditch this car to find another. Somewhere out there a new life awaited him, and he damn well deserved it after what they did.

At the next light when he didn't see the SUV, he breathed a little easier. He slowed down, turned a corner, and then his windshield flew apart in a thousand pieces. His right shoulder burned. Losing control of the steering wheel, he struggled to stay on the road, but instead he jumped the curb and slammed into a parked car.

Caleb's head jerked forward. He wasn't wearing a seatbelt. Some internal instinct told him to phase. He did, but not fully. His upper body meshed through the steering column, all except for his injured shoulder. Biting off a howl of pain, he jerked back.

Glass crackled next to him. He grasped the arm reaching through the window and drove his elbow into the man's face. Then he shoved the door open to knock his enemy on the ground. Caleb jumped free of the wrecked vehicle to run. Fired shots kept him moving although he was beginning to get light-headed. He darted into an alley and weaved his way through several streets. The daylight waned. When he could go no farther, he dropped against a doorway to catch his breath. No footsteps sounded nearby, but they would not give up any time soon. He needed to find somewhere to hide until he could deal with his wound.

Caleb tore a strip of cloth from the bottom of his shirt and tied it around his shoulder, using his teeth and one hand to tighten it. Staggering and leaning on the wall for support, he made his way down the alley. Music spilled out from an open doorway up ahead. He scanned the pristine alley for a weapon and found none. He'd have to dredge up some energy from deep down to overpower whoever was there. They'd help him whether they liked it or not.

Opposite the doorway, Caleb stopped when he could see inside. A woman came into view, dancing to the nineties beat. Her jeans hugged a curvy figure, cut low enough that Caleb glimpsed a pink thong. Every now and then she used the knife in her hand to smooth icing on the cake in front of her. She dipped a finger into a bowl of Cool-Whip and sucked it off. Caleb's cock hardened at a time like this, when he could bleed to death. He chastised himself for his lust, but it had been a long time. He'd been in the government facility for more than a year.

Taking a deep breath, he pushed off the wall and shuffled across the alley. The woman twirled again. Her cropped shirt revealed a pierced navel. Caleb's enhanced vision allowed him to make out the golden dragon with a red jeweled eye. His erection strained at his pants. When he stumbled into the doorframe, she bit off a scream. Wide blue eyes stared at him. Pink lips fell apart.

Caleb's lids drooped. His head bowed. "You've got to be the hottest woman I've ever seen," he said, and then fell flat on his face unconscious.

* * * *

The knife in Zita's hand slipped to the floor from nerveless fingers. She could not believe a man had fainted in her kitchen and was bleeding all over the place. Having the back door open probably hadn't been smart, but when she baked, the kitchen grew so hot she couldn't stand it. She had only intended to leave it open for a little while. Now look what happened.

Deciding that she better do something quick before she had a dead man on the floor, she climbed around him and stooped to grab him under the arms. Through much huffing and puffing, she managed to drag him into the pantry where she kept a tiny cot for nights it was too late to head back to her RV. She'd managed to pull him using her body weight, but there was no way she could lift him up to the cot. The man was massive. Shoulders that looked like they'd been carved from stone sat atop a wide chest. Even through the tattered shirt he wore, she made out rippling muscle.

The situation couldn't be helped. She would need to dress his wound right here and then maybe get him to wake long enough to crawl up to the cot. Zita went into action, retrieving her medical kit from one of the pantry shelves. She'd done so many odd jobs over the years, along with starting a half dozen courses at trade schools. Medical assistant had been one on her list, and after she'd quit half way through, she kept the medical supplies. Hell, she'd paid for them. Why not?

In minutes, she dressed the man's wound, relieved that the bullet had passed through his flesh. That particular skill—knowing how to check—went beyond her training. She'd learned that the hard way with a brother in trouble more often than not. When she finished her work, she was pretty sure her sexy patient would live.

"Hey," she called out to him and tapped his cheek. "Wake up, sleeping beauty. You need to get off this floor before you catch your death of cold."

He didn't respond at first, but then dark eyes opened to stare up at her. Confusion clouded their depths. A hand shot up and grabbed her around the neck hauling her down to him. "Who are you?" While he spoke, he scanned the room.

Zita coughed, fighting his hold. "The one who saved your life, you ass." He let go, and she scrambled to put space between them.

The man struggled to sit, leaving the shirt she'd cut away from him on the floor. When he swayed and caught himself on the edge of the cot, Zita caught sight of his back. A stirring of desire hit her long deprived system. A marine's emblem had been tattooed between his shoulder blades with the words *Semper Fidelis* beneath it. Always Faithful was the translation. It was the motto of the Marine Corps. She recognized that too because of her brother.

"You're a marine," she stated.

He stiffened. "*Ex-marine*." He pulled himself up from the floor. When she would have helped, he gave her a look that told her to back off. Zita crossed her arms to lean on the opposite wall. Yeah, he was a soldier all right. They didn't need anybody until they fell flat on their faces and had no choice. When dizziness hit the man again, he sank down on the cot and lay back. His breathing labored, he seemed to concentrate on getting his heart rate down. "Why did you help me?"

Zita shrugged. "You needed help. Besides, you're sexy as all get out." She laughed at his shocked expression. "Hey, I don't bite my tongue."

The soldier's gaze dropped to her breasts and heated in a second. Zita smirked. Yeah, he'd be just fine if he could think like *that* at a time like this. She left the room to clean up the mess in the kitchen and lock the

back door. In the distance police sirens blared. Wondering if it had something to do with him, she went back to the pantry.

“Who are you?” she asked. “And what kind of trouble am I going to get into helping you?”

His lips compressed into a straight line. For several moments he watched her, she guessed assessing how much he should admit. “My name is Caleb Russell.”

“And?” she prompted.

“That’s all you need to know.” He struggled to stand up, swayed, and dropped on his ass a second time.

Zita laughed. “You’re not going to stop until you break open your stitches, are you?”

He eyed his shoulder and then her. “You stitched it up? You’re a chef. What would you know about that?”

“Hmm, they breed them arrogant in the marines, don’t they?” She put her hands on her hips. “For your information, Mr. High-and-Mighty, I learned a couple things from my brother. He was a marine as well.”

“Was?”

“You have your secrets. I have mine.”

“Fair enough, but I need to get out of here. I...don’t want to be a burden to you.”

“You mean you don’t want the police finding out which alley you slipped down.” At his irritated glare, she raised her eyebrows. He didn’t respond. “Fine. I’ll give you a ride to your next stop, but after that, you’re on your own. I don’t need the trouble.”

To his supreme humiliation, which Zita got special satisfaction from, she had to help him up, and they stumbled through to the kitchen. Once Zita had them in the alley, she locked the restaurant door and directed Caleb to her RV. When they drew alongside it, Caleb cast it a doubtful look.

“Hey, buddy, this has gotten me all around the country, and it doubles as a home when I don’t have a place to stay. So don’t look down your nose at it.”

“I wasn’t.”

“You were.” She wasn’t offended by any means. Zita had badmouthed her junk heap on wheels many a day, but it was transportation and home more often than not. With her gypsy-like ways, moving from job to job and place to place, it was perfect. Every now and then, she longed to settle down, to have a family with a husband and kids. But then she’d dismiss

the thought as a pipe dream and continue on. This was her life. Hoping for more meant pain she didn't need.

Zita settled Caleb on a couch and tossed her bag on a chair. She went to the fridge to grab a cold drink. "You want anything?" Moisture had broken out on his forehead, and his eyes were glassy. She swore and crossed to him. His skin was hot. "Damn it, a fever."

She started to move away, but he caught her wrist. Zita tumbled forward to land against his chest. He winced when she bumped his injured shoulder. With an apology on her lips, she looked up to meet his eyes only to find their mouths were inches apart. Caleb's breath heated her lips.

She froze. The desire that had surfaced the last time she was too close to him came back with a vengeance. Zita told herself to get up off his lap. The man was ill after all. But she couldn't make herself move just yet.

"You're very beautiful," he muttered. She thought she'd go insane when his lips brushed hers as he spoke.

"Yeah you kind of said that before your face hit my floor," she quipped.

He closed his eyes. She thought he'd gone unconscious, but then his lids fluttered open again. The man had lashes a woman could be jealous of—thick and sooty to match his hair. "I need a couple of days," he told her.

"No way." She tried to get up, but he released her wrist and put an arm about her waist. He was strong even with a fever. His embrace drew her closer, flattening her breasts against his chest. One of his thighs had somehow become wedged between hers while she sat facing him.

"Two days," he said again. "You're not afraid of getting into trouble."

"*Au contraire*, soldier boy. I am. I know too well how much trouble it can be crossing the police." She didn't elaborate. He didn't need to know her business. "Now if you'll let me go and tell me where I can drop you, we can part ways."

Her words were matter-of-fact, but she was feeling anything but that. She wanted him to stay. No, she thought, biting her lip and trying to put space between them. Getting involved with a soldier was the biggest mistake she could ever make. An odd pressure in her head made her focus on him. The dark eyes had deepened more to something like a stormy ocean. Still glassy, their intensity chilled her. The pressure increased. If she didn't know any better, she'd think he was reading her mind.

"I'm sorry about Zander," he said.

She gasped. "How do you know about my brother?"

"Your twin," he confirmed. "He was convicted of murder."

“He didn’t do it!”

He hesitated and then released her. She scrambled off his lap to stand as far away from him as the narrow room allowed.

“I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to upset you,” he began. She rolled her eyes. He lifted a hand toward her, palm down as if calming a frightened animal. “I can help you. I have connections. I can get him off.”

She sucked her teeth. “Yeah, like I’d believe that. I’m not an idiot. Somebody shot you. Looks like you’re on the wrong side of the law yourself, or you would have gone to a hospital. Oh no, wait. Gunshot wounds are reported to the police.” Sarcasm dripped from her lips.

He ran a hand through his hair, tussling it more and making himself sexier, if that was possible. She licked her lips and turned her head. This was not the time. Yet, it had been too long.

“And how do I know this isn’t some kind of setup?” She turned back and glared at him. “If you know about Zander, you also know he had problems after his time in Iraq, but instead of helping him the police set him up and got him convicted of a crime he didn’t commit.” Tears welled in her eyes, but she brushed them away not wanting this hardened soldier to think she was a wimp.

Caleb seemed to be holding himself up with the last of his strength. His fingers clutched his knees, and his back was ramrod straight, but his eyes were slits and his breathing heavy. “I’m in no condition to prove to you what I’m saying is the truth. Just two days, Zita. I’m sure I’ll be fine then. The man I need to meet can also help Zander. I guarantee it.”

Zita left him sitting there and walked to the front of the RV. She dropped into a seat behind the steering wheel, her mind going a mile a minute. In all honesty, she’d planned to blow out of Boston soon anyway. The restaurant baker gig had been getting old. She should help him for the smallest chance that Zander could be set free. Or was he lying? And if he was lying, then that meant he knew something about her and her brother. The authorities that went after Zander could now be after her, but why bother? She was probably as screwed up in the head as her brother.

Leaning out around the cabinet that backed her chair, she examined Caleb. Every muscle was tensed although his head had gone back to rest on the couch. She imagined despite his condition, he was tuned in to his surroundings, alert against an enemy attack. Zander had been that way—precise, militant, always on guard. But the survivor’s guilt that weighed him down tore Zita apart to watch. Maybe in a way, helping Caleb would be her way of helping Zander, even if Caleb couldn’t get him off. Hell, she’d be screwing the police either way.

Decision made, she got up and went back to him. “Okay, soldier boy, I’ll help you.” She leaned down to rest a hand on his thigh. “But if you screw me over, I’ll castrate you.”

Inches above where her palm rested, his cock grew hard. She chewed her bottom lip. The agreement had been a ride and time to heal in exchange for his help with her brother. Problem was, Zita wanted oh so much more.

Chapter Two

Zita had been driving for hours. When she couldn't keep her eyes open any longer, she pulled off the road headed for an RV park she knew of. At least she'd made it to Ohio, but now was the time for rest.

Her tiny rolling home had just the one bed which the couch opened out to. When she slipped out of the driver's seat, she noted just how much of the bed Caleb's giant body took up. He lay on his back, arm slung out to her side, leaving a narrow space for her. Sighing, Zita pulled off her jeans but left her tee on. She climbed in beside him and tossed his arm away. At least his injured shoulder was on the other side so she wouldn't hurt him while she slept.

Being careful not to let her skin touch his because that would set off a whole new bunch of problems, she curled up beneath a sheet and closed her eyes. Almost right away, Caleb rolled to his side and spooned her ass. Electric desire brought her body to life. She tried forcing herself to relax and go to sleep. It didn't work. Caleb shifted behind her, his cock growing solid. Damn, did the man ever think of anything but sex? Like she was one to talk, all she wanted was to grind into him and take it all.

After an hour of trying to sleep but failing, Zita gave up. The ache between her legs was calling out for satisfaction. She peeked over her shoulder at Caleb. He was still out, although his fever had come down some. Feeling safe, she closed her eyes and ran her hand down over her belly to thread past her thong.

