

Praise for  
**Strange Little Band**

“*Strange Little Band* is an engrossing love/hate story set in the heart of a cold-hearted megacorp. ... Shane, an alien half-breed, and Addison, a psychic, are themselves both the players and the played in the elaborate game the Triptych Corporation is playing. ... Neither Addison nor Shane are likeable people, and yet, living their lives vicariously through the story, they become sympathetic characters: they’re well-written, believable, and engaging.”

—Lyn Thorne-Alder  
author of *Addergoole*

“I’m really not a big fan of romance. Thankfully *Strange Little Band* is not a sappy romance. It’s a dark dysfunctional romance that doesn’t pretend it’s normal. ... On the whole *Strange Little Band* lives up to its name. It’s a wonderfully strange serial and I will keep going back for more.”

—Becka Sutton  
author of *Dragon Wars*

“[*Strange Little Band*] is mainly a love story between two very bad people who use and manipulate others at will. It’s an interesting point of view, like seeing how a master villain and his relationships play out on a day-to-day basis.”

—M. Jones  
author of *314 Crescent Manor* and *Black Wreath*

# Strange Little Band

Sample Chapters

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and  
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Visit our website for artwork and more: <http://www.strangelittleband.com>

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“The family. We were a strange little band of characters trudging through life sharing diseases and toothpaste, coveting one another’s desserts, hiding shampoo, borrowing money, locking each other out of our rooms, inflicting pain and kissing to heal it in the same instant, loving, laughing, defending, and trying to figure out the common thread that bound us all together.”

—Erma Bombeck

## Prologue: What's Best

Ellen Myers dabbed at her puffy red eyes with a fresh tissue. “But we’ve already been over this with Lt. Narita.” The box of tissues was the only item on the utilitarian metal table.

From his seat on the other side of the table, Daniel gave the distraught woman his most sympathetic smile. “I know this is hard, Mrs. Myers, but please bear with me. We—”

“Who did you say you’re with again?” Russ Myers demanded. Although the stout, forty-something man shed no tears over his son’s debacle, his stiff posture screamed tension. His hand hadn’t left his wife’s since Daniel had entered the small meeting room in the Portland Police Department.

“The Triptych Corporation, Mr. Myers.” Daniel waited for the parents’ next question. No matter the nationality or social status of the parents he spoke with, they always asked the same things. Although their predictability made recruiting easier, the routine was getting tiresome.

“But you,” Ellen sniffed, fidgeting with her tissue, “your company makes electronics, and jets, and—”

Daniel nodded. “Yes. We’re quite diverse.”

Russ scowled. “Why are you talking to us?”

“Because of Shane’s... situation,” Daniel replied. “Our social outreach program has had great success with troubled youth. Your son—”

“He’s not my son,” Russ grumbled.

Ellen yanked her hand from her husband’s. “Russ!” Then she turned to Daniel, chagrined. “It’s been a long day, Mr. Gibson. What Russ means is that Shane’s not our biological son. We adopted him when he was a baby.”

Daniel nodded as if interested. The adoption was in Shane’s file, which the recruiting department had assembled after learning about the death at Shane’s high school. “I see. Does Shane know he’s adopted?”

Ellen nodded, but Russ sniffed. “He knew before we’d even considered telling him.”

That piqued Daniel’s curiosity. He’d studied the photos of Shane and his parents in Shane’s file. Although the fifteen-year-old’s build was lankier than his parents’, that was the most pronounced physical difference. The small

family looked like any other white, middle-class American family. “Oh? How did he figure it out? If you don’t mind me asking,” Daniel added.

Ellen pursed her lips and studied the table top. “We don’t know.”

“Shane was three,” Russ stated, frowning. “He...” Russ’ eyes fixed on a spot on the far wall. “He’s a weird kid.”

“Shane’s precocious,” Ellen interjected, “but he’s a good boy.” She exchanged a weary look with her husband and reached for his hand. Russ took it. Reassured, Ellen turned back to Daniel. “School’s never been easy for Shane. Socially, I mean. He’s been in fights before, but this—” Ellen’s voice hitched as she squeezed her eyes shut.

“Luis is—” Russ pursed his lips, then continued. “—was a bully. We’ve always told Shane to stand up for himself, even if it means detention. But Shane didn’t kill the kid. He couldn’t have!”

Daniel leaned toward the troubled parents, all earnestness. “I’m not accusing Shane, Mr. Myers. May I speak with him? Your choice, of course.” It wasn’t really, but the Myers didn’t need to know that. Besides, most of the parents of potential recruits agreed to the request.

