



UNIQUE TRANSFORMATION

Black Rose



KARLA DAVISON

Unique Transformation

by

Karla Dawson

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Unique Transformation

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Dedication:

To my mother, Sara DeWalt Ridd

Christine Mattison entered the immaculate hospital room, pausing to consider the small child lying on the bed. The boy's breathing was shallow, and his small face and even his shiny head appeared flushed. A feeling of sadness washed over Christine as she stared at him, but she was quick to squash the unwanted feeling as she forced a happy smile to her face and made toward the bed.

"Hi, Walter!"

At her familiar voice, the child stirred and slowly opened his eyes to peer over at her. Christine gave him an even brighter smile and took hold of his small hand, squeezing it gently.

"Hello," Walter managed hoarsely, his eyes lighting up as soon as he saw her.

"And how are you today? Up for a game of Candy Land?"

Walter gave a slow nod, a small grin curling his thin lips.

"All right then," Christine continued, taking the game box out from under her arm and moving toward the extra bedside table to lay out the board and pieces. Setting aside her new Hilton designer handbag, she continued, "What color would you like?"

"Gr—Green."

Christine cast him a look of humor.

"You always choose green, Walter. Are you sure you don't want to try a different color?"

"No," he said through his dry lips. "Green is my...favorite."

"Okay, but I have to warn you that red is still my lucky color."

Walter giggled then.

“Aw, Chrissie, you never win.”

Christine turned, lifting her hands to her hips in dubious fashion. She did her best to put a fake frown to her own full, pouting lips.

“Hey, you never know. There’s a first time for everything.”

So saying, Christine moved to help the small cancer patient sit up before sliding the bedside table in front of him so he could reach the game pieces. Once he was situated comfortably, his anxious hand readied above the spinner, Christine perched on the bed and placed a secure arm about him.

An hour later a nurse appeared in the doorway, announcing the need to prep the boy for yet another round of chemo treatments. At this, Walter’s face paled noticeably and he gripped Christine’s arm in a frightened manner.

“Please, Chrissie,” he pleaded desperately. “Let me stay here with you. I want...to play another game. Please....”

Christine’s heart lurched painfully in her own chest as she lifted her sad gaze to the nurse’s. She knew the woman understood but had no authority in the matter. The nurse shook her head and told them she’d return in ten minutes.

“I’m sorry,” Christine said gently, giving Walter a reassuring hug before hastily clearing the game board and putting the pieces away. “If you want to get better so you and your dad can play baseball in the spring, this is just something you need to do.”

Walter clutched her to him.

“I know,” he said softly, “but it makes me feel so sick afterwards. I hate it!”

Christine’s lips trembled as she gazed down at the boy. She was making every effort to hold back the tears threatening to spill from her own eyes.

“I know, Walter,” she said, “but this is just one of those things that you have to go through. It will

help you get better.”

Walter sighed and released her, and she could tell he wasn't convinced. He was a boy who knew when to pick his battles.

“You sound like my mother.”

A grin sprang to Christine's lips then, at the comparison.

“Then you know how much she loves you,” she said lightly, “as do I. We only want you to get better so you can go home.”

She pushed aside the bedside table and dropped to eye level with him.

“Promise me you'll be brave,” she said. “Before you know it, this will all be over.” As Walter met her gaze, he relented and fell back against his pillows. Frowning miserably, his glance fell to his hands resting on the blankets.

“Promise me, Walter.”

“I promise,” he murmured slowly, but his lower lip was quivering.

“There's my boy.” Christine moved forward to squeeze his shoulder. Leaning over, she kissed his cheek before turning to snatch up the game. “Your parents should be here soon, and I'll be back tomorrow to see how you're doing, okay? Your mom had to attend a meeting, so she got out of work late today.”

“Okay.”

“Bye, sweetie.”

The nurse returned just as she was leaving, but Christine was careful to avoid the woman's non-sense expression. She knew the woman had hardened herself against terminal cases a long time ago, but Christine had not. Visibly crying now, she hurriedly ducked into a nearby restroom to wash her face and gain some semblance of control.

Later, on her way home, she pulled off the side of the road, into a vacant parking lot near Hennessey Park. It was there she released a torrent

of tears that no one but God had a right to see. Every day it was the same thing, every year a similar situation. Things never got any easier.

Volunteering to help comfort the many children who had been given terminal diagnoses had seemed like a wonderful way to spend her time. Unfortunately, she had never really considered how emotionally involved she would become with each patient. She had loved each and every one and cried each and every time a little boy or girl had to suffer. Every moment with them was precious to her, but she still hadn't managed to curb her emotions. She refused to harden herself to the fact that each of the children she cared for had died or would die eventually. Remission for most of them was not even in the vocabulary at this point, although the doctors and parents refused to give up hope and continually tried new ways to help them. Christine's job was indeed difficult, but she refused to stop doing what she was doing. It was worth every moment she had to spend with these most precious of all God's treasures.

Wiping her eyes, Christine yanked her compact from her bag and did her best to fix her makeup. Still sniffing, she bit her lip and stared blankly into the rearview mirror, praying she would get full control of herself before she made it home. Her mother would have a heyday if she caught her daughter foolishly crying over a stranger again. Her mother had blood that ran like ice, and she cared nothing for the suffering of others. Her whole life centered on whom she could impress with her elegant lifestyle and which wealthy and prestigious people she could rub shoulders with.

Christine, to hide her pain at her mother's lack of empathy or compassion for the less fortunate, made great effort to mask many of her true feelings and activities from the woman. She knew that if her mother were ever to learn of her volunteering at the

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children's hospital, she would certainly put a halt to it. If Sheila Mattison had her way, Christine would spend more of her time participating in endless fundraising events for ridiculous reasons instead of directly helping to improve the lives of dying children.

Having had her share of fundraising events and pointless kowtowing to the elite, wealthy snobs her mother favored, Christine knew that what she was doing now made her feel so much better inside. No amount of money could ever steal away the wonderful feelings she experienced when around the hospitalized children she often visited.

Releasing the brake, she stomped her foot on the gas pedal, backed out, and sped her silver Lexus toward home. Her breast was still heaving with emotion at thought of losing little Walter to the vicious cancer eating away at his small form. Then, despite herself, tears rained afresh down her pale cheeks.

Droan knew the woman failed to observe him spying on her. Only he and God had been witness to her tears.

Having been hiding behind one of the larger bushes bordering the lot she had been parked in, he knew she would not have seen him there. Nor had she been aware of him when he had observed her leaving the hospital, either. His ability to appear and vanish at will made these episodes possible and afforded him the ease to learn as much as he could about this particular female. His many discreet observations of her had shown him her versatility in many situations. She had demonstrated her kindness, her athletic abilities, regality and patience. More importantly, he had been witness to her great intelligence and inner strength, particularly one day while she was dealing with a male outworlder who ran what he had learned was

an investment firm. There she had demonstrated her extraordinary business expertise and financial wisdom.

That this particular human also had a compassionate side intrigued him and, as he considered the female's heartrending tears as she drove away, he knew that his search had finally ended.

He watched her for a long time from his crouched position behind a thick array of dense bushes. His scales blended well, so no one was aware of his presence, least of all the female human lying beside the cement water hole. She was scantily dressed, lying on her stomach on a long, brightly colored piece of cloth. Her eyes were closed, but the expression on her tanned face gave evidence of her contentment. Clearly, humans enjoyed the feeling of warm sunshine against them, as did his own people. Already he could envision the female basking naked beside him on a large, smooth slab of nemana rock, a slate-like material prevalent in many areas of the tuberous mountains near his home.

A voice calling from the large dwelling in the distance stirred the human. Slowly lifting her head at the second page, she squinted in that direction. A moment later, she groaned and pushed herself up from the towel she had been lying on. She peered around to make certain she was alone before sitting back on her haunches to tuck her large breasts back inside her bikini top. She carefully retied its straps behind her neck. After a few adjustments, she seemed satisfied. Then, standing, she grabbed her towel and shook the dirt off it before grabbing her paperback and empty glass from the patio furniture. At the third page, she reluctantly turned and proceeded towards the large, white house, angrily snatching up her CD player from the table on the way.

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“Coming!” she yelled. “I’m coming.”

Christine gave a curious glance at the odd item she spied lying on the table, a queer bracelet made of three distinctly colored metals of unusual texture and design. It was intertwined with some tiny green leaves and purple flowers shining with luminosity. Carefully, she picked it up to examine it more closely, wondering at its origins and how it came to be resting there on the table. At another irritating page, Christine grimaced and stomped off, still holding the bracelet protectively in her hand as she did so.

Droan eyed the scene with a mixture of interest and disappointment. Granted, he was curious about the female, but he was unwilling yet to admit to his secret attraction for her. Compared to many of the female humans he had previously observed while on her planet, he found this one to be of exceptional beauty, even to one of his race. He wished she hadn’t been called away when she had, for he had only just worked up the nerve to make his presence there known, although he knew she might be frightened at sight of him. Still, he felt so strongly drawn to this female that he knew he must do or say something at some point in an effort to establish a relationship with her.

He smirked at what his own men would say if they were to learn how long he had observed the female without making contact. Their sovereign had never shown cowardice before, they would say, so why now? Shaking his brownish-green head, he turned and slowly made his way back to his ship, which was hidden in the valley, among the desert sands, glad that he had at least dared to gently, soundlessly toss his gift for her onto the table before she left. As he sneaked away, he pressed the button on his wrist device, quickly vanishing from sight.

“Christine,” her mother said when she reentered the house. “Didn’t you hear me calling you?”

“Yes, I did,” Christine said, moving past her mother to the staircase. “Your majesty,” she added sarcastically as she hurried up the stairs.

“Now don’t take that tone with me, young lady,” her mother said. “I told you earlier that we had to leave for the country club at precisely two o’clock.”

“It’s only one o’clock, mother, and it only takes five minutes to drive there from here. So, what’s the problem?”

“Don’t be smart,” her mother said. “You know I like to get there early and get a good table for the fashion show. And it’ll take you a few minutes to change.”

Knowing better than to argue with her mother, a woman who thought more about what the elite snobs she hung around thought about her than about what her own family thought, Christine proceeded to ignore her, realizing that further argument was pointless. No wonder her father always escaped to the bar room or out to the golf course as soon as he could, she thought, once they arrived at Havenwurst. More of an introvert, her father preferred just sitting back with a good martini or playing a few rounds of golf with his cronies than being around the wives who found their social life more important than anything else.

Ignoring the rest of her mother’s complaining, Christine hurried to her room and locked the door. After a quick shower, she slipped into a light summer dress and sandals, then made to sit in the car until her family was ready to go. She certainly didn’t want to give her mother any further reason to blame her for being late to her precious fashion show. She didn’t want to be a model, anyways. Politics was actually more her interest, but her mother would have none of it. Still believing that all

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women should be housewives and mothers, her mother gave not a care to what Christine wanted out of life. Never mind that Christine had earned an A in government or was president of the student body or was head of the debate team at college. None of that mattered to her self-centered, selfish mother. All she worried about was keeping her place at the country club and cared not a fig what anybody else in the family wanted.

As it was, they arrived at the country club with forty-five minutes to spare. After quickly ushering her daughter into the changing area, Christine's mother sat down at the closest table to the runway and started a conversation with her favorite margarita. Her father had silently scurried away to the bar, out of sight and out of mind. Her two younger brothers, Tom, twelve, and Petie, nine, stayed at the pool with the lifeguard, as if he were a designated baby sitter. Again, since her parents were so wrapped up in themselves, they gave no thought to anyone else.

"I really hate this," Christine grumbled to two other girls who had also been coerced into modeling as well.

Nodding their agreement, both girls gave her a wicked grin. Exchanging looks, one of them leaned toward her.

"We're going to sneak away later," she said in a low voice. "Going to go to Shaunessy's and see if we can pick up some guys there. Wanna come with us?"

Christine perked up at this and instantly nodded.

"Are you driving? I had to leave my car home."

"No," the other girl said. "I conned my brother into taking us."

"So, how are you going to pull this off without your moms getting suspicious?" Christine wanted to know. Although it wasn't as if she hadn't done something like this before, she had just never tried

sneaking away during an afternoon at the club.

“Just tell your mom you’re not feeling well. Cramps or something. It always works for me.”

Nodding as she listened, Christine could already feel the lies formulating in her head, although she knew her mother could care less. Even though she hated lying to anyone, she knew it was the only way she could get away from her stuffy family for a while.

“I’ll meet you in the parking lot afterward, then,” Christine said. “Sounds like a great idea.”

It was nearly seven o’clock when the girls managed to escape the club and head for Shaunessy’s bar. Although they were all of legal age, their prestige in the community still made entrance in any drinking establishment an easy, non-proofing achievement, as usual. Once inside, the girls headed toward the dance floor, hoping to get a table close to the action.

“It’s the best way to get noticed,” Tanya said, aware that Christine had never been to such a place before, thanks to her mother’s controlling ways.

“Ever been picked up before?” Mandy asked her.

“Uh, yes,” Christine answered. “At a wedding once and...at the country club.”

“Humph,” Mandy snorted. “That’ll change real fast. With your looks, you’ll be swamped with guys seeking your attention.”

Christine laughed, suddenly self-conscious.

“You think so?” she said.

“Know so,” both girls chimed in unison. “You’re really hot looking, in case nobody ever told you before. But don’t think we’re interested in you, ‘cuz we’re not.”

“We’re only here for the hunks,” Tanya stated. “And I’m going to settle for nothing less.”

No sooner had the girls seated themselves at a small table before two guys who had spotted them

from the bar came strolling over for a dance.

"I think I'm going to wait a bit," Christine said, settling back to watch her friends hit the dance floor.

Two hours later Christine was still shooing men away from her and had tired of ordering Seven-Up on the rocks. Even at twenty-three, she still found it difficult to imbibe, disliking even the sweetest of alcoholic drinks.

"I think I'm going now," she told her friends. "I just can't get into this."

"You're feeling guilty, is all," Mandy said. "A few more times, and this will be old hat to you."

Christine grinned. "Perhaps," she said. "But I'm still going. And don't worry. I've decided to walk back to the club. It's only about a mile, and I could use the exercise. Besides, it's really nice out."

"Well, just be careful," Tanya warned. "There's a lot of tough looking guys in here tonight. Call my cell when you get to the club, will you, so we'll know you made it okay."

"I promise."

With that, Christine left, casually swinging her handbag as she strolled down the shady, tree-lined street, enjoying the scented breeze blowing about her. It was nice being away from the stuffy smell of the bar. Gazing upwards as she walked, she noted the bluish tint to the twilight sky. It was one of those sultry summer nights that made one ache for romance and companionship. The sun had barely set, yet the moon was shining full and bright, with a myriad of stars blinking overhead.

Lost in thought, Christine meandered along dreamily, only vaguely aware that three strange men had followed her from the bar and were quickly catching up with her.

"Hey, babe," one man called out by way of invitation, "how 'bout a quickie?"

At this, Christine turned, only then realizing the danger she was in. Her heart began pounding as her

adrenalin picked up, and she instantly whirled around and began dashing down the street. Hindered by her footwear, the men catcalled every time she stumbled, but she kept going. Eventually she had to kick off her sandals and run barefoot across the street in an effort to flee the men. She had no idea where or when she had dropped her bag, but it was the last thing on her mind at the moment.

Scooting across the wide street, she never paused until alone in a large parking lot behind the local shopping plaza. Since it was past closing, no one was about, and she felt cornered among all the crates and boxes piled behind the loading docks of the stores. The men were almost upon her now, and the feel of gravel and glass beneath her feet made escape painfully impossible right now. She was out of breath and panicking as she realized what the men might and probably would do to her. How stupid it was for her to venture from the bar alone, she thought. Only idiots did that. So why on earth had she?

As the three men snickered and slowly came toward her, Christine suddenly shot past them and into the field behind. With a kick upward thrust, she had jumped up and snagged the large limb of a huge elm tree resting there, carefully hoisting herself up and over the branch. From there she proceeded to climb to the top of the tree, never once looking back until she had made it as far as she could. If they wanted her now, then they would have to come up and get her. Considering their conditions as she peered down at them from her perch near the top of the tree, through the thick leaves partially blocking her view of them, she figured it might be a while if they managed it at all.

One fellow cursed aloud, laughing at their having cornered her in the tree, then started making his way up the tree. But he didn't get more than halfway up when he was suddenly torn from the

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tree, landing with a painful thud onto his back. From her position, Christine could barely make out what had happened, but she was quick to observe a strange group of men, much larger than her followers, surrounding them. She could hear more cursing and shouting as the strangers made short work of the three men. Two of her attackers eventually ran off, leaving their other buddy, the one who had attempted the tree climb, unconscious on the ground.

When the two had disappeared from sight, the largest stranger moved to stand beneath the tree, signaling for Christine to come down. Sensing that he and his comrades meant her no harm, she finally, cautiously made her way back down the tree. She felt the grimace on her lips as she did so, aware that her feet were bleeding. Other parts of her bare flesh were scratched as well, caused by her hasty ascent up the tree. Once on the bottom limb, she was aware that no one stepped over to help her down. The strangers merely stood back and silently watched her. She could sense their amazement at the fact that she had chosen to flee up the tree rather than run from her assailants.

Once on the ground, Christine turned to greet her rescuers, only to step back in fear at sight of the aliens standing there, one so large and so completely covered in scales that her mouth dropped rudely as she stared at him. A quick glance at his companions brought the same reaction, and she wondered now what other real danger she might be in. She raised her eyes to the one standing before her, the one who had single-handedly ripped the attacker from the tree.

The alien's eyes were so kind and gentle that her heart melted as she stared at him. Resuming control, her gaze dropped curiously to his booted feet before moving up his powerful thighs, past his bulging loin cloth, and up along his muscular chest.

A sudden blast of desire overwhelmed her then as she gaped at this strange being. The fact that she found herself attracted to this...lizard...shocked her beyond belief, but she couldn't help herself. There was just something about him that stirred her heart, not to mention her passion. Despite his scaly appearance, his form was indeed appealing to her, and she put a hand to her throat with dismay, ashamed at feeling this way toward him.

Droan stood there watching Christine's reaction to his appearance, and it didn't take him long to recognize the truth in her expression. Oddly enough, it seemed that the human wanted him as much as he wanted her. Still, he did not want to frighten her away and, turning, he motioned one of his men forward to lay Christine's shoes and handbag at her feet. Half bowing as he did so, Droan then moved away to stand beside the other three men with him as Christine slowly bent to retrieve her sandals and purse. He watched as she made a quick inspection. When she appeared to find everything intact, she lifted her eyes to him. He felt a peculiar churning in his chest when he observed her trembling as she studied him. Then as he made a move toward her, he extended a hand to one of his comrades who instantly produced a strange sash and handed it to him.

He paused upon noticing the bracelet he had given her, secure about her wrist, then lifted his solemn gaze to hers as he lightly touched the area, pointed to the odd patch on his uniform, then directed her to lean against the tree behind her. Once she had complied, he wordlessly knelt down and calmly reached for her foot. Peering up at her, he met her gaze, quietly searching her face until she realized what he was about.

He noted the fascination on her face as she lifted her foot to him. He gently wiped the blood and

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gravel from it with the sash before slipping her sandal onto her foot. Then he repeated the process with her other foot, afterward daring to slowly run a scaly hand up each of her legs in an erotic, deliberate fashion as he gently wiped the blood from her other injured areas.

A flame of desire tore through Christine then and a startled gasp escaped her lips at the alien's audacity.

Trembling at his alien touch, she gaped at his lean, finely sculpted face as he went about his task, but she made no protest. When he reluctantly released her and rose to his full height, Christine gulped and finally managed to nod politely and move away, although she found it difficult to do so. Stepping back, she closed her eyes a moment, quietly inhaling the heady, natural scent of this queer being. It caused her to feel a strange loss of control as a sudden rush of desire again inflamed her belly. Shocked by her reaction to him, she hastily opened her eyes and clutched her bag to her. Stumbling away, murmuring her thanks, she quickly darted away toward the country club, disbelieving what had just happened.

As she scampered away like a frightened rabbit, she turned to look back, finding the alien still standing where she had left him, watching her intently. Even from this distance, he was impressive, and her breath caught in her throat as she felt her attraction for him growing. Further unsettled by this, she turned and fled, not daring to look back again. The alien and his group had saved her from whatever danger she had been in, she had thanked him, and that was enough. To report him to the authorities as an alien invader was the last thing she wanted to do, so she tried to forget the episode as soon as she returned to the club, where no one had probably even missed her.

It was hot. Sweltering. Although the Mattisons had central air, Christine preferred leaving her glass doors to the balcony open, allowing in what little of the sultry breeze there was that night. Rising from her pink, satin-sheeted bed, she slowly made toward the door, feeling out of sorts. At first she tried convincing herself it was due to the humidity, her reason for not sleeping, but actually she knew it was because she couldn't stop thinking about her alien encounter. Then, feelings washed over her that she wanted to squash, to put away from her. But she couldn't get the alien's gentle gaze from her mind, no matter how hard she tried. Odd, his eyes weren't like that of a reptile, but black. Sexy. And that rock hard body. Faith, it was all she could do to control the strong urge she had had to reach out a hand to touch it, to marvel at its uniqueness. And the fact that he seemed to be the leader of the group only made him more impressive a specimen, in her eyes.

Stepping outside in her teddy, she lifted her face to the wind stirring softly around her, and then made an easy decision. Going back inside, she grabbed a beach towel and headed outside toward the swimming pool. There was no better night for a swim and since everyone in her house was asleep, or so she hoped, she figured no one would notice if she went skinny-dipping. It was fortunate that there were steps leading from her balcony, so she was able to head out without waking anyone. Figuring her family was happy with their air-conditioned bedrooms—she was usually the only member who preferred a natural environment—then she doubted anyone would ever be aware she was out swimming so late at night.

Once by the pool, visible only because of the hazy moonlight, she stepped from her silky teddy and panties and tossed them aside, eagerly diving into the pool, enjoying the feel of the cool water

against her heated flesh.

After a few laps, she leaned back against the side of the pool and laid her head back against the marble, enjoying the view of the sky overhead and the fact that she was alone and finally feeling...peaceful.

But all that changed soon enough. She had only closed her eyes a moment but, when she reopened them, it was to see a dark, hulking figure standing on the ledge of the pool, watching her. She knew it was him. The alien. And despite the cool water lapping about her, she felt the heat rising in her belly as he viewed her naked form in the moonlight.

They stared quietly at one another, and she wondered why he was there, but secretly knew. Nervous, she pushed away from the side of the pool. Standing up in the shallow part of the water, she hastily crossed her arms about her naked breasts as she did so, her wet hair dripping about her shoulders. When he unexpectedly stepped into the pool and came towards her, she gulped when he then stood over her, mutely gazing down at her. Self-conscious now, she started to crouch back into the water and move away, but he instantly prevented that. Reaching out, he snatched her full against him, snapping her head back as a startled gasp erupted from her. She had to stand on tiptoes as he held her in place. With a quick tug, he removed his loin covering and tossed it away so she could feel his stiffened member, scales and all, pressing against her. Embarrassed, she was forced to drop her hands away so that her wet, full breasts were now crushed against his massive pectoral muscles. She tried to avoid looking up at him, but he gripped her chin and brought her eyes to his, studying her reaction to his alien flesh against hers.

The next thing Christine knew, he released her and slowly backed her against the side of the pool again. The heat rose to her face when she found she

had no place to escape to and that she was now at the alien's mercy. Her breathing turned to short gasps as her heart pounded so loudly she thought it would explode in her chest.

Amazingly, her legs opened to him, as if of their own volition, and her hands shot out to grip the sides of the pool as he leaned close enough to penetrate her. He was gentle at first, until he realized she wasn't going to protest this alien invasion of her body. As he lifted her hips and began slowly thrusting himself into her, her pleasure mounted. His scaled member did things to her that no ribbed condom ever could. At that moment, she was thankful she was no longer a virgin, or this might have been a rather painful event. As it was, it was the most erotic, exhilarating moment she had ever experienced, and she enjoyed every minute of it.

Her head lolled back of its own accord, her eyes closed in ecstasy, as she allowed the alien his way with her. He filled her to bursting, and her body felt so hot now that she thought the temperature in the pool must be steaming. Arching against him, she sought more and brought her legs up to allow him deeper penetration, her ankles locking as she wrapped her legs about him. Moaning with pleasure, her hands slipped from the wall of the pool and grasped his rough-textured arms as he moved against her.

Encouraged, Droan paused to stare down at the human he had conquered so easily. Her face was nearly shadowed in darkness, but the moonlight reflecting from the water shone from her alabaster skin like the hectarin lighting of Diama, his home planet. That she was enjoying their joining pleased him immensely, and he knew now that this was the mate for whom he had searched for so long. The fact that she was attracted to his non-human features astounded him and excited him all at the same time.

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As he studied her earthen beauty, so brilliant and ethereal in the natural light, he lifted his hands to her breasts. He ached to feel their softness as he remained planted within her. She felt so good to him that a low growl escaped his own mouth as he explored her body. He firmly planted his feet on the bottom of the pool as he leveraged her more tightly against him in the water.

He could tell her eyes were open now and that she was watching his face as his hands slid over her. When their eyes locked, they gazed silently at one another, both aware that something special was happening between them. It pleased him when Christine's hand moved from his arm to move over his own scaled flesh, over his chest muscles. She didn't flinch or grimace at the feel of him. She seemed only...curious. But he could hold himself back no longer. Readjusting, his hands firmly gripped her hips again and he plunged mercilessly into her, drawing a loud gasp of pleasure from her. Moving with him, Christine flung her arms about him, clinging to him as he thrust in and out of her with timed precision. Growling deeply within his throat, Droan savored the hot wetness of this woman as he ground his hips against her until she let out a loud, guttural squeal of satisfaction. Only then did he allow himself the pleasure of his own release, his own eruption bringing forth a strange sound from his throat common only to the males of his race. As alien fluids passed between them, they sighed with pleasure.

Then, as their breathing subsided, and Christine relaxed enough to remove her legs, the alien drew away from her and gazed at her so kindly, so wonderfully, that a sob of intense feeling tore from Christine's throat. No one had ever made her feel as this being had, and she knew she never wanted the feelings to go away.

Then, as quickly as he had when he had first

penetrated her, his alien mouth covered hers. He pulled her against him, sampling her mouth with his own and shocking her when his serpent-like tongue suddenly slipped inside her mouth, exploring there. Tears dropped from Christine's eyes then, at the wonder of his kiss, and she clung to him, wanting him to do it all over again. Everything.

When he finally released her, she was unwilling yet to let him go and snatched him to her in a possessive manner. At her expression of affection, the alien smiled in his own way then embraced her in similar fashion.

Yes, he decided. He had chosen well. From this point on, this woman would be his. His woman. His queen.

It was three days before Christine saw the alien again. It drove her crazy, wondering what had happened to him. He had kissed her and immediately vanished from sight the other night, once he had climbed naked from the pool and recovered himself. With but a nod of his scaly green head, he was gone, and even that shocked her. Faith, it seemed that everything he did had the same affect on her.

Grinning at the memory, Christine shrugged, feeling the goose bumps she had felt during their first alien encounter. Warmth flooded her as she recalled the tender way he had made love to her, as if he truly did love her and understand her fear of him, an alien. So considerate, this stranger. She never would have thought that, considering all the tales of aliens she had heard or read about.

When he finally did reappear, it was during a downpour late one Wednesday evening, when least expected. How he got into Christine's room, she wasn't certain, but she was lying in bed, struggling through yet another sleepless night when he

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appeared beside her bed.

At sight of him, Christine smiled and jumped up to throw herself into his arms. Genuinely pleased by her greeting, her visitor wasted no time removing his coverings. Excited, Christine quickly did the same, and soon welcomed him into her embrace, this time in her own bed.

He made slow love to her this time, even deciding that foreplay was better. Kissing her possessively, his scaled hands then explored her entire body until she gasped for release. To her horror, he did things with his long tongue that brought a response from her body that surprised even her. Moaning with pleasure at the things he was doing to her, she gave a sob of such intensity that tears broke forth and ran down her cheeks. She reached out to him, and he answered her by kissing her lips, then her breasts, and then her belly, before starting all over with that tongue thing again. Then, when he finally entered her, she was more than ready, and such loud cries of extreme gratification tore from her lips that she was afraid she would waken the entire household.

His smile shown deeply in his eyes as he enjoyed seeing the pleasure he brought her. That they would be able to do this for a lifetime, he had no doubt. But only one more night of this would bring him what he sought, before he could tell her how he truly felt about her. But for now, he would pleasure her until she would beg him to stop. And as she tentatively explored his alien body with her own soft hand, drawing deep groans of ecstasy from his own inner being, he knew she would gladly do the same for him.

“Hey,” Petie said to his family, who were sitting about the kitchen table the next morning. “Did you guys hear about the aliens spotted out by Nemon’s Creek? Somebody said they mighta shot one.”

“Peter!” his mother said with dismay, covering her mouth. “Whatever are you saying? And at the breakfast table.” Sheila Mattison peered over at the shocked look on her daughter’s face.

“Aw, ma,” Petie said. “It’s true.”

“Yeah,” his brother, Thomas, said. “I heard it, too.”

“Nonsense,” their mother said. “There’s no such thing as aliens.”

“No, ma,” Thomas continued. “It’s true. They shot some lizard-like thing but by the time they got to it to take a better look at it, it had disappeared. They couldn’t find it anywhere.”

Christine paled at this news and bit her lips worriedly. Could it be, she wondered, that her alien, whoever he was, had been injured? But she knew there were others.

Perhaps it was one of those. Still, she could not help but worry about the one she truly cared about, the one she realized now she might actually be in love with. Faith, even at this discovery, her pale skin grew even more noticeably pale. Could she be in love with a lizard-like alien? One that made her feel so wonderful that she could not imagine a life without him?

What would happen when he returned to his own world? she thought, glancing down at the queer bracelet on her wrist and touching it, having realized after her first encounter that the alien had given it to her. How was she ever going to continue without him? At this, her eyes misted over, and she gave an insignificant sniff, drawing the attention of both her parents then.

“Christine?” her mother snapped. “What’s the matter with you?”

“Oh, I...I haven’t been sleeping well, mother,” she stammered.

“Humph,” Sheila snorted. “If you’d keep your stupid window shut, perhaps the air conditioning

would help.”

Christine ducked her head to stare at her half-eaten plate, unwilling to share that little Walter had succumbed to his terminal disease and slipped away just a few days ago. Between this painful loss and worry over her alien, it was a wonder she was even functioning today. “I know. You’re...probably right. It’s just...I enjoy fresh air so much.”

“Always been that way, mother,” her father stated, plopping some more scrambled eggs onto his plate. “You know that.”

“Yeah, but it’s a stupid habit, Brian. Just keeps running up our electric bill, is all.”

Christine couldn’t take any more and laid down her fork.

“M-May I be excused?” she asked. “I guess I’m not feeling all that well today.”

When she finally made it to her room, she quickly locked her door. Changing into her bikini, she grabbed her towel and hurried to the pool, too upset to even bring a book to read. Once poolside, she tossed aside her towel and made a hasty dive into the pool, hoping to cool herself down. After a few laps, she stopped on the side and leaned over the cool marble, burying her head in her arms as she tried to overcome the raging desire coursing through her veins as well as the pain in her heart.

God, *she loved him!* She didn’t know how it had happened or why it had happened. She just hadn’t realized it until only a few minutes ago that she was truly and hopelessly in love with an alien from another world. And *heavens*, she thought, fear coming to light, what if she was pregnant? What would happen to her then? What would her own people do to her if they found out she had played the harlot and gotten herself impregnated by an alien being? Her mother would never let her live that one down. She would *never* forgive her for destroying her reputation at the country club either.

Oh, God, she cried, *whatever was she going to do?* What if he never came back? What if she never saw the alien again? And what if he was the one who was shot? Was he still alive? Injured? What? She would never know and had no way of finding him. Heck, she didn't even know his name. They never spoke. Not ever. And it had not once mattered until now. All she knew was that she loved him and wanted to spend the rest of her life with him. She could not imagine life without this kind, gentle being, one who possessed such confidence and strength that it made her insides quake with longing. He made her feel safe and secure, and she could think of no place she'd rather be than in his arms.

Still crying, Christine finally turned and swam a few more laps before climbing out to fall asleep in a lounge chair. When she awoke, the sun was high in the sky and beating down on her in unhealthy ways, so she returned to her room. After a cool shower, she moved to shut and actually lock the balcony doors, then fell naked into bed, where she slept like a log until dinnertime. She skipped dinner, unwilling to face her mother again and wishing she had moved out of the house a long time ago. Only later, did she sneak down for a hot cup of comforting tea. But this time, for the first time ever, she went to her father's liquor cabinet and put in a good douse of whiskey before returning to her room to lock herself in for the night.

The fact that Christine was lovesick had not escaped anyone's notice, least of all her mother's. She continually glared at her daughter whenever she chanced by, wondering who or what was so distracting her.

"What's up with you?" Sheila asked, frowning at her from beneath her cloud of bleached hair. "You're not doing drugs, are you?"

Christine stopped in her tracks, pursing her lips angrily.

“Of course not, Mother,” she said, returning her glare mockingly, hands on hips. “Why is it that every time I’m a little down in the mouth you figure it’s drugs or something?”

“Well, is it?” her mother demanded.

Christine snorted at this.

“No,” she answered softly, dropping her gaze as she blushed with warm memories of the alien’s lovemaking. At her heightened color, Sheila Mattison’s eyes widened perceptibly.

“What it is then?”

Christine came to life then, whirling into attack mode.

“I don’t know,” she shouted irrationally, clearly upset now. *“Maybe it’s because I’m up all night having hot, passionate sex with some space alien! Did you ever think of that?”* With that, she turned and stomped upstairs to her room, slamming the door behind her as loudly as she could before flinging herself across her bed and pounding her fist on it. At the shocked look on her mother’s face at her words, she knew the woman had been speechless and would not bother to follow her to her haven of security. Thank heavens for that.

After awhile, Christine replayed the episode in her mind and smiled. Telling her mother the truth had been easier than she had thought, although she knew it was so outrageous that her mother didn’t believe her anyways. But the fact that she had gotten in the last word for a change had felt good. Very *very* good.

Three-and-a-half weeks passed before the alien reappeared in Christine’s room, only he was disappointed to find her sound asleep, lying on her side with her face toward the light and a hand dangling off the bed. Her bedside lamp was glowing

dimly in the peach-colored room, and the aromatic fumes of a rum-laden teacup wafted about him as he crouched to peer into her sleeping face, so pale and relaxed. Dark shadows under her eyes gave further evidence of many sleepless nights, and he realized that he was probably the cause of it. Reaching over, he lifted the teacup to his nose, sniffing it, then frowned as he realized why his woman was sleeping so soundly. Apparently his absence had caused her more than one problem, and guilt gnawed at him as he replaced the cup on its saucer.

Rising to his full height, the alien stared at her with indecision. Considering her weary state, he had no desire to wake her, although every inch of him ached for her. Lifting his wrist, he pressed the familiar button there and instantly vanished from the room, only to reappear about five minutes later with a long-stemmed rose in his hand. He knew as he lay it across the bedside table that she would know who placed it there. Turning, he gazed down at her, then reached a hand out to tenderly caress her cheek, hoping its roughness wouldn't stir her to waken. Satisfied she wouldn't, he pressed the button again and vanished away.

Christine sat cross-legged on her bed with pillows puffed up behind her, both hands curled about the deep red rose in her hand as she sniffed it. He was coming. She knew it. He would come for her tonight, and she would wait all night to see him again, if that's what it took. Kicking her feet up and down excitedly as she ran the beautiful rose down her cheek and under her nose, breathing in its pungent fragrance, her whole body came alive with excitement as she thought about being with him again. It had been weeks since she had seen him, and she couldn't believe how much she missed him. Faith, if only she'd been awake last night when he'd shown up.

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It was just past midnight when he arrived, only Christine had nearly given up and was dozing back against her mound of pillows. Sitting his large form beside her, the alien removed the rose from her limp hand and set it aside as he leaned closer to kiss her lips. She stirred, a hand moving to her lips as her eyes fluttered open. At sight of him sitting there, her eyes widened with pleasure as a smile broke wide on her face.

“You’re back!” she exclaimed happily, throwing her arms about him to hug him. “I’ve missed you.”

As she tightened her arms about him, she was startled when he grimaced in pain. Easing back, she stared up at him with curious eyes.

“I’m sorry,” she said. “Did I hurt you?”

But then realization struck her, and she gaped at him and immediately removed her hand from his arm.

“*It was you!*” she said with shock registering on her face. “*You* were the alien that they shot, the night you left here? That’s why you haven’t been around.”

At his sudden frown, lines of concern became etched in her expression as she realized she was right.

“I’m so sorry,” she whispered frantically. “I wish I could have been there for you. Please, tell me how I can help you.”

As she made to inspect the bandaged wound on his upper arm, he pushed her hand aside, shaking his head. Sitting back on her haunches, she blinked at him, her face so full of concern for him that his own heart melted inside. Then, putting a hand to her neck, he drew her mouth to his, making claim to those tantalizing lips. Before they knew it, they were both naked and making love with such ferocity that it was as if it was to be the last time.

He stayed with her until sunrise, just before the gut wrenching spasms began. Managing to stumble

from the bed without waking her, the alien bent double, overcome by the searing pain eating away at him. He knew he couldn't stay there and, after grabbing his clothes, vanished from the room, leaving Christine to wonder later about his sudden departure. By sudden, she meant that he had forgotten the golden amulet he sometimes wore about his neck. He had dropped it when he left, so she immediately put it on as soon as she noticed it lying on the floor beside the bed. It seemed such a valuable piece that she knew he hadn't left it deliberately. She also knew she would return it when next she saw him, whenever that might be. For now, just having something of his to put against her body was wonderful enough, and she only hoped that he would return soon.

"Come, Christine," her mother said. "I'd like you to meet Cal Stuyvesant. He's the date I've lined up for you for the dance tonight."

"Oh, Mother," Christine muttered. "Don't you think I would have gotten my own date had I wanted to go?"

"Nonsense. I won't have it be said that my beautiful daughter can't get a date. Besides, Cal is wealthy beyond mentioning. Don't worry about the limp. He'll outgrow it, I'm sure."

Humiliated by this revelation, Christine ducked her head self-consciously as her mother dragged her across the eclectically designed dance floor to introduce her to the tall, thin man with the thick glasses. His hair was slicked back like a greaser, and he had buckteeth, no less, evidence of too much insecure thumb sucking as a child.

Just what I need, Christine groaned to herself, a big baby to look after. As she observed the man, no matter how nice he was to her, he just couldn't hold a candle to her magnificent lizard lover. In fact, as she stared about her, at the many high society

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couples filling the country club, at one of the biggest soirees of the season, she realized that none of the males there could compare to him. The fact that she was indeed hopelessly in love with the alien was now a definite fact, and she couldn't get him out of her mind or her heart no matter how hard she tried.

She felt bad, putting Cal off for hours. Oh, she had sent him on many pointless missions, for punch or whatnot, anything to keep him busy and away from her so she didn't have to talk to him or dance with him, but her mother quickly saw what she was about and gave her a severe tongue lashing when she finally caught her alone in the powder room. She should have expected it, but she also knew she couldn't outwit her mother forever. So, to shut her up, she returned to her table and told Cal she wanted to dance. His face lighting up like so many colored lights on a Christmas tree, Cal had jumped up excitedly and quickly escorted her onto the dance floor. After several rounds of boring waltzes, fox trotting, and a tango, not to mention dull conversation, Christine was finally able to return to her table and relax for a bit. Once there, she shocked everyone when she ordered a shot of whiskey and downed it in one gulp.

"Christine," her mother said firmly, evidence of her disapproval. "When did you take up drinking? Surely, whiskey is too strong a drink for a lady of your breeding."

"Yeah, yeah, whatever," Christine muttered, blowing her off. "So what?" Dropping her attention to her hands, she mindlessly began picking at her fingernails, praying the night would soon be over, unaware that her focus had quickly drifted from her nails to the golden amulet hanging about her neck. She clasped it tightly as she realized how heavy her heart felt when the alien wasn't there beside her.

Not certain what it was about him, the alien just seemed to exude such kindness and tenderness

towards her, and he was so confident in himself. And strong. She knew he was strong, considering the size of those glorious muscles of his and how quickly he and his men had taken care of those other criminals who had followed her from Shaunessy's that night. What did it matter if he had scales? Faith, the way he made her feel by just looking at her with those black eyes made her insides quiver uncontrollably, and she'd do anything now if only she could be soon lying alone in his arms somewhere. Right now, all she felt was a heaviness in her heart that refused to leave her.

"More...whiskey?" Cal asked in his gracious manner, interrupting her morose thoughts.

Looking up at him, Christine nodded then refocused her attention on the amulet again, feeling guilty at her own self-centered behavior. It wasn't Cal's fault her mother had fixed them up. Perhaps she should be a little nicer to him and vowed to dance a few more rounds with him when he got back.

Standing at the bar, he had been watching his woman for some time now. He could tell she was unhappy and it was no wonder, considering the wimp she had been dancing with. The older woman who kept coming over to badger her, clearly her birth mother, seemed only to add to the problem and it would explain why the male with Christine was even now getting her another shot of whiskey. He had observed him buy her the first drink and had witnessed with a great deal of shock at how easily she had downed it. That she was trying to ease out of reality was clear to him now, and he had to stop that from happening. As his queen, he knew she had to have all of her wits about her at all times, except when she was alone with him in bed. There he didn't care if she lost all control.

Moving from the bar, he made to stand in the doorway, trying to decide the best way to approach

the table. Apparently more than a few others had ventured over to speak with Christine, so her mother and some other ladies had joined them as well.

As he finally moved toward them, those on the dance floor parted at his entrance, most staring in awe at him as he passed by. Dressed in his imperial garments of turquoise and black, with his shining gold breastplates across his massive chest, he was indeed a magnificent specimen to behold. He stopped just behind Christine's chair, so she had no idea he was there. However, the astonished looks on the faces of all the others at the table finally made her turn around curiously to see what everyone was gazing at. At sight of the gorgeous man standing there looking down at her, her own mouth fell open for he was the most arrestingly handsome man she had ever seen, what with his dark skin and hair, hanging like a gleaming black mane about his shoulders.

"May I have this dance?" he asked pointedly, extending a hand to her, his voice deep and sensual.

"I...I guess so," Christine answered, unable to help herself. As she rose to take his hand, it was as though lightning had passed between them when they touched, and she drew her hand away as if burned. Merely smiling, the man took her arm and quickly drew her away from the table, amid the whispers and awed comments about him.

"H-Hey," Cal pointed out as he saw Christine being led away, "That's...my date!" His face was flushed in outrage, but the couple ignored him as they brushed past, and he was left standing with two drinks in his hand, not certain what to do with them.

Christine was afraid to look up at the man. For the first time in weeks, since meeting the aliens, she was finding it difficult to think about the man she loved, with this man beside her. Odd, he seemed familiar to her somehow, but she wasn't sure how.

“Christine,” he whispered, trying to draw her from her musings as he took her in his arms to dance. “Look at me.”

He could feel her fear, even now when she was safe in his arms, but that would change, he knew.

“Christine.”

She looked up at him then, unable to hide the expression on her face as she admired his handsome features up close. When her gaze finally met his, her mouth fell open as she peered into his reptilian eyes.

“Ah, so you do recognize me then?” he said with a growl, laughter in his voice.

“I...don’t understand,” she said softly, her eyes now brimming with tears of joy and surprise. She wondered how he even knew her name when she had never given it to him. Even his English was perfect.

“Yes, it’s me,” he told her. “But please don’t cry just yet. Let’s go outside somewhere and forget the dance.” She realized that it had only been a ruse anyways, a reason to get her alone.

He was quick to escort her out of the building and around to a secluded rose garden, located just beyond the parking lot. Fortunately, no one else was around, insuring their privacy. Directing Christine to a bench, the alien sat beside her, never releasing his firm grip on her hand.

“So, what happened to your...scales?” she sniffed, peering up at him in the twilight. “And why have you waited until now to speak to me?”

“That’s what I wanted to explain,” he said, his voice accented and low.

She stared at him in awe, at his tremendous beauty, wondering what had happened to the alien she knew as intimately as herself. And she had to admit, she much preferred him this way.

“I’m glad you’re going to explain something,” she told him. “I’ve been waiting to find out your name like...forever now.”

He smiled then, revealing to her his even white

teeth and, unable to help himself, he pulled her against him and kissed her, in human fashion this time, drawing a moan of longing from her that surprised him.

“We’ll have plenty of time for that later,” he whispered as he drew away, raising a hand to tenderly caress her cheek, enjoying the feel of her human flesh against his. “Right now, I need to share with you...a few important things that you must know about me. First of all, my name is Droan, and I am...ruler of my people.

“Encouraged by her silence, he continued, “On my planet, Diama, we are all born as you have always known me. When it is time for us to take a mate, we must search for one and become...intimate with that person...or being...for three cycles before we can morph into our true and permanent form.”

Sighing, Droan lifted a hand to brush a strand of hair from her face, as if embarrassed by the whole conversation. “Last night was our third mating, Christine. Afterward, my metamorphosis began, so I had to leave quickly. The process was painful at first as physiological and physical changes began taking place. After several hours, I molted my outer covering. What you see before you is my permanent form, what I really am.” He ducked his head, suddenly uncertain and self-conscious. “Are you...disappointed by what you see?”

Christine laughed then and threw her arms about him again, being mindful of his injured arm this time.

“No,” she admitted. “You are the most gorgeous man I’ve ever seen, and I can hardly wait to see the rest of you.”

“Had I spoken before, Christine, you would not have understood my words as clearly as you do now, although I am fluent in your language. I’ve sought a mate here for many years, but you were the only one who never ran away from me screaming.”

Pushing her away, he gazed intently into her eyes then.

“We are mated, you and I,” he told her. “Forever, Christine. Do you realize this? I chose to mate with you. You are mine now.”

At this, the laughter fled away and the floodgates opened. Tears slid down Christine’s face, ruining her makeup.

“I want to be yours,” she said. “So much. I...I love you, Droan. Truly.”

He smiled again, and she melted.

“I love you, too, Christine. You are my woman. Queen of my world.”

She sniffed, trying to halt the flow of happy tears then.

“I think I’ll be a good queen,” she said, crinkling her nose at him.

“Why’s that?”

“Because anyone who could fall in love with a alien lizard has got to be unique in every other way. Mating with you was a unique challenge, as will ruling your world be.”

Chuckling at her observation, Droan drew her to him for another kiss, this time slipping his human tongue into her mouth as both of them dreamed of what he could use it for later.

“Do you think your family will miss you when I take you home with me?” he asked, once able to pull away from her delectable mouth. “Will they put up a protest?”

“No, I doubt it,” she told him. “If it’s one thing I’m sure of. I can leave this world, and no one will miss me. I will leave them a note, though, so they don’t try and find me.”

“Then you’re right. You will be a good queen,” he told her, his lips curling in amusement. “No unfinished business.”

“Yes,” she admitted. “Your world will indeed be my world. And you, Droan, are mine and no one else

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shall ever have you. I will share you with no one. Although—”

She paused, grinning as he quirked a dark brow at her in curiosity.

“Although I will have to share you with this baby I’m carrying.”

At this, Droan beamed broadly and yanked Christine into his arms, pressing the familiar button on his wrist device as he captured her mouth with his yet again. As they vanished from her world into his and she later lay sprawled naked beneath the unique being she had married, Christine knew she had no regrets. Not one.

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