One skim over her throbbing clit had her on fire. She stroked it, clenched her thighs, and suppressed a moan. Pleasuring herself had become second nature. She could do it in her sleep, but having a man buried inside of her was so much better. Longing for more than her fingers, Zita imagined Caleb touched her. When she pushed her fingers into her wet center, she thought of his cock, considering whether it would stretch her walls and fill her with more girth than she'd ever had before.

Her breathing quickened. She picked up the pace while trying not to jostle the bed. Her fingers, coated with her cream, glided deep, bringing a soft cry to her lips. At the same time she pumped, she used her thumb to massage her nub. A massive climax began to build. She bucked a little, anticipating it.

"Zita?"

She froze, her fingers buried in her pussy. Maybe he would think she was asleep and fall back himself. Her body cried out for her to finish what she started. She could have hit Caleb over the head for ruining her play

time with him in mind. She waited for him to settle down, but although he didn't move, she had the distinct feeling that he was still awake.

"Finish it," he whispered.

She gasped. "That's none of your business," she said, annoyed that he knew what she was doing.

He lifted his head and then laid his cheek alongside hers. Her pussy pulsed when he pushed against her ass so she'd feel his erection all the more. "Finish it while I listen. If I had the energy, I would take you to heights you've never known."

"Always the arrogant soldier," she quipped, but she could not hold back. Knowing he wanted to watch, to hear her, got her hotter. Wrestling between desiring to feel him pressed against her and wanting him to see what she did, she gave into the latter. After she twisted around to her back, she hooked her thumbs in her thong and pushed them down over her hips. The moonlight shining in through the curtains gave just enough illumination for him to see.

She kicked away the panties and the sheet, and spread her legs. One she flung over Caleb's legs, and she watched for his reaction. His eyes widened. The bandaged arm lay on his side, but he clenched and unclenched his fingers before letting them relax. Caleb longed to touch her.

"Just watch." She reached down and lifted her tee up over her breasts. She'd relieved herself of her bra while she was driving. Stroking her breasts, she uttered soft moans and encircled her areolas with her thumbs. Pushing one erect nipple toward her mouth, she sucked on the peak. Caleb hissed. She drew harder, sending arrows of delight between her legs.

Never being one to be ashamed of her body, she ran her hands over her belly, luxuriating in her own generous curves. When she reached her pussy, she arched and pushed a palm between her legs to squeeze. Caleb groaned.

"Imagine I'm touching you," he instructed. "Thumbing your clit, pinching and tugging on it until you can't take it anymore. Do you want my cock inside of you, Zita?"

"Yes." Her breath came in short bursts.

"Hold your clit and push your fingers into your pussy. Let me hear it. Let me hear your cream coating your fingers as you pump."

She raised her hips as she thrust, driving in a way that the friction made sensual noises. Her juices flowed like a fountain all around her fingers. Never had masturbating been this hot. Caleb who had been riveted to her movements, collapsed back in exhaustion. She slowed down until

he could focus on her. All the work might be at her hands, but this involved the two of them. She needed his commands.

When he opened feverish eyes, Zita hesitated. "Should I stop?"

"No, sit up. Touch yourself for me."

She did as he asked, getting to her knees and facing him. Leaning forward a little, she put one hand between her legs and played with a nipple with the other. Her gaze locked on his, she buried her fingers inside of her and began a slow pump. On the brink of a climax, she worked her body faster, Caleb encouraged her. His shaft twitched. She whimpered.

"Come, Zita," he commanded. "I cannot wait any longer."

She tormented her little clit and bunched a hand in the sheets. Her orgasm raged through her body, and she collapsed beside him in a satisfied heap. But Caleb wasn't finished with her.

"Put your fingers inside your cream and feed it to me."

She looked at him. He was serious. Not that she thought he wasn't since her varied sexual exploits included oral sex both ways. But feeding her lover from her fingers when he couldn't go down on her sent a chill of delight racing over her skin. What would it be like when he was well, and they could explore all they wanted of each other?

Dipping her middle and her ring finger into her pussy, she had to pause a moment while a smaller yet intense orgasm rocked her. She squeezed and worked her heat until the sensations eased, and then she pulled the coated fingers free. Caleb parted his full lips, but before Zita fed him, she had to taste him. Their mouths fit well together in a slow, sensual melding.

Rather than get carried away, which she could with ease, she drew back. "Maybe I shouldn't. You're still not feeling well."

"Do you know what you've done to me? How hard I am right now? I can't take you like I want to, so the least I can have is a taste of your sweetness." His nostrils flared in his frustration. "Give me what I watched running down from that luscious pussy of yours, while I imagine that I got it by snaking my tongue up your tight little hole."

His words threatened to make her come again. Shuddering at the powerful picture he drew in her mind, she pushed her fingers into his mouth. Caleb groaned, running his tongue over her hand. Every drop he laved made her quake with fresh need. She fell against his neck and tried to catch her breath.

"Oh hell, Caleb, I think I might need to do it again."

He kissed her fingers. "By all means."

Bolder now, she sat up and leaned over the side of the bed. The lower compartment in the cabinet was where she kept her toys. She selected the

bright purple eight inch dong and held it up for Caleb's inspection. "Would you like to watch me play with this?"

Excitement registered in his eyes. "Just what kind of woman have I stumbled on?"

She grinned. "An uninhibited one. I love sex. What can I say? And it's been a while since I had a good lover." She flicked her gaze toward his crotch. "I wonder if you are."

"I intend to prove that I am. Meanwhile." He indicated the dildo.

Zita shifted to lean back on her elbows while her pussy faced Caleb. She did consider herself uninhibited like she said, and she'd had more than a couple one night stands. But what she was doing with Caleb was bold even for her. She'd never played with her toys with a man. None up until her soldier was willing.

"Would you like it here?" she asked, teasing her clit with the bulbous head. "Or here." She glided over her pussy opening toward her anus.

"Both." Caleb licked his lips. "First your pussy, then your ass. Do you have another one?"

Zita almost howled in joy. "You can do that when you fill one and feed me the other."

With languid movements, she coated the toy in her juices. Then she breeched her entrance an inch deep. Her head went back, and she closed her eyes. Caleb began to pant. Zita laid down flat and held the dildo in two hands. She fed it all the way up her channel and then withdrew it before repeating the process. How she loved a man inside her and wished it was Caleb right now.

"You're so beautiful, Zita," Caleb told her. "Take it all."

She raised one knee to her chest and pushed the dildo higher. Caleb called out his encouragement. She took it deep, squirming and moaning as she did. He seemed just as unsettled as she was, on the verge of release.

"To hell with this," he grumbled. Her eyes widened when he shoved the sheets down along with his boxers. His cock stood thick and long. All of a sudden, her dildo did not appeal. She wanted Caleb more than she remembered wanting any other man. "Come here, Zita. I need to feel you all around me."

"But you've still got a slight fever, and—"

"Trust me. I will be fine." He stroked his manhood, making her mouth water for a taste and a ride.

They were both shaking with the excitement of what was to come as she positioned herself above him. She straddled his hips and brought her pussy down over his cock. From the first piercing, she lost all sense of

time and place. All she wanted was more of him, as much as she could stand.

She closed her eyes and let herself down. The man was too long for her to take all of him, but she stuffed herself full and began rotating her hips to make him slide in and out. Zita fell forward, catching herself on Caleb's wide chest. She bucked as arrows of delight raged through her body.

One arm limp, Caleb used the other to hook around her waist and drag her closer. "Damn it, I wish I was strong. Pump, Zita. I don't know how long I can hold my release. Woman, your pussy is so tight." His grunts set her off. She worked him hard and fast, hooking her feet around his legs. She fell flat to his chest, and licked his salty, warm skin. Capturing one flat nipple into her mouth, she sucked and rode him to her heart's content.

When her orgasm tore through her, Zita shuddered and collapsed, breathing hard. Caleb didn't allow her to rest long. He slid his hand down over her back until he reached her ass. "You owe me action here."

She sat up to stare at him. "Aren't you exhausted? You came, and you're still too warm for my liking."

He said nothing but left a single eyebrow raised in question. Zita wasn't complaining. From experience, she knew if her clit was massaged, she could come and come, presumably forever. She eased off his cock. Seeing that with a little stroking, her soldier grew out a second time, Zita worked him to thick hardness again.

She let Caleb watch her play with her clit until she was wet, and then she used her come to moisten her ass entry. Caleb's eyes grew round when he realized what she was going to do. Zita laughed. "I told you I would fill both holes when you were one of them. If you're up to it, I'll do just that."

"Oh, I'm more than up to it." He shook his head. "It was my lucky day when I stumbled onto you."

She grinned. "Literally."

Zita loved getting it in the ass with her lover behind her, but since Caleb had to stay on his back, she made concessions for him. She'd be sure to get him to make it up to her later. First she leaned toward Caleb and then fed his solid piece into her pussy. She had to pause twice, once so she wouldn't come too soon and once so Caleb could gain control. After he was buried as far as he could go, she worked on the dildo. The smooth purple surface stretched her anus, and Zita wiggled a little to get it deeper. Caleb hissed. The fit with him and the dildo together made her head spin, but the feeling was too good. Zita had a secret fantasy like any other

woman of having two men at once, and this was the closest experience to it.

Caleb reached behind her to take control of the dildo, and while she rode his cock, he drove the dildo into her. She cried out, falling flat on his chest with her ass curved into the air. Caleb lifted his head to capture her lips, and melded bodily, they curled their tongues together. Zita moaned while her climax built. She captured his lower lip between her teeth and nipped him. A shudder rocked his hard length. Zita dug her nails into her palms. Then without warning, she came, and following on the heels of hers, Caleb bucked his release.

Spent, they clung to each other panting. Not for a long time did Zita have the strength to climb off of Caleb. She rolled to his side and fell asleep. Some time during the night, a loud banging on her door woke her. Groggy and sore, she misjudged the edge of the bed and landed on the floor. The banging continued.

Zita yawned and stumbled to unlock the door before swinging it open. The three men in dark suits, incongruent with the rising sun at their backs, stared at her in shock. Too late she realized she was stark naked. To cover her embarrassment, she put a hand on her hip and glared. "It's like five in the morning, gentlemen. What do you want?"

They managed to wrestle their gazes from her nipples and the patch of dark curls between her legs. The one in front said, "Uh, sorry to bother you, ma'am, but we're with the CIA." He flashed a badge. "We need to search your vehicle for a suspect we're in pursuit of."

Zita's body went cold as she remembered that her injured soldier was lying feverish in her bed.

Chapter Three

The agents ascended the three steps into the trailer while Zita grabbed a robe. She'd had no choice but to let them in. The hope that Caleb could help her with Zander wasn't a huge loss since he was leaving her in handcuffs. Yet, when she turned around, it was to find her bed empty. The men stood unmoving, staring around. To Zita's further embarrassment, the purple dildo lay atop the covers in plain sight. She scanned the rest of the bed and the floor. Where was Caleb?

Her trailer was tiny. There weren't many places for him to hide other than the bathroom or maybe the closet if all her crap wasn't piled in there. So how had she not heard him scramble about while she answered the door? The agents searched every nook and cranny, even the cabinets where not even a cat could fit, let alone a man of Caleb's size. She guessed their job insisted that they be thorough, and she said nothing.

When they were done, they thanked her for her time, gave her a card to contact them should she have any info to share, and then filed out. At the door, the last man hesitated and looked back at her. Zita knew what was on his mind. He flicked a card from his pocket and said, "*Do* call...if you have any information."

"Uh huh," she muttered. When they were gone, and she'd locked the door, Zita tore up the cards. Whether she had information or not, she wasn't helping the authorities find jack. Let them do their own investigation. What Zita wanted to know is where Caleb went.

She did another scan of her place but didn't find him. After she'd showered and dressed, she went outside to search the area. There were no traces of Caleb anywhere. Zita ran her hands through her wet hair trying to determine how got out, but finally decided Caleb must have awakened earlier and left on his own. He didn't need the two days to recover, and he'd screwed her over on their agreement.

"Should have known." She stomped back to her RV and prepped it to leave. After she settled her bill, she left the park and headed for somewhere she could get breakfast. Parked in an alley, she jumped out of the RV and strolled the street in search of a coffee shop. She came across a bookstore with a café and decided to go there. After snagging her favorite magazine, she ordered a caramel latte and a bagel with cream cheese, and then returned to her vehicle. Caleb stood outside the door. "What the hell?"

She stormed up to him and would have put her hands on her hips to demand where the hell he'd been, but her hands were full. Besides that,

the man looked like he was about to collapse. Zita didn't say a word. She unlocked the RV and helped him inside. When he was settled, he grabbed her bag and began munching her bagel. She snatched the latte out of his reach before he could confiscate that as well.

"Where the hell were you?" she demanded. "And how did you get out of here?"

"One swallow," he begged. "I won't drink it all."

She frowned. "You're doing *me* a favor?" She held her hand out for the small piece of bagel he hadn't devoured, and he handed it over. After she'd enjoyed the rest of her breakfast and wet her throat with the drink, she gave half to him.

"I thought you'd screwed me on the help you promised."

"I wouldn't do that. I said I'd help you with Zander, and I will. I knew those guys would catch up to me sooner or later, so I had to be ready."

She took in the fact that his hand shook a little when he drank. "Never mind your shoulder. Let me look at it. You better not have torn the stitches." When they had finished their breakfast, and drank down the last of the latte, Zita examined Caleb's wound. There was some bleeding, but he hadn't damaged the careful stitches she'd done. She changed the bandages and threw out the used ones. Caleb hadn't explained his Houdini escape, and she began to think he wasn't planning on it.

Back on the road, Caleb took the seat across from her and looked over the many maps she kept in a cubby. He tapped the paper in front of him. "I have a friend here. If we go that way, I can pick up some cash."

"Won't the police be looking there? They always stakeout your friends first just in case you're looking for someone to hide with." Hence his getting her to help him, she imagined.

He grinned. "You get that from movies?"

She rolled her eyes. "Books, thank you very much, but a lot of that stuff is based on real life."

"Yes, well don't worry. My buddy knows how to lay low, and so do I. Wake me within five miles of our destination. I'll tell you what to do next."

"How about a thank you for saving your ass, soldier boy!" Mornings were not her thing. She tended to be a night owl, and when she was forced to wake before noon, the pissy attitude was what those around her got—take it or leave it. Caleb's expression told her he'd leave it.

"Thanks," was his clipped response, and he left her to drive on her own. Since she didn't hear the springs creaking from the bed being unfolded, she guessed Caleb had decided to stretch out on the couch as it

was. She blew out a frustrated breath. Last night was amazing having sex with him, but in the light of day, she wondered if she'd lost her mind. Her freedom in exchange for a single night of hot, sweaty sex was a poor choice. And yet, just thinking about Caleb unclothed kicked her heartbeat up and made her moist between the legs. She wanted more, stupid, stupid woman that she was.

The miles stretched ahead of her. Zita decided to check the CB she liked to keep on hand. She flicked through the channels, listening to truckers' chatter in the area. Sometimes the banter was funny or interesting. Other times, it got old with everyone trying to use some kind of code words, which no one else could figure out—unless of course she was the only one out of the loop, not driving a big rig.

Today, things were different. The messages between the truckers and whoever else owned a CB were excited and coming nonstop. It took a few minutes for Zita to get what was going on. "Caleb," she called over her shoulder. "I think you need to get up here."

When he didn't answer, she called out louder and heard him grunt. He slipped into the passenger seat running a hand through his dark, unruly hair. She wanted to do the same but kept her mind focused on the road ahead.

"Brief me," he commanded, suddenly all business.

"Sounds like there's a roadblock up ahead. The word is that they found the bloody bandages and confirmed it's you. Now they're reporting that you're injured and headed the way we're going. All traffic is being stopped. As you can see we're already gridlocked."

He frowned. "They wouldn't leak information like that."

She laughed. "Are you serious? That kind of thing happens all the time. Somebody always finds out and let's the whole rest of the world know." She shook her head. "Those agents are probably pissed off that the truckers gave us the heads-up. What do you want to do?"

She glanced over at him and was glad to see his eyes were less glassy, and his skin looked better. It hadn't been quite two days, but he was on the mend. They had a long way to go to get to Seattle, but from the way things were going so far, she began to doubt they'd make it.

"Switch with me," he said.

"What?"

He stood up and stepped over to her seat. Zita didn't argue. Since she'd had to come to a stop anyway because of the heavy traffic, she put the RV in park and moved to the passenger side. Caleb took over driving.

“Do you have a cell phone?” he asked. She handed it over. He dialed what seemed like fifty numbers and then waited listening. A few more numbers followed. At last, Caleb spoke into the receiver. “Hey, it’s me. I need your help.”

Zita longed to know what the other person said that put the annoyed look on Caleb’s face, but she couldn’t hear more than a low mumbling. She assumed it was a man Caleb was speaking to.

He hesitated. “I’m bringing a friend.” The person must have gone off on that, because Caleb pulled the phone back from his ear. Zita picked up the feminine tone. The woman was cursing up a storm. If she was that pissed just because he was bringing “a friend”, what would she say when she found out Zita was also a woman. She held back a laugh. If nothing else, at least her life had gotten a whole lot more interesting. Zita didn’t consider herself a thrill-seeker, but she did get bored easily. Caleb had turned out to be anything but boring.

“So how do we get out of this?” She pointed to the long line of cars ahead of them and the sign that indicated the next exit was miles away.

Caleb handed back the phone. “This is nothing.”

Zita gripped the handrail above her head and braced the other hand on the dash as Caleb pulled onto the shoulder of the road. Like he did that kind of thing on a daily basis, he rode the shoulder at normal speed. One look in the door mirror told Zita several drivers behind them followed suit. She just hoped the cops weren’t somewhere up ahead, and they wouldn’t all be stopped.

When they approached the exit, it was to find several cars doubled along the off ramp. Zita’s heart sank. There wasn’t even room on the thin strip of shoulder, and even if there was, her RV would never fit. Beyond the ramp, police cars were lined along the street with lights spinning.

“Oh no, what are we going to do now?” Zita worried her bottom lip.

“Watch and see,” he commented.

Although she saw no other way they could go since they were locked in with high reaching grass on the right and back-to-back traffic on the left, Caleb turned the wheel. Perspiration beaded Zita’s forehead when Caleb began driving into the tall grass.

“Are you nuts?” she shouted.

He kept going, but then he slowed to a crawl. If he thought this would work or that the cops wouldn’t see them, the man must be sicker than she thought. But just like before, the cars behind them followed Caleb, and when he began to drive too slowly for the impatient group, they peeled around him. All at once, several cars and pickups were between them and

the police up the street. When the cops caught sight of these idiots darting out onto the ramp, they ran out to meet them. Caleb kept going across the ramp into more grass.

Zita jumped from her seat and ran to the couch to peek out at the area where the police were. To her shock, none of them seemed to have noticed that instead of heading up the ramp toward them, Zita and Caleb had kept going. Now the small strip of street where they'd been was filled with cars that had followed them, but none had been crazy enough to keep driving through the grass.

Zita returned to her seat with nothing put greenery ahead. "You realize you're insane, that you don't know what's out here. We could drop off a sudden cliff for all you know." That thought made clench the arm rests on her seat.

"There isn't," he said.

"How do you know?"

"I know," he insisted. She blew out an exasperated breath.

After some time, they came out onto a dirt road. Zita jerked the map in front of her to try to pinpoint their location. She thought she had the general location, but the dirt road wasn't on the map. "If we're where I think we are, there's another road coming up."

He nodded, concentrating on traversing her awkward vehicle over the rough terrain.

"If you damage my baby, you buy me a new one."

Caleb's lips tightened. "We'll have to ditch this."

She shrieked. "What! I've had this RV for—"

"Fifty years?"

She leaned back and crossed her arms over her chest. He could be insulting all he wanted. She knew her vehicle wasn't the best, but it served its purpose, and if she dumped it now, where would she live when the money wasn't flowing in. Zita had lived her life as a free spirit, a gypsy without the heritage. She didn't give a damn what he said. Her RV was staying with her. He could like it or lump it.

He seemed to know the way her thoughts were going. "If I promise to buy you a new one, will you be willing to let this go?"

"No deal. You haven't kept your first promise yet. And I have no guarantees that you won't be killed within the next twenty-four hours, let alone live long enough to get to Seattle and help me save my brother."

He sighed. "Fine for now, but we will have this conversation again." He turned off the road they were on to follow another. By the time they

drew up to a huge farmhouse, Zita figured they had lost track of where they were and how far they'd come.

Seeing where they were stopping for the night, she shivered. "This place looks like the house in that movie Texas Chainsaw Massacre. Creepy."

Caleb slid his amused gaze from her to the house. "Hm, you're right."

Zita took exception to the fact that he didn't bother calming her fears. They drove around to the back of the property toward a barn. She caught her breath when the double doors turned out to be one solid piece that rose like one found on a garage. Caleb drove the RV into the dark interior, and the door closed. Somewhere a light came on, and Zita peered out to see who was there. The silhouette of a very sexy woman filled the doorway. Zita grunted.

They followed the woman inside the doorway which didn't lead to the house at all but rather was an elevator descending underground. Zita whistled at the covert spy outfit. "Nice."

The woman might be beautiful, but she was mad as hell from the look of her. Large blue eyes which didn't need makeup from the thick long lashes accenting them glared her way. "Who is this, Caleb? You said a friend, but you know I don't let outsiders come here."

"She helped me get here. Don't worry. She won't betray you," he assured her.

The disbelief in the woman's expression was plain. "You haven't said who she is."

He sighed. "Maida, Zita. Zita, Maida. Satisfied?"

"Not hardly." She left the controls at the side of the door to stroll over to Zita. They met nose to nose. Zita stood her ground, raising an eyebrow. Was this woman really going to challenge her as if they were back in high school? She raised a finger to point in Zita's face. Her nails bitten down to the quick were the single ugly thing about her. "If you betray me or even Caleb for that matter, you won't live to regret it."

Zita folded her arms over her chest and grinned. "My brother taught me a lot before he was sent up for murder. You have two seconds to get away from me."

To Zita's satisfaction, the woman paled. Behind them, Caleb grumbled. "Back off, Maida. You really need to work on that temper of yours. Besides, it's pointless to get your back up because my *friend* happens to be a woman. You and I are no longer together."

So they had been lovers. That explained so much, but Caleb pissed her off all the more reiterating that she and he were friends. She'd thought last night put them in the lovers category, but perhaps she was wrong.

When the elevator door opened, they stepped off into an artificially lighted hallway. The walls seemed hewn from solid rock, and no one had bothered giving the place a little color. It was all gray, black, and dull white as far as the eye could see. A man in a lab coat walked up to them. Maida gave him sharp instructions about seeing Zita to a room.

"You can come with me, Caleb, so I can look at that shoulder," she told Caleb.

He hesitated looking at Zita. "Perhaps I should see you to your room."

"I'm sure we can find it just fine without your help." She followed the assistant without looking back. If he wanted her, he could find her whenever, and maybe she would give him the time of day. Maybe not.

After Zita was settled in a room which was little more than serviceable, she showered and put on the fresh clothing she found folded on the bed. Maida might be a harpy, but at least she thought of the bare essentials. Zita ran a towel over her hair to squeeze out the excess water. She decided not to bother with blowing it dry since her stomach was growling. Breakfast had been hours ago.

In the hall again, Zita wandered around looking for someone to guide her to a vending machine or something. She stumbled onto a room behind a glass wall. More men in lab coats scrambled around, some bent over microscopes, some studying computer screens. Zita searched for the door and wound up having to go past the room to another hall. There she found a steel door unlocked and let herself into it.

"Are you going to tell her about it, Caleb?" Maida was saying as she walked in.

Zita stopped behind Maida. Caleb was just sitting up from a hospital bed and buttoning his shirt. "Tell me about what?" she asked.

They both froze and glanced at each other. Caleb frowned. "Nothing. Come on. You must be hungry. I'll take you to the kitchen."

Curiosity ate at Zita, but she didn't push it. After all, they hadn't known each other that long. His medical issues, if that was what it was about, was none of her business. Unless... She stopped walking beside him and put her hands on her hips. "If you have some kind of disease I should know about, you better tell me."

His eyes widened in surprise, and then he chuckled. "I assure you. It's not that."

She studied him a little longer and nodded. "Fine."

They soon located the kitchen and raided several pots on the commercial stove for spaghetti with meat sauce and garlic bread. Zita's stomach churned, her mouth watering in anticipation. After she'd grabbed a soda and a cup of ice, they chose a table in the corner of the room.

Zita downed some of her food before she spoke. "I can't believe all of this is under that house. And I'm guessing the agents don't know anything about it?"

He shrugged. "The government doesn't know a lot about things that go on in this country. However, the same can be said of people not knowing what the government is up to." His tightened lips showed his bitterness. She remembered how he'd insisted he was an ex-marine and wondered how he'd been screwed over to get that look. She imagined she mirrored it after what happened to Zander.

"What did they do to you?" She tried for a casual approach, but the soldier was always on guard.

"That's not important."

Zita blew out a breath and set her fork down. "Okay, you clam up when I talk about that part of your life. How about something personal? Do you have any siblings? Did you grow up in this part of the country or out west closer to Seattle?"

Caleb's stiff shoulders came down an inch or two. He watched his plate as he shoveled in fork after forkful, pausing long enough to speak around the large bites in his mouth. "I was an only child. My parents were killed in a plane crash when I was seventeen. I was born and raised in Roanoke."

"I'm sorry." She watched him. There wasn't the least hint of sadness in his announcement, but she assumed that was how he had been trained—never show weakness. "You already know about Zander, although how I don't know. He is my twin. He joined the marines when we were twenty-three, and the fuckers messed up his mind. He was never the same." Tears balanced on her lashes. "He was all I had. Zander and I had cut off our father years before that, and we had no idea where our mother was."

"Caleb echoed her earlier condolences. "What about the charges against him? Are you sure they're false."

"I'm positive!" She stood up almost knocking her chair over. Caleb cast her a repressing glare, and she forced herself to calm down. The man wasn't accusing Zander of lying after all. She took her seat but let her food grow cool. "The cops picked Zander up off the street and later charged him. He'd been in and out of the psych ward at our local hospital being

evaluated. Later, they claimed they had Zander's DNA at the crime scene, but they're liars. Zander was with me most of that night."

"Your alibi wasn't accepted?"

She shook her head, fighting tears. "No. They had found their killer as far as they were concerned. Case closed. And who's going to listen to a woman who lives in an RV with a string of unrelated jobs behind her?"

Caleb scratched his head as he seemed to consider what she'd told him. "Do you know the name of the victim?"

"No."

He tapped his fork on his plate in a rhythmic motion. "What about where he's being held? Do you visit often?"

At that point, she let a sob escape and curled her fists in her lap while she hung her head. "No, I don't know where he is. Surely, he has rights? I've heard of prisoners having family visits, but no one will tell me where he was transferred, and his public defender was no help getting the information at all. That damn good-for-nothing told me I'm better off letting it go. What does that mean? How am I supposed to 'let it go' with my own brother?"

Caleb stood up and gathered their dishes. He emptied what was uneaten on her plate and then washed their plates and cleaned off the table. After he finished, he took her arm. "Come on. You need some rest. We have to get back on the road in the morning. Staying in one place long is out of the question, and I can't risk Maida's secret, or she'll skin me."

Zita didn't argue. For the first time in a long time, she'd had someone to talk to about Zander. Of course Caleb didn't show much of a reaction, and she didn't expect him to. But he had listened. That was the most important thing. He didn't treat her like she was stupid and too naïve to believe her brother was capable of taking someone's life. During their dinner, she had forgotten how angry she was with him.

When they arrived at her bedroom door, Caleb paused. "You're really tired?" he asked, stroking her cheek with his thumb.

Desire fanned in her nether regions. She looked at his shoulder. He held it less stiffly, and the bandage beneath his shirt was almost seamless. Maybe it was Maida's doing. Zita hated that she felt jealous of the beauty even though Caleb had admitted their relationship was in the past. That didn't mean it couldn't be reignited. Anyway, he'd relegated her to nothing special.

"I suppose you're sleeping in Maida's room," she said.

His eyebrows went up. "Why would I...?" He grinned. "Oh, you're jealous."

“Go to hell, Caleb.” She turned to open her door. He caught her arm, and pulled her around to face him. Backing her against the unyielding steel with his almost as firm body, he lowered his head and kissed her lips. Zita couldn’t help herself. She gave in, parting her lips. When his tongue slipped into her mouth, she sucked it, uttering a soft moan.

“I’m stronger now,” he warned when he broke the kiss.

“I’m just a friend,” she countered.

“Don’t pout. It’s unbecoming.”

Zita tried shoving him, but he wouldn’t be budged. He ran a hand down over her side and then to her ass. One squeeze had her wedged into his firm length. Everything inside of her wanted to unbutton his pants and grab for what she most craved. The man was already hard. She fought with the desire to play with his head, letting it glide over her palm and then feeding its thickness into her pussy. She shouldn’t get attached, but damn it, she wanted him like crazy.

“Well?” His dark gaze dared her to deny him. “You want this.”

“Did you read my mind?”

Startled was not the reaction she expected. Everyone used such a term. It was a joke. Too needy to think about it, she twisted the knob on her door and kicked it open. Then she curved her fingers into Caleb’s shirt. Backing away, she guided him into her room. Zita had never denied herself pleasure with a man, and she wasn’t going to do it now just because she was angry at Caleb. Tonight was about discovering the pleasurable new heights Caleb had hinted at before.

Chapter Four

Zita backed in the room while she watched Caleb. She unbuttoned the blouse she'd been given and pulled it out of her slacks. Caleb's gaze followed every move she made. The man was almost salivating with the peek at her breast she gave him. Teasing, Zita ran her fingers over the edge of her bra. "You want this?" The false surprise made him chuckle.

He crooked a finger at her indicating she should come to him. She shook her head. "You're a naughty woman, Zita. Come here."

"Nope." She whirled away. "I'm not convinced you want it."

His fingertips brushed her arm, but she darted out of reach. He growled. "That depends on what you have to offer. Let me see."

She tapped her lower lip and tilted her head to the side. The bed laid between them now, her on one side and him on the other. "I think you're too used to people following your orders, soldier boy. I need to teach you a lesson."

"What lesson will you teach me?" The bed sank beneath the weight of one of his knees.

She let her blouse hit the floor. "How to beg for what you want."

"Not in this lifetime." Caleb made short work of leaping over the bed and capturing her around the waist.

She screamed. "You'll hurt your shoulder."

Caleb tugged her backward on the soft surface, and she landed on top of him, her ass grinding into his crotch. She expected him to cry out that she'd hurt him, but he didn't make a sound beyond the heavy panting in her ear. With one arm locking her in place, he located the button on her slacks and pinched it open. When her zipper descended and he reached inside to cup her pussy, she squirmed.

"No fair. You're using your strength against me."

"Of course. That's the best way." He flipped her over to her stomach with him stretched above her. In two seconds, Zita found herself naked, Caleb having stripped off her slacks her panties and bra, along with her shoes and socks. She tried regaining control, but he held her down and rested his mouth next to her ear. "Uh-uh, beautiful. I let you get away with teasing the hell out of me last night, but I am much better. You will get what I give you."

Outraged, Zita squirmed harder, but Caleb had no trouble holding her down. He ran a single finger down the center of her back until he reached her ass. Then he turned the direction of his hand, fingers pointed downward. Zita bit into her bottom lip when Caleb pushed his middle

finger against her anus. Her soft, tight entry gave a little. Zita moaned, arching up to his touch.

Caleb hissed. "Look what we have here. You're so hot right now, aren't you, Zita? You want my cock inside you?" He tapped her ass. "Here and in the front?"

She refused to answer him, but squeezed her eyes shut instead. As silly as that was, she knew she gave herself away by how she clutched the covers under her and pushed her ass toward his hand. How her body ached to be penetrated, and no other man would do it for her but Caleb. "You're a jerk," she uttered at last.

"Am I?" He kissed along her spine and tasted every so often with just the tip of his tongue. Zita almost keened at the sensations. Caleb reached her rounded cheeks, and he stroked them while kissing.

She gasped. "W-What are you doing?"

He drew back. She thought she would die. From somewhere, he found lubricant and used it to coat her anus. Zita panted with anticipation. Caleb teased her entrance a second time but didn't go in. Zita growled her frustration. It took everything in her not to demand that he push in.

"Beg me, Zita," Caleb said.

"H-Hell no." She wiggled her hips in rhythm with his stroking finger. *Damn him!*

"Beg me, beautiful, or you'll never get it. I know how much you want it." He drew back and hoisted her hips higher. She imagined he could see more of her pussy that way. "What's this?" he said confirming her thoughts. "You're so wet already. A shame to let all that cream go to waste. I could be eating it right now, or working my cock into your tight little ass. You like it from behind, don't you, Zita? I saw how much you love sex last night. It's killing you not to get it."

She sneered at him over her shoulder. "I can get it from any one of the men in this place. I don't have to have sex with you."

That seemed to set him off. He turned her over to her back with rough movements. She tried to get up, but he pinned her. Leaning over her body, he narrowed his eyes in anger and reached between her legs to push a finger up her ass. Zita cried out at the intense pleasure. Caleb had been right. She loved getting it up the ass. In fact, she'd take a man's cock any way he gave it to her.

Caleb worked his finger in and out while she wriggled around enjoying it. She moaned louder when he added a second and then a third finger. He caught one of her knees and hoisted it higher so her hips came up off the bed. When he lowered his mouth to her pussy and began eating

her while he pumped his fingers into her ass, Zita thought she was in heaven. Caleb lapped up her juices like he loved the flavor. Just knowing how much he enjoyed her taste, turned her on all the more. Zita couldn't catch her breath. She cried out his name and whimpered on the verge of a climax. Just when she thought she'd come crashing through to pure bliss, Caleb stopped all movement and sat up. Zita came hurtling down to the ground unsatisfied.

"Beg for more, Zita," he whispered.

"You bastard." She had to have it, had to have *him*. His mouth between her legs was everything a woman could ask for. His fingers were weapons of sexual delight. She didn't have a choice. What did he want to hear?

As if he read her mind, he said, "Beg me to fuck you."

"Is that what they taught you in the military, to demand control of everyone around you?" She moved off the bed and turned her back on him. Any satisfaction she might have gotten from the fact that he followed her was lost when he didn't give in.

"You don't want to know what I learned at the hands of the military." His hardened cock stroked her from behind, and she fought not to arch into it hoping for entry. Caleb massaged the base of her neck following his fingers with his mouth. Chills of pleasure rippled through her when he snaked his hot tongue over her skin. "Just a few words."

"Why?"

He twirled her to face him, dipped his knees, and let his cock tease her opening. Zita lost her breath. She swayed, but he caught her up to him and tormented her by thrusting into her an inch and pulling out. Just enough to drive her insane but not enough to bring her to climax. She couldn't hold out any longer. Zita had done all she could to survive without her brother or anyone else she could lean on. She'd learned to take of business herself. Yet here was this soldier without a heart taking away what little she'd gained over the last few years. She resented him for making her desperate.

"Fuck me," she demanded. "Put your cock all the way in and make me come."

He chuckled, waved a finger before her face, and shook his head. "A little less commanding. A lot more submissive."

She swore and rolled her eyes. Without warning, he spun her around, pushed her forward so she bent with her ass in the air, and he plunged deep inside her. Zita cried out his name. He worked her rough and fast for a few moments, and then stopped. She screamed out her frustration. When her body settled down, as if the man sensed the rise and fall of her

excitement, he pumped his long, thick cock into her aching pussy a second time. Cream drenched her upper thighs. How she could be so wet and not climax yet, she didn't know, but Caleb continued to torture her.

"Ready to submit?" he asked and worked her a third time.

"Yes." She couldn't hold out another second. He'd won. "Please, fuck me, Caleb. I want you so bad."

"Good, girl." He turned Zita so she could rest one knee on the bed. With steel in his hold, he thrust into her pussy. Zita arched at the violence of his move while the intense sensation had her head spinning. She pushed back to him and matched his speed. Their hips ground together over and over, both panting and groaning.

Caleb's noises excited Zita all the more. She reached back to grip his thighs and drive him into her with force. Caleb's groans grew more fevered. "You're going to make me come, woman. Is that what you want? You want me to let go?"

"Yes," she rasped and lost the strength to hold herself up. Caleb lifted her fully onto the bed and followed her down. His heavy weight pressed her into the bed. He raised her arms above her head and pinned her wrists in place. Somehow she felt he was angry. An orgasm made her shudder and whimper, but he never slowed his onslaught.

He reached under her to cup her pussy, allowing his cock to glide into her between his fingers. When he moved to her clit, she keened. His mouth pressed to her ear and in a harsh whisper, he muttered, "For now, this is mine. If I catch you fucking another man, you will be responsible for me beating his ass to a pulp. Is that clear?"

Zita knew he was saying it because she'd threatened him, saying she could have sex with any man in this facility, and a man like Caleb would never accept being tossed aside or made to feel like he was no better than the next man. He'd have to prove he was superior by beating up the other guy. As pissed off at him as she was at that moment, she also got a small thrill at his attitude. Of course, she'd never let him know that. And to avoid a repeat of his earlier denying her pleasure, she chose not to buck up against him.

Caleb caught her chin, turned her head, and kissed her lips. They stayed in that position until she'd come almost a dozen times and he'd released twice. Then Caleb guided her to the shower, and they washed quickly before returning to the bed to sleep in each other's arms.

Wedge against his chest, she tried to reposition herself to see his shoulder better. "You shouldn't have gotten in the shower without covering it with plastic. You could have wet the bandages. Let me see."

“Don’t worry about it. It’s fine.”

He pushed her hands away but not before she saw that the bandage was indeed loose, and behind it, his skin was almost unscarred like the stitches had never been there at all. There was just a small red slash where he’d been shot. Zita decided she must be seeing things because if not, Caleb was unlike any man she’d ever met.

Chapter Five

Before the sun rose, they were on the road again. So far, Caleb had managed to keep Zita's questions at bay, but from the questioning glances she cast his way, he knew that wouldn't work for long. After a few hours behind the wheel while she slept, Caleb figured Zita would be bugging him soon to stop for something to eat. As if she'd sensed him thinking about it, she moaned and shifted in her chair. His cock hardened remembering the times they'd had sex. Caleb had known bedding Zita would be good, but she'd blown his mind. Her body was just what he needed, and the more he touched her, the more he wanted to.

Dragging his eyes off her breasts and reliving the sensation of sucking her nipples, he focused on the road ahead. An off ramp led him to a strip of fast food restaurants where he considered whether to use the drive through. Who knew if this contraption she called home would fit without ripping off half the building.

Zita made his decision for him. "Park over there. I gotta go pee."

He pulled in and parked. Caleb followed behind Zita to a country buffet styled restaurant. At the same time he acknowledged the sexy sway in her hips, he took in their surroundings with scarcely a look and searched his pockets for money. "We're not going to be here long. You should have chosen something faster."

"They've got awesome food here and fast service. You'll like it. Trust me. I used to cook here."

"Not a good idea. Someone might recognize you."

"You're wanted, not me, soldier boy. I have you covered."

Caleb grunted.

They entered the dim interior, and Zita made a beeline for the bathroom. Caleb stood in line looking up at the menu. Before the trouble began, Caleb sensed it coming. The ability didn't come from the enhancements the government had placed in him, but from years in the military. The guy was a thug in a ratty leather jacket and combat boots. For the time being, Caleb ordered food for him and Zita and then walked back to the rear of the restaurant. While he waited for her, Ratty Jacket strolled by and left. Caleb watched him through the front window as he returned to his car, like he had all day to get there.

What put Caleb on alert was the way the man glanced around before opening the rear door. If his eyes weren't fooling him, there was something or *someone* back there. With the man blocking the opening, it was hard to see, at least for most people. Caleb put to use whatever the

hell they did to him in that facility he escaped from. He narrowed his eyes and almost felt the enhancement. No, not enhancement, it was as if space wasn't a factor. That's how he phased, his body could instantly make null the laws of physics when it came to space. Solids posed no more of a problem than moving through water or air. He couldn't explain it, of course. He was a simple soldier, but he'd picked up on how to use the ability after the grueling exercises they'd put him through.

All of a sudden, he saw the woman clearly. She lay across the back seat of a station wagon that had to be at least twenty years old from the make and rust. Her hands were bound behind her, and Ratty Jacket pulled back the bond on her mouth long enough to stuff a burger between her lips. From the way she ate with relish but weakly, he guessed the man had held her a long time.

Caleb shouldn't get involved. He already had to see that Zita was safe and that he kept his promise to her about her brother. He suspected the same assholes that fooled him had taken her brother. Why else would they keep it secret where he was imprisoned? He sighed having no choice. If he didn't help the woman, no one else would, and chances were, thoughts of her would rob him of sleep later. Getting to Seattle was top priority. This would take a moment. No more.

After checking to see that Zita hadn't come back yet, he left the restaurant and tossed the food he'd bought in the RV. The kidnapper hopped into his vehicle and turned over the engine. Caleb sped up and stepped into the road directly in line with where the man would drive past. He flexed his shoulder. It was healed enough to phase with him this time unlike the time he tried after he'd been shot.

No one else was in sight. The RV would block anyone seeing what he'd do from the restaurant. While Caleb pretended to check the RV for road readiness, the asshole stayed put. He gritted his teeth. If the man didn't take a chance on passing him, the whole set up would be ruined. Calling in the tag and car info to the police would work but was more risky for him.

"Come on, damn it," Caleb growled under his breath. "You were bold enough to take her. Now take it a step further and come my way."

He bent down near the tire and pretended to be engrossed with it. The kidnapper finally got up the nerve and shifted into drive. Caleb didn't hesitate. When the car drew alongside him, he phased, melted through the fiberglass and steel and through the man himself. In one smooth motion, Caleb wrapped his arms around the woman causing his shifting molecules

to join with hers and for a moment make her like him. The two of them phased through the back of the car.

The entire process was over in an instant, and Caleb had her standing in front of him with his back to the driver, so that the man didn't even know he'd lost his precious cargo. He sped on out to the highway, probably patting himself on the back for not getting caught. Before Caleb could concentrate on seeing if the woman was fine, a shout sounded behind him. He whirled around. Zita stood there with her eyes wide and her mouth hanging open.

"How the hell did you do that?"

He swore. Instead of answering her, he untied the woman. "Do you have something to write on and a pen?" he asked Zita.

"Are you going to answer me?" She eyed the woman like she was the freak and not Caleb.

Caleb nabbed Zita's purse and dug through it for himself. He brought out a bill envelope, wondering if Zita had paid it since it was stamped past due. After tearing off a piece and finding a pen, he wrote down a detailed description of the kidnapper, of his vehicle, and the plate number and then handed it to the shaking victim. "Give this to the police. We need to go. You'll be fine now if you head into one of the restaurants here."

Without another word, he grabbed Zita's arm and shuffled her into the RV. She grumbled and complained the whole way, but at least she didn't blurt out his name. He had to be grateful for small mercies.

Back on the highway, Zita scowled at him. "If you don't tell me how you snatched that woman from that car with it looking like it was about to run you over, I'm kicking your ass out of my RV."

He flicked his gaze toward her before focusing on the road again. "Think you can do it?"

"Hey, I've taken down bigger guys than you, soldier, so don't get any ideas. I can take care of myself. Zander taught me a lot."

He heard the sadness in her voice whenever she mentioned her twin, and he'd felt the pain of his loss when he delved into her mind. Caleb wanted to give her hope, but he had a lot of doubts about it. At the facility, he'd learned there were many failed experiments before he came out alive. Zander might be one of them.

"What I can do is the result of government experiments. Any more I'm not at liberty to say." Truth was, he didn't know much more. That's why he was going to see his friend in Seattle. Maybe Montrose could give him some answers. Once he had those, he could determine his next steps.

They parked the RV for the night, and when Caleb prepared to get some rest, he used a small mirror Zita had to examine his shoulder. He should be used to healing quickly by now, but he wasn't. While he stared at the smooth skin, unblemished as it was the day he was born, for the millionth time he wondered just what they'd done to him.

Zita echoed his thoughts. "What did they do to make your skin go back together like that? I want it." She pouted making him desire to taste those soft lips.

"I don't know. I will find out. I didn't sign up for this," he admitted.

"What did you sign up for?" Her eyes bore into his as if she would read the thoughts from his mind, but he knew she was wholly normal. He let his gaze drop down over her body, lingering a minute at her pert breasts. A hunger to flick his tongue over the small points took hold of him. Yeah, she was normal, but no woman made him lust after her like Zita did.

She'd undone a couple of buttons on her blouse so he got a good peek at her cleavage. More smooth creamy skin lay exposed at her navel. Caleb used the back of his hand to brush her abs. Her lovely curves drew him closer, bade him to explore further.

"Open your blouse all the way," he commanded.

An eyebrow popped up at his words, but she moved to obey. Soon her shirt lay open from top to bottom and Caleb got an excellent view of her red lace bra. The material hugged her plump breasts making him rise to attention. His cock strained at his pants. There might be a lot riding on this trip and probably the sooner he got there the better, but damn it to hell he wasn't going to deny himself this sexy woman. Every available second he would enjoy her, in every conceivable position.

Caleb led her around to the drawer where she kept her toys, and he bent to search it for something of interest. He came across a strap-on with a small dong about four and a half inches extending from it. Caleb eyed her with curiosity, but she didn't volunteer any information. He continued to look through the colorful assortment. "You like your playthings, don't you?"

She shrugged. "A girl's gotta get it any way she can when there's no man around. And like I told you before, none of the previous men let me play while they were here. You're different."

"I'm confident."

She rolled her eyes.

While he searched through various sized dildos, both battery operated and manual, Zita reached around him and pulled open a second drawer.

Caleb's interest was peaked at the lace, leather, and fluff found there. He drew out a black babydoll set with sheer top and thong panties. "This one. Put it on."

She was about to protest. He cut her off.

"These fish net stockings and those heels hanging there. Hurry."

Grumbling, she ignored his command this time. "I have not given you the right to boss me around."

Caleb didn't buy the act. Her nipples had hardened from the first instant he told her what to do. He stood up and dragged her close to him, molding her small frame to his larger one. She squirmed and fought against him but not enough to get away. Caleb smacked her round ass once, and her head snapped up, fire in her eyes.

"You've got claws. I grant you that. You're strong enough to take care of yourself if you have to, but I can sniff out a born submissive when I come across one. You, my sexy little kitten, are made for a man to show you what he wants. You *will* do what I say, or you will be punished."

By the time he finished speaking, she was panting and trembling in his arms. Anger still burned in her eyes, but she was on fire with desire. If he dipped a hand between her legs, Caleb had no doubt, his fingers would come away coated. Knowing that made his cock strain all the more to get to her. But not yet. He wanted to show her who was boss. Caleb spanked her a second time. He did not need to repeat himself.

When he let her go, Zita began to remove her clothes. He watched her sensual grace, natural and seductive. She bent to slide her panties off and stepped out of them with her jeans. The eyeful of her pussy pleased him, causing him to lick his lips in anticipation.

Caleb took the butterfly he'd come across from the drawer, along with a set of silky ropes. He set them both aside for later use. When he snapped his fingers to get her attention, she glared at him. He was not intimidated by her anger in the least. "Now remove my clothes."

"You can do that yourself!"

He whipped her around and smacked her bare ass. She whimpered. Caleb dragged her against him so she'd feel his hard cock, and she sucked in a breath. Sooty lashes lay against her cheeks when she closed her eyes. He guessed she was trying to control her desire, to find a way not to want him so much. Hell, if she could do that, she needed to teach him a thing or two. While this game pleased him, he ached to rip apart his clothes like an animal and assuage his hunger on her lovely body.

Instead, Caleb bent her over the bed and gave her a few more spanks. She trembled and moaned with each swat. He pointed to the ropes he'd laid on the bed. "Do you want me to tie you up and tease you all night?"

"I can please myself just fine."

"Tied up?" he reminded her.

She grumbled.

"You can be tied up and let me bring you to orgasm using both your toys and my cock, or you can suffer wanting it but never having it. It's your choice, Zita."

Caleb bit off a chuckle at the expletives she threw at him in her mind. He heard every one although she didn't know it. Zita's mental processes were an open book to him, but he preferred to gauge what she felt by her physical reactions, so he backed out of her head. He moved away from the bed and waited. After a few stubborn moments while she considered whether to do what he wanted, she stood up and approached him. He remained guarded just in case she decided to kick him in the nuts, but like the dutiful thing he knew she could be, she worked the buttons of his shirt open.

When she reached his pants, Caleb's shaft twitched in anticipation. He watched every movement her small hands made as she shoved the sides of his jeans over his hips. His boxers followed, and he caught her chewing on her bottom lip as she stared at his erection.

"You like what you see, Zita?" She didn't answer. "You want to taste that?"

"Go to hell!"

He took a silky rope from the bed and bound her hands behind her. "Down on your knees." She gritted her teeth. He tugged at the bond, and she had no choice but to sink to the carpeted floor. Caleb then moved around in front of her, allowing his cock's head to touch her lips. He blew out a calming breath. "Suck it."

Her lips parted. He pushed between them, clenching his jaw at the white hot pleasure. Zita's warm mouth slid from the base to half way down and back again. Caleb teetered dangerously close to an orgasm, but he held on to prolong the enjoyment. He pushed her back so his cock popped from her mouth.

With a thumb pressed under her chin, he forced her to look up at him. "Tell me how you like it?"

She frowned and then said in a low tone, "I like it."

"It's good?"

"Yes."

“Do you want me to feed you more of my cock?”

She shivered. Caleb stroked her face. Zita was the kind of woman who got off on a man speaking dirty to her, making her obey. She'd had to stand alone so long, she wasn't sure she could trust him. The ghostly fear playing about her being was very real. He could almost see it. For a moment, he wanted to bend down and hold her, to assure her everything would be okay. But no, this wasn't the time for that. Zita needed to obey him even more than he desired to dominate her.

He lifted her enough to position her back to the bed, and he tilted her head so it rested on the soft mattress. With a knee alongside her head, he crowded her, pinned her down without touching. He positioned his cock at her mouth again and tangled his fingers in her hair. With a tug rough enough to sting but not hurt her too much, he forced her mouth into place. “Please me.”

This time she didn't fuss or hesitate. Her small mouth opened and took him in. He swore at the intensity, the way she sucked hard on him. Drawing him deep, she almost swallowed his entire length, and Caleb began to gyrate his hips, arching them forward so he could fuck her mouth. He grunted and growled, increasing the pace. She moaned with each thrust, like she loved the taste of him.

“Suck it harder, Zita. Make me come!” He jerked on her head a little, not too much because he'd never want to hurt her. He was building to a head. She was going to do it. Her incredible mouth was going to make him explode, but would she drink all of his release? Ordering her to do it wasn't an option unless she liked to. While he let himself go, head back and eyes closed, Caleb prayed she'd go that far for him.

His muscles clamped down, and then he could hold no longer. He filled her mouth, groaning until the end. Caleb watched with satisfaction as his fiery lover drank down every drop and even licked her luscious lips when she finished. He moved back and grinned stroking her cheek. “You've pleased me. Now it's time for your reward.”

* * * *

Zita couldn't believe she was letting Caleb treat her this way, like he was her master. It was such a turn on, and truthfully, it felt incredible to have a strong man leading her for once. Now that she thought of it, she'd always depended on Zander before he went into the service. He'd taught her everything she needed to know to survive. He'd protected her. Even when he came out, Zander had done his best. But when the survivor's guilt

and PTSD started, Zita had to take control of their little family. She resented it. Not that she didn't think she was smart enough or strong enough. She knew she was, but men had let her down in the past, and she'd had to do it all. Just once, she'd dreamed of having a man who was strong enough to lean on.

Caleb stood over her, making her suck his cock. His fisting her hair had gotten her hot. She only pretended to be angrier than she was. Of course she was pissed. Caleb might not be all he claimed, and after all he had needed her help to escape the CIA. He wasn't invincible. The spankings had brought her close climax. Her ass cheeks stung in the most amazing way, and from that she was so wet.

They had been playing around with him making her beg before. Should she trust him this time, when he looked more serious? Would he really deny her if she refused to do what he wanted? Zita had no desire to be tied to her bed all night unable to come. Sex and the climax of it were one of the best feelings in life! She wanted him inside of her now.

Still leery, Zita looked up at Caleb from her position on the floor. He pushed a thumb into her mouth, eyes darkened from when he had released earlier. She loved his flavor and had no problem drinking his come. Zita had enough experience to know men loved that, but of course, she didn't offer the service to just anyone.

Caleb pulled her up from the floor and laid her back on the bed. She tried lifting her hips off her bound hands but couldn't, so he untied them. "You don't touch anything. You understand? If you do, we stop and I tie you up again."

Zita bit back the smart remark that flew to mind. She nodded like the good girl she wasn't. All of a sudden, she couldn't put two words together when Caleb strapped on her butterfly, placing the vibrating body over her clit and letting the angled tail dip into her wetness. Zita almost squirmed in anticipation, but still she was disappointed he wasn't using his cock as it had already grown hard again.

Zita ducked her head to hide her disappointment, but he tipped her chin up, a grin spreading over his face. "Don't worry, beautiful. I will please you with my cock."

She opened her mouth to say something, but he wagged his finger. "Until we're done, you may either cry out my name or moan, anything that expresses how much you love what I'm doing to you. Nothing else."

Caleb flipped her over to her belly with her hips braced on a pillow. He shifted the butterfly aside so he could coat his fingers with her cream and then massaged her ass opening. Zita was almost keening by now

realizing what he intended. Her perfect lover was going to let her butterfly tease her clit and play with her pussy while he penetrated her from behind. She couldn't help the moan that escaped her lips.

"When you do as I say, this is what you get," Caleb told her just before he eased his thick head into her ass. She bit down on a scream. It hurt just enough to be amazing and felt insanely good. His massive cock stretched her so much, Zita panted trying to force herself to relax. Caleb stroked her ass and called out encouragement. "Shh, easy. Just relax and let me in. You're so tight, baby."

She whimpered clutching at the sheets. She wanted to reach back and force him to take it faster, just to get it going so she could come, but Caleb was in control. If she touched him, he'd stop. Strong or weak, she'd cry like a baby if the man backed off now. Zita pushed into Caleb's thrust. At last he was fully inside of her, and they began to move, together and apart. She gasped and bunched the sheet into her mouth.

He watched her with those dark eyes, almost black and dangerous. His fingers dug into her hips. He yanked her back onto his erection when the pain had all but receded. She longed to beg him to fuck her harder, rougher. Caleb reached down to flick the switch on the butterfly. The toy came to life wriggling over her clit. Paired with what Caleb was doing, the sensations had her core muscles tightening all over again. They contracted and shifted until an orgasm tore through her. She screamed and pleaded for him never to stop. Pushing back into his pump, she rode him until the waves of bliss eased.

Afterward, Zita fell onto the bed panting and trying to catch her breath. She shut her eyes still clutching the sheets. Caleb let her lay there without saying anything. But when her breathing returned to normal, he climbed on the bed and kissed her hair. A tremor passed over her at his gentle touch, so unexpected after the game they'd played.

While Zita couldn't move a muscle, Caleb turned off the butterfly and un-strapped it. To her surprise, he lifted her into his arms and weaved along the narrow RV to the bathroom. When he set her on her feet, he instructed. You get cleaned up first, and then I will. We need to get some rest. Tomorrow we arrive in Seattle."

Zita stepped into the shower wondering how she'd let Caleb go once this was all over. Their time was almost up. When and if Caleb helped her find Zander, would he walk out of her life, or could they find something more in common than sex? She didn't know if she hoped he'd stay or would be relieved that he left so she'd never risk falling in love and getting hurt. Since she was a woman who tried to live in the now, she

dismissed the worrisome thoughts and reviewed instead the amazing time she'd had with Caleb just now. Her ass was so sore, and yet, she wanted to do it all over again. Grinning and eager to get back to him, she washed as quickly as she could. Caleb didn't begin to know how big her sexual appetite was.

Chapter Six

Caleb woke up in the middle of the night, sensing something but not knowing what. He listened to his surroundings, but no sound reached him other than light traffic in the distance. So close to Seattle, there were plenty of places they could pull off the road in a tree-lined area and stay out of sight. Caleb had felt confident that they weren't being followed and that the agents didn't know they were moving in Zita's RV.

She sighed next to him and rolled toward him. Her hand landed on his arm. He ignored the tightening in his chest just looking at her. She was beautiful, no denying that, and making love to her had been out of this world. He sat up with a frown and swung his legs over the side of the bed. When the hell had he switched to calling it making love and not sex? It had been sex—sweaty, hot, incredible sex. But then he'd gone and changed it into something warmer when he kissed her hair and cuddled afterward with her wrapped in his arms.

Distracted thinking about how important Zita was becoming to him, he wasn't focusing on what had awakened him in the first place. The door burst open, and Caleb jumped to his feet. An instant before the bullet hit him in the chest, he phased, and it passed through. Then he solidified to smash the agent in the jaw with his foot. The man went down. Another was behind him. Rather than let him squeeze off a shot that might hit Zita, Caleb launched himself out the door on top of the man.

They scrabbled back and forth through the dirt, both trying to get their hands on the gun Caleb had caused the man to drop. A right hook to his chin sent Caleb down, but he shook it off and landed a blow of his own. The unexpected dirty move the agent used by tossing dirt into Caleb's eyes gave the agent the upper hand. Stars exploded before his eyes when the man slammed Caleb's head on the ground. Caleb's vision blurred. Somewhere nearby Zita screamed.

The agent cuffed Caleb. He almost sucked his teeth in disgust that the man would think anything like that would hold him. He phased, but his molecules wouldn't separate like they usually did. Along with the phasing issue, a jolt of white hot electricity flooded his system, and he yelled out in pain. The world around him went dark. He shook his head. He had to stay alert, to do something to make sure Zita was fine. If they hurt her... Again, he tried to phase—another shock.

Caleb blacked out. The next time he came to, he was in a car, hands cuffed to the door. Two agents stood outside talking. Every now and then,

they scanned the darkened area around them. "Should we look again or leave her?" one of the men asked the other.

Caleb sighed in relief. She'd gotten away. But then what did he expect? Zita had years of practice slipping off into obscurity. Not trusting authorities had taught her that. He considered scanning for her thoughts but dared not in case even that would get him shocked. As it was, his strength was all but depleted.

"We better not. I can't get a signal in the middle of all these damn trees," the second agent responded. "No loose ends. You know that. We bring her along and let the higher ups decide what to do with her."

"Fine. I'll look again." The click of his gun was unmistakable.

Caleb strained against the cuffs to see the man disappear into the roadside brush. A few moments later, he swore, and several sticks popped under someone's weight. Caleb prayed it wasn't Zita. He was about to take another stab at escaping when Zita appeared in the place where the agent had vanished. The first man trained his gun on her.

She raised her hands. "Don't shoot, please. I can't deal with all this craziness. I don't mess with the police. This man lied to me and then forced me to drive him across the country." She sniffed as she drew closer. Her blouse was open several buttons down, and she wore no bra. Her nipples were well-defined through the thin material. Caleb grew tight in his pants, and from the arrested expression on the agent's face, he guessed her appearance affected him as well. Jealousy raged in Caleb's mind. He wanted to shove his fist in the bastard's mouth and demand he take his eyes off Zita. Instead, he remained silent. She knew what she was doing. Funny enough, he didn't believe for a second Zita was betraying him.

Zita came within a few feet of the agent. Her arms being raised made her blouse strain across her breasts. She pouted and widened those lovely eyes. "Please, can't you help me?"

The gun never lowered. "Where's my partner?"

Zita shrugged. "He grabbed my breast. I kneed him in the nuts."

Her straightforwardness must have thrown the guy off because his gaze shifted from Zita to the trees behind her. She darted forward and rather than knee the guy in the nuts like she claimed to do to his partner, she whipped out an air horn from somewhere and squeezed it off in the agent's ear. He crashed down on his knees. Zita smashed a knee into his nose and knocked him out cold.

At last freed from the hi-tech device that had bound his abilities, Caleb stared at her in awe. "Zander?"

She grinned and nodded.

“I’ve got to meet this soldier.” He took her hand. “Come on. We have to get out of here. The sooner we get to my friend, the better. I need answers.”

* * * *

The house was too silent. Caleb and Zita had been watching it for the last three hours with no movement. His friend, Montrose, was retired military. He’d been a medical scientist for the government and had signed away his life to keep quiet about whatever he’d been involved in. The government would silence him permanently if he opened his mouth, but Caleb was confident he could get the answers he needed—that is if they didn’t already get to Montrose, guessing this was where Caleb was headed.

“Stay here. I’m going to check things out,” Caleb told her.

She grabbed hold of his arm frowning. “I’m staying with you. Besides, it’s dark and creepy out here.”

He flicked an eyebrow up. “Now you’re all girly? I’m not buying it, Zita. I know you better than those agents did. I’ve seen what you’re capable of, but I won’t risk you either. Let me case the place to be sure they haven’t set a trap. Stay.”

“I’m not a dog, damn it,” she grumbled and crossed her arms. “Fine. You’ve got two minutes and then I’m coming to find you. I mean it when I say I’m nervous out here. I’m a city girl. This middle of nowhere stuff is for the birds.”

Caleb nodded and then headed into the trees. He kept his eyes peeled and stayed alert to any foreign scents. Marine training had taught him how to move in silence. When he came near enough to the house, he opened his mind as well to pick up thoughts. On the fringes of his range, he picked up Zita’s mental chant “hurry up, hurry up.” No others were close by.

He turned to go back to Zita when the single sentence was spoken into his mind. “Come inside.”

Caleb jerked to attention. He strained to pick up more thoughts and to identify who it was, but got nothing. Someone was waiting, and he had to know if it was Montrose. Rather than go and leave Zita alone, he went back for her, and together they approached the house from the back. The door was unlocked. They stepped, Caleb in the lead, every muscle tight.

Something clicked across the room. Zita jumped and pressed close to him, her soft breasts flattening against his back. “What was that?” she whispered.

Caleb didn't answer. Another click, and a sliver of light shown beneath a door. Caleb crossed the room with care, pulling Zita behind him. Stairs led down below ground level. When they began to descend, grateful for the light, the door sealed behind them. Caleb swore. He yanked out the gun he'd taken off one of the agents and held it ready. They reached the base of the stairs.

"Come in, come in, Caleb," a now familiar voice called from inside the room opposite them. Caleb recognized Montrose and relaxed.

He entered the room with Zita pressed to his side. "What's with all the cryptic stuff, doc?" Caleb complained.

The jolly older man with stark white hair and unruly beard grinned before hugging Caleb. "Couldn't be too careful. I knew you'd hear my thought. Plus I wanted to test to see if I could lock you out of my head and give you just that one command."

Caleb frowned. "You didn't get enough of the endless tests back at the facility? I guess you know why I'm here, doc. I escaped, and I want answers. I want to know what they did to me. I didn't sign up for this."

"No, my boy, I don't suppose you did." Montrose slapped him on the back and motioned them to a seat. "I got wind of your escape from a few well-placed friends. I figured you'd be coming, but you must know they will figure that out as well. You don't have long here."

"Then you can get right to telling me what the hell is happening, why my freedom was taken away from me after they did what they did."

Montrose's gaze flicked to Zita and back to Caleb.

Caleb made a quick introduction. "Ed Montrose, brilliant scientist, retired. This is Zita. I promised her you could get her information on her brother."

The doctor's eyes widened. "Who is your brother, young lady?"

The hand Zita brought up to push her hair from her eyes shook a little. When she lowered it, Caleb threaded his fingers through hers. He imagined she couldn't believe she was so close to getting answers. He badly wanted to say that could wait and focus on his own issues, but he shoved the feeling down. She must be as desperate as he was. Caleb had been alone in this world a long time, but Zita'd had her brother.

"It's Zander Gordon, my twin. But I can wait for you to tell Caleb what he needs to know." Caleb didn't miss the warm look she cast him before she hid it. Was she falling for him? He had nothing to offer her except a life on the run.

Montrose seemed startled by the name. He stood up and walked over to a file cabinet. After unlocking it and pulling out a folder, he secured the drawer again and slapped it on the table.

“Alien genomes,” Montrose announced.

Caleb’s throat closed. “Come again?”

A picture of a man was the first item in the folder. Montrose held it up. “They found an artifact—where I don’t know. What I do know is the original alien looked like you and me, but he wasn’t human. From that small sample, my colleagues were able to determine that the aliens were just like us in every way except they could read minds and manipulate their molecules to make time and space null and void. There wasn’t much to work with, but the government would never let the kind of opportunity it represented slip through their fingers.”

“Of course not,” Caleb said, his tone dripping with bitterness.

“I was called in as a consultant if you remember when they’d botched everything.”

Caleb nodded. “You saved my life. Thank you for that.”

Montrose waved a hand and continued studying the papers before him. “There were a few others, all worse off than you, one of them”—Montrose looked up at Zita—“was Zander Gordon.”

Zita surged to her feet and shrieked. “What? You’re telling me my brother was bonded with that...that...” She looked at Caleb, and he ground his teeth. He couldn’t blame her. This went beyond just physical enhancements. This was screwing around with a person’s DNA.

Caleb turned back to Montrose. “Where is Zander? What happened to him and the others? Are they still there? They told me...” He paused about to say that he’d been told he was the only one to survive.

Montrose sighed. “Unfortunately, it’s true. You were the only one we could save. Maybe it was that you were in top physical shape before the experiment, and the rest were, well in various states of deteriorated mental and physical health.”

Caleb jumped to his feet to catch Zita just before she reacted to the news that her brother was dead. He could have punched Montrose for the damned air-headed way he’d told her, but then that was just how he was. He wasn’t a cold-hearted person.

Zita screamed once, and her legs gave out. Tears flooded her eyes. Caleb sank with her to the floor holding her in his arms while she sobbed nonstop. From head to toe, she shook, and he rocked her while stroking her hair and crooning nonsense. He crushed her tighter to him, seeking the only way he knew to comfort her. Covering her sweet mouth, he invaded

with his tongue. He expected her to beat him off or jerk out of his hold, but she melted to him.

Somewhere nearby a door closed, and Caleb figured Montrose had given them a few moments alone. Caleb lifted Zita in his arms and walked over to the couch in the corner. He sat down and put her on his lap. Zita buried her face into his neck still shaking but quieter. He waited for her to speak knowing she'd need to vent.

"They had no right. He didn't sign up for that experiment." She sniffed. "I know Zander wouldn't leave me to do that, and he definitely wouldn't have gone through that farce of a trial knowing he was covering for volunteering to become a damn alien!"

Her gaze locked on his. He brushed hair from her cheek. "Zita, I—"

"I'm sorry. That was wrong for me to say. If I wasn't heartbroken over Zander, I'm sure I'd think this whole thing was interesting."

He grunted. "Hardly."

"I just thought he was alive. I believed it with all my heart." She sobbed and pounded a fist on his chest. He took the abuse if it would get her through this. "I want to get back at whoever did this, whoever gave the order to use my brother and whoever screwed you over too."

He smirked. "Thanks, sweetheart, but don't worry. I'm planning to take out the guy as soon as Montrose gives me a name." He kissed her once more and then put her off his lap.

As if he sensed they were ready for his return, Montrose came back into the room holding another folder. More likely he'd been monitoring them in some way. He held out the folder to Caleb. "This is the dossier I had put together as soon as I heard you'd escaped. The man there is General Jamison Peters. He is the brass behind this project, and it's him who sent out the order to have you killed."

Caleb started. "Killed? I thought they were taking me back."

"They consider you a fail since you don't follow their orders. They intend to use your genomes to make their next line of super soldiers, and Jamison is the one you want."

Caleb thanked him and took only a single sheet from the folder with Jamison's information and the picture. He folded both and stuffed them inside his pocket. Caleb glanced toward Zita and found her asleep, tear tracks drying on her cheeks. He despised the ache in his chest but leaving her was for the best.

"Can we step into the hall?" he suggested to Montrose. When they were there with the door closed so Zita wouldn't overhear, he said,

“Please, use your resources to get her somewhere they won’t find her. I want her to live her life in peace, not spend it running.”

“Sure, I can do that.” Montrose scratched his jaw. “Will you tell her good-bye?”

“No.”

He started to walk away when his friend’s words stopped him. “She doesn’t strike me as the type of woman that’s going to accept you leaving, especially after losing her brother.”

Caleb ran a hand through his hair. When was the last time he’d had a good night’s sleep? He couldn’t remember, and it was sure he wouldn’t get one in the coming days—not until his deed was done. This wasn’t just revenge. This was his way of freeing himself and for making sure Zita could be free as well. Now that she knew the truth, they wouldn’t want her running around with the knowledge, a woman with nothing left to lose.

He closed his eyes and drew a picture of her beautiful face in his mind. Fiery, sexy, his if he held his hand out to her. But she deserved better than him. She deserved a chance at a normal life with a wholly human man. Despair washed over him before he pushed it away.

“Tell her my part of the agreement is done. Tell her I promised she’d get information about him, and I lived up to that.” As he spoke the words, bile rose in Caleb’s throat. He cared a hell of a lot more for her than what he sounded like, but this way she’d get pissed off at him. That anger would help her to move on. Anything gentler would be a mistake.

“Are you sure about those words, Caleb?” The coldness wasn’t lost on the scatterbrained scientist.

“I’m sure.” He turned toward the stairs and started up them. “Soon enough you will be safe, and I’ll lead them off after me. Thank you for everything, Montrose. I probably won’t be seeing you again.”

Chapter Seven

Zita woke to an explosion. She jumped up and fell over the side of the couch onto the floor. Someone had turned off the lights, and the room being underground with no windows was pitch black. She held out her hands before her. “Caleb, where are you? I can’t see a thing.”

The door on the far side of the room creaked open letting light into the room. Zita froze, but she ran forward when she recognized the old scientist’s voice. “Mr. Montrose, where’s Caleb? Is he already outside? Did someone attack?”

She hated how her voice shook, but she was scared for Caleb. Now that she knew her brother was gone and she’d been able to stop crying, she realized she’d really have been alone in the world if Caleb hadn’t come along. She didn’t think it was being naïve or stupid to think he cared about her. They could help each other through the devastating news they’d both gotten—her with the loss of her brother and him with learning what he was. Alien genomes or not, Caleb was still the man she’d traveled with all along who comforted her when it must have thrown him for a loop to find out what the government had done.

Montrose stumbled to the wall and flicked a light switch. He opened a panel Zita hadn’t realized was hidden there. After he flicked a few buttons, another explosion overhead shook the foundation, and Zita jumped. Montrose fell against the table. When he righted himself, a thick pool of blood lay where he’d been.

Zita screamed and ran to him. “Oh no, you’re hurt. Lay down. Where is Caleb? Out there?” She was torn between trying to find her lover and tending to the old man. When she would have left his side after helping him to the couch, he grabbed her arm. The grip was strong despite the amount of blood he must have lost.

“Wait, I have to tell you,” he rasped and then coughed so hard he blacked out for a minute. Zita tore a piece of his shirt off and balled it to press into his wound. From what she’d seen, something or *someone* had cut him pretty deep. If they didn’t get him stitched and quick, he would die.

“Mr. Montrose, do you have a medical kit, some strong thread, and a needle?”

He shook his head. “Don’t worry with that, young lady.” He coughed again. “I’m pretty much done in. I need to tell you...” His voice faded out until she had to lean down to hear. “He loves you. He didn’t want me to tell you he was leaving for your sake, but I’m telling you anyway. Caleb

loves you. I could see it in his eyes and the devastation he felt because he believed he couldn't be with you."

Zita leaned back and stared. Gone? Caleb had left her behind? He couldn't have. He wouldn't, not knowing how she'd just lost her brother and had no other family. Yet here was Montrose telling her that he loved her but found the ability to turn his back on her? Her lashes grew wet, but she blinked the moisture away. "If he loved me, he would have stayed."

"He left you *because* he loved you."

"That doesn't make sense to me."

The old man seemed to struggle to hang on until she understood. "He just learned he's part alien now, some freak of nature—"

"He's not a freak!" She'd liked this scientist right off even though he worked for the government, but she wasn't going to tolerate him bad-mouthing Caleb. She was pissed enough at Caleb on her own and needed no one's help.

"Calm down, young lady. I'm only saying what might be going through his mind. I know him, and I know that he is thinking about what kind of life you'll have if you stick with him."

He struggled for breath for a few minutes, and Zita checked his wound. The sounds above ground had died down. She hoped that meant the enemy had decided they weren't here and went to search somewhere else. She prayed wherever Caleb was he was safe.

Montrose continued after he'd caught his breath. "Think about what would happen if he never catches up to the man that did this to him? Or if it takes years. You willing to live a life on the run? What about children and a normal life? You can't convince me a young, vibrant woman like yourself doesn't dream of a family. And what if he does get to this man, what then? For the rest of his life Caleb has to be careful not to get a serious injury that might land him in the hospital and have the wrong people take his blood. He can't have children anyway unless he risks passing on his new genetic code to the child. Who knows the consequences then. Now are you seeing the problem?"

Zita sank down to the floor. Yes, she saw it all after Montrose explained. All she'd been thinking of was having someone to love her, to take away the loneliness, the empty feeling she'd tried to fill with one job after another—moving from place to place thinking she could outrun the emotional baggage that must be welded to her ass.

She dropped her head into her hands and cried. No matter what they felt for each other, she and Caleb couldn't be together. He'd seen that right away, and she could only imagine what he felt when he left, knowing the

truth. Did he really love her? She enjoyed the thought of him somewhere out there thinking of her, caring for her like no one else but Zander had.

Misery squeezed her throat closed. She wept until Montrose had another coughing fit, and she made him as comfortable as possible. When the power went off and the room was plunged into darkness, she knew their time had run out. But what did it matter? She had nothing left for them to take away.

* * * *

Zita curled for a moment with her back pressed against the wall. A naked bulb hung overhead, swinging back and forth as if something had shaken the room. The dim lighting allowed her to see that she lay on a dingy cot in a duller box cube. She knew from when they'd shoved her inside that the steel door across from her was locked. Panic had set in. All the courage she'd thought she had, had scrambled out the door as they shut it. Zita had climbed on the cot, shut her eyes, and chanted that this was all a dream.

Hours later when she didn't wake from this nightmare, she had to face the truth. The agents that had been after Caleb now held her, and she guessed they let him know it somehow so she could be the bait.

"I'm sorry, Caleb," she whispered in the stone room.

While she didn't hear him in her head, she did feel that pressure she'd felt on the first night she met him. She'd come to recognize it as the side effect to him reading her thoughts. Quickly, she considered what kind of information she could let him know to help him find her. At least she hoped it was him and not some other person they had experimented on.

"The room I'm in is in a long hall with doors on each side. I think the building where they took me had the number thirty-nine in bold black letters on the side but up near the roof," she explained mentally. *"Please be careful, Caleb, and..."* She hesitated but hoped her next words would encourage him. *"I love you. No matter what you are I've fallen in love with you, and I want to be with you no matter what the danger."*

By the time she finished communicating her thoughts to him, the pressure was gone. Zita had no idea whether Caleb had withdrawn from her mind before she told him everything or not. She had no choice but to wait and hope he'd come soon without getting caught.

Time passed with no sounds, no one coming at all. Zita was on the edge of going stir crazy. She searched the room three times in every corner, but the space wasn't so big and looking too closely meant finding

the spider webs woven in the corners. Spiders crept her out. Standing in the middle of the room, she considered a plan to get someone to come. Several scenarios she ran through her mind had her shot dead because these fuckers weren't playing. They were trained to kill and wouldn't bat an eyelash after doing it.

After a little while, she had to go to the bathroom anyway. Zita approached the door only to catch the sound of a key turning in the lock. She gulped and leaped clear of the door. A quick scan of the room presented no weapons she could use in defense of herself. Zita took on a fighting stance. She hadn't sparred with Zander for nothing over the years, that's for sure.

The door opened. Zita drove her fist forward with all her might. A large hand engulfed her small hand, twisted her wrist, and in half a second had her slammed into an unyielding chest. All the wind whooshed from her lungs.

"I come to rescue you, and that's the thanks I get, a right hook to the jaw?"

Zita cried out and clung harder to Caleb. "You're here. I didn't imagine it."

His tone lowered and softened. "Yes, I heard you. When we're clear, we'll discuss what you said."

She shivered, unable to glean anything from his tone—whether he would put her off gently or accept her love. One thing Zita knew about soldiers was that they were more stubborn than mules. Once they had made a decision, nothing would change it. Caleb might dig in and refuse to let her be in his life all because he felt he'd already made the right choice.

Caleb peeked out into the hall and then took her hand. "Stay behind me. Keep quiet. I think I got lucky coming in here, but I'm not sure it'll hold going out. Especially since I left a few bodies lying around."

He tugged a gun from his waistband and held it ready. They ran on tiptoe down the hall, meeting no one on the way. In fact, along several halls and two flights of stairs, they didn't even hear another person's voice or catch sight of anyone. Zita began to smell a trap coming. And just as she thought, the last corner they rounded, a man in an army uniform with stripes on his sleeve indicating he was high ranking stood ahead of them. So the army was at the top, not caring what kind of soldier they experimented on—their own or marines. This man too carried a gun, and it was pointed straight at them.

Caleb shoved Zita behind him. Scared for his safety, she gripped his arms and pressed close. She searched for some plan to get the drop on the man, but there was no way unless they backtracked. Something told her the soldier wouldn't allow that move without open firing.

Caleb sneered. "General, huh? Don't tell me you're Peters."

"Yeah, I'm the one who gave you that gift you have."

"Gift!" Caleb lunged, but the general cocked his gun.

"Uh-uh. Remember you can phase so the bullet misses you, Caleb, but what about your little girlfriend? You really care so little about her that you'd let it pass through you to kill her?"

Caleb swore. "You piece of shit."

"I stood over you through the long hours it took to know for sure if you were going to be the one the alien genomes bonded with. You were the prototype, and now with you back, we'll be able to reproduce those results on countless soldiers. The U.S. will be unstoppable, and no other country will dare blink twice at us."

"Yeah, you'll take soldiers that didn't want to sign up like my brother," Zita spat. "You deserve to die for what you did, and if Caleb doesn't kill you, I will."

Peters laughed. "She's got spunk, soldier. I like that." The grin left his face as quickly as it appeared. "Lay down the gun and come with me. You might get a bullet off before I shoot. You may not. Either way, I get one into her."

Caleb hesitated only a moment and then laid his gun down on the floor. He raised his hands up, and Zita followed suit. The general flicked his gun in the direction of a door to their left, and they filed into the room one behind another. Zita glanced around. The space was larger than her cell, but every available spot on the floor seemed taken up with some kind of equipment. In the center was a bed with straps hanging from it. She peered up at Caleb and found him frowning, his jaw tight, anger flashing in his eyes. She guessed he recognized the place where they'd done who knew what to him.

Peters prepped one of the machines. A chill passed over Zita. Just what was he planning to do? Surely, they'd done all the damage they could to Caleb. Peters picked up a phone and dialed two numbers. "I see you left me the specimen like I asked, but did it occur to you that I might need help monitoring everything? Get your ass down here on the double."

Specimen? Zita swallowed. From the corner of her eye, she caught Caleb tightening his fists. Whatever he suspected was about to happen, she was sure she came to the same conclusion. The general was going to try a

combining on her genomes with the alien's and maybe Caleb. Did he think they'd stand there and not fight? Either way, whoever he called would be there soon. If they were going to do anything, it had to be now.

Caleb must have been on the same page as her thinking or in her head while she didn't notice. He leaped toward the general, but the man fired without hesitation. While he expected Caleb to phase, her lover stayed solid and took the bullet. She cried out when he jerked from the impact, but it didn't slow him down. The two men struggled over the gun, smashing into equipment and knocking operating tools to the floor. Fists pounded into jaws, and beakers smashed into a million shards under their feet.

Zita scanned for something to use as a weapon, and when she spotted a scalpel still resting on a tray, she snatched it up. By the time she spun around, Caleb and Peters' hands were locked together in a fight to see who would get the upper hand. Zita searched for the gun but didn't find it.

"Give up, Caleb. My men are on their way. You'll never get out of here alive," Peters warned.

"I did it once. I'll do it again," Caleb snarled. "I will have my freedom." The thought of it being so close must have fueled Caleb all the more. He gave Peters a massive push that knocked the man off his feet. The hulking soldier smashed into a machine behind him and cried out in pain and horror. He clenched his teeth together, his eyes bulging.

"What's wrong with you?" Zita demanded, freaking out at his expression.

The general sank to his knees grabbing at his back. Zita glanced at Caleb and then at the machine Peters had crashed into. Her mouth fell open. Inside was a small case like an incubator with a jar of thick rose liquid. A tube extended from the jar and led out from the incubator to a massive needle. The entire setup seemed like something out of a sci-fi movie.

Zita took a step back. "Tell me what I think happened just now...*didn't*," she pleaded with Caleb.

He stepped over to the general who after a seizure wasn't moving. Caleb checked the general's pulse at his neck and then examined the digital display beside the needle. Zita didn't understand the dosage measured in cc's, but her guess was that the general had gotten way too much.

Caleb shook his head. "Poetic justice I guess. He was injected with too much of the alien genomes. I'm thinking it overloaded his system."

"You don't sound sorry."

He glanced around at her. “Are you?”

“No.”

Caleb walked over and pulled her into his arms. He crushed her to his chest while nuzzling her neck. Zita melted into him. There was nowhere else she’d rather be.

“We have to get out of here before we’re captured, tried, and convicted for his murder.” He paused at the door, an expression of pain crossing his features before it was gone again. “I saw in your thoughts Montrose is dead. If I could kill that bastard all over again—on purpose this time—I’d do it, for Zander too. I promise you, Zita, I’ll find out where he was buried and take you there.”

Her eyes widened at the impassioned promise. Maybe Montrose was right when he said Caleb loved her. But then again it could be all about duty. Caleb might feel like he’d gotten her into this mess, and he needed to get her out. Nothing more. She sighed and nodded. “Thank you. That would mean a lot to me.”

He watched her with narrowed eyes a few minutes. Zita didn’t feel pressure on her mind, so she wondered what he was doing. After a while, Caleb took her hand and led her into the hall for their escape to freedom. With any luck they’d find a place where the U.S. government would let them live in peace. Zita would go anywhere as long as it was with Caleb.

Chapter Eight

“Alaska, Caleb? Really?” Zita shivered at the cold outside their mountain cabin and followed her lover inside. The warmth from the roaring fire chased the chill from her bones, and she inched as close as she could.

Caleb moved up behind her and rested his hands on her shoulders. She grew wet feeling his thick hard-on pressed into her back. The one good thing about being up this cold mountain in the middle of nowhere was that Caleb had the time and opportunity to satisfy every one of her sexual desires—two or three times a day if they liked.

“Hey, it’s in the U.S., the location is secluded, and we get down to town once a month. What could be better?” Caleb played with the buttons on her blouse. His libido was unstoppable.

“Yes, but...”she began.

“But?”

She bit her lip hesitant to say what was on her mind. All this time, Caleb hadn’t invaded her mental privacy. In fact, he never displayed any trait that would remind them of what he was. She couldn’t read minds, but she wondered all the time what he was thinking, if he was happy having her here. After Caleb had taken her to visit her brother’s grave and she’d cried for a while, he had made arrangements for them to leave the lower states for good. Not once had he asked her what she wanted or suggested she go anywhere other than with him. There’d also never been any mention of love on his part. That hurt just as much.

“Maybe I should go somewhere else. They might be looking for a couple.” She faced him and spread her hands to the side. “I know we’ve seen no evidence of anyone tracking us this past three weeks, but—”

He frowned and moved away. “Is that what you want?”

She grew angry. He still wasn’t admitting what he felt. For crap sake, couldn’t he just say it? “Don’t you know? You can read my mind.”

“Damn it, I don’t want to read your mind, Zita.” He slammed a fist on the mantel above the fireplace and then shoved his fingers into his hair. “Sorry. Look, if you want to leave, I’ll find somewhere for you to go.”

“You dumb ass,” she screamed and charged toward their bedroom. When she came to the bed, she threw herself down on it and cried. With her sobs muffled into the pillow, she shouted. “Stupid, stupid, man! I told him how I felt, and he said we’d talk, but he lied. He doesn’t give a damn about me.”

Pain and anguish ripped through her heart. She drew her knees up to her chest while trying to will all the hurt away. Nothing worked. The bed sank down on Caleb's side. She tried to quiet down so he wouldn't know she was crying over him. He touched a lock of her hair. She jerked away.

"Come here, Zita."

"Go to hell."

He reached to her side of the king size bed and hauled her over to his. He unbuttoned her jeans and lowered her zipper. She stopped him before he could put his hand down her panties. "That won't solve anything. You always do that instead of talking to me. Just arrange for me to go somewhere. That's what you want anyway."

He stilled. "That's not what I want, Zita. But..."

She didn't bother asking what the "but" was. The conversation was pointless.

"You have no idea how much I..." Again he hesitated. Zita gritted her teeth. She tried to get out of his hold, but he tightened his grip on her and spooned her from behind. "I want you in my life forever. I crave it. Wanting that is a raging pain that rips me apart every morning I wake up knowing this is a dream that can't last. I'm no longer human, Zita. You have to face that truth."

Zita worked her way free and stood up. She crossed the room to the wardrobe and threw it open. When she'd retrieved her suitcase, she began to pack. "I'm going. I don't know where, but when I get there, I'm starting over. I'm going to meet a new man. We'll fuck like bunnies, but eventually *he* will love me."

"No, you will not!" Caleb's explosive response made her jump. She whirled to face him, and he stalked forward to snatch the blouse she held from her, and he kicked the suitcase out of reach. The bag slammed against the wall. "You're not going to be with another man."

Zita put her hands on her hips. "So what is this, if you can't have me, no one will? Are you going to kill me?"

"Don't be stupid." Her jerked her to him, and Zita's feet rose off the floor. She wriggled to get away, but Caleb was too strong. His face was a mask of anger and self-recrimination. After he dropped her on the bed, he followed her down, pinning her beneath him. The lust in his eyes mingled with something else, something she dared not identify in case she was wrong. "Damn it, Zita, I love you!"

His call of her name was almost a cry of need and pain.

"I'm selfish. I don't want to give you up, and I damn sure don't want another man's hands on you." He tore her blouse open, popping buttons

and revealing her breasts. With his thumb he traced the red lace of her bra and then licked the soft skin of one breast. Zita shivered, closed her eyes, and tried not to let herself get too happy. Caleb loved her, but he hadn't said he'd let her stay.

Caleb bit the front bra clasp open and licked his way to a nipple. Zita's back came up off the bed when his lips encircled her tight bud. She whined and squirmed, wanting more but knowing this was no resolution. Caleb worked his way down from the valley between her breasts until he reached her navel. One dip of his tongue had her shivering, but he didn't stop. At her waistband, he began undressing her again, yanking her pants over her hips. Her panties followed, and he flung the garments over his shoulder.

"Your pussy is addictive. You know this," he said although she didn't think it was a question.

He swiped at her clit, but she pushed his shoulders. "Caleb, stop. I need to—"

"You're not leaving me. Not now, not ever."

He sat up, kneeling in front of her while he made sure her legs were spread and ready for him. Zita watched Caleb shuffle out of his clothes. She panted when his hard chest came into view, and forced a swallow when his cock sprung forth from his boxers. His size, his taste, everything about Caleb sent her into overdrive. Her pussy clenched and moistened for his entry.

At last, she knew she was his, that he loved her, and that they'd always be together. This whole time, Caleb had been fighting to let her go, to deny what he felt. That's why he never admitted anything. Zita was pretty sure the moment he *did* admit it, there was no going back, and he was right. She wouldn't let him go either.

She reached between her legs to stroke his shaft. The stiff member glided between her fingers and jerked as if just as hungry to get into her as she was to have it. She flicked her gaze to Caleb's face. Each time they made love, he dominated her, told her exactly what he wanted her to do and for how long. She loved every minute of it. Who would have thought she was this much of a submissive? If someone had told her she was all that time she was out on her own, making her way in the world, she'd have called them a liar. But maybe she just needed a sexy, strong marine to give it to her like she needed it.

"Do you want me to suck it, baby?" she purred up at him.

"No."

He reached out and yanked her hips down toward him. One of his thumbs rubbed her clitty for a few seconds and then withdrew. Zita whimpered her disappointment. Caleb ran a hand up over her stomach to curl his fingers around her neck. He didn't put pressure there, but just the act made her feel bound. She lowered her lids until they were almost closed and licked her lips. Caleb followed her movements with lust in his eyes.

"I'm going to show you who you belong to," he announced.

He leaned out over her and tightened his hold around her neck. Gently, he rubbed a finger across her lips before pushing between them. Zita closed her eyes and sucked at his finger, moaning as she did so. Caleb grunted. He let go of her neck and shoved her knees up. Without pausing, he thrust into her wet tunnel. The pain and pleasure mingled, making Zita cry out his name and arch up to him.

"Look at me, Zita," he commanded. She opened her eyes. He thrust deeper while squeezing the backs of her thighs. "Who do you belong to?"

"You." Her climax was coming fast. She bit her lip, her lashes fluttering.

"Don't you dare look away. You keep your eyes on me until you come. I want to see every minute of it."

"I can't." She groaned and squirmed. Her core muscles clenched and released, squeezing his cock and teasing it to drive farther into her, to find that sweet spot only Caleb could find. He plunged harder and faster. Zita screamed. Her lids drifted closed, but Caleb spanked her ass.

"I see that I'm going to have to punish you. Do you want me to stop? Do you want me to deny you an orgasm?"

"No," she whispered.

He pulled out of her and flipped her to her belly. With strength that always turned her on, he lifted her quickly and positioned her so that she laid facedown long ways on the bed. Zita gasped as he forced her legs apart and kneeled between them. Again he slapped her ass cheek and then rubbed it.

Caleb brought his full weight down on her and pushed three fingers into her wet pussy. He rested his mouth against her ear. "Do you want me to put my cock in your ass, Zita?"

She tore at the sheets in anticipation. "Yes, please, yes, Caleb."

Spreading come from her pussy to her anal opening, he messaged her with each movement until Zita was relaxed enough for his easy penetration. He pumped deep into her ass without lifting her hips. The stretching of her walls was both painful and so good, she keened. Caleb

worked his cock all the way to the hilt and then withdrew. He pushed in again for three rapid pumps, and then he stopped. Zita sobbed.

All at once his roughness and cruelty were gone. He lay down fully on her and wrapped his arms beneath her shoulders. His movements gentle and loving, he brought her to a passionate orgasm that had her trembling from head to toe. Caleb chanted her name while he found his release. When he was done, he didn't move but lay still holding her.

"I love you more than my life, Zita," he murmured. "You know that don't you?"

"Yes." She turned her head to kiss him. Their lips met in a brief caress. "I love you too, more than I can say. I never want to be with another man—no one but you."

He gave her tender squeeze. "Then come what may, we will always be together. Our bond is stronger than anything the government can produce. I promise to keep you by my side and protect you with my life."

Content even though she didn't know what the future held, Zita fell asleep in Caleb's arms right where she belonged.

The End