Ellen plucked another tissue from the box on the table. “I suppose.” She looked a question at her husband.

Russ nodded. “After he’s spoken with our lawyer,” he told Daniel.

“Naturally.” Daniel got to his feet. His work was done for now. He produced two business cards from his suit pocket and offered them to the Myers. “My card. If you, Shane, or your attorney have any questions, don’t hesitate to contact me. We all want what’s best for Shane,” Daniel lied. He wanted what was best for Triptych.

# Chapter 1: Great Expectation

Addison Harris studied her profile in the full-length mirror in her quarters, smoothing her hands over her swollen belly. The gray Triptych Corporation tank top conformed to every curve. A little fashion camouflage—a khaki jacket two sizes larger than her usual size eight—hid 21 weeks of pregnancy.

She frowned at her reflection as she tugged the jacket on. With only the bottom button fastened, the open vee displayed her gestational cleavage while distracting from her belly. Although the easy disguise was a blessing, Addison knew that her oversized bosom would soon be a hindrance. When she'd been pregnant with now three-year-old Ashlynn, her lover Ferdinand appreciated her ample cleavage. But this time there was no lover. The only appreciation she'd earn would be ogles from horny Triptych scientists and security. But they knew better than to approach her.

*A pain in the arse is what these are,* Addison grumbled at her reflection. A few fluffs and tucks and the jacket fell flat. She smiled mirthlessly. *Only for another week or two. Then everyone will know that I've been "knocked up." Too bad I didn't have fun doing it. All the pain without the pleasure.*

A Petri dish, catheter, and a thinly veiled order from Triptych VP Daniel Gibson were responsible for Addison's condition. The fertility drugs had worked their magic, producing nine ova. Addison hadn't protested since she'd thought that her participation ended there.

"They are *your* eggs," Daniel had reminded her. Easy for the uterus-less prick to say in the comfort of his office.

"I gave them to Triptych."

Daniel had donned a sympathetic smile. "Triptych is a generous employer. They're being given back to you."

"I'm not an incubator," Addison countered.

The wanker leaned back in his leather chair. "You are whatever Triptych wants you to be. And for reasons that we've yet to work out, you're the only woman who can carry your embryos to term."

Addison shook her head. "You're basing that theory on one outcome: Ashlynn. That's not proof. She may well have been a fluke."



“Let’s hope for another fluke, then.”

Ultimately Addison had agreed, not that she’d had much choice. She took solace in the condition she’d negotiated: she would be the surrogate and nothing more. The child would be Triptych’s responsibility. She refused to form a psychic attachment to one of her employer’s pet projects.

Daniel had a final, peculiar stipulation of his own. “If you get pregnant—”  
“When,” Addison corrected.

“*When* you get pregnant, keep it a secret as long as possible. And stay clear of Dr. Myers. Not that I think that will be a problem for you,” Daniel smirked.

Addison didn’t question either stipulation, particularly the latter. Myers’ ability to learn a person’s physiology by mere touch would certainly reveal her pregnancy.

Avoiding Myers, whom Addison rarely encountered outside of staff meetings, was easier than hiding the pregnancy. Between mood swings and morning sickness that stretched into the evening, Addison was amazed that no one had voiced the suspicion. Or maybe they were too scared. After all, Addison had telekinetically pinned Ramirez to the wall last month. The klutz had inadvertently brushed against her tender breasts.

It was around that time—15 weeks along—that things had changed. Instinct, curiosity, or perhaps temporary insanity prompted Addison to psychically contact the baby. Suddenly it—he—wasn’t Triptych’s pet project anymore. He was her child. Her responsibility. Over the ensuing six weeks Addison had strengthened her bond with the baby. She responded to him empathically and guided her daughter Ashlynn to do the same.

Daniel had imposed himself on Ashlynn, forming a bond with the child early on. Not this time, Addison vowed. Her unborn son would be hers and hers alone. Blocking outside influence would protect her and her children, as well as provide some leverage with Triptych. Daniel wouldn’t be able to do a bleeding thing about it.

One of Daniel’s seemingly casual statements terminated Addison’s gloating.

“Myers?” Addison had shrieked, grateful for the soundproof walls of Daniel’s suite. “You fertilized one of my eggs with that freak’s sperm?”

“No,” Daniel replied. “We fertilized nine of them with ‘that freak’s’ sperm. Only one resulted in a viable pregnancy. You know as well as I do that you’re not in the clear yet.”

Addison’s mind reeled. Although Myers looked human, Addison had mentally sensed the hybrid’s inhumanness on a few occasions. “I’m having Myers’ child?”

Daniel, for once, had the decency to hide his amusement. “You’re having Triptych’s child. You and Myers happen to have compatible DNA.”

After that conversation three weeks ago Addison had tried to detach from the baby, but it was too late. She was hopelessly attached to the prog.

Once Addison had resigned herself to the fact, she spent quiet nights and midday naps bonding with and sensing the life growing within her. The baby truly was Myers’. Her son wasn’t fully human. It was something she’d sensed but dismissed early on because the feeling hadn’t made sense. Now she recognized the bits that weren’t human or *Homo superior* like her. The part that was Myers.

Addison idly wondered how Myers would take the news. Ever since their initial introduction—the memory made Addison grin—he trusted her as a snake would a mongoose. Like most of the men and some of the women at the Triptych Alpha facility, Myers wanted to shag her but was too damned scared to act on it. Her reputation as Daniel’s pet psychic who implanted suggestions and performed psychic lobotomies was well-deserved. The irony of Addison carrying Myers’ child amused her greatly.

Triptych’s head physician Frasier diligently monitored Addison’s progress with weekly exams, tests, and fetal monitors. Addison could have told the woman she was wasting her time. The pregnancy would go to term. Pre-cognition had already assured Addison so. But the tests kept Daniel and Triptych happy, so Addison played along.

After her week 21 appointment with Dr. Frasier, Addison headed toward the commissary. With morning sickness behind her, Addison’s appetite had

returned with a vengeance. Once again her body had skipped hunger and went straight to ravenous. Little could stand between her and whatever she was craving.

Addison's route through the sprawling complex took her past Genetics—Myers' department. The doors to the various labs and offices were closed, as usual. Myers ran a tight ship.

The door ahead and to Addison's left opened, and a balding, middle-aged white man in a lab coat strode through. The printout in the man's hand had his complete attention. His unshielded thoughts washed over Addison. ... *don't know how the hell he thinks we'll resequence...*

Addison's eyes found the nameplate beside the slowly closing door: Dr. Shane Myers. On impulse she ducked inside.

Even if the freak hadn't been sitting at his glass-topped desk, Addison would have guessed this was Myers' office. The decor was cold, modern, and minimal. The only exception was a black leather sofa against one wall. Rumor had it that Myers was a workaholic. He may have slept on the sofa more often than a bed.

Myers himself was oblivious to her presence. Like his underling, he was too busy frowning at papers to notice a buxom woman a few feet away.

Addison fought to keep her amusement from her voice. "Dr. Myers." Her tones were cool and polite.

Myers' head snapped up. Surprise flitted across his fair, clean-shaven face, then was replaced with a scowl. "What are you doing here, Harris?" he demanded.

Addison perched on the sofa arm closest to Myers, careful to stay out of reach. She leaned forward to hide her bump and display her generous cleavage. "Can't I visit a colleague?"

Myers' scowl didn't waver. "No." Nevertheless, his brown eyes briefly darted to her breasts.

Addison allowed herself a smug smile. "Shane." She propped her elbow on one knee, resting her chin on her upturned palm. "You don't mind if I call you Shane, do you? 'Dr. Myers' sounds so formal, considering that we're practically family now."

Silence stretched as Myers studied her. Addison studied him back. He wasn't bad looking. Lanky, and possibly fit under his dress shirt and slacks. The fact that Addison couldn't sense his emotions—her mental fingers slid off of his eerily slick mental shields—reminded her that the average-looking man was part alien.

Myers hadn't ordered her out, so Addison continued. "I suppose I should start with congratulations." She stood and drifted toward him, unbuttoning her jacket. "Or didn't Daniel tell you that your donation worked out? One of those sperm is the little engine that could."

For an instant confusion, curiosity, and a hint of lust radiated from Myers. Addison laughed as her jacket fell open. "Don't flatter yourself, Myers. I don't want to shag you." She ran her hand over her rounded belly. "Congratulations. Twenty-one weeks and still growing strong."

Myers gaped as his shields slipped again. Taking advantage of his distraction, Addison grabbed his hand, lifted the hem of her shirt, and pressed his palm to her bared abdomen. "For confirmation." The man's mute shock made the precariousness of the situation worthwhile.

Chuckling, Addison backed off, heading for the door while buttoning her jacket. She tossed over her shoulder, "If you're going to buy those chocolate cigars, you want the ones with the blue wrappers. It's a boy, Dad."

Addison felt Myers' eyes on her back she strode out of his office into the hall. *Daniel will be pissed*, Addison mused. She dismissed the thought with a shrug. She really didn't care.

Her stomach, on the other hand, wondered if there was any chocolate cake in the commissary. She had a craving for it.

## Chapter 2: Nothing to See Here

Nothing was wrong with Dr. Shane Myers. Nothing ever was. He didn't get sick. He rarely was injured, and then not for long. Occasionally he was more than annoyed or frustrated, and even more rarely let it show. He had colleagues, assistants, test subjects, lovers, and Tae Kwon Do sparring partners, but no friends by design. His work was his love and his life. He didn't need anything else.

Until Harris waltzed into his lab with his unborn son.

Shane fled from the resulting whirlwind of emotion to his cool, logical alien side. He worked for 48 hours straight. When he couldn't sit still any longer he went to the dojo. Exercise was important to maintain one's body.

After changing into his gi, Shane padded barefoot to the mats and stretched. Only Eisen, a hulking ex-Marine, and a handful of others were there.

Eisen gave him a toothy grin. "Think you can take me today, String Bean?"

Shane gave him the requisite smile in return. The Marine could call him String Bean all he wanted. They respected each other because all of their spars had ended in a draw. Eisen was smarter than he looked, and Shane stronger than his wiry frame implied, as well as faster and flexible. "Let's find out."

Dozens of kicks, punches, and blocks later Shane was tiring and slowly but surely losing. Sweat stung his cuts and his bruises throbbed, but he wouldn't heal himself in the middle of a match. That would be cheating.

After focusing more intently on Eisen, who had his share of bruises and lacerations, Shane regained some ground. After a kick to the Marine's kidneys and a punch to his solar plexus, Shane thought he had a chance at winning. Then a foot sweep snuck through his defenses. Shane's back slammed into the mat, knocking the wind out of him.

Eisen was on him instantly. A knee pinned Shane's chest to the mat. The man's rock-solid forearm pressed down on his neck. Eisen grinned wolfishly. "Concede."

Rage shattered Shane's inhuman calm. He wouldn't be vulnerable. He

didn't have to be. He was better than this overgrown ape.

Eisen blanched in the split second it took for Shane to grip the man's forearm with both hands. Shane threw himself to one side, grinning when he heard and felt the Marine's bones splinter.

Eisen shrieked and cradled his ruined arm, leaving himself wide open. Shane's arms and legs were a blur as he hit vulnerable spots on the Marine's body: left ankle, right knee, right ankle, and left knee. The man crumpled, his face a mask of agony. Nevertheless Shane lashed out with one foot for Eisen's pelvic bone. It took two additional kicks, but the tough bone finally shattered.

Shane stepped back to admire his handiwork and catch his breath. Human bodies were a paradox of toughness and fragility. His life's work was understanding that dichotomy.

As he wiped sweat-diluted blood from his eyes, Shane noticed that Eisen was unnaturally still. Frowning, he knelt beside the man's broken body, not showing any outward indication of his own injuries and discomfort. Before he touched his fingertips to Eisen's arm he knew the man was dead.

Shane sighed. Eisen shouldn't be dead. He hadn't made any killing blows. Shaking his head, Shane telekinetically retrieved an inch-long silver prism from the small pocket he'd had sewn in his gi. Holding the crystal in his swollen right hand, Shane mentally connected with the metallic object. The softly glowing prism heightened his empathy, alerting him to the onlookers ringing the mat. Their mingled horror, admiration, bloodlust, and fear wove around Shane. Safe in the emotionless void of his alien side, the gawkers were easily ignored.

With the extra energy supplied by the crystal, healing his own injuries took about a minute. Then Shane turned to Eisen. After mending the ex-Marine's broken bones and damaged tissue, Shane reluctantly started the man's heart and brain functions. The effort was exhausting, but necessary to avoid Gibson's ire.

Eisen's eyes opened as Shane returned his prism to its pocket. The big man sat up, blinking at Shane and their audience in confusion. "What

happened?”

Shane stood, wrapped in the cool comfort of his alien side. “I won.” The crowd parted for Shane as he strode off the blood-spattered mat. A shower and hours of sleep beckoned.

## Chapter 3: Cravings

The worst part of pregnancy, