# Cathryn Fox & Lisa Renee Jones

# PRIMAL INSTINCTS



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### **Chapter One**

Flashlight in hand, Dr. Olivia Markham pushed through the vines and vegetation as her glance scanned the tall palm trees fringing the overgrown footpath. With the setting sun unable to penetrate the thick canopy of leaves overhead, she had to rely on artificial light to find her way. Not that she knew her wayâ€"she didn'tâ€"which was why she, along with her best friend and fellow research partner, Dr. Jordon Brooks, had joined a local tour group that had just embarked on a weeklong safari.

The heavy, humid atmosphere closed around her, making it difficult to fully inflate her lungs with air. She swiped her damp bangs from her forehead, hardly able to believe that her research into aphrodisiacs had landed her smack-dab in the middle of the Riviera Maya jungleâ€"a far cry from her research lab at the University of Texas, she mused.

The tour group had been traveling from sunup until sundown. Judging from the grumblings coming from the other group members up ahead, it was clear they were ready to stop and set up camp for the night. So when  $Olivia\hat{a} \in \mathbb{M}$ s stomach started to grumble, she stopped midstride, twisted around and spoke to Jordon in whispered words.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$ How much farther do you think it is? $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$ 

Olivia waved her flashlight toward her friend, momentarily blinding her. Without warning, their bodies collided with a thud, and the air rushed from her lungs.

Gasping, Olivia stumbled backward, her heavy backpack throwing her off balance. With her hands flailing, her flashlight tumbled to the ground; unable to right herself, she landed with a thump a few feet away from her light.

Jordon dropped to her knees. Panicked, she reached for Olivia and gushed out, "Olivia, are you okay?â€

"l'm okay, but…l can't speak for the damn bush I fell on,†she said, lightening the mood. "lf I didn't know better, l'd swear it was a cactus.â€

Jordon crinkled her nose and panned her light, taking in the flattened foliage. "Not a cactus—just the exposed roots of a Pacaya palm tree,†she said.

Olivia pushed her damp bangs back with her palm.  $\hat{a} {\in} \varpi Oh$  , yeah? Tell that to my ass.  $\hat{a} {\in}$ 

She shimmied forward to retrieve her flashlight and then looked around. Sure enough, Jordon was right. It was merely Pacaya palm rootsâ€"they'd done enough research over the past few months to know the foliage intimately.

Stifling a chuckle, Jordon shook her head and reached out to her. "Need a hand?â€

"l think I need a minute to catch my breath first.†Olivia gripped her chest and wheezed loudly to emphasize the point.

Laughing at Olivia's exaggerated antics, Jordon plunked down beside her and went to work brushing dirt and insects from her cammy jacket.

Olivia pulled off her rucksack and took a moment to compose herself. The hard truth was that Olivia and Jordon were both strong, streetwise city girls who'd trained emotionally and physically for the weeklong excursion, but despite their preparedness, they somehow found themselves a little vulnerable, and a whole lot out of their element in the primitive jungle surroundings.

While they rested and filled their lungs, Olivia knotted her long auburn hair at her nape and then glanced around. She swept her flashlight over the flora, scanning the area from ground to treetop as she searched for the bright ivory petals of the Estela flower.

Rumor had it that the Estela, which meant "star†in English, could actually glow in the darkâ€"hence the name, no doubt. Rumor also had it that the leaves, when ingested, had very potent, very magical aphrodisiacal powers. This was the only reason Olivia and Jordon, her colleague, were fighting their way through a jungle at this particular moment, instead of working at their private laboratory.

Unfortunately for themâ€"and their researchâ€"rumor also had it that the flower was merely a legend, and no proof of its presence had ever been found. Even the townsfolk, including their tour guide, had been pretty closemouthed about the flower's actual existence.

Jordon angled her head to peer into the dark path. "We'd better get moving before we lose the others.â€

Olivia glanced behind her, and flicked her light over the untamed path. "Shouldn't there be a guide following up the rear to ensure no one gets lost?â€

"l guess it's up to us to keep up.†Jordon climbed to her feet. "Come on.â€

Olivia stood, threw her rucksack over her shoulder and then stilled. "Listen.â€

"What am I listening for?†After a quiet moment, Jordon turned in a circle, hearing only the crunch of twigs and underbrush beneath her hiking boots. "l don't hear anything.â€

"Precisely.â€

"Oh, shit,†Jordon said as understanding dawned. "Let's move it. We'd better pick up the pace before we really get left behind.â€

Pushing through the vines, they rushed forward searching for their tour group. A few moments later they came upon the others, who were already setting up camp.

Following Jordon's lead, Olivia dropped her bags and hooked her flashlight onto her belt. She was grateful that they'd finally reached their destination.

Olivia went to work finding a spot to set up the tent, while Jordon rooted through their bags for food. The minute they were both rested and fed, the two had plans to scope out the area.

Before she had time to secure a spot, their guide approached with two lit lanterns and spoke to them both in broken English. "Follow me.†As he handed Jordon a lantern, Olivia took that moment to study him. Splashes of colored paint, with symbols she didn't understand, covered his dark skin, making him look wild, fierce and…*carnal.* Long black hair fell forward as he dipped his head to meet Olivia's gaze straight on.

He made a low guttural sound, and lowered his voice for their ears only. "Come and learn.â€

Marveling at the turn of events, Olivia cast Jordon a skeptical glance, her expression conveying her disbelief; a heady mixture of concern and anticipation whipped through her blood. After refusing to even discuss the flower's potent powers, or even its mere existence, could he really be guiding them to it?

Moving with grace and agility, he turned his back to them, and stepped from the beaten path into one that appeared less traveled. Jordon held the lantern high, lighting the dark jungle before them.

Olivia stood stock-still and said in a whisper, "What do you think caused his change of heart?â€

Jordon's frown deepened as she slowly shook her head. "l really have no idea at all. But I think we should at least follow him to find out.†With that, Jordon picked up her rucksack and stepped forward cautiously. Olivia scooped up her own pack and followed closely behind.

Without speaking, their guide led them deep into the jungle interior. Despite their hunger and sheer exhaustion, they trekked onward, following in silence, anxious to discover the magical flowerâ€"a flower that would take them from obscurity to making their mark in the scientific world.

What felt like hours later, but in reality could have been only twenty minutes, Olivia and Jordon found themselves overlooking a tall cavern. From their elevated position, they couldn't see into its depths, but they could hear the rustling sound of water below. They both crouched down and peered into the darkness. They could see a faint light deep below. A fragrant scent curled around her, and Olivia inhaled, pulling the unique aroma into her lungs; she wondered if the scent was coming from the Estela flower, and if the faint light was from its glowing petals.

When a twig snapped behind her, Olivia stood and turned to face their guide. Jordon placed the lantern near the cliff, and moved in beside her. Their guide waved his hands forward, gesturing to the thick rope dangling over the edge.  $\hat{a} \in celt$  is what you seek. $\hat{a} \in celt$ 

Her heart racing, Olivia narrowed suspicious eyes and said, "You want us to go down there?â€

Their guide nodded. "lt is safe. I will follow.â€

Jordon twisted around, hunkered down and grabbed the rope. She tugged, testing it. Always the risk-taker, Jordon tossed Olivia a reassuring look and shrugged.  $\hat{a} \in celt$  seems safe enough. $\hat{a} \in celt$ 

Was it really possible that they'd find the Estela flower in the belly of the cavern?

The guide answered Olivia's unasked question. "What you seek you will find, down there. Auga,†he added in his native tongue, bowing his head.

They'd find the flower in the water?

Olivia noted the moment of hesitation in Jordon's eyes, before she quickly blinked it away. "What do you say, Olivia? Are you game?â€

Olivia knelt beside her friend and tried the rope. She drew a fortifying breath, gathered her bravado and shot Jordon a glance. "l say we've come too far to back down now.â€

#### **Chapter Two**

Jordon jumped to the ground deep inside the wonderfully cool inner cavern and immediately grabbed the flashlight hanging from her belt, flipping it on. She held it up and stared in awe at the glorious sight she found around her. The light reflected off the sparkling water of a pond, which was in the center of a magnificent cavern. She quickly scanned for animals or other hidden dangers, and thankfully found nothing that represented imminent riskâ€"only obscure beauty hidden in darkness. Drawing a breath, she tried to calm her racing heart. The idea of finding that flower had her pulse pounding at double time. A flower as potent as legend foretold would do more than offer pleasure; it might deliver alternatives to addictive pain medications. She was dreaming big, but she couldn't help herself.

Despite her excitement, Jordon couldn't fight her uneasiness. Shouldn't the guide have come down first and ensured their safety? And why the change of heart about helping them? Why show them this secret location? Up until this point, he had acted as if their quest for the secret Estela flower was some sort of great taboo. And quite truthfully, even now, she felt nervous. Could they trust him?

Before she could consider those questions any further, Olivia landed on her feet beside Jordon, discarding her heavy backpack. Immediately, Olivia's flashlight flipped on, showing she shared the same jitters.

"Oh, my God,†Olivia whispered. "lt's beautiful. Or what I can see of it is.â€

"l know,†Jordon said, following her friend's lead and sliding her pack off her back. "Easy to believe something special like that flower would be down here, isn't it?â€

"Oh, yeah,†Olivia agreed, not quite suppressing a sudden shiver. "And about ten degrees cooler. Gotta love that.â€

"l bet the water's a little chilly, though, and that's where the flower is supposed to be,†Jordon warned. "We can't go in without proper gear. We'll freeze.â€

Abruptly, the rope jerked and Jordon assumed the guide was headed down to join them, but instead it began to climb upward.

"Hey!†Jordon screamed, instinct kicking in as she dropped her flashlight and jumpedâ€"four years on the college track-and-field high-jump team being put to use as she leaped upward, trying to grab the rope.

"Oh, crap!†Olivia exclaimed as Jordon's fingers merely grazed the tip of the rope. The rope slid farther out of reach, and Jordon plummeted to the ground with a hard thud and scrambled for her flashlight again.

"Hey!†Olivia shouted at the guide. "What are you doing up there? I thought you were coming down, too?†No response. "Are you insane? We need

that rope.â€

Jordon pointed her light upward at the entrance as she pushed to her feet.  $\hat{a}\in\mathbb{C}$  This is so not good,  $\hat{a}\in$  she murmured, not bothering to yell again. At this point, it was pretty obvious they were screwed.

As if in confirmation, the guide's head appeared at the opening of the hole and he grinned. "You'll get the rope back,†he promised. "When the shaman, Donato, says you get it back.â€

"What?†Jordon gasped at the same time that Olivia demanded, "Who is Donato?â€

Suddenly the cavern lit with flames; fire flickered at several corners and then followed a path around a ridge. Within seconds the entire cavern was alight, and Jordon and Olivia found themselves surrounded by natives. And not just any nativesâ€"tall, muscular men in barely there loincloths stood in various parts of the cavern.

 $\hat{a}$ €œTo say this isn $\hat{a}$ €<sup>™</sup>t an ordinary cavern in the middle of the Mexico jungle would be an understatement, $\hat{a}$ € Jordon murmured, swallowing hard as three loinclothed, godlike natives stepped closer, forming a line. She flicked a split-second glance over at Olivia and then back over the rock-hard abs and broad shoulders of  $\hat{a}$ €œthe gods. $\hat{a}$ €  $\hat{a}$ €œTell me I fell and hit my head, and this is some sort of erotic fantasy, because I really don $\hat{a}$ €<sup>™</sup>t want all of these hot men to be cannibals about to kill us. $\hat{a}$ €

"Not unless you pulled me down with you, and we both hit our heads,†Olivia said, delivering the hard truth. The two friends took a step closer together at the same moment. "You think one of them is Donato?â€

The three men who'd formed the line eased apart, and a gray-haired man wearing a bright, floor-length robe of yellow and orange stepped forward. "l am Donato and I possess the answers you seek. I can give you the Estela.†Though he spoke English, his words were heavily laced with a native accent.

Jordon gave the man a cautious once-over. "Why do I think there is more to your offer than simple generosity?â€

"Exactly,†Olivia inserted, her arms crossing protectively in front of her chest. "Why are we here? It's clear you planned this.â€

A hint of a smile played on the older man's lips, a bit of appreciation in his eyes at their astuteness. "There are certain terms to my willingness to help you.â€

"Terms,†Olivia said flatly. "Why would we accept your terms?â€

This time the old man openly smiled. "Because we both know how badly you want the Estela. Why else would you be in the middle of a jungle, hunting for what many believe to be only myth?â€

"But it's not a myth,†Jordon countered. "ls it?â€

"The Estela is real, as is its power to deliver great pleasure.†He held out his hand, closed his palm and then opened it. A glowing flower lay in his palm.

The two women shared a gasp of surprise. "How did you do that?†Olivia asked.

"With the same kind of magic found inside these glorious petals.†He held the flower between his fingers and threw it in the air. A second later it disappeared in a sprinkle of gold glitter. "Magic I can show you.†He paused. "lf you are willing to meet my terms. For we are the guardians of Estela. No one touches it without our approval.â€

Jordon and Olivia exchanged a nervous look, silently agreeing they should at least hear the man out. Olivia wasnâ $\in$ <sup>IM</sup>t one to walk around a subject; she took the direct approach. â $\in$ œThese terms you mention. Be more exact. What do we have to do to get to the flower?â $\in$ 

"To leave with Estela in your possession, you must first understand the true magnitude of her abilities. You must experience her great powers. You must sample her essence, here with us. Learn of her seductive magic. Then you will know what she will do to your world.â€

"Do to our world?†Jordon asked, not sure she followed where this was leading and certainly not keen on taking the equivalent of a drug, especially outside a controlled lab environment. "What will it do to our world?â€

He fixed on Jordon a deep, soul-searching stare, his gaze almost inhuman, his eyes emitting an odd quality, almost a glow. "The flower's magic must be managed,†he finally explained. "Once freed into your world, her powers would become invasive, controlling. Your world would forget all it knows, living for nothing but all-consuming passion.†His voice was low, yet foreboding. "You must experience this power here, where I can control Estela's reach. Then, and only then, will you understand why we guard her so closely.â€

Olivia snorted.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$ Please. We have plenty of drugs in our country. None of them have consumed our world. Besides, we mean the flower to be used for medical purposes. $\hat{a} \in$ 

The old man stared at Olivia as he had at Jordon, and Jordon felt Olivia shiver under his attention. "Estela decides how she is used,†he commented with eerie certainty. "If you want the flower, you will accept my terms. Sample the flower under my supervision.â€

As scary as this was to Jordonâ€"testing the flower here, outside a labâ€"the science it represented was more important. "And if we do this and still want the flower, you will give it to us?†A slow incline of his chin followed, but nothing more. No words. No promises. Yet she understood his agreement; she also understood that he believed they would not take the flower once they tested it.

Abruptly Olivia grabbed Jordon's arm, pulling her aside, turning Jordon so that their backs were to the man and his followers. "We can't do this,†she whispered urgently. "It's insane. I like to consider us smart women. For all we know, he plans to drug us and kill us.â€

"Then why talk to us at all?†Jordon countered, knowing Olivia was the rational thinker, the one who advised caution, whereas Jordon took risks. Their differences made for balance, and a good team. "No one knows we are here. He

could easily have already killed us. We said we'd come too far to turn our backs on this chance when we came down into this cavern. And now that is truer than ever. We know the flower is here. We're so close, Olivia, I can taste it. Think of what this discovery can do for science.â€

Olivia wasn't finished reasoning. "What if we die? What if we're allergic? And who says they will let us go when this is all over?â€

Jordon had to smile at that. "lf we have to die, doing it in the arms of a few hot men sounds like a good way to go.â€

An appalled look flashed across Olivia's face before she chuckled. "l can't believe I am considering this.â€

"l can,†Jordon insisted. "We both know we can't leave without knowing we did all we could do to take this flower home with us.â€

Seconds ticked by as Olivia fretted. Suddenly the rope dropped from the hole above them, giving them an exit route. The girls turned to face the gray-haired man.  $\hat{a} \in ce$  You are free to leave,  $\hat{a} \in he$  offered.  $\hat{a} \in ce$  *Without* the flower. Or you may stay and sample Estela. $\hat{a} \in$ 

Jordon looked at Olivia, her brow raised in question. Olivia drew a breath and let it out, then clasped Jordon's hand. "We're staying.â€

The manâ $\in$ <sup>TM</sup>s wrinkled face showed no signs of response. â $\in$ œThen we begin.â $\in$  He turned without waiting for their reply, the expectation clear that they would follow. The sexy native men, who Jordon suspected would soon be their lovers, stood like statues, staring forward, eyes averted.

Hand in hand, Olivia and Jordon started forward, following the old man past the loinclothed "gods.†The instant they passed those glorious bodies, Jordon felt warm all over. She continued to be aware of the men, who now walked behind them, and who were quite possibly planning to become their lovers. A brief moment of fear and panic overtook her, but those feelings were quickly smothered by a growing sense of excitement and more than a hint of arousal. Even without the flower's influence, these agreed-upon "terms†were erotic and daring. They'd agreed to let that flower lead them to sensual places, to perform erotic acts with complete, utter strangers. And even if she wanted to claim it was for science, a part of her thrilled at the excitement of exploration, of an excuse to let her inhibitions go and escape into pleasure. If she felt this now, what would she feel with the flower influencing her?

Donato led Jordon and Olivia into a smaller cave within the cavern, only it looked more like a room with stone walls. Gorgeous stalactites hung like icicles, and the walls were covered in primitive erotic art. Rugs draped the floors and a small, woodburning black furnace sat in the corner, though there was no doubting the floral scent that seemed to seep from the smoke. The essence of Estela, perhaps?

Jordon barely had time to consider that idea when her attention was riveted to the three chairs before her, two of which held the most gorgeous twin males sheâ€<sup>™</sup>d ever seen in her life. Long sable hair brushed their broad shoulders, while lean muscle

glistened beneath olive-colored skin, their loincloths doing nothing to hide their perfection.

"lf, by chance, you indeed hit your head and this is your fantasy,†Olivia whispered beside her, "thanks for including me.â€

Donato sat down in the open chair between the twins.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  These are my sons. $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  He waved to the right, to the male directly in front of Olivia.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  Chale. $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  He inclined his head at Olivia.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{A}$  And this is Amador. $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{A}$  Amador inclined his head at Jordon.

Donato continued,  $\hat{a} \in ceMy$  sons are masters of Estela $\hat{a} \in ms$  magic. If you accept them as your protectors and guides through this experience, you will show them so. You will fall at their knees now and submit to their rule. $\hat{a} \in ms$ 

#### **Chapter Three**

Olivia's eyes met with Chale's, studying the hard angles and planes of his face, and registering every delicious detail of the broad man seated before her.

The way his intense gaze locked on hers was both erotic and unnerving. She shifted restlessly and cleared her throat, working double time to marshal the lust that saturated her mind as unease segued to lust. There was nothing she could do, however, to bank the unfamiliar heat and need spreading through her body.

Chale stood and took one measured step closer, and she briefly closed her eyes against the flood of heat. The way his hard warrior body moved toward her with such confidence, and the way his primal scent closed around herâ€"he weakened her knees and brought on a shudder. With just one look, this godlike warrior had her body turning mutinous.

Dear Lord, what had they gotten themselves into?

He held out one large hand, palm up. Without hesitation, Olivia placed her palm on his. When he curled his fingers around hers, her small hand was swallowed by his enormous strength. The warmth of his skin seeped into her flesh, and in that instant she just knew that what she was about to experience would somehow change her future, and alter her life forever.

She shivered. Almost violently.

Chale inclined his head, and the slight curl in his lips told her that not only had he read her body's responses, he was pleased by them.

Long sable hair fell forward, veiling his bare chest. "Do you accept me as your guide, Olivia?†he asked in near-perfect English.

Heart racing, she nodded. Knowing she had to submit to him before she began her erotic journey, she sank to her knees, coming face-to-face with his hard cock, the loincloth unable to hide his impressive magnitude. She almost wept from pleasure. Out of her peripheral vision she watched Jordon submit to Amador.

"Then I offer you Estela.†His voice was softly seductive and worked some mysterious alchemy on her soul. Chale twisted sideways, accepted a small bowl-like crock from a young woman and offered it to Olivia.

A pause, a quick moment of hesitation, and then Olivia drank from the crock. The sweet syrup was as delicious as it was fragrant. She could feel her body warm, feel Estela racing through her bloodstream, heating her from the inside out.

Chale took the empty crock from her hand and pulled her to her feet. Feeling so small next to his large body, Olivia tilted her chin upward, bringing them face-to-face. His hands cupped her cheeks; his warrior features softened. The sudden flare of heat deep inside her made her body tremble.

Dark eyes probed hers, as though assessing her, reading her every hidden desire, her every secret fetish. His glance slid over her skin, a rough caress. She

should be afraid, she knew. But at the moment, with Estela racing through her veins, she felt anything but fear. Her breathing quickened; her chest was rising and falling in an erratic pattern.

A strange primal sound crawled out of Chale's throat. Raw desire flitted across his face. He bent his head, positioning his lips close to her ear, and spoke in whispered words. "You are very passionate, little one.â€

A moment later his warm mouth touched her skin, and she became instantly aware of the desire rising in him. He inhaled her, and then brushed his lips over the erogenous zone just below her ear. His movements were slow, deliberate, his touch going right through her.

Olivia drew in air, but couldn't seem to fill her lungs. She felt a little dizzy, a little disoriented. Sexual hunger churned inside her, prowling through her body, drawing her into a current of need and desire.

Chale inched back, his fingers brushing over her heated cheek, her neck. His nostrils flared. "Come with me now, little one, and learn.â€

Strong hands encircled her waist, guiding her to a smaller cave. She caught a glimpse of her friend being scooped up and carried in a different direction, and wondered where Amador was taking her, but all thoughts of Jordon were forgotten as Chale led her into his inner chambers.

Eyes alive with curiosity, she took a quick moment to catalog the unfamiliar surroundings, momentarily stunned by the beauty. Soft candlelight bathed the room in a warm, erotic glow, the arousing, aromatic scent of Estela saturating the air. Although the underground lair was primitive by her standards, what it lacked in modern luxury it made up for in sensuous delight and earthy appeal. A large cozy-looking white fur rug blanketed the circular floor, Estela's leaves sprinkled on top. Flanking the rug, two handsome warriors stood guard. To her left, a round tub drew her eye, with more white leaves floating on the water's glistening surface.

She glanced at the shadows dancing playfully on the stone wall. The erotic art from the large chamber spilled inside the smaller room. Olivia touched the limestone, the tip of her index finger tracing a couple in a tantra position. She wondered if the sketches were images re-creating the sexual activities that took place in the cave. Would she find her own spot on the wall when this was all over? And if so, what erotic position would she be captured in? Suddenly her imagination kicked into high gear, her mind conjuring up sexy visuals. As a bevy of fantasies rushed through her mind, her body responded with a shiver.

With his muscles rippling and pulling her focus, Chale walked to the center of the room and turned to face her. He gave a wave and a slight nod, gesturing for his men to bring her to him. When the warriors moved in beside her and escorted her forward, away from the archway, two more men took up guard at the door, locking the world out and her inside, making escape impossible. But she didn't want to escape. She wanted to stay here with Chale and experience Estela's magic in all her aphrodisiacal glory.

When she reached Chale, her eyes raked over his taut torso. Deliberately he

leaned over her, his scent assailing her senses, his primal essence completely overwhelming her. She stole a glance at the two loinclothed warriors still at her side, and the male-dominated space closed in around her.

Would they be staying while Chale guided her in Estela's magic? Would they be *watching* while he took her to intimate, sensuous places? Would they be *participating* in this scandalous yet so damn titillating encounter?

"What you want, and *need*, requires them to stay, little one,†Chale murmured into her ear, answering her unasked questions.

Olivia sucked in a tight breath. Had Estela's magic put him in tune with her desires, her *needs*? Needs that she knew she had, but never had the courage to vocalize.

Chale fingered her cammy jacket, toying with the material, seductively rubbing it through his fingers as if he'd never felt anything finer. "lt is what you wish, yes?â€

With Estela running through her veins, she suddenly felt very wild, very bold, everything in her urging her to open herself up to him. And really, she'd be crazy to deny herself what she really wanted. Because what she really wanted, and what she secretly needed, was to have the warriors stay, to watch and play.

Without any censure, she gave a slow nod, and said in a breathless voice, "Yes, it is what I wish.â€

Her unabashed certainty seemed to please Chale, and deep down, she suspected he knew her needs and desires better than she knew them herself.

With that, Chale removed her jacket, and then stood back. His eyes fixed on her breasts, watching the way her nipples hardened and poked through her thin T-shirt. When he wet his bottom lip, everything inside her screamed to feel his mouth on hers, his wet tongue on her breasts, between her legs. Her pussy moistened in anticipation.

"Undress her, and prepare her for her journey.†Chale gave the command to his warriors.

Her flesh quivered as the men expertly removed her clothes and boots. Gaze riveted, she never once tore her glance from Chale's powerful, virile physique. Her nipples quivered as her body ached to join with his. A craving she'd never before experienced swamped her. Oh God, she needed him, under her, over her, inside her. Liquid heat lubricated her pussy and dripped down her thighs.

After they had undressed her, the men led her to the bath. She glanced at the water and suppressed a shiver, wanting to try it with her finger before climbing in. Would the water be cold, like the pond at the foot of the cave?

"Estela keeps it warm,†Chale said softly.

His low voice played down her spine and moved through her like an aphrodisiacal drug. Trusting him completely, instinctively, in a way she'd never trusted another, Olivia nodded and slipped into the steamy, silky water.

Pure luxury. It was a befitting description for what she was feeling. The fragrant scent of Estela swirled around her. The men dropped to their knees, each picking up

one white petal. She wondered what they had in mind. She shot Chale a glance, curious, yet excited just the same.

He angled his head. "My men will service you, and prepare you for me.â€

The tips of the petals flicked over her breasts, scenting and cleansing her skin while filling her nipples with heated blood.

#### Oh, Jesus…

Her body began vibrating, her clit swelling, clamoring for attention.

As though reading her needs, one of the warriors trailed the petal lower, over her stomach, to her legs, fueling her desires. She rested her head against the porcelain tub; her lashes fluttered shut against the erotic assault, and her thighs automatically widened. He stroked small circles over her publis, before brushing the petal over her twin lips.

At this first touch, sparks shot through her body. Her hips powered upward, purposely placing the soft tip of the petal where she needed it most. Lust filled her and her body grew ravenous, tension building inside her.

With deft fingers, the warrior whipped the petal over her clit, while the other man turned his attention to her breasts, circling her nipples with accurate precision, seducing all her senses and raising her passion to never-before-known heights. Deep in a haze of arousal, she moaned in ecstasy and writhed as they worked her into a state of euphoric bliss.

One thick finger slipped inside her and all coherent thought was lost. In and out, in and out, he pumped into her, taking his time to caress her bundle of sensitive nerve endings. Her cunt spasmed, sucking him in deeper. Heat and desire flushed her skin.

Pleasure resonated through her, and her muscles clenched with the approach of a powerful orgasm. Her shaking hands gripped the tub. She bucked her hips forward, giving herself over to her needs. With that first sweet clench, her blood raced, carrying Estela to all parts of her body, warming and stimulating her darkest corners.

Feeling euphoric, intoxicated, delirious with pleasure, she erupted, shattering all over him, letting herself go in a way she never had before.

"Oh, damn,†she cried out, then bit down on her lip, riding out every delicious wave, every sweet pulse of fulfillment.

A moment later she blinked her eyes open and met Chale's glance. As her body called out to him, she realized that she was far from feeling fulfilled. Her passion hadn't even begun to recede; in fact, it was growing at an insurmountable rate. She knew, after that intense orgasm, she should have been sated, but she felt anything but. She wanted more, *needed* more. The lust rising in her was almost too much, too intense to bear. She sucked in a tight breath and sank back into the water. A low moan escaped her lips, her body shaking with sexual frustration. She tried desperately to manage her overwhelming urges, but failed miserably.

As though sensing her distress, Chale came to her, lifted her from the tub and carried her to the fur rug, giving her a tender look.

"Breathe, little one,†he commanded in a soft voice. He stood her before him

and put her hand on his heart, letting her follow his slow, steady beat. In the span of a moment, her racing pulse settled. "That's a girl,†he murmured. "Learning to control Estela's power takes time.†His voice dropped to a whisper that sensuously caressed her body.

Chaleâ€<sup>™</sup>s lips brushed along her cheek, making a slow pass over her mouth before settling there for a deeper exploration. The soft blade of his tongue slipped inside for a gentle kiss that grew in passion and intensity when she moved restlessly against him. Her hand slipped between their bodies. She gripped his thick cock, wanting it inside her. It jumped beneath her intimate touch.

He stepped back and met her glance. They exchanged a long look. His dark eyes gleamed with sensuality, and before she realized what was happening, Chale captured her hands above her head, tying them with a dangling rope, and then quickly inserted his knee between her legs, widening them, while his men shackled her feet to the floor.

Ohmygod!

He'd secured her in an erotic position straight from her fantasies.

"Chale…†she murmured. He shot her a look of intimacy and promise. A shudder overtook her, and she was ready to explode just from the smoldering look in his eyes.

She twisted sideways to watch Chale's warriors circle her, like wild animals in heat, touching her body, exploring her curves, her heat, her most private parts. She gave a broken gasp and closed her eyes, not wanting to think, wanting only to feel.

The room became charged with sexual energy, her scent filling the heavy air.

One large palm slapped her ass. It stung, but she liked it. She moaned, and arched into his touch. Another hand moved in to soothe the sting left behind.

One warrior moved to her side, bent forward and encircled her areola with his tongue. His mouth felt like fire on her skin. Chale stepped in front of her and inserted a thick finger into her sex. Her cunt throbbed, begging for him to relieve the ache.

Voice full of want, she cried out, "More.â€

Giving her what she wanted, Chale pushed another finger inside, stirring her desire, and filling her with his girth. God, he was touching her in ways that drove her wild, made her feel feral. Ways that sheâ€<sup>™</sup>d only dreamed of a man touching her.

"l needâ€"†Her voice broke off when one of his warriors widened her puckered passage. Heat engulfed her. Lust consumed her thoughts, blistering heat welling up inside her. Never before had she felt so ravenous.

Behind her, the other warrior dropped to his knees, a warm tongue made a pass over her ass, and then she felt a slight pressure as he slipped a finger inside, penetrating her tight passage. Her breath hitched, her orgasm building. The room began spinning before her eyes. She gave a sexy moan, letting them all know how wild and wanton she felt.

Chale continued to pump his fingers in and out of her, plunging deeper while sensuously circling her clit with his thumb. The other men pleasured her ass and her breasts simultaneously. The triple assault brought on a fever. Her cunt muscles clenched with the approach of a climax.

Working together, the three men took her to a place she'd never been before, pleasuring her beyond her wildest imagination, while the guards stood at the door and watched the erotic show.

Nostrils flaring, Chale leaned into her and whispered,  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  want to taste your cream,  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  his voice rough with anticipation. With that, he sank to the floor and pressed a hot kiss to her pussy, his tongue burrowing deep, pushing her to the precipice once again.

His teeth scraped over her inflamed clit, stroking her with expertise, burning her flesh. She whimpered, her body going up in a burst of flames.

"That's it, little one. Come in my mouth.â€

She began trembling against Chale's mouth as he ravished her with dark hunger. Sparks shot through her body and she started to pant.

Chale changed the tempo. His fast steady thrusts brought her to the point of no return. Giving her no reprieve, he made another pass with his tongue, showering her with pleasure beyond her wildest imagination, driving her into a state of aroused euphoria, making her feel wild, dizzy, feverish. As he continued with his mind-blowing erotic assault, an explosion tore through her and she nearly blacked out.

Her sweet cream poured endlessly into Chale's open mouth. He lapped at her liquid heat, moaning his approval.

When her tremors subsided, Chale slid up her body and pressed his mouth to hers. She could taste her sweetness on his lips. He pushed his cock against her midriff, his aroused scent calling out to her. Her mouth watered, and she wanted to lave him with her tongue.

Desperation fueled her. With single-minded determination, she gyrated against him and whimpered. "Please,†she begged. "Let me taste you.â€

He nodded to his warriors, a silent command, and they went to work removing her shackles. Once the task was completed, Chale discarded his loincloth, then gripped her shoulders and guided her downward.

She settled on her knees before him, taking pleasure in his beautiful cock. She sheathed his shaft in her hands and then licked the juices pearling on the tip. A low moan welled up from his throat.

Olivia pulled him into her mouth, going as deep as possible, with no chance of ever swallowing his entire length. He was far too big for that.

She began working her tongue over his cock, one hand going to his balls, cradling and massaging his heavy sac. Chale's body began moving urgently against her mouth.

Standing beside her, the two warriors began to masturbate, arousing her even more. The entire scene was so wild, so erotic.

Her body grew tight, screaming for her to impale herself on his cock. The need to fuck this virile warrior pulled at her. She wanted him so much she couldn't even think straight. The need to ride him, to feel his gorgeous, engorged cock deep inside

her, destroyed her ability to form a rational thought.

His cock swelled in her mouth, filling with heated blood, and she knew he was close. His body trembled. He pulled in a breath, and then, taking her by surprise, gripped her head and tugged her off.

She blinked up at him, not understanding. But when her glance met his, she read his intention. A shiver skipped down her spine.

Chale dropped to the floor and pulled her on top of him. He gripped her hips and guided her onto his erect cock.

"Fuck me, little one.â€

She moaned in acquiescence and impaled herself on him.  $\hat{a}\in e^{\hat{a}}$  is the cried out, her voice a strangled whisper as her pussy swallowed his entire length. She rocked against him, unable to think about anything but the pleasure. A barrage of sensations closed over her and her body convulsed. Her mouth opened in a silent gasp.

Her hips pitched forward, driving him impossibly deeper. He powered upward, and together they reached a fevered pitch.

As she rode him furiously, nothing mattered. Not time, not space and not even her future. All that mattered was this man, and the pleasure he was giving her. It was addictive, all-consuming. Potent.

And in that instant, she knew it.

She was hooked on Estela.

Chale's hands bit into her hips as he slammed into her. She wet her lips, needing desperately for him to ease the escalating tension inside her.

Perspiration speckled their skin; their bodies fused as one. Chale plunged deeper, drawing out the pleasure. Her heart raced, making her breathless. She leaned forward; their tongues joined and tangled. She felt fierce, out of control. She cried out in ecstasy.

Her hands raced over him with aroused eagerness. Her erotic whimpers filled the room as the rippling waves of an orgasm took hold. When Chale pulsed inside her, she stilled her movements and let go, coming all over his cock. He threw his head back and came with a growl.

A moment later she collapsed against his chest in a rumpled heap. Although her body was bruised and sore, her blood was still pulsing hot, her libido aching for so much more.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  don $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{T}^{M}$ t want to stop, ever, $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  whimpered, completely overwhelmed by what she was feeling.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  don $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{T}^{M}$ t ever want this to be over between us. $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$ 

After a long moment, Chale broke the quiet.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{R}$  Now do you understand, little one? $\hat{a} \in A$  warm palm cupped her chin, bringing them face-to-face.

She nodded, completely understanding: she could never, ever introduce Estela to her world. The flower was far too powerful, all-consuming and addictive for that, especially if it landed in the wrong hands.

When Chale's hand traveled over her back and stroked her flesh, she

trembled against him.

As though sensing she still had unsatiated needs, Chale found her mouth and kissed her slowly, passionately. "No worries, Olivia. I will keep fucking you until Estela works her way out of your system.â€

#### **Chapter Four**

Jordon inhaled the sweetness of the Estela flower lacing the air, its magical scent the only urging she needed to act, to show her submission to the man called Amador. She went into action, never looking at Olivia or seeking her friend's approval. Perhaps Jordon feared one look at her friend would deliver them both to sanity and reality, would root them both in the logic and conservative actions of two scientists, rather than the desires of two women. She didn't want conservative, didn't want logic—Jordon wanted fantasy. And so she acted, moving forward and falling to her knees in submission before the dark-haired warrior meant to be her protector, acclaimed master of Estela, which translated into master of her desires.

"Teach me,†she whispered, her hands settling on his strong thighs. His muscles flexed beneath her palms, and electricity raced up her fingers, her arms, her shoulders.

Jordon's eyes locked with Amador's darker ones; the connection sent a sizzle of awareness through her body as if she had been touchedâ€"everywhere. Jordon sucked in a breath, shocked by the unnatural reaction to this man; her nipples tightened, her mind conjuring images of his lips brushing them, his tongue teasing them. Her breasts grew fuller, her core aching and wet. How was this possible? Was the incense of the flower enough to send her senses into overdrive, or was it simply this man called Amador? In a far corner of her mind she reminded herself how deprived she was, how needy. It had been two years since her divorceâ€"two years of abstinence. Sex had seemed complicated. Until now. This was the perfect deliverance from a complicated past.

Someone offered Amador a crock. Jordon didn't look away from him to see who, nor did she care. She was lost in the deep, dark depths of this man's eyes, the fantasy of where they would deliver herâ€"where he would deliver her.

Amador eased the bowl into her hand, wrapping her fingers around it as he covered her hand with his. "Drink,†he ordered, his English laden with a sexy accent. With words low and resonant, he added, "Let the flower take you beyond your inhibitions, beyond your fears,†and his words sent a shiver down her spine.

Fear. Was that in her eyes? Fear? Is that what he saw when he looked at her? She wasn't afraid. Was she? Was there fear behind her charge forward into submission? Had she denied herself satisfaction because of fear? No. She wouldn't go thereâ€"to a past bad relationship and a lot of pain she had buried deep below the surface. So why was she even thinking about it now? The here and now was about science, not emotion, not her life. Jordon shoved aside the personal thoughts. She didn't want to think about the past, or even the futureâ€"only the opportunity the present moment offered her, the secrets of Estela.

"Drink,†her warrior urged again, gently prodding with his sensual voice,

lifting the cup to her lips.

Yes, please, she screamed in her mind, doing as he ordered. She sipped the sweet beverage, hungry for exploration, for the answers to the questions burning in her mind about Estela, about herself. Hungry for the satisfaction her body craved already with a mere inhalation of the flowerâ€<sup>™</sup>s incense.

Seconds later, contents of the cup emptied, Jordon gasped as Amador pushed to his feet and scooped her into his strong arms, that broad chest like a wall against her body.

"What are you doing?†she whispered, barely able to find her voice, her arm wrapped around his neck, his dark hair tickling her cheek.

"Protecting you,†he declared. "I thought you would be more comfortable elsewhere when the heat consumes you.â€

"Heat?†she questioned. "l don't feel hot. I feel—†Suddenly heat rushed through her veins. She could barely breathe for the intensity of it. Her skin tingled. Everything tingled. "Oh, God.†She had on too many clothes. Needed them off. She reached for her shirt, tried to tug it off but couldn't. "l feel, I need, l—â€

 $\hat{a}$ €œl look forward to finding out exactly what you need, cariña,†Amador murmured, continuing forward, taking her into a room she barely glanced at—a fire burning somewhere near, a bed, chairs, a room that looked nothing like a cavern. Nothing like anything but a pleasure palace. "We are here, Jordon, to the place where you will discover your every desire.â€

She blinked, the sound of her name on his lips erotic, enticing. This man got to her in a big way, this stranger, this warrior. The idea of having a protector was arousingâ€"that he was her protector, her pleasure giver and taker.

"Did I tell you my name?†she asked, realizing she wasn't sure she had. Her mind was foggy with lust, though, and the question was dismissed as soon as she spoke it, the demands of her body taking over.

Jordon curled into him as he carried her; this sexy warrior meant to satisfy her, and that is exactly what she wantedâ€"satisfaction. The desire to touch and be touched controlling her now, ruling her mind and body.

Her hands traveled Amadorâ€<sup>™</sup>s perfect body as he took several more steps, his sleek dark skin feeding her need, taut muscle flexing under her command. "What I need is you,†she whispered, her gaze traveling to his neck, his lips, meaning those words in a soul-deep way. He called to her beyond understanding. The reason was unimportant. The demand imperative. "I must kiss you. And touch you. I needâ€"â€

But she never finished the sentence. Suddenly she was in the center of a massive round bed. She scurried to sit, her fingers curling behind her into the black silk covering of the massive mattress beneath her. Two gorgeous naked men appeared by her side, knees on the mattress. There was no time to think, hardly time to register Amador standing at the end of the bed watching. The men ripped her clothes away. Somewhere in a far corner of her mind she was aware of candles flickering, lining the ceilings, the floors, lighting the erotic paintings that clung to the walls in bright, brilliant colors. Except these things, these images were distant; her burn, her ache, was everpresent.

She wanted to scream out and say she wanted Amador, and him alone, but her body betrayed that inner thought. The touch of these two menâ $\in$ <sup>TM</sup>s hands on her skin inflamed her with desire. She was naked, with one naked man behind her, one in front, their hands exploring, caressing. They touched her everywhere, yet she couldnâ $\in$ <sup>TM</sup>t feel enough of them. She arched into them, begged and pleaded for more. Her skin sizzled with each touch; her nipples ached as fingers teased them, tongues flicked the hardened peaks. And her core dripped, clenched, ached. Her legs spread, her fingers touching her sensitive flesh, her eyes seeking out those of Amador. â $\in$ œYou,â $\in$  she managed to whisper urgently as one of the men tweaked her nipple with his teeth. â $\in$ œNot them.â $\in$ 

Amador stared at her several seconds, his gaze traveling her body, stroking her with heat before finding her gaze again. Holding her stare, he spoke.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$  ome here, $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{A}$  he ordered, still at the end of the bed.

The men sauntered away from her as if the words Amador spoke had staked a claimâ€"his eyes certainly did. They showed possessiveness, ownership. And it aroused Jordon. Aroused her to the point of damn near making her orgasm just thinking about him taking her.

Jordon had always fantasized about a strong, dominant man in bed, one who knew how to take a woman in all the right ways. But until now, sheâ€<sup>™</sup>d never given herself to one, fearful heâ€<sup>™</sup>d take more than she was willing to offer. Here and now, though, there was no denying her wants and needs. Nor was there any fear of facing the morning and finding that her submission had come with a price. Desire, perhaps desire driven by Estela, demanded she submit as she wished to. It demanded she allow herself to live the fantasy of being submissive. Sheâ€<sup>™</sup>d felt it from the moment she fell to her knees before Amador. He was her master of the moment. Jordon swallowed hard, excitement lodging her breath in her throat.

Slowly Jordon repositioned herself on the bed, crawling toward Amador, then rising to her knees in front of him. She resisted the urge to touch him, her instincts telling her she must wait.

He stared at her, his dark eyes intense, hot. "Tell me what you want.â€

"You,†she whispered, unable to find her voice, desire heavy in her limbs. "l want you.â€

A long pause, then, "l'm not sure you're ready for what I require of you.†His eyes brushed her nipples, and her core spasmed in response.

 $\hat{a}$ €œl am, $\hat{a}$ € she insisted, wanting him, needing him, ready to beg, which was beyond what she would expect of herself, but no less true. In a stronger voice she repeated her declaration.  $\hat{a}$ €œl am. $\hat{a}$ €

He studied her for a few long, intense moments. "Turn around and face forward.†Jordon hesitated, a tiny slice of her mind hanging on to the need for

control. Amador's expression softened. His hand caressed her cheek, and goose bumps shivered their way up her spine in reaction. "You are truly strong, cariña. Estela is powerful, yet your fears still linger. Release them. Release them to me. Trust me. I will not hurt you.â€

She let out a shaky breath; his touch was gentle, contrasting with his powerful body, his warrior-like appearance. Jordon did, indeed, trust him, she realized. Why? She didn't know. She didn't give trust easily. It scared her that she wanted to now, but it was also extremely erotic to give herself so completely to a stranger.

Without a word, she acted, turning to do as ordered, giving him her back. She heard movement behind her, the swish of cloth, and Jordon knew he was now naked; her mind conjured images of what he must look like, aroused, ready for her. Images that had her dying to turn around, to see for herself.

But before she could cave in to that desire, he was there, his hands on her waist, pulling her back against his body, settling his cock between her legs, his hands palming her breasts. Jordon whimpered at the feel of his body, his touch. Her body arched into him. His lips brushed her neck, and then his teeth.

"Lean forward on your hands and knees,†he ordered, his voice low and taut. "l can't,†she replied, not able to bring herself to pull away from him.

 $\hat{a}\in \infty$ You can and you will, $\hat{a}\in$  he quickly said, his voice terser now as he pressed her forward, insistence reinforced with words and actions. When she was on all fours, his hand settled on her lower back.  $\hat{a}\in \infty$ Do not move until I give permission. $\hat{a}\in$  His hands slid over her backside, palming it, possessive aggression in his touch.  $\hat{a}\in \infty$ Understand? $\hat{a}\in$ 

"Yes,†she hissed as he pressed her thighs farther apart, his fingers probing between her legs, teasing the sensitive flesh there, rewarding her for submission. Seconds later the long, hard length of him was there, stroking her, teasing her, but never giving her what she wantedâ€"him inside her. Yet release crept up on her; her body threatened to orgasm without him entering her.

As if he sensed how close she was, he pulled back, taking her away from the ultimate sensation she sought, only a moment before she tumbled over into it.  $\hat{a} \in \mathbb{C}$ Amador, please! $\hat{a} \in$  she cried out, trying to turn.

His hands held her hips, keeping her in place. "Patience, cariña. The best comes to those who wait.â€

But she needed to come, with an urgency that hurtâ€"the ache of desire thrusting through her, as she wanted his cock to. She would have said as much, but he was suddenly on top of her, pushing her flat against the mattress as he settled carefully over her, framing her with just the right amount of delicious weight.

His lips were near her ear. "ls this what you want?†he demanded, his erection sliding along the wet folds of her body.

"Yes,†she gasped, trying to lift her hips upward, trying to make him come to her. "Inside me. I want you inside me.â€

 $\hat{a}$ €œSoon, $\hat{a}$ € he promised, his hand sliding down her ribs, over her waist, flattening on one butt cheek.

#### "Now,†she demanded. "Now.â€

But he didn't give her what she wanted. Instead, he slid back and forth along her core, teasing and teasing. She moved against him, wild with the burn, squirming, aching, begging. And finallyâ€"finallyâ€"he gave in to her pleading. Amador slid inside her with one hard, deep thrust, burying his cock inside her.

She cried out with the joy of being filled, with the relief that lasted only seconds. For one need turned to anotherâ€"simple penetration wasn't enough. Nor was it for him apparently. He answered her silent cries for movement with a hard pumping of his hips. Over and over, he pounded into her, driving his erection to the hilt, driving her pleasure to the edge and then tumbling her into release. Without warning, her body clenched around his cock, spasms ripping through her with more force than she thought possible, pleasure hitting nerve endings she didn't know existed. Even her fingertips tingled.

When her body calmed, she went limp. Amador responded by turning her over and kissing her, a seduction in and of itself. For one minute she was satisfied; the next, aroused and ready again. It seemed she hadnâ€<sup>™</sup>t gotten enough of Amador. And as he slid back inside her, still erect, she was relieved to know he, too, desired more.

The pleasure was intense, overwhelming, unbelievable. How could anyone get enough of something this good? How could anyone say no to this kind of pleasure? If she had doubted Estela's power, she no longer did. Estela, and Amador, had her attention…and her full submission.

Â

What must have been hours later, Jordon collapsed on top of Amador, and amazingly, the sweet bliss of relaxation slid through her body. For hours she'd been driven to seek that very sensation, begging Amador for more and more. Finally Estela had worn off, and she felt the comforting sensation of being sated.

Amadorâ€<sup>™</sup>s hand stroked the back of her hair, gently, tenderly. She felt a strange connection to him, an outcome she wondered if she should credit to Estela or the man himself. Wanting an answer, she pressed upward on her hands with what little strength she still possessed, her eyes seeking his, seeking answers. In them she found such intelligence, such gentleness, yet still he managed to exude that animal masculinity. Indeed, he took her by storm, despite the fading effects of the flower.

Abruptly Amador moved, rolling her to her back, his big body framing hers, his warm lips caressing hers for the briefest of moments. His weight rested on his arms as he stared down at her. "You trust me,†he said, and it wasn't a question.

"Yes.â€

"And I am worthy of that trust, cariña, but what if I were another? What if I had used Estela to garner your submission with dark intentions?â€

She knew where he was going with this, trying to point out the dangers of Estela, the reasons she had to leave without it. She'd come too far, risked too much, to accept defeat so easily. "l chose to give myself to you because I sensed I could trust you. I had my free will.â€

"There is nothing wrong with giving yourself to someone who deserves the gift you offerâ€"and your body and your trust are giftsâ€"but those things should be given freely and to a man who deserves them. You would have given yourself to my men, unable to stop yourself from seeking satisfaction at all cost. As your protector, I didn't allow them to take you. I only allowed them to touch you, as they did, for one reasonâ€"to show you how easily you would have gone to a place you didn't want to go under the flower's influence.â€

Jordon swallowed hard, her chest pounding with the rapid beats of her heart. He was right. She didnâ€<sup>™</sup>t want him to be, but he was. Sheâ€<sup>™</sup>d needed satisfaction and would have taken it however she could have gotten it, if not for him sending the other men away.

His finger brushed hair out of her eyes. "l know how important this discovery is to you. It is to me, as well. But if the flower escapes our protection here, it will be used to manipulate people. It would control humankind, rather than help it.â€

Insistence and hope rose inside her. "There has to be a way to use its abilities for good.â€

"I have no doubt there is a way,†he agreed readily. "And we've tried. What you see here is only what we've allowed you to see. We have great minds at work and labs with high-tech equipment. But despite decades of efforts, regardless of how it's packaged, how it's manipulated, the flower's ability to control desire always prevails. Until we discover how to stop that from happening, it must stay here.†A smile touched his sensual mouth; his eyes softened. "There is only one way you can work with Estela.†He didn't wait for an answer. "You, and your friend as well, could join us. Be a part of our research team.â€

She laughed at that, a bit halfheartedly. The offer was tempting, but she had a job, family, friends at home. So did Olivia. The here and now was fantasy, a detour meant to be left behind. Still, she felt regret at the prospect of leaving it behind, not quite ready to do so.

"You could come back with us,†she countered, finding she meant the words, surprising herself with how much. "Study Estela with us. Perhaps we have resources that would help.â€

"Ah, cariña, you know deep down that l, like Estela, am a part of this jungle. I belong here.â€

Indeed. Part of what made him so special was the wildness beneath the surface, a wildness that could never be captive to another type of life. But she clung to more time with him. "l'm not ready to leave yet.â€

"No one is rushing you,†he murmured against her lips, a second before he kissed herâ€"a long, sensual kiss. His arousal became evident as his erection settled more fully between her legs, growing longer, fuller with each stroke of his tongue against hers. And when he slid inside her, filling her, completing her, she decided Estela had given her a gift. A gift of insight. For now she knew she was capable of giving herself to another manâ€"and that she could trust again despite a past that had

made her doubt she could. But first, before giving trust to another, she had to learn to trust herself, to trust her instincts. Instincts that she now knew would lead her to the right placeâ€"back to satisfaction, to a new life, complete with passion and pleasure.

### **Chapter Five**

Hours later, Chale led Olivia back to the main chamber, where she found Jordon already waiting. Olivia glanced at her friend, who looked worn, satiated and alive, a new light shining in her eyes. Olivia could definitely relate.

Olivia reached out, grabbed Jordon's hand and squeezed, happy to see her friend. Together they stood before Donato, as Chale and Amador took their seats beside him.

Donato's soulful eyes studied the two women. After a long, thoughtful moment, he spoke in a soft tone. "What you have learned here, you will tell no other.†It was a statement, not a question.

They were both intelligent enough to know that Estela must forever remain a secret, or at least until their world was prepared for such a powerful aphrodisiac.

"We understand,†Jordon said, and they both nodded in agreement.

Donato smiled, stood and gestured with a wave. "Your guide will be waiting for you.â€

Chale stepped up beside Olivia while Amador moved in next to Jordon. The two men slowly led them back outside, to the larger cavern where theyâ€<sup>™</sup>d first entered the evening before.

Olivia squinted against the morning light, surprised that the night had flown by so quickly. Her gaze raked over the majestic area, soaking in all the beauty as they followed the same path out. A moment later, they came upon the rope. Olivia glanced up to see their guide. Arms crossed, he nodded his head slowly.

Olivia gripped the rope and tugged, testing it. She turned to Jordon and noticed that she was speaking quietly with Amador.

"Perhaps we will meet again,†Amador said.

"You can still come with us,†Jordon whispered to him.

"l belong here,†Amador replied. "But perhaps one day, that will change and I will find you.â€

Olivia cast one longing look Chale's way, keeping the memories of his erotic touch close until they, too, met again, as she somehow knew they would.

As though reading her thoughts, Chale smiled, gathered her into his arms and brushed his lips over hers. "Until we meet again, little one.â€

"Until we meet again,†she whispered into his mouth.

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