

My One

By

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Epilogue

Chapter One

She had called to him.

Not to him precisely, but he was the one who had heard her. He was the One.

It was a most inopportune time. He was just preparing to imbody with a very lovely woman he had met at a circuit gathering of Patrollers. It had already gone past the foreplay stages, and she was more than ready. So was he.

The connecting fever was upon them and his lust ran hot. How could he pull back now? The instant he had the thought, he knew the answer.

He must.

He disengaged himself from the protesting woman, apologizing for his rudeness. The woman was not happy. Her curses seemed to follow him through the Substantive Transport to his ship, which was docked now, during his off time, adjacent to Station 12.

He went directly to his quarters in the single-occupant ship. Removing his flight suit, he lay naked on the bunk waiting for the automatic holo-sensor to appear around him, giving the illusion that others were surrounding him in touch.

The senso-image brought him immediate comfort, as it was designed to do; he relaxed into the familiar warmth, knowing that without the comfort of the illusion, Patrollers could not remain alone long in space. He had always seemed even more sensitive to this particular affliction than others of his kind, for he could not bear lying down to surrender his consciousness without feeling the presence of another

next to him.

Even with that limitation met, he had never felt truly at peace.

Trystan relaxed into the warmth surrounding him, closing his eyes, breathing deeply. It wasn't long before he achieved the state he was reaching for.

He sent his mind out

Past planets past entire star systems past the far reaches where no one had ventured before. Still he journeyed. Eons and eons of nothingness; matter dark. Past pockets and anomalies, wormholes, red giants and on

Until he found what he sought: the source of the call. An average, insignificant planet amongst thousands of like planets in the far arm of the galaxy. A place no one would even think to investigate, so remote was its location, so unexceptional its existence.

Though deep in trance, he furrowed his brow in puzzlement. He had never heard of anyone receiving the call from such a distance. In truth, as far as he knew, the linkage only occurred within their own system, amongst their own peoples, scattered throughout the twenty-seven habitable planets in their sector.

Immediately after the thought occurred to him, another, more disturbing, followed. The call had come from an outsider.

Not from their own kind.

What should he do? Interaction with other species not approved by the Joint Councils was forbidden. Upholding that particular law was an integral part of his existence as a Patroller. And yet

The most sacred of their laws held that one must answer the call when it came, for the call was a prelude to wholeness, which all of his kind actively sought throughout their existence. The call superseded all, for it connected; it was the very

foundation of who they were.

There was no choice to make. He would go.

It was fortunate this particular voice came to him. Another, he realized, might not have access to his ship; another might not be able to respond to her. But he could.

Yes, the distance to her was vast, but he had been known amongst his people as a man who often accomplished what others could not; the superior ship and elevated rank they had gifted him with for exemplary service was proof of it. With the uniquely modified design of his craft and its exceptional abilities, he could manage it and without having to go into the Sleep, which he detested.

His eyes blinked open. As he sat up, the holo-image of others sleeping around him dissolved.

The optimum course would be intricate, the journey long. He would have to ride the waves wherever he could to conserve ship energy. The return trip would be more difficult; fuel levels would have to be carefully gauged, especially with her added presence causing further drain on reserves.

Nonetheless, he was confident the ship would make it.

And so would he; she had called to him.

Chapter Two

The doorbell rang.

Lois dropped the laundry she'd been folding. It had better be that noaccount

plumberthe one who had promised he would be out the next day, three days in a row! Her kitchen sink was backed up and threatening to spill over the counter with the slightest breeze across the standing water.

She had been tiptoeing through the kitchen for days trying to ward off that particular disaster. The last thing she wanted to do was sop up greasy, dirty sink water that had been standing for three days.

No, that wasn't quite true.

The last thing she wanted, needed right now, was an enormous plumber's bill. Her shoulders sagged. She had tried everything to unplug the stupid drain herself and had only succeeded in making it worse.

Her only option, other than blowing her small house to kingdom comean option which appealed mightily at this momentwas to call in a professional. An expense she could ill afford.

Not when her business was on the brink of failure.

Not when, three months ago, her partner-cum-boyfriend of four years had emptied out their joint accounts after charging up a fortune on her credit cards and simply disappeared, leaving her to mop up the disaster.

Not when her entire life had come down to the present, and she didn't know if she was going to be able to endure the coming months of loss and failure on both the professional and personal fronts.

She had never felt such despair in her life.

In one incredibly selfish move, Mark had stripped away everything she had come to value in her life: her good name, her belief in her own judgment, her reality base.

She swore that if she ever got involved with a man again, it would just be a

casual, albeit monogamous, relationship. No promises. No deep protestations. No baring one's soul.

Lois knew where baring one's soul got one. A oneway ticket to Palookaville. If she doubted it, all she had to do was remember a night weeks ago, when, in a rare moment of intense internal pain, she had actually sent out a heartfelt plea to the cosmos for help. It was a stupid thing to do, she realized, but she guessed when you were desperate enough, stupid lost its meaning.

Now she chuckled at the silly request to the miasma of space. At least she had managed to retain her sense of humor through this nightmare.

The bell sounded again.

Yes, I am getting there! She threw the door open.

And stared, mouth gaping, at the man on her doorstep.

She just couldn't help herself. He was exquisite. Never in her life had she seen such masculine perfection.

The pure lines of his face came together, forming a picture of sheer beauty the straight nose, neither too large nor too small; the cleft chin; the strong jaw; lips that begged for a kiss; and eyes eyes that watched her with a strange combination of innocence mingled with age-old knowledge, eyes a clear silvery blue and glittering with something.

Her shocked gaze took in a swift inventory; he was tall and well-built. The man had a body many women might be tempted to kill for. Not her, of course. And that hair! Black, thick, silky, it hung loose past his shoulders.

He appeared to be a few years older than she was. Somewhere around thirty, she guessed, although it was hard to tell. He was in that perfect state of grace men achieved between the ages of thirty and forty.

Did he have Indian blood? He might, she thought, noting his high cheekbones and dusky skintone. Now this was a nice visual surprise on a rotten day, week, month, year.

The man's translucent eyes seemed to question her inspection of him, strangely holding no knowledge of the reason behind her blatant regard. She would have expected someone of his appearance to be impossibly vain or very sure of his effect on women. At first impression, he seemed to have neither of those traits. He spoke in a smooth, deep voice, breaking into her assessment of him.

"You called me and I have come."

The plumber! He was a plumber? She would have thought a guy who looked like him would've headed straight to Hollywood at the first opportunity, do not pass go. Instead, this hunk had chosen to become a plumber? The Norton of the beautiful people?

Her brows slanted down. Of course he became a plumber, you dolt; that's where the money is! Just think what he's going to charge you for this little fiasco of yours. Who needs television commercials or a lucrative movie contract when you're armed with a plunger and a snake!

Here it comes, she thought furiously. I'm about to get taken big time, and there's not a damn thing I can do about it! Men. Suddenly this one became the focal point for months of suppressed anger at his sex.

She barked at him, no longer in the least awed by his looks. "Well, you took your sweet time getting here!"

Tristan's eyes widened. He looked down at the woman, amazed at her fury. Why was she angry with him? Had he not come to her at once? Crossed endless amounts of space to reach her?

"Don't stand there gawking at me! I know you charge by the hour! Get in here and do your job!"

She gestured towards her kitchen, indicating by a sweep of her hand that he should enter at once or pay the dire consequences. Her no-nonsense approach must have gotten through to him; he gingerly stepped around her into the house. She closed the door with a snap.

"Well?" She crossed her arms over her chest, tapping her foot impatiently. The man was just standing in the middle of the room, staring at her with a dumbfounded expression on his gorgeous face. The jeans and sneakers were fine, she reflected, but that black T-shirt with the fuzzy teddy bears was truly bizarre.

"I" He cleared his throat. "I am Trystan."

"How nice for you. I'm Lois Ed and, yes, before you say it, my father was Mister Ed. Ha-ha. Seen it, heard it. Now, do you think you could get to work?"

He was confused by her strange words. Since he could make no sense of her speech, he chose to begin by questioning her last word. "Work?"

"Yes, you knowdo what you came to do," she answered him sarcastically. These workmen would do anything to waste time and jack up the bill although, for some reason, he seemed genuinely surprised by what she had said.

"You wish me toto begin right away?"

She threw her hands up in the air. "Of course!"

"You are very forward." One corner of his mouth lifted in a slow, seductive smile, his low voice vibrating along her nerves. "I like that."

If she were any other woman, say one who wasn't wise to the wiles of his kind, that smile might have turned her into a bowl of pudding. Fortunately, she was immune to the pudding syndrome. At least she thought she was, until he began

walking toward her. Purposely.

"What are you"

Before she could finish her question, he had reached her side.

Before she could utter a protest, his hands came up, cupping the sides of her face.

Before she could remember to breathe, those incredible light eyes locked onto hers.

He stared intently down at her, thoroughly examining her. Somewhere, in the background of her mind, she thought she must have the same expression as a deer caught in headlights.

"It will be as you ask, Lois Ed; I will not wait for you to accustom yourself to me. I will imbody with you now."

Her lips parted, but the question was never issued.

A strange prickling sensation seemed to be coming from his hands and vibrating to the base of her skull. She looked up at him, caught between fear and fascination. What was going on?

Trystan observed her carefully. Her eyes were already beginning to dilate with his prelude movements. Good. She was going to be incredibly responsive to him.

The physical touch of her was acutely pleasing. Strange, he had never noticed the physical touch of another as being different or enlivening. But such was the case here. He stroked his thumb along the underside of her jaw just to test the phenomenon. Yes, most pleasing.

He scrutinized her features once again. She had a good face. He enjoyed the beauty of her eyes; she would not know they were gentle for him now, a hazel shade. And he definitely approved of the shape of her mouth; the lips looked soft

and full.

He wondered what he was doing.

It was odd he had noticed these things, such considerations being of very little import. But then, she was his One, so perhaps it was only to be expected that this would be very different from any other experience in his past. There would be nothing holding him back. He could delve into her as deeply as he wished.

Trystan had had plenty of time on the long journey to absorb her language so he would not frighten her by having to immediately link with her to gain this knowledge. And yet, she didn't seem frightened of him at all.

On the contrary, she seemed most bold. He approved of her methods. By her minute examination of him, she seemed to favor him in some way he could not name.

Perhaps the ship's facsimilator had done a decent job with his wardrobe. In his quest to find the proper raiment, he had viewed many male inhabitants on this planet, including a very small one, whom everyone seemed to like.

Trystan had noticed her staring at the copy he had made of the small male's shirt. There was no doubt; she was impressed with his choice.

Now he would know her truly after these countless years of waiting and wondering if he would be fortunate enough to receive the call. Many did not and were forced to live out their existence incomplete. This would not be his fate. For he had heard her.

His One.

His to imbody with completely. At last, he would be able to unlock the final barrier when he mated. His heart sped with the thought.

He always knew he would desire her, but had never envisioned the depth of his

desire until this moment, when he gazed down at her and she stood within his mating embrace. Trystan could taste his passion rising.

It surged up in him, through him, along his arms to the tips of his fingers, which were even now locked about her in the traditional securing position for his initial thrust into her.

His breathing sped up. Hers did too. He would not wait. No, she did not want him to wait.

Lois fell into his eyes.

Those clear, light blue eyes.

She felt as if she were falling, tumbling end over end through a never-ending spiraling tunnel. Multicolored lights swirled past her going faster and faster. Intricate designs of breathtaking beauty continually formed around her, dissolved, forming again. Like being in a 3-D kaleidoscope, she marveled.

What is happening to me? Where am I?

Her descent stopped and the patterns gathered her up, teasing her, lifting her on the crest of paisley waves, as if as if the waves themselves were reflections of joyous emotion. They began to play with her now, teasing her, tickling her, and she began laughing, caught up in the sheer joy surrounding her.

Then she felt another presence there with her. Or was it the same presence as the lights? She didn't know. But this nebulous presence seemed to surround her now, engulf her. It came over her completely, warmly cloaking her. It felt nice. Soothing, yet somehow, in a way she couldn't explain, stimulating.

Until the presence began pressing in on her.

Suddenly she didn't like this anymore. She tried to push back from the pressure, but she could not stop it from penetrating her.

There was intense pain.

She screamed, lifting her hands to her head.

Trystan snapped the connection immediately, stunned.

The world turned right again and Lois slid to the floor, clutching her throbbing head. Oh, my God! What had just happened to her? Had she suffered some kind of stroke?

Trystan knelt beside her, badly shaken. "Forgive me, my One. I had no idea you were untouched. Had I known, I would have been very careful in my attempt to breach your barrier. Let us try again I swear you will not feel this pain."

Lois peered at him through bleary eyes. "Wh-what are you talking about?"

His hands cupped her shoulders in earnest entreaty. "I am so sorry. You must know I would not have caused you pain for any reason, my One. Will you let me"

She slapped his hands away. The pain in her head was receding rapidly and with it her disorientation. "What are you babbling about? Look, something odd just happened to me. I think could you take me to a hospital?"

He grinned at her! Instead of being properly concerned like any decent human being would be, he was laughing at her!

"You do not need a hospital." He brushed aside a stray lock of dark brown hair that had fallen over her forehead. "I assure you, the pain, though regrettable, is a natural response of the female when penetrated by the male for the first time. Has no one taught you this? Had I known you were unbreeched, I would have attempted a more careful entry to lessen your discomfort."

"Wh-what are you saying?" Lois stared at him, horror-stuck. Was he implying that he had caused that that thing to happen to her? That he had somehow entered her mind?

It was too unbelievable to contemplate, yet she had just experienced something very paranormal.

He raised an indulgent eyebrow, which, in any other circumstances, would have irritated her no end. "You are inexperienced. It appears you know nothing of the ways of mating."

He sighed deeply. "I suppose I will have to teach you as we go along."

Trystan contemplated this unexpected development. It might prove interesting. Somehow the idea of her being untouched excited him. He would be the first, the only experience for her. Not just her One, but her only man. Yes. It made him hot just to think of it.

Lois ignored the man's overbearing, foolish statement, getting straight to the part which was of paramount concern to her. "Are you saying you entered my mind? How could you do that?"

He gave her an extraordinarily sexy grin, as if to say, "need you ask?"

Lois began backing away from him, holding her hand up to ward him off. "You're not the plumber, are you?"

He began to close the distance between them. "I've already told you; I am Trystan. Your One."

She tried backing up some more, but the wall stopped her. Swallowing, she forced herself to look him straight in the eye, which wasn't too easy since he stood a full head and shoulders above her.

"My one what?" She gulped.

"Your one everything," he whispered, reaching up again to cup her face.

Lois quickly ducked under his arm. She wasn't going to let him touch her like that again. Not for anything. If a man enjoyed something that much, it was probably

wise for a woman to be very careful with it. Besides, it hurt!

"Stay away from me, Trystan! I don't want you in my mind."

The corners of his mouth tightened as if she had insulted him in some way. It was strange, very strange.

He was strange.

Oh, not his looks they were simply exceptional. It was a certain way he was behaving that just didn't make sense. She would chalk him up as a nutcase if she hadn't experienced that odd probe of his.

"Where exactly are you from?" She was afraid she already knew the answer, but when his silvery-blue eyes slowly glanced skyward, a sinking feeling washed over her. Oh, my.

"How did you get here?" she croaked, clutching a side table for support.

He motioned her to the front door. She followed gingerly, staying several steps behind.

When he opened the door, he drew a small flat disc from his back pocket, directing her attention to the sky above the woods surrounding her house. Then he pressed a sequence of some kind onto the disc.

A ship materialized over her woods.

It just hovered there, silently waiting.

Lois grabbed his arm, not even realizing she was doing it. She stared up at the alien craft, spellbound.

Trystan watched her silently, noting her ashen complexion. She had not expected him to come. The insight shook him to the core. She should have had more faith in him!

With a flick of his fingers, the ship dematerialized. He drew her gently back inside.

"You called me and I have come," he repeated, emphasizing the flow of cause and effect for her.

"Oh, my God." Lois sank onto the couch clutching her stomach. "I think I'm going to be sick."

He sat down beside her. She turned to face him. "Youyou heard me?"

"Yes, I heard you. I am your One."

"You keep saying that. I don't understand what you mean."

He stared intently at her. "I am not One without you. You are not One without me. Together we become One."

She still didn't understand. But it sounded strangely sexual, nonetheless. "Are you coming on to me?" Her voice was tinged with suspicion.

"No." He emphatically shook his head. "I am coming into you."

Lois jumped up. "Like hell you are, buddy!"

Trystan smiled indulgently. "It is your inexperience frightening you. You must trust me the next time I imbody with you."

"Imbody? Do you mean, enter my mind?"

"It is more, much more. It is joining pleasure in its pure form, and in our case"his eyes flicked over her in a very male way"it is a journey we take together, forever, once we"

"So you want to, like, meld energies or something with me?" This was weird. Not that she would consider it under any circumstances.

Her question seemed to distract him; he turned away, a dull flush of bronze

highlighted his cheekbones. Had she embarrassed him in some way?

"You are very direct." He turned back to her, a hungry expression in his eyes. "Yes, I do."

Lois jumped at his response.

"But not yet. I see now you are not ready. You are too uncontrolled, too inexperienced"

Lois began giggling. She couldn't stop herself; it was all so bizarre. "Are you saying I'm a virgin? Oh, this is rich! I'll have you know, a long-term relationship of mine just recently ended. I admit, I'm no barfly, but I can assure you, after four years Mark"

"It is pointless for you to try to deny the truth." His expression was downright smug. And very male. "I was there, remember?"

Lois's mouth parted, but nothing came out. It appeared he thought of this mind thing he referred to as imbody in a sexual way. Perhaps that was how his species fooled around? Could it be? There was an easy way to find out.

"Tell me, Trystan, have you ever been with a woman?"

He thought of his well-deserved reputation in that regard. His response was a blatantly masculine one.

"I have been with women many, many women."

At her crestfallen expression, he added, "Surely you did not think I was as untouched as you? Do not think on it, my one; I assure you, the others are naught to me."

As if she cared! Have patience, Lois, you're dealing with an alien mind here. "I mean, have you ever physically been with a woman?"

His answer was a confused expression. She was right! Oh, well. She regarded his beautiful body wistfully. What a waste. "So, in actuality, you are the virgin."

Trystan chuckled. "I assure you, it is one thing I have never been accused of, Lois Ed." His superior expression conveyed blatant amusement at her apparent naivety.

It hit her.

He didn't understand.

He had no concept of physical love. Probably was incapable of it.

She had to laugh at herself. Now here's just the type of answer I get to any kind of plea I send out. A hunk that can't.

The situation took on mythological proportions, rather like one of those weird punishments the Greek gods meted out to people who misbehaved like dangling grapes forever out of the reach of a starving man. She looked at Trystan, seeing a bunch of muscatel. It figured.

Not that she wanted anything to do with men right now.

But in this case, it would have been nice to have had the choice.

Chapter Three

"You wish me to sleep alone?"

The look of utter horror on his face would have been comical if he hadn't just turned a sick shade of pale. You might think she had just told him he was to be

executed at dawn! What was the big deal?

"Yes, I expect you to sleep alone here in the guest room." She emphasized "guest" to imply that he was not. "On the foldaway bed."

"I cannot!"

This was getting to be annoying. It was one long, obstinate refusal after another. After she had tried to get him to leave, which he flatly refused, she had tried to get him to understand that he had made a mistake in coming here. He refused to believe that as well. Now he was squawking about the sleeping arrangements.

She released a long-suffering breath, crossing her arms over her chest. "Why, pray tell, not?"

"I must sleep with the touching. We all must. I cannot surrender myself to the sleep state without it."

"Are you telling me you always have to sleep next to someone?" When he nodded his head at her, she threw her hands up in the air. "For Pete's sake, this is too much!" What was next? She was only thankful she hadn't gotten a guardian angel out of her request. God only knew what that would have produced!

A possibility occurred to her. "Is anybody else on your ship?"

"No, I come alone."

He appeared a little uncomfortable with his confession. Maybe he had taken off when he wasn't supposed to. Well, if he got into trouble, it was none of her concern. Maybe next time he would think twice before chasing a wrong number across the galaxy.

"Wait a minute how did you sleep on your journey, if you were alone as you say?"

"There is a holo-sensor imaging do you know what that is?"

"I can guess," she responded in an annoyed tone.

"Itit simulates the sensation of the touching."

"I see." Dammit. "I don't suppose you could just return to your ship in the evenings?" she asked hopefully.

"No. The repetitive trips through the Substantive Transport would be too draining on my ship's reserves. I have calculated this excursion very carefully; I need to conserve all possible energy."

"All right." Lois threw the towel in reluctantly. She couldn't be responsible for the poor guy suffering sleep deprivation. "Come on."

He eagerly followed her into her bedroom. Too eagerly, it seemed to her. She stopped abruptly, almost causing him to collide with her.

"No imbodying." She pointed a stern finger at him.

He shook his head, earnestly, like a chastened schoolboy, "No, my One."

"Okay, thenwhy are you taking off your clothes?"

"How else do we sleep with the touch?" He looked at her as if she were missing a few circuits upstairs.

How else indeed.

"You must remove your raiment also."

"No way, Jose."

"You must. The contact has to be by both. Remove them."

Lois bit her bottom lip. Should she? Did she have a choice? Not if she didn't want to be unnecessarily cruel to him. Okay, so it wasn't like he would pay any attention to her in that way. She sighed. Did it really matter? Only to her, it wouldn't to him.

She quickly shed her clothes and dived under the covers. She was right; he hadn't even glanced her way.

But she glanced his way.

The wrapping did not do justice to the package. And even though he seemed oblivious to physical love, he had his share of the proper equipment. More than his share.

Trystan got under the covers, gathering her to him.

"Hey!" She fruitlessly tried to break his hold.

"Shh, we will entwine with each other. You will like it. Already, I can feel a difference with you that I have never experienced before. It will be good." That said, his large palm flattened her head to his broad, toasty chest.

My God, she was lying naked in the arms of a studmuffin.

A sleeping studmuffin. And by the peaceful expression on his face, a damned comfortable one.

The back of his hand stroked the curve of her waist.

Chapter Four

He awoke in the middle of the night.

There was a strange tingling sensation at the base of his spine.

It did not seem to be indicative of any discomfort or illness. He felt perfectly fine.

Better than fine.

For the first time in his life, when he slept, he had felt at peace. He decided to ignore the dull, unaccountable vibration in his lower back.

Trystan rubbed his cheek in a cuddle motion against the soft skin of Lois's shoulder, drawing her tighter into his secure embrace.

Chapter Five

Lois sleepily opened her eyes onto silvery blue ones. In her sleep, her arms had found their way around Tristan's warm neck. His stare was intense, silent, and deep. What was he searching for in her?

Without speaking, he moved one of his hands from around her waist to the base of her neck, under the heavy fall of her hair. There, he massaged her, using his thumb and forefinger, loosening the tight muscles that had constricted under his burning gaze.

How had he known that?

Lois vaguely remembered rubbing her forehead against the strong column of his throat, and the spicy, intoxicating scent of him. She definitely remembered the tender way Trystan had held her all night long and how he had intermittently stroked her in his sleep, as if, subconsciously, he needed to reassure himself of the contact between them.

Her breath caught as his lucid gaze now swept down to her slightly parted mouth, lingering there. The thick, spiky black lashes made a crescent on his

cheekbones; Lois found this intimate view of him utterly sensuous. She was struck anew by the pure beauty of his masculine form.

Raven-black lashes rose slowly, languidly.

Trystan met her dazed look with a palpable intensity. His eyes said he wanted her. His hand, stroking her nape, said it. His body, pressed close to hers, said it. And finally, his husky voice said it.

His low tone caressed the stillness of the morning. "Let me love you."

Let me love you A little sound issued from her throat. A little sound that seemed to excite him.

He groaned low in response. The bronzed hand still holding her waist trailed up her chest, moved lightly over her breast, to cup her face. Attentively, he positioned his splayed fingers against the side of her face and the base of her head.

A jolt of color flashed across her vision.

Not physical love, she realized. Quickly, she clutched his strong wrists, catching him by surprise and breaking the contact. "No, Trystan, no"

Trystan closed his eyes, remaining perfectly still for several moments. Lois wondered if he were in some kind of pain. Was it similar to an Earth man breaking off at the last moment? Was he trying to bring himself under control?

It seemed so, for he remained in the same position with her for several minutes, her hands clutched to his wrists, his fingers, a hairbreadth away from touching her.

It occurred to Lois that if he wanted to proceed, there was little she could do to stop him from taking her in whatever way he took a woman; the physical strength he possessed was very evident in the highly toned muscles of his perfect physique.

Finally, though, he pulled away from her, breaking all contact.

He rolled onto his back, his sinewy forearm flung across his forehead, his upturned fist clenched. He wouldn't look at her; instead, he stared up at the ceiling.

His voice, when he spoke, was flat, toneless. "Leave me now."

Lois quickly scooted out of bed.

He wanted her consent.

The realization relieved her of her fears. Trystan might try to entice her into this odd communion of his, but he wouldn't force her. She was safe with him.

Chapter Six

That afternoon, when Lois entered the family room, she noticed Trystan in front of her computer, his hands flying across the keys. He was sitting in the chair wrapped in a bed sheet from the waist down. Earlier, he had come out of her shower innocently claiming he could not don the same clothes he had worn previously unless they were first cleaned.

Then he had asked her where her sanitation unit was.

She smiled at the memory. Rather than argue with him that his jeans were hardly dirty after a half-day's wearing, she had simply thrown them into the washing machine. Later, when she had gone into town to do some errands, she had picked up a change of clothes for him, including a couple of T-shirts that didn't have fuzzy teddy bears on them. She still wondered about that.

"What are you doing?" She leaned over him, placing a cup of hot tea on the

table for him. Trystan smiled at her over his shoulder, producing one very intriguing dimple in his right cheek. He was so handsome and so unaware of it.

"I'm playing with your computer; it's very primitive. I've made some modifications." He took a sip of the tea. "This is very soothing; what is it?"

"Tea. What do you mean, modifications?" she asked, alarmed. Her computer was her livelihood. Or what was left of it after Mark had run out.

"Watch." His finger hit the option key. The graphics display jumped four inches out of the screen in a holographic projection. Lois's mouth dropped open.

"How did you do that?"

"I've reprogrammed it. I admit it's not very impressive, but this unit is all I have to work with. Do you collect antique machines?" he asked seriously. "I have known some to pursue this hobby."

So he thought this brand-new, state-of-the-art home computer, for which she had shelled out a huge chunk of her savings, was an antique! "No, this is one of the best computers out there for home use. In fact, I use it in my business."

His brow furrowed. "You earn your living with this?" He seemed surprised at the concept. "Such machines are just tools where I come from; I don't see how you could exchange money with it. What do you do?"

"I have a desktop publishing business. WeI mean, I print technical manuals by contract. At least I used to." She sighed.

"What do you mean?"

"My partner, Mark, did all the graphics for the manuals; he was something of a genius with C.A.D., computer-aided design."

"He isn't doing this for you anymore?" He watched her intently.

"Mark" She swallowed. "Mark left so I think I'm going to have to return the contracts I have. I can't complete them, you see."

Trystan thought about it a moment. It was obvious to him that she did not want to return these "contracts" of hers. In fact, it seemed important to her not to do this. He didn't fully understand it, but if it was important to her, then it was important to him. After all, she was his One.

"I'll help you, Lois Ed. As you can see, such designs are a very simple thing for me to produce."

Lois started. He was right; it seemed like child's play to him. Could he help her? Just until she could find someone to replace Mark? It would mean the survival of her business. It would mean food in the refrigerator.

She flashed a warm smile at him. "Could you, Trystan?"

He believed his heart stopped for a moment.

It was something in the smile she had bestowed on him. Her lips were so soft looking and her mouth trembled ever so slightly when she mentioned the man, Mark. Had this man hurt her in some way? He hoped not.

She was leaning over him now, watching the screen. Unbidden, his eyes fell to her breasts. They were full, round, and womanly. He reflected on how nicely shaped they were.

Odd; he had never paid the slightest attention to a woman's breasts before. They were just there, a fact of the differences between the sexes; women had them, men did not. Why should he notice them now?

And last night, while she slept, he had noticed the shape of her legs, as well. They were smooth and tapered delicately to her small ankles. He thought them most alluring, even if he couldn't say why the shape pleased him so.

In fact, the sight pleased him so much, he could not resist stroking the flat of his palm down along the curve of her hip and thigh just to see if the feel of her legs beneath his hand would please him as much as their visual shape. It had.

And it confused him.

More confusing still was the heavy sensation now concentrating in his groin. The weighted phenomenon seemed to accompany these bizarre thoughts about her. It was like a pressure, burning and swelling within him. It was very uncomfortable.

It was throbbing.

Chapter Seven

Once again, Trystan awoke in the middle of the night.

His head was resting comfortably on the flat plane of her stomach; his arms were wrapped securely around her waist. As it should be.

The tender skin of her abdomen was warm and soft against his face. He breathed deeply of her personal scent, letting it fill his lungs.

The sleep he experienced while touching her was a deep, comforting one; and yet

He was strangely restless.

The unusual tingling sensation in his lower spine had returned. Only it was more insistent now. It hummed steadily along his spinal column. And the pressure in his groin had increased as well.

Was there something wrong with him? Perhaps he had contracted an unknown form of space illness, although he didn't feel sick exactly.

Raising his head slightly from the region of her belly, his sights were caught by the little pink nipple jutting close to his eye. The delicate feminine protuberance was pretty.

For some reason, he suddenly wondered what it would taste like.

It was rather a foolish thought, but still

Before he could analyze what he was thinking, he lifted his head further, lightly touching the tip of his tongue to the tip of her breast.

It was interesting.

He would try it again.

Trystan quickly flicked his damp tongue across the small pearly nub. It hardened instantly. And so did he.

Trystan glanced down at himself, amazed at what he saw.

His male member had swollen to an immense size! Not only that, it was stiff and hard, almost painful, jutting out at a strange angle from his body.

Earlier, when Lois Ed had smiled at him in that special way, a similar event had occurred, although he believed he was swelling even larger this time. It must be some unknown illness or perhaps it was a reaction peculiar to this planet. An allergy of some kind?

When it happened to him before, he had discovered that cold water alleviated first the burning sensation, then, eventually, the swelling.

Lois moaned.

Tristan's silvery blue eyes darted nervously to her face, noting her even

breathing with relief. Thankfully, she was still asleep. How foolish he would have felt if she had awakened to his deviant behavior.

He rolled out of bed, quickly heading to the source of cool water.

When he turned the taps off and stepped out of the shower stall, his long hair dripping streams of water down his chest and back, he re-experienced in his mind the precise feel of that hardened little nub against his tongue.

Turning the cold water back on, he immediately stepped into the shower again.

Chapter Eight

"A man came by and corrected your sink. He left a note for you in your kitchen room."

The plumberat last! God only knew what he charged her, but at least she had a working sink again.

"You just let him in?"

"Of course. Why should I not? He said you called him. I admit, at first I wondered why he thought you would call him when I am your One, but then I realized you did not call him in the same way."

"Huh?"

Trystan gave her a knowing look. "There is the one special thing between us, Lois Ed, that would bring me to you." His searing appraisal made her blush. She thought it best to change the subject.

"What are you working on?"

"I have finished the illustrations for this instructive book. Come, tell me if they are acceptable to you." Trystan spoke to her over his shoulder.

Lois put down the grocery bags in her arms and walked over to the computer station. "You've finished it already? The whole book? Let me see!"

Trystan handed her a stack of pages.

Lois thumbed through them, amazed. "Trystan, these are wonderful! No, better than wonderful they're brilliant!" She grabbed him around the neck, giving him a spontaneous hug. He placed his hands over hers, locking her arms around his neck.

He grinned up at her.

"It is so easy to please you, my One. I must try to think of something else I can do to bring this smile to your face." He winked at her, causing her to blush.

Lois was always surprised when he came out with one of his teasing innuendos. By this time, she realized that even though Trystan performed the actual mating act differently, he still behaved in a typically male fashion. He argued with her; he prodded her; he had a tendency to dominate.

In short, physical sexuality notwithstanding, he was very much like most men in the company of a woman they desired. He teased her; he made her laugh; he held her.

Trystan was proving himself a very enticing package of masculinity.

Lois decided she liked him. Very much.

Aside from his differences, Trystan had an engaging personality. He was smart and he learned quickly. Often, his silvery blue eyes would flash with humor. There was other evidence of his nature just this morning when she was about to stomp on

a spider in her kitchen, he had stopped her. Carefully lifting the spider onto a flat sheet of paper, he had gently deposited it outside.

And yet, he had told her he was a soldier of some kind.

A Patroller, he called it. He defended his home worlds against invasion, although he was very vague about just what or who would be invading them. When she asked him, he didn't seem to know the answer himself.

"Whosoever the Joint Council of Worlds deem as those we must have no contact with," he had finally replied.

"Do these Patrollers all have their own ships?"

"Not all. Only those who have proven their worth to our people. Some are gifted with better ships than others. The ship I have come to you in is of a superior design than most."

Lois raised her eyebrows. So, that meant he was probably the equivalent of a high-ranking officer. "Did you just leave to come here?"

He seemed uncomfortable with the question, reminding her of a similar reaction he had when she had first questioned him. Now, as before, he answered, "You called me and I have come."

He was AWOL. She just knew it. How much trouble would he get into for it? Not too much, she prayed. Though misguided in coming here, he seemed to be such a caring, decent person.

"You know, Trystan, perhaps you should return to your home soon." Surely the longer he stayed away, the worse it would be for him.

"Not yet. It is not time." Then he smiled sweetly at her. "Besides, Lois Ed, I must help you with your desk-top-publishing-business." He spaced each word carefully, causing her to smile.

She glanced over the graphic sheets again, taking the stack to the couch with her. "These are so good" she murmured absently.

Trystan came to sit by her, looking at them with her. "They are quite simple. I could do much better if you allow me to make further modifications to your machine."

"No." All she needed was a manual with holographic illustrations jumping out of the page at poor, unsuspecting technicians. They would both be hauled away by government types. An X-File waiting to happen. "No, these will be just fine, Trystan."

"Is there anything else you require of me at the moment?" He leaned back against the sofa, raising a suggestive eyebrow at her.

Lois tried not to laugh. Trystan was not being very subtle.

"Well, there is one thing."

He leaned forward, smoothing back a lock of hair from her face.

"Yes, my One?" His voice was a sultry purr.

"Why were you wearing that T-shirt when you first arrived?"

Her question was not what he expected or wanted to hear. "T-shirt? What T-shirt?"

"The one with the fuzzy teddy bears on it." She giggled, quickly covering her mouth with her hand.

Light dawned. "Ah, the shirt I copied from the small male. You did not like it? Everyone seemed to favor him greatly; he was touched and hugged by many in this shirt."

"And you thought I would touch and hug you in it?" Her eyes gleamed with

mirth.

"Well" He smiled back at her rather sheepishly.

"Why do you call him a 'small male'?"

"Because he was. I have never seen such a small one before. Only this high," he raised his hand a few feet off the floor to show her. "Perhaps he was a different species."

"He was a child, Trystan. Don't you know what a child is?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I have never seen this life form before."

"This life form? How do you people reproduce, anyway?"

"What do you mean?"

Apparently, he had no idea what she was talking about. "How do you keep the species going?"

"Going where?"

Lois was getting exasperated. "Humans grow from children to adults. Don't tell me you were always the size you are now."

"Of course I was. How else would I be?"

"But how did you get to be be?"

Trystan looked puzzled. "I don't know," he finally said. "I never thought on it before. I remember my Waking, but not before."

"What is a Waking?"

"It is the beginning of an existence. That is all I remember, from that point on." Why had he not thought on this before? Where had he come from? Where had they all come from?

"So there are no children in your worlds? How sad."

"No, we do not have any of these children you speak of."

"Do you age?"

"Yes, we age. Although Patrollers take revitalization treatments to stay at optimum age for duty."

Lois gave him the once-over. "How old are you, anyway?"

"I have passed the equivalent of thirty of your years since my Waking."

But he was already an adult on his Waking. It was confusing. "How long is your life span?"

"I would normally live another seventy of your years, barring accident or other occurrences. I am still considered a young man in my worlds. Yet, I must continue my treatments or I will begin to age at a normal rate. If that occurs, I would eventually have to give up being a Patroller, which I would not want to do."

"I understand. It must have taken a lot of training and hard work to have reached your position. It isn't so easy to give up something like that."

"You do understand. It is true I am very good at being a Patroller; it is why I was chosen for the position. It is something of an honor. One must have the proper balance of mental and physical attributes." He hesitated briefly. "But it is not all that I am, Lois Ed."

She looked at him. "I understand that, too." She covered his hand where it rested on the sofa.

Trystan turned his palm up, clasping her hand in his.

Chapter Nine

Someone knocked insistently on the door.

Since Trystan was busy trying to figure out how to make some popcorn in the kitchen, Lois went to answer it. She was shocked to find Mark on the other side of the doorstep,

"Mark! Wh-what are you doing here?" She pushed a stray curl out of her face to gain a second to compose herself. This was the man she had spent the last four years of her life with. The man to whom she had given her love and innocence. The man who had run out on her.

"Lois. It's good to see you again." His dark brown eyes traveled over her form in possessive memory. "You're as beautiful as I remember. Can I come in for a few minutes?"

Lois looked over her shoulder in the direction of the kitchen. She heard a pan rattle on the stove, an "ouch," then a few muttered words in an alien tongue that sounded suspiciously like curses, followed by corn beginning to pop. "I suppose it would be okay for a few minutes, but I really don't think we have much to talk about, Mark."

"Just hear me out that's all I ask." He looked at her beseechingly.

Despite being a rat of the first order, he was still a very good-looking man, she thought, holding the door open to let him in. It was amazing how none of the misery he caused showed on his face. Maybe he has a special portrait in his attic that depicts the real Mark on canvas.

There was only one thing she wanted to hear from the Dorian Gray of the

desktop publishing world at this late date: why? Why, after four years, had he run out on her, leaving her in such dire straits?

Mark walked into the family room.

Lois closed the door, wasting no time in asking him, "Why did you do it, Mark?"

Mark opened his mouth to respond just as Trystan sauntered into the room carrying an overflowing bowl of popcorn. He stopped, staring at Mark curiously. Mark's return look was much more hostile.

"Who's he?" He jerked his thumb in Tristan's direction.

Tristan's nostrils flared slightly at the insulting gesture. "I am Trystan. You need but ask me if you wish to know."

Lois could see by the slight narrowing of Tristan's eyes that he did not cotton to Mark at all. She quickly stepped between the two men. The last thing she wanted right now was a scene. By the reddening of Mark's ears, it would behoove her to think of something to immediately diffuse the situation.

"Trystan is a distant cousin. He's been helping me with the business" she pierced Mark with a pointed look "since you left." It worked; Mark turned away, uncomfortable with the blatant reminder of his deplorable behavior.

"Oh." Mark approached Trystan, extending his arm for the traditional handshake.

Trystan looked down at the proffered hand, then up to Mark's eyes. He studied him for several tension-fraught moments.

Trystan decided to ignore the man's gesture of false friendliness. Turning away from the annoying intruder, he plopped down into a club chair, put his feet up on a hassock, and started munching on his popcorn.

Lois hid her smile behind the back of her hand. Trystan was a very perceptive man.

Mark watched Trystan for a full minute in disbelief. Finally, he turned back to Lois. "Look, can we go somewhere to talk?"

"There is an empty chair here big enough for the both of you." Trystan curtly nodded in the direction of the couch while continuing to pop the popcorn into his mouth.

Mark gritted his teeth. "I meant, in private."

"This is private enough." Trystan sounded adamant. Lois swallowed.

"Why don't we sit here?" She sat quickly.

Having no choice, Mark joined her on the couch. "I wanted to try and explain to you why I did what I did."

"What happened to you, Mark? How could you" She stopped, unable to go on. Mark placed his hand on her arm, gently squeezing the soft skin in a gesture of feigned empathy.

Trystan watched them very carefully. For some reason, he did not like this man touching Lois. It was not as if the man was being overly bold by attempting a prelude to imbodying, but still

Mark's fingers stroked her arm as he began to speak.

Trystan observed the caressing motion. No, he did not like this at all! He leaned forward, shoving the bowl of popcorn under Mark's nose. "Try some."

Mark pushed the bowl away. "Do you mind? I'm trying to have a conversation here." He faced Lois again. "I had a problem, Lois. I wanted to tell you but couldn't bring myself to do it."

She never expected this type of a confession from him. Mark had always hated to have anyone think he was less than perfect. Which might mean he was telling the truth. "What type of problem?"

"Gambling. I when it started out, it wasn't so bad. A few bets here and there, the horses, the dogs, you know how it is."

She didn't.

"Anyway, it sort of got out of control. I started borrowing money from the business, but you never knew because I always paid it back before you found out. Then"

"Then it reached the point where you couldn't do that anymore." She finished for him. No wonder, even with all their lucrative contracts, they never seemed to show a profit at the end of the month. "Oh, Mark, why didn't you tell me?"

"I couldn't. I owed some guys money, a lot of money. I ah, borrowed as much as I could from the bank books, then I hit the credit cards. I'm sorry, Lois. There was nothing else I could do."

"Mark" Lois's eyes filled with tears.

Mark took her hands. "It's all behind me now, honey; I've paid them back and I"

Trystan had heard enough. "This is the man who hurt you deeply, Lois Ed, is it not? The man who left you alone to fend for yourself? The one who never concerned himself with your welfare after he left you?"

Lois closed her eyes, then opened them. "He's right, Mark. Why didn't you if you had problems you should have come to me, not shut me out."

"I couldn't do that. Lois, I want to come back"

She shook her head. "It was over when you walked out that door, Mark."

"I still love you, Lois."

Trystan stood. He had definitely heard enough. "Then it is unfortunate for you. You lost your right to this happiness when you mistreated her. In any case, she does not love you; do you, my One?" He didn't even wait for her answer. "Nor has she ever truly loved you. You can go now."

Lois's mouth gaped. She wasn't sure whether she should berate Trystan for stepping in where he didn't belong or answer his accurate observation.

Trystan took her silence for all the confirmation he needed. He faced Mark again. "Perhaps you did not hear me I said, you can go now."

Mark's focus shifted from one to the other. "Cousin," he spat out. "Yeah, right."

He stormed out, slamming the door behind him.

"There is a saying where I come from, Lois Ed: 'farewell to a dark wind'. I believe it applies here."

Lois reluctantly nodded her agreement. She picked up the popcorn bowl and flipped on the TV. Trystan sat beside her on the couch, reaching into the bowl every now and then for a handful of the snack. He maintained his silence on many levels.

Chapter Ten

It happened again in the middle of the night.

Worse this time.

They were lying side by side, curled into each other. As it should, the curve of her body fit perfectly to his own.

His arms were wrapped around her when he awakened. From the inside out, he burned. He burned.

His whole body was thrumming with an unknown energy sizzling, crackling through him. But it was at its worst in his male member.

He throbbed, swollen and pulsing. Would he die of this ghastly malady? He ached so

Lois muttered something incoherent in her sleep, leaning further back into him. The skin of her back and buttocks slid tightly against him. Trystan stifled his groan of agony.

He had faced down alien invaders, fought for his life and his people. He must remain strong. Vowing he would live through this, he tightly clenched his teeth together.

The night passed slowly for him, in excruciating torment.

By the time the first rays of light came through the bedroom window, Trystan was bathed in sweat. He was no better. If anything, he was in more pain.

A diversion.

He needed a diversion to take his mind from this affliction. Besides the monumental pain, this thing was making him irritated. He impatiently brushed aside the thick swath of Lois Ed's hair from where it had been tickling the front of his nose.

His sights fixated on the exposed nape of her neck. He wanted to press his lips against the vulnerable spot. Glide them across the velvet expanse of exposed

Was he going mad?

Disgusted with himself, he jumped out of bed, wakening Lois in the process. She opened sleepy eyes to the sight of him standing right next to her by the bed. Her eyes widened at what was in front of her face. She sat up with a squeal, clutching the sheet to her.

"What is that?" She pointed an accusatory finger at the obvious swelling.

Trystan tried to pretend nothing was amiss. "What?"

"Don't be coy. What is that enormous erection for?" she demanded.

Trystan had no idea what she was talking about, but her attitude irritated him nonetheless. Could she not see he was ill?

"You are being argumentative and ridiculous," he bit out, stalking toward the bathroom.

Cold water would help him. Ice cold.

Lois remained in the bed, clutching the sheet in stunned silence. Trystan had become aroused.

Physically aroused.

Had it happened to him before? Did he know what it meant? Maybe he did.

Maybe it happened to his kind all the time, but they somehow ignored the implications.

Maybe that was why he seemed so testy when she pointed out the obvious.

Or maybe, just maybe, it had never happened to him before and he didn't know what to do about it.

A slow, impish smile inched across her face. She knew exactly what to do about it.

What would it be like with him? she wondered. She'd only ever been with Mark, but somehow she thought it might be different with Trystannot for the obvious reasons, but by virtue of his heartfelt nature.

She believed Trystan would make the experience very special for her. He would cherish her and give completely of himself, she was sure.

Lois admitted to herself that she wanted him. The next time he found himself similarly indisposed, she intended to show him the prescribed treatment.

Chapter Eleven

He would live.

Apparently, whatever had him in its throes was not life-threatening. So far.

Trystan ran a shaky hand through his long hair. It seemed to come at him in a series of attacks. One minute he was fine, the next he was on fire. Perhaps he should go back to his ship to see if he could get the medi-program to search out an antidote for him.

No, he couldn't do that. He had calculated this trip so close to exhaust levels that he had to be very conservative with energy usage.

He had survived so far. In fact, between bouts, he seemed to recover completely until the next attack seized him. This appeared to be a positive indication that his body was mastering the problem. Except that the attacks seemed to be coming more frequently.

He would give it one more day.

If he hadn't improved by the next morning, he would have no choice but to seek aid from his ship. Fortunately, for the rest of the day, he survived without a relapse. Lois Ed had gone into another room, which she called the den, to work on a different project. He stayed in the family room working graphics on her computer.

Chapter Twelve

His good fortune did not hold out.

Chapter Thirteen

Lois opened her eyes.

In the darkness of the night, moonlight filtered through the partially raised shade, falling across the bed. Illuminating Trystan.

Bronze and naked, he was sitting back on his haunches. The surrounding moon-aura made a pagan god out of him.

He was magnificent!

He was breathing raggedly; sweat beaded his upper lip and glistened on the perfectly delineated ridges of his sculpted chest. By his demeanor, she was not

surprised to find that her hips had been lifted to rest atop his powerful thighs.

The tip of his throbbing manhood kissed the portal of her femininity.

Trystan saw that she was awake.

Their eyes locked for a timeless eternity.

Caught in his heated stare, Lois held her breath. Would he?

Trystan pushed forward slightly, never breaking eye contact with her. He barely entered her. Yes, she thought. Yes

Trystan watched Lois's eyes widen, her pupils dilate. Then he felt fluid, thick and warm, surround the head of his manhood. He stopped, thought about it a moment, and decided he liked it.

More than liked it.

Slick, yet velvety, the unknown substance seemed to cool the fire in his man rod, yet ignite it at the same time. Sensually, he wondered how this rich juice would feel sliding against his mouth.

With a start, he realized the liquid was coming from deep inside her. Instantly, he wanted needed to immerse himself in more of this hot, viscous substance. And when he suddenly realized he was causing her to make this dewy wetness, he all but moaned.

He would have more of her.

Trystan pressed forward slowly, allowing himself the time to feel his body gradually sink into this wondrous liquid heat of hers. Inch by inch, he entered her, deeper and deeper. He slid in as far as he could go and wanted to go further still.

He clasped her hips in his strong hands, bringing her up tightly against him. The sensations flooding him caused him to close his eyes with an ecstatic joy he had

previously experienced only in the throes of mind embodying.

Only this was different. Less, and yet more.

She surrounded him with herself not just heat and liquid now, but her, caressing him, bringing him in, embodying around him, until he was not sure where he ended and she began.

Shocking him, she caressed him inside.

A low sound growled from deep in his throat. The cords of his neck stood out as he threw his head back. A bead of sweat trickled down his brow.

"Kiss me." Her breathy voice caused him to open his eyes. She wanted something from him, but he knew not what. His mouth parted slightly as he watched her beneath him.

"Show me, my One," he rasped.

Her arm coiled around his neck, gently tugging him forward, urging him toward her mouth while the fingers of her other hand threaded through the long strands of his straight hair. His eyes widened momentarily as she placed her lips against his, then closed of their own accord when she moved those softest of lips against his, back and forth, in the most pleasing manner possible. She was beautiful.

He could taste her now. Taste her and drink of her.

She licked his upper lip. He licked her back and tickled the corners of her mouth with his tongue.

She nipped at him. He returned the favor by nipping back, then decided to gently suckle on her full lower lip.

Trystan did what he was good at; he took command. No longer content to follow her lead, his tongue began a foray of its own, teasing the little indentation above the bow of her mouth, laving across the seam of her lips, and, finally, doing

what he had thought of doing the other night. He came into her completely with his tongue.

She was moist and hot there, too.

Leisurely, he explored her and stroked her and tasted her until he thought he would go mad from the feel, taste, scent of her against him, beneath him, in him, within him.

He was swelling and thickening inside her. But she did not seem to mind; on the contrary, she moaned and squirmed beneath him. He knew now what she wanted; Lois Ed wanted him to move within her the same way he had done in her mouth with his tongue.

But he would not. Not this first time.

His hands came down to anchor her hips, to prevent her movements.

"Trystan," she moaned. "Move inside"

"No, my One," he answered her raggedly, "I want to feel you this way I want you to feel me within you like this, deep"

He throbbed inside her, felt her responding shudder. He started to bring his hands up to her face, to the base of her head, attempting even now to give her his mating embrace, but something was happening to both of them. Something powerful. Raw. Wild.

The fire in his body was out of his control. He felt a rushing, pounding surge from deep within him, building and building. He choked out her name, clutching her tighter to him. Could he die of this? He didn't care!

The same thing he was experiencing seemed to be happening to her. She embraced him, calling out her pleasure with his name.

"Trystan!"

It burst upon him, then.

An unbelievable rush of energy, life, and power. It surged from him, from that part of him connected to her, buried within her. It gushed on and on, seeming to come from his very soul.

He streamed into her. And she accepted it, absorbing him within her joyously, still coaxing yet more of this spurt of joining fluid from him with tiny contractions all along the shaft of his member.

It was his final undoing.

He was overcome by his soaring emotions. He sobbed her name in the throes of his passion. "I am yours," he whispered, falling unconscious in her arms.

Chapter Fourteen

"TrystanTrystan, are you okay?"

Lois lightly tapped his face with the flat of her hand. He had scared her when he passed out at the culmination of the act. What did she really know of his alien physiology? What if, in her exuberance, she had damaged him in some way?

The silvery blue eyes opened slowly, looking slightly dazed. "I am alive?"

Lois couldn't help but smile. "Yes, you're alive." She smoothed a damp strand of silky hair off his forehead. "You're not hurt in any way, are you? How do you feel?"

His brow furrowed while he thought about his current state. "I feel fine." That

didn't seem to be the entire truth. "No, I feel very, very good, Lois Ed." He grinned at her.

"I think we know each other well enough now for you to drop the Ed part and just call me Lois."

His eyes took on a hazy light. "I will know you better, Lois." He eagerly rolled toward her, brushing his mouth across hers. "I like this new method of mating I have discovered." He captured her earlobe with his teeth.

"You've discovered? Trystan, I don't think you understand"

"It is a wondrous expression of joining, unlike any I have experienced before. Was it the same for you? I can tell you what I am feeling without words and thoughts but with my physical body alone. It's most remarkable." He ran his palms down her backside, cupping her buttocks to him.

Unbelievably, he was hardening again!

His open lips fastened on the curve of her neck, drawing against the skin. Lois gasped. "Trystan, you"

"It appears I am being afflicted again, Lois. Being the caring individual you are, I know you will help me to relieve this condition, my One." He seized her mouth in a heated kiss.

Whatever she had been about to say was lost when he captured the peak of her breast in his hot mouth.

"This time I will move for you," he whispered.

And did he ever.

Chapter Fifteen

"We've got to stop," she gasped.

"Why?" Trystan rotated his hips, causing a tiny moan to escape from Lois's lips.

"B-because I'm going to collapse. I can't move a muscle."

He smiled against her throat. "Surely you can move one muscle" He flexed deep inside her.

"Oh, God"

Trystan kissed her hungrily, his hands cupping the sides of her face. "Let me come inside you my way, Lois," he panted, his artistic, energetic movements below making both of them breathless.

Once again, she shook her head no.

It had been the same request repeatedly throughout their heated lovemaking of the past week. Once Trystan had tasted the joys of physical passion, there was no controlling him. He had been insatiable. In fact, they had barely left the bedroom for days.

Like a kid with a new toy, he wanted to try everything, in every conceivable way. He had loved her with his tongue, his mouth, his body, on the bed, the floor, the kitchen table, in the bathtub, and once, when they had failed to make the bedroom, on the stairs.

He was incredible. Once, he had inadvertently let it slip that he had something of a reputation amongst the Patrollers regarding his encounters with women. Lois suspected his natural inclinations toward "lustiness" spilled over into the physical

realm as well.

The passionate side of his nature now had a new outlet, and it wasn't long before he was teaching her a thing or three. Where did he get his stamina? He had virtually exhausted her.

It had never been this way with Mark. Never.

In Tristan's arms, she felt totally beautiful, sensuous, alluring lover. She had never considered herself overly passionate before until he made a wild woman out of her, causing sounds to issue from her throat she had never even suspected she was capable of making.

When he loved her like that, she could deny him nothing.

Except his repeated plea to allow her to let him embody with her.

She continued to refuse him on that score. It scared her, this alien communion of his. What would it do to her? How would it affect her? Would he actually come into her mind to join with her in some way?

From what she remembered of his first and only attempt at the alien mating, that was precisely what he intended to do.

No, she didn't think she could handle extraterrestrial sex just yet if ever. Anyway, it hurt like the dickens! What pleasure was there in that?

He would just have to be satisfied with what she was giving him. And from the raw, gravelly little moans he was making, he was plenty satisfied.

Chapter Sixteen

Lois stretched her arms over her head.

She had been at the computer for hours. Her back was killing her. It was, unfortunately, one of the disadvantages of her chosen home job.

Trystan came up behind her, placing his large hands on her shoulders; he expertly massaged the stiff muscles in her neck with a rare skill.

"Oh, that feels so-o good."

"You might think I am physically mating with you by these sounds you are making," he observed.

She opened one eye to glare at him over her shoulder. "Very funny."

"Mmm." He rubbed his chin against the top of her head. "If I knew I could coax such sounds out of you by simply rubbing your shoulders like this, I would have tried it sooner. Think of all the time we would save."

"You think you're cute, don't you?"

He leaned down to place a kiss on the rounded curve of her arm. "Does it work on all women the same way, or are you especially sensitive to my touch?"

Instead of smiling, as he had anticipated, her shoulders drooped.

"I suppose you'd want to find that out, wouldn't you?"

His brow furrowed. "What are you talking about?"

She pivoted in the seat to face him. "Well, I mean, now that you've tried it with me, I guess you want to see what it would be like with someone else." She didn't look at all happy about what she was saying.

Trystan was confused. "Why would I want another when I have claimed you?"

"Claimed me? We tussled in bed. It was your first experience. I'm sure you

want to spread your wings"

"My first experience?" He grinned at the very idea. Yes, the mechanics were different, but a comet was a comet. "I've been making love forwell, let's just say I am very experienced."

She stood. "You know what I mean, Trystan."

He ignored her words and began stalking her around the room and out into the hallway, a glint of sexual mischief lighting his silvery blue eyes. "As for spreading my wingsmaybe I will spread yours instead." He lunged for her.

Lois shrieked and ran up the stairs.

Trystan strolled behind her until he got halfway up the staircase; then he bolted after her.

"Put me down, Trystan! Put me" Lois's voice briefly filtered down the hallway before the bedroom door was slammed shut.

Chapter Seventeen

Trystan rolled off Lois, gathering her to him in the secure comfort of his embrace. Already she was fast asleep. He had exhausted her.

His conscience pricked him slightly. He had thought if he tired her enough, she might lower her adamant resistance to him. But it hadn't worked out that way.

Not that he wasn't sufficiently motivated within his own body to enthusiastically participate in their physical exchange; he was. In fact, he could have vigorously

gone on all night long loving her in this new way they both so enjoyed. However, he wanted more.

He wanted to imbody with her.

Not just wanted needed.

Being an innocent, she didn't understand a man's natural impulses. Every time he joined his flesh to hers, the desire rose fiercely within him to make her his completely.

A few times, the longing had almost overwhelmed him. But he had fought it down. It would be unforgivable of him to enter her without her consent; to take what he so desperately craved.

He was known among his peers as a man of strong character, a man capable of total control. Lately, however, he wondered how much longer he could retain that control when every time they mated, he seemed less sure of his ability to obey her wishes not to imbody.

Trystan absently watched the window curtains fluttering in the night breeze. The light wind was welcome against the warmth of his naked flesh. There was nothing he could do except give her more time to accept him. Eventually, he hoped with all his heart, she would let him in.

Until that time, he could not even think of attempting the journey home. No, she must imbody with him before they approached his home worlds.

If not, under the best of circumstances, she would be considered an alien, subject to review or sanction by the Joint Councils. At the worst, she would be considered an invader. What she would be subject to should such be the case didn't bear thinking about.

Chapter Eighteen

The following month was an idyllic time for the two lovers.

They played together and worked together, following no pattern whatsoever, yet somehow managing to get both jobs done.

Trystan had devised a new desktop publishing program for the business, which worked like a dream. Specifically tailored to his own style of imaging, the work he produced was both timely and innovative.

As a result, Lois had managed to deliver most of her contracts on time, picking up several new ones as a result of the fine job they did.

While he was working on the new program, Lois had cautioned Trystan not to make too many improvements. He caught on quickly to what she meant, toning down what he really wanted to do by compromising on the final program. The end result was still yards better than anything out there on the market.

In the future, Lois thought maybe they could publish and sell the program. It could prove to be worth a small fortune. Come to think of it, with his superior ability, Trystan could start up his own programming development company.

Along with developing programs, Trystan had also developed a taste for the classic movie channel on cable. He especially seemed to favor musicals of the 1940s and '50s. She often caught him watching the television, a slight, bemused smile on his face as Fred Astaire tapped across the ceiling and walls or Gene Kelly pranced through the streets of Paris.

Once she saw him laugh out loud as Donald O'Connor bounced his way like a

springy rabbit across the streets of a small town proclaiming his love for a woman in time to music. She wondered what interpretation he put on the lunacy of Hollywood. Lois was sure nothing across the galaxy could be so alien or bizarre as a movie director with carte blanche.

The intimate side of their relationship continued to deepen; Trystan avidly explored all the physical aspects of their alliance with passionate intensity. He was a bold, sexy lover. Tireless in his pursuit, erotically inventive with his desire, he kept her in a perpetual state of sensual haze.

It was a perfect interlude.

Until she began getting nauseated in the morning.

Chapter Nineteen

It couldn't be.

It just couldn't be! Lois wiped the sweat from her brow as she tried to master this latest bout of sickness. Trystan had told her

Regardless of what Trystan had told her, all the signs were pointing in one inevitable direction. The late period. The tenderness in her breasts. Her tired feeling in the afternoon. The nausea.

She would kill him.

No, first, she was going to the drugstore to buy a home test. Then she would kill him.

She found him, later that day, sitting in front of the TV in his jeans and T-shirt, stockinged feet crossed on top of the coffee table. There was a boyishly innocent expression on his oh-so-handsome face as he watched the screen. Yes, she would definitely kill him.

Lola from Damm Yankees was asking, "who's got the pain when they do the mambo?" Lois thought she could answer that question with authority now. Grabbing the remote, she punched off the television. Trystan turned to her with a questioning look.

"I thought you said you couldn't have children." Her hands were at her hips, her foot tapping impatiently.

Tristan's silvery blue eyes widened. "We do not have children."

"Well, you're going to have one now!"

"Youyou mean I have given you a child?" The corners of his lips lifted in a semblance of a smile. "I do not understand this, Lois, but it is most intriguing."

That did it. "Intriguing? Intriguing! You oversexed, ignorant space dupe!" Lois started pacing, then stopped, slapping her forehead with her hand. "I don't believe I fell for that sweetly innocent approach of yours. What was I thinking of not to"

When she made the next pass, Trystan calmly leaned forward, clasped her about the waist, and tumbled her across his lap. His eyes were twinkling with amusement as he gazed down at her shocked face.

Using her momentary astonishment to his advantage, he brushed his lips back and forth in a sensual slide across her own. "I like this idea of a child. It pleases me, my One."

Lois blinked up at him, still slightly dazed to find herself lying across his thighs, staring into those gorgeous sparkling eyes. Her fingers twined in the long strands of

his black hair, which fell forward over his shoulders.

"Youyou do?" she whispered against his mouth.

"Mmm. Very much." His mouth fastened on her own in a searing kiss.

Lois was never exactly sure what happened after that, but the next thing she knew they were both lying across the couch sans clothes, trying to regain their breath.

"You do realize this is what caused the trouble in the first place?"

"It is no trouble."

"Easy for you to say," she muttered.

Either he didn't hear or he wasn't paying attention; his mind seemed totally wrapped up in the prospect of being a father.

From that moment on, he bombarded her with endless questions.

When would the child come? How big would it be? Would it look like him? On and on the questions came until she was sorely tempted to conk him on the head. He was the most excited father-to-be she had ever seen.

Chapter Twenty

The next weekend, Lois took Trystan to a small shop a friend had told her about in the center of Wystershire, a nearby town which seemed to be a local mecca for artisans and craftpeople. The shop specialized in handmade baby clothes.

Trystan was amazed at the tiny outfits. He examined them very closely. Lois was wondering what he was thinking when he turned to her with a very serious demeanor.

"If the child is going to be so small," he said sincerely, "then we both are going to have to watch it very carefully so nothing bad happens to it."

He is so sweet. Smiling, Lois stood on tiptoe to kiss his cheek. "We will be very careful, Trystan; I promise."

They purchased several little outfits suitable for a newborn, Trystan being unclear as to why they could purchase none of the blue or pink outfits, saying it made no sense to him when a few of the blankets she bought had both colors in them. The saleswoman winked at her as they left the shop hand-in-hand.

On the way back to the car, Trystan was very quiet. Lois thought he was still trying to make sense of the blue and pink taboo. In actuality, his thoughts were going in a much more serious direction.

He had not realized the child would be so tiny. How could he take it on his spaceship? The rigors of space travel might prove too much for such a small life-form.

And what of Lois? How would she fare under these conditions? Would she be weak from having his child?

He didn't know a lot about the process, but what he did know made him concerned about the wisdom of subjecting them both to the journey any time soon.

Lois had never even experienced interstellar flight before. It was a long journey. Who knew how they both would react to it?

And Lois still refused to imbody with him. That alone precluded them from leaving. And now with the child

He would just have to wait until the child arrived and they both seemed strong enough for the journey. By that time, Lois would have embodied with him and the timing would be right.

Trystan sighed. He had so wanted to immediately present his child to the people of his home worlds, to show them what he had done. There was a pride in this accomplishment like none other in his past. No one else he was aware of had done such a thing.

Unfortunately, it would just have to wait.

After all, their welfare must be his first concern. Already, he could sense Lois looking to him for a certain protection. This natural expectation of the female to the male usually only occurred after a couple embodied completely with a total mating.

It pleased him that she relied on him now in this manner, even if it was subconscious on her part. No, he would never let either her or their child down. The journey must be postponed.

They were passing a florist shop when he suddenly stopped. "What do you call these flowers?"

Lois looked to see what he was pointing at. "Pink tea roses. Why, do you like them?"

Trystan stared at them for several minutes. There was something about them "I want you to have these, Lois."

He seemed so serious. "All right. Let's go get some. They are pretty; we'll put them on the kitchen table."

He paused, looking down at her, a loving expression crossing his face. His strong hand gently tightened his clasp on hers. "And we'll put more next to our bed so we can see them when we arise in the morning, my One."

"How romantic! What about on the table next to the computer? And the coffee table in the den?"

"Yes." He smiled broadly at her. "Let's fill the whole house with them. So everywhere we look we see a reminder of" His brow furrowed.

"A reminder of what, Trystan?"

"I don't remember." He looked momentarily confused.

It doesn't matter; we'll do it anyway!" Taking his hand, she dragged him into the shop with her, where they purchased all the pink roses the florist had.

Chapter Twenty-One

The coffee machine dribbled dark brew into the pot.

Trystan was not overly fond of the stuff, but drank it on occasion. She, on the other hand, was a coffee-holic. At least, she was until her pregnancy.

Lois stared at the pot with a jaundiced eye, wondering if she was going to be able to handle it this morning. The kitchen door opened behind her, and she heard Trystan padding across the tile floor in bare feet. She turned to him, intending to ask him if he would like a cup, but the words never crossed her lips.

Something was wrong.

She could see it in his face.

Wearing nothing but a pair of jeans, he sank to his knees in front of her, burying his face against her midriff. He hugged her hard to him and when he pulled away,

tears glistened on his eyelashes.

Oh God, not now. Not when everything is going so well. Please don't let him tell me he has to leave

Placing a hand on the crown of his head, she let her fingers sink into his thick hair, wondering what she would do if she was never allowed to feel the silky mass beneath her hand again.

"What is it?" She could barely get the question out.

Tristan's palms cupped her elbows. His face held a monumental sadness. "My ship is gone. I can never return home."

Lois closed her eyes for a moment. It was selfish of her, she knew, but she could not help feeling relieved at the news. He couldn't leave now. "Why?"

Tristan couldn't speak; he hugged her to him again, burying his face against her. And Lois did feel terribly sorry for him. He had come to her, and now he had lost everything.

She suddenly knew why his ship was gone. "Because of what we did." Her voice was flat.

"Yes. I am the first in two thousand years to" He raised his head to watch her. "You have awakened a pleasure center in me that has lain dormant in my people for millennia, Lois. It was feared, should I be allowed to return home, I would likewise contaminate others simply by my presence. My energies run high, you see."

How well she knew.

"I am now labeled an invader and can never approach any of the twenty-seven worlds ruled by the Joint Councils. To make sure of my compliance, my ship has been recalled."

"Oh, Tristan, I'm so sorry for you, but I'd be lying to you if I didn't tell you I

was glad as well. Now you can't leave me to"

"Leave you?" He looked stunned. "I would never leave you, my One. Never. Why would you even think such a thing?"

"I thought you would return to your worlds you said you would."

"Yes, but I intended to take you with me. The only reason I waited this long was because we have not embodied. I wasn't sure about the effects of the journey on you and our child I thought it best to wait until you were both strong enough. But leave you?" He embraced her around the waist, bringing her closer to him. "Could I leave a part of myself behind?"

"Oh, Trystan." Her arms went around his neck; she bowed over him, rubbing her chin against the top of his head.

Trystan stroked his cheek against her abdomen. "Perhaps it is for the best this way. The Joint Councils were right. I could never give up this physical pleasure I have found with you, my One."

"I know I couldn't." Lois tried to smile through her tears.

His clear eyes met hers. "What better way to tell you how I feel? When I touch you with this pleasure, you know. When my mouth begs to caress yours, you know. When my body presses hot against you, you know. And when I stroke inside you" his eyes hazed over with remembered passion "you know. Is it not so, my One?"

"Yes, Trystan. It is so."

He swung her up into his arms. "Then let me tell you now how it is for me, this minute, when I need you so much my heart pounds with it. I will show you my spirituality in this physical expression, this translation of One." He carried her up the stairs to the bedroom.

There, he gently placed on the bed.

He untied the belt of her robe, helping her to shrug loose of it, then he unzipped his jeans, stepping from them into her arms. They lay side by side on top of the handmade quilt.

Lois wondered if her great-grandmother ever knew when she was lovingly piecing this quilt together, that one day she and Trystan would become a living part of the pattern of interwoven rings. It was a fanciful thought.

The back of Tristan's fingers lightly brushed the shape of her collarbone, trailing down to sweep the underside of her breast in a slow, back-and-forth motion.

"Your breasts are fuller. And these"one lazy finger swirled around the nipple, causing it to instantly harden"these are deeper in color now." His eyes darkened when the peak jutted into a nub. "Will you feed our child, Lois?" His voice was a husky purr.

"Yes," she breathed, running her hands down the strength of his arms.

His silvery blue eyes lifted slowly to hers. "And will you give sustenance to me as well, my One? Should I have a need of you?"

"Yes, Trystan, yes"

He bent his head slowly to the distended nipple, his palm cupping the weight of her breast, lifting it to his descending mouth. "Then sustain me now," he whispered before his hot mouth covered the peak.

Lois clutched his powerful shoulders, crying out at the searing contact. He drew on her, taking her deep inside; the tugging, drawing motions set up an instant humming throughout her body. She always wanted him and, to his delight, was always ready for him. But when he set out to play with her like this, she knew he meant to take her at his leisure, driving her crazy into the bargain.

As if to prove her point, his tongue swirled around the nub now, teasing; the broad, wet surface glided across the tip in a drawling lick, scraping languidly across the beaded surface. In reaction, Lois delicately bit the curve of his neck. He chuckled low against her, the vibration further exciting the raw nerves of her skin.

While he continued his devastating ministrations at her breast, a lazy finger meandered its way across her rib cage, down the center line of her torso, to tease her sensitive little belly button. Lois jumped when the tip of his fingernail lightly scraped concentric circles around her navel.

Trystan acknowledged her response by returning the favor. He gently bit into the curve of her neck. His finger dipped lower

Twining the curls at the juncture of her thighs round and around, he lightly tugged against them just enough to cause a certain friction across a very sensitive spot. A taut pulse of longing rippled through her from that centralized location between her legs. At that exact moment, he recaptured her nipple with his teeth.

Lois uttered something inaudible and slid her palms down the curve of his back to cup his perfectly rounded buttocks. They were a nice, tight handful.

Lois tried unsuccessfully to bring him closer to her in an effort to speed him up.

Trystan smiled at Lois's obvious attempt to move him along. He had been the captain of his own ship; he was used to setting a course. It was no different here. He would guide this journey with her at his own pace. Next time, she could take the helm.

He moved his finger along her silken cleft, inserting it slightly in the dewy folds. Her liquid essence surrounded him. She was very wet. He knew exactly what this fluid was now, what it signified, the texture of it, the sweet, pungent taste. He felt himself get harder.

No, he would never willingly give up this pleasure he had found with her. Not for his ship. Not even for the Joint Councils.

He would sooner choose being labeled an outcast for the rest of his life, never to see his homeland again than to be forbidden to ever feel her sweet mouth beneath his own or hear the tiny sounds of pleasure she made just for him when he slipped full into her body.

Trystan pressed into her with just the tip of his finger. The velvety walls surrounded him. His finger rotated circular motions inside her, letting her know him all over again, preparing her for his eventual entry, letting her see how it was going to be between them. The masterful actions spoke to her with the special language of lovers.

"Trystan, that feels so, so good"

"To me as well, my One. Do you want me to enter you now?" His mouth made a passionate sweep of her throat. "Should I come deep inside you now so that you can feel my man shaft throbbing for you as my heart beats?"

His words made her shiver. "Yes, Trystan, now"

Lifting her leg up over his thigh, he entered her in a swift, steady thrust that took both their breaths away.

Capturing her mouth in a fiery blaze of desire, he moved in long, endless strokes. His skillful movements and heated caresses soon rendered both of them almost incoherent.

Disjointed, indecipherable words of endearment spilled from each of them, but they were not meaningless. On the contrary, both Trystan and Lois were very aware of what each was trying to say to the other and thought their sighs, moans, and guttural groans most eloquent under the circumstances.

Caught in the love tempest, Trystan feverishly rolled them over so Lois was beneath him. His arms encircled her, bringing her tight within his embrace. He thrust deep into her, pinning her to the mattress with a totally erotic movement of his hips.

He spoke low in her ear, his husky voice trembling seductively along the side of her throat.

"Let me come into you now, Lois. Completely. You know what I want."

Lois froze beneath him.

Trystan ran his hand lightly over the small swell of her stomach. "We have made a new life together. I will make more for you; but I want to know you in my way," he whispered. "I want to make you mine completely. Let me love you, my one let me let me"

He punctuated each of his heartfelt pleas with his open mouth trailing wildly across her face, forehead, the line of her jaw. With slow, strong pushes into her body until she thought she would go mad.

She could deny him no longer.

She flung her arms around his neck, closing her eyes tightly. "Please don't hurt me too much, Trystan."

He stopped all movement, exhaling in disappointment at her misconception. Trystan cupped the back of her head in his hand. "Look at me, my One."

Lois opened her eyes warily. He cupped her face, gazing down at her with a tender expression.

"I would not hurt you willingly for anything in the universe. It is not what you think. I have tried to explain to you that I did not know you were untouched the last time, and so did not prepare you properly for my entry. It will be different this

time, I promise." He hesitated, then continued.

"I will not be able to prevent all discomfort this first time, but my intention is to bring you only pleasure. I will try my best to ensure that it is the most enjoyable of experiences for you. You must trust me in this or I will not continue."

His beautiful, sincere features watched her expectantly. She did trust him. It was odd, but now that she recalled, she had never fully trusted Mark before, had never felt completely sure with him. It had never felt right with Mark.

But it had not been that way with Trystan.

Almost from the beginning, she had felt a certain acceptance of him. Certainly, she had never felt threatened by him in any way, not even when she first found out that he was an alien. Oh, she had been shocked, certainly, but not scared. Never scared.

Lois relaxed in his arms. "I do trust you, Trystan." She rested her forehead against his chin. "Make me yours."

His lips brushed her brow briefly; then he lifted her hair to place his fingers at the base of her head.

Lois fell into Trystan.

Light and color flashed before her eyes, and once again she was swirling amidst a riotous flow of interchanging patterns. Joy surrounded her and she knew it was Trystan. He was taking her on his personal magical mystery tour.

Lois laughed, but if pressed to put into words what was humorous, she would have been at a loss. It was as if she felt humor. And such happiness! She realized Trystan was conveying this to her, beginning his journey in his own special way.

Then the presence turned into a gentle pressure surrounding her. Only it wasn't like the last time. This time, Trystan came to her and retreated, came to her and

retreated, in an easy back-and-forth flow.

His presence approached her in lapping waves.

Rolling against her, and back, he ebbed, he surged. Each time, he seemed to trickle into her a little more until, with the final wave, he flowed into her completely in a seamless, painless motion.

There was the briefest moment of discomfort. Then a sort of popping sensation. And he was in.

It was the most remarkable thing Lois had ever experienced. He was with her inside herself she could sense it!

He began to love her in this strange new way.

It was unlike anything she had experienced before. Trystan twined himself around her in a dance of light. He coaxed and teased and stimulated senses she didn't even know she possessed. He led her with him on an inner adventure. And the pleasure he was giving her!

Even though she was a total novice in this realm, Lois more than suspected that Trystan was very gifted, indeed. Now she fully understood his well-deserved reputation in the art of this embodying, for he took her with such exquisite finesse, highlighting every drop of sensation like a true artist.

Lois was mesmerized by him.

Then she felt something else. A physical sensation.

Trystan was moving in her.

They were still joined physically he was on top of her, moving seductively inside her even as he embodied with her mind. Lois uttered an uninhibited cry of delight.

It was the most beautiful experience of her life.

To think she was afraid to let Trystan share this utterly incredible joining with her! What a fool she had been.

Trystan sent her a ripple of his passion. It flamed about inside her in tones of red and purple, a heavy, humid impression. He followed it with a cool wash of green satisfaction licking at her reason.

He continued his expressions of affection, caressing her in heated rainbows, nestling within her his way and hers. Trystan coaxed every response he could from the experience.

Then he turned his sights to that special place that had called him from the beginningan inner repository which must never be breached except by the One. A place where heart and spirit joined as One.

He faced the symbolic doorway. His heart beat to a steady thud; he could see the life flow around him in tones of pulse.

Breathing deeply, Trystan unlocked her doorway and opened his own, joining them together for all time.

And in that instant of eternity, they remembered

Tristan, is it you, my love?

Yes, it is I. Wake up now, my sweet Isolde. Wake up

For one brief, glorious moment, they knew. They clung to each other until the true vision of incarnation passed, fading forever from their minds back into the corridors of time.

Trystan trembled from the depth of the experience, taking Lois with him over the abyss.

Into union.

Epilogue

Lois peeked around the door frame.

Trystan was holding their infant daughter, walking back and forth across the nursery, gently patting her back. As he paced, he crooned in low, soothing tones to the baby.

"Did I say you would be no trouble? Hmm?"

A tiny fist smacked his chin.

"See? You are already arguing with me. What am I to do with you?" He caught the small fingers in his mouth, playfully teasing them.

"If you keep me up all night like this, how am I supposed to make more for your mother?" He kissed the fuzzy little head, gently rocking her.

Lois's eyes filled with tears as she watched the two of them. She recalled the first time Trystan had held his daughter in his arms shortly after her birth. Tears had tracked down his cheeks, he was so overcome by his emotions for the tiny life he had helped to create.

Life was a continual surprise, she marveled. On the verge of losing all, she had, instead, found everything. On a lonely, desperate night, she had sent out a prayer to the cosmos and this man had heard her. This man.

He had turned his back on everything he knew, defied custom, and, probably, broken several of his laws to reach her.

Her Love.

Her One.

Her Trystan.

Taking one last look into the nursery to ensure that she would never forget this picture, Lois smiled to herself and quickly tiptoed back to bed. He would return to her soon.

He always had.

Author's note:

As you've probably surmised, yes, Lois Ed's name is an anagram for Isolde. According to at least one version of the story of Tristan and Isolde from the Legends of the Round Table, Isolde's intended, Mark (Marc), King of Cornwall, killed Tristan in a jealous rage and Isolde died of a broken heart. The hapless lovers were buried together in a single grave where they slept in each other's arms for eternity. A white and a red rose bush grew by the gravesite. Over time, the white and red roses grew together, forming the pink rose, which forever symbolized their love.

I thought they deserved a better ending this time around.