
ABANDONED

Hidden Worlds

Book 2

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Chapter 1

2610 C.E.

On Gamma Rigel Two
In the city of New Wales

I stretched in the massive bed, took a deep breath, and stretched again. I was alone. Of Prince Rohan, my captor, my torturer, and last evening's bed partner, there was no sign.

As the glow of the Gamma Rigel Two's rosy morning sun poured over me through the wide glass windows, I reflected with a sense of near numbness as to how I had arrived here.

Less than one Earth-month ago, I had been on Earth, receiving the unexpected and delightful news that I had been slotted into a last minute off-planet research trip. Such trips were the goal of all University researchers who specialized in some area of study concerning the colony planets that had been developed in the twenty second century. Most researchers were only offered one or two trips in their life-

times. The fact that I was now on my fourth at the young age of twenty-four made me the object of considerable jealousy from my professional colleagues.

Less than two Earth-weeks ago, I had been on the Makotah, a Drakkon class star-cruiser, just coming out of the suspended sleep I'd been in for sixteen Earth-days, preparing for what I would hear and discover on Gamma Rigel. As I was a linguist, and my field of interest was historical English, studying how English had changed on an isolated and barely literate "stone-age" planet over more than three hundred years was extremely relevant.

And this morning—I lay naked in the bed of a massive barbarian prince.

My thoughts raced. I would have liked to drift back to sleep, but that was not going to happen, and I gave up. I rolled over in bed, my eyes scanning the room. On a chaise next to the bed, a small blanket rested, the sort you might throw over your lap and legs on a chilly night while watching vids. Without a thought, I picked it up, wrapped it around myself, and, after using the luxurious bath facilities, went out onto the balcony.

The massive castle in which I was located was in the city named New Wales, and Rohan's chamber was in the higher levels. From it I could see both down into the courtyard, as well as over the walls of the city and into the distance. I'd already been scolded once by the Prince for coming out onto this balcony; the fear was that somehow those who had left me here would see me via remote observation cameras and know I was not dead.

Drawing the soft blanket over my head, covering my short-cropped hair, and wrapping myself in the trailing ends, I sat on a soft chair that was back in the far corner of the balcony. From here, the roof of the balcony hid me from the

sky, so unless some observation device was directly in front of me, I was hidden.

Far away, misty hills shimmered blue and green, quite nearly mountains. Were those the mountains where Navigator Christy MacCleod, my unwilling partner in this horrible adventure, and I had been abandoned? I didn't think so: we'd been brought from where two terrifying soldiers had found us, on horseback to be sure, but still in well under an hour. What I was seeing now was too far away for that. And, I recalled, as we had been brought into the city, the front of the castle had been away from us. So, where we were found had to be behind where I was now sitting.

What did it matter? How would knowing or even finding the location help me? The ship was gone. Christy and I had determined *that* within minutes. Returning to the location was pointless. I was here. Without a great deal of cleverness or luck—and probably both—I would never leave Gamma Rigel. Despite the Earth correct-speech rhetoric as the planets were being developed in calling them “colonies,” Gamma Rigel Two was in fact a prison planet and now it was my prison too.

This planet had been barely monitored at all for the first two hundred years of its existence, and what had happened here defied all explanation. Most colonies had descended into existences barely better than Dark Ages Europe, primitive Africa, or the jungles of Amazonia. This had been intentional. To preserve Mother Earth, once faster than light travel enabled habitable planets to be discovered with ease, the bulk of the world's population were moved elsewhere in the galaxy. Then these colonies were to be monitored with one objective and one objective alone: to ensure that no colony developed technology—ever—that would enable them to develop space travel.

Colony planets were primitive by design, where the most advanced groups might possibly be developing metal working techniques and wheeled carts, and while literacy could not be stamped out completely, since in many cases the original colonists were literate, any colony that contained a too robust educational system was watched extra carefully.

On Gamma Rigel, the culture of the towns and villages resembled medieval Europe. There were shopkeepers, and physicians. Children went to school. There were books, though not many and they seemed to be expensive and hand made. Houses had glass windows, a lot of them. People played chess, board games, and cards, had musical instruments. People dressed simply but the fabrics were well-made.

So very civilized, except for three completely bizarre facts. First, it was not medieval Europe. The cities were, when one delved more deeply immaculately clean, with running water and sewage. Medical technology was advanced and included the ability to do complicated surgeries with anesthesia.

Second, this society had evolved into one where young women were, at least from what I had seen so far, routinely trained for marriage, seemingly their only allowed role, using procedures and policies that included humiliating shameful physical chastisement on a regular basis. And even more astounding: much of the training, punishments, and procedures were performed by older women—known as Matrons—who not only seemed to tolerate the treatment of the younger women, they encouraged it, even embraced it.

Third, and in spite of what had happened to me personally, this was the most incredible of all: beneath the city, concealed in a massive cave in a mountain, lay an inoperative space ship. Rohan had told me that this entire city had been built in the last fifty years to hide the ship and the activity

surrounding it. Each day dozens of men worked below the city to try to unlock the secrets of the ship, and Rohan had informed me yesterday, I would be working with the men, on the ship, on a daily basis.

I had seen all this because I had been abandoned on this planet by the rest of my team, by men I had trusted. And not only men, I reminded myself, because even though Christy and I had been the only women actually on the Makotah, there was no way that this could have happened without the involvement and cooperation of people on Earth, many of whom were women.

Christy and I had been encouraged to “go on a walk” and explore after our craft had set down in a clearing. The area of the planet was supposed to be devoid of any human presence. But when we had returned to the clearing where the ship had landed, it was gone.

And within barely any time at all we’d discovered that we had not only been betrayed by those we trusted, but we’d also been abandoned in a place where there were roads, cities, villages and farms. We’d been captured almost immediately by two giant barbarians soldier-warriors on horseback.

There was no dispute that the actions of our colleagues had been intentional: both Christy and I had been physically implanted with devices that allowed “monitors” in the ship above to watch and hear everything we were experiencing. And why?

That was the question. Why?

The whole thing seemed pointless. Christy and I had been “active” for less than a day when Prince Rohan had guessed that we were spies and took actions to neutralize us. After being taken to a chamber where we were shown a gruesome antique Earth execution device, the guillotine, our

heads were hooded. I was placed in the device, and then, without warning rendered unconscious via an injection.

The implants, we learned later, were powered by the neural electrical activity in our bodies. The only way to remove them was to stop this neural activity. In other words, to kill us.

I learned later that the moment my heart stopped, in an amazing feat of medical expertise, a surgical team standing by removed both the implant from my eye and the one from my ear, and then restarted my heart. Within just a few minutes.

So much for primitive medicine...

Then it was Christy's turn. But catastrophe had ensued. Christy's implants, like mine, had been removed, but as the devices had been carried away from the operating table, the implant from behind her eye exploded, killing the doctor and two Matron-nurses and injuring Christy badly. By the time another doctor entered the room to restart Christy's heart, it had been greatly feared that she could not be revived.

Although she had regained consciousness and seemed to have experienced no permanent brain damage, she was seriously injured.

So now, here I was, on a castle balcony in the early morning sun of a massive planet, twice over a prisoner. I had been captured by those who lived on this planet and had no way to leave Prince Rohan's chamber, to say nothing of the castle or the city. My body had been inspected, probed, punished repeatedly, and marked with a tattoo.

This, however, was not the worst part of my situation no matter how much I might wish it to be. The planet itself was a prison, and I was stuck here. I shook my head, trying to force away my thoughts. I'd been over it again and again, and how could I formulate answers when I barely knew the questions?

Risking a peek, I slipped up to the edge of the balcony, making sure the blanket was firmly over my head and I gazed idly down. In the cobbled courtyard below, people were moving around, busy, bustling with their morning's work, mostly men wearing long flowing gowns which marked them as government officials, but here and there a few soldiers, as well as a few women whose dark blue tunics and trousers marked them as servants. If anyone looked up to Rohan's balcony, they would see me, barely concealed by the blanket. Wisely I again retreated back to my corner.

While I didn't know all of the rules here yet, I was quite sure that hanging over the edge of Prince Rohan's balcony with only a blanket to cover my naked body would most definitely be considered something that I should not do. And if there was one thing I'd learned in the days I'd been here, you did not want to break any rules.

Over the railing of the balcony, I could still see the mountains. As I gazed into the distance, in spite of my earlier disquieted thoughts, I was shocked at my near equilibrium, because truthfully that was how I felt. I almost wondered if there had been something in the wine he'd given me the prior night, for, despite what had happened to me the previous day, I still felt oddly at peace this morning.

But how could that be? What had been done to my body was beyond belief by any modern-day Earth standards. The previous day I had been spanked hard more than once, been strapped to a table, and had a needle carve a tattoo permanently into the soft skin of my bottom. Then, at a dinner with Prince Rohan, his two sisters and his cousin, I had watched his cousin punished severely in the Gamma Rigel traditional manner: bare bottom and shaved sex exposed.

And why had she been punished? When it came right down to it, for nothing more than a sassy rude comment, and no one in the room had thought anything more of it than it

was routine—even deserved. The other two young women, Rohan’s sisters Marlou and Cheri had snickered and grinned as it was happening.

Then, inexplicably at the end of the night, Rohan had kept me in his chamber, bathed me tenderly, obviously as part of some intended seduction, but when I refused him (which apparently, I was completely entitled to do) he left me alone. At the end of all of that, I had slept like a baby. How was any of that possible?

Later Rohan had joined me in the bed and as the glow of moon rise filled the room, I had stirred and felt his massive body next to me in the huge bed. I'd reached out and found a considerable expanse of warm, bare golden brown skin. He'd felt the movement, shifted, grunted, and wrapped an arm around me, drawing me close. I'd stiffened, wondering, my heart racing briefly what would happen next—was the rape he had said earlier would not happen going to happen now? And this fear was made more acute when I realized drowsily that I was every bit as bare as he was. But he'd never come any more awake than that, and within moments I was again asleep.

The next time I knew anything the sun was brilliantly red in the room and Rohan was gone.

I allowed myself a brief, smug snicker. No doubt my absence from the chamber would soon be noted by Rohan's two younger sisters, Cheri and Marlou, and his cousin Raisa, all of whom lived in the palace with him.

All three of the young women, were between fifteen and seventeen in Gamma Rigel years, and were in their first years of “wifely” formation. Because Gamma Rigel years were longer than Earth years, it was hard to place their ages exactly, but they were all a bit younger than I was, somewhere between eighteen and twenty, I had calculated.

Under the care of an older woman known as a Matron, they were kept under strict discipline, which, to my eye, consisted of bare-bottom spankings administered with appalling regularity, as well as incessant shameful cleanliness procedures and medical examinations, all seemingly with one goal: to draw the young woman's attention to the area between her waist and her knees as often and as thoroughly as possible.

I was angry, sure, furious if the truth be known, but still it was almost as if the anger was in one part of my mind and other things were... elsewhere. Because there was a part of me that had wanted to snicker right along with Marlou and Cheri while we all watched Raisa being punished again.

What was happening to me?

I heard a door open and close in the outer chamber, and I stiffened. Would it be Rohan? Would he want to continue where he'd left off in the bathing chamber last night? I thought of the massive erection against his belly, how he'd calmly assured me that despite the size of the thing I'd take pleasure in it, and I swallowed.

Five minutes earlier, I had assured myself that, concealed in the back corner of the balcony, I had not violated any rules, but suddenly I was not so sure. If my first days on Gamma Rigel had taught me anything, a spanking could happen anytime, anywhere, for no reason at all, it seemed.

Could I dash back to the bed and throw myself under the covers somehow, hide the fact that I had left the bed? That answer was quick: no sooner had I considered the possibility, he was standing at the door of the balcony, peering out at me in irritation. "Ye daft?" he queried. Again I was struck as to how much of the speech here had retained the cadences and vocabulary of historical Scots English.

The original settlers here had been a group largely from

the prisons of what was then the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Scotland, and I was reminded vaguely that—on paper—this was what I had been sent to Gamma Rigel to study: historical linguistics of the English language. How ridiculous that seemed now.

“No one can see me, Lord,” I responded nervously, wondering if this was all it would take to see my morning begin with a spanking.

“No one in the court, mayhap,” he responded, “but come in, then. Best not take chances.”

Disobeying or arguing was not a possibility. I followed him into the suite, plenty grateful that while he seemed to think going outside had not been wise, since he had not actually forbidden it somehow I was not held accountable.

When I was back through the door, into the large bedchamber, Rohan eyed me calmly. I reflected that since yesterday, after spending so much time with him, I'd almost become accustomed to him. Seeing him in the full light of the Gamma Rigel morning reminded me anew of just how large he really was. He wore a sleeveless top, something like a vest, that hid no bulge of his massive arms, and though the trousers that came to just below his knees were loose, they still only accentuated his massive thighs and legs.

The gold arm bands that he had on the previous day had been removed and not replaced, but around his biceps, where the arm bands had been, there were banded tattoos, colorful intertwining rings and vines, twisting around geometric bands.

How had people gotten so much bigger here? It was noted in the files that I had had access to, but never explained in any way.

"Probably should not ha' let you stay here the night, for there's likely to be talk." Then he shook his head, and his expression went sour. "But you were snorin' to beat all, and

I was lazy as a dead dog, too sorry to put my breeches on to take you back. There'll be somethin' said, make no mistake."

Interesting, I thought briefly, that our thoughts had traveled along the same path.

He grinned, and I noticed suddenly, again, that he was very young; the smile transformed his whole face. He could well be younger than I. It was quite a thought. "Well, no help for it, and that's sure. Guess there must be some benefit to bein' the prince." He arched his eyebrow at me and the smile turned into a full-throated laugh. "I can take the heads off of those that speak amiss, ken?"

My eyes must have gone incredibly wide at that because he snorted at my expression. "'Twas naught save a jest, lass." He paused, his expression suddenly thoughtful. "And not so funny a one for you, I'm thinkin'. My apologies."

I was speechless. Had he just apologized to me for an ill-timed joke? However, before I could appreciate it, with no warning, he walked over and yanked the blanket off my shoulder. "Well, go on then, lazy bird."

I squeaked. "No! Stop. I'm naked." Desperately, I grabbed for the blanket.

His eyebrow lifted high. "As I've seen ye before, lass. Now stop yer nonsense and get yer things. There's mornin' meal waitin' for ye. If ye're laggin' I'll tan ye." He paused and leaned forward, tipping up my chin with a long finger. "As I will the next time ye're sayin' 'no' or 'stop' to me. Or outside alone."

So much for apologies.

Totally bare to his gaze, I felt it even more than I had last night in the bath. With absolutely no comment or warning, his hand found the back of my neck, and he pushed me down, tail end high, over the edge of the high bed. My legs flailed, parted of their own accord.

"Stop! No!" The words popped out of my mouth before I could stop them.

"I'm doin' naught but checkin' your mark, lass." Without warning, his big broad palm slapped my upper thigh hard, unerringly finding the tender crease, just where my bottom met my thigh. "And you, my girl, are not the brightest star in the heavens, that be fer certain." I gasped and squirmed, wiggling my rump from side to side, knowing that every time I shifted I was showing myself to him, but not being able to help it.

The sting from just the one swat took my breath away. His hand stroked over the bare warm skin of my behind, plainly checking to see that there was no unusual trauma or swelling from the procedure. I could feel the places where the needle had scored. However, since there was also a vague hot tenderness on the other side, I had no way of knowing how much was due to the marking and how much was due to the fact that I'd been thoroughly "warmed" by him on more than one occasion the previous day. "It's lookin' fine."

He swatted the other thigh, obviously appreciating symmetry. The crack echoed in the chamber, and I squealed. God, it hurt! And it meant nothing to him. On Earth, he could have been reprogrammed just for *thinking* about swatting me. "Now, get dressed or I'll be rememberin' my promise."

Wisely I kept my mouth shut and fled into the bathing chamber. I looked at the tub longingly, as it had always been my practice to shower in the morning, but he had not given permission. When his first instruction of the day, that I not say "no" or "stop" again had been violated within seconds, and I had managed to avoid a spanking, I had no desire to press my luck.

I washed my face quickly with warm water, noticing as I did so that by the side of the sink there was a small cake of

soap that looked brand new. It hadn't been there the previous night, and no servant had come in that I had seen. Trying it I found it fragrant and very mild.

The only conclusion was that he had left it there for me. I was again simply flabbergasted at the contradictions here. The man would spank me so hard that I could not sit comfortably for hours, and then remember to lay out special soap.

I had only been on Gamma Rigel a few days, but I suspected I could be here many years and would still never understand it.

My all-white Gamma Rigel "maiden" garb had been discarded the night before when he bathed me, lumped carelessly on a small bench in the bathing chamber. With nothing to change into, I simply put the clothes on again: all white, the split trousers and the tunic top with the split flaps on either side reaching to my waist.

There was a full-length mirror in the chamber and I took a long moment to examine my appearance. Except for the fact that my hair was short, I now looked no different than any other "maiden" on Gamma Rigel. Not wanting to do it but unable to stop myself, I moved closer to the mirror and lifted the front flap of my tunic top, exposing the split trousers. Even with my standing up straight, the trousers bagged open slightly. I eased my legs apart, and my shaved sex came into view.

Gathering the tunic flap with one hand, I reached between my legs with the other, drawing my fingertips across the bare skin, marveling at the smooth softness of the plump flesh.

I didn't understand any of this. I looked at my changed body for a few more long seconds, then raised my gaze and stared directly into my own eyes in the mirror.

What would become of me? Was I really stuck here

forever? To the best of my knowledge, the people who had abandoned me were never going to “rescue” me; why would they? And now they thought I was dead.

GR2 was a prison planet and I was now in prison.

Suddenly, I couldn’t stand my own gaze any longer. I dropped my tunic to cover my bare pussy and walked out into Rohan’s suite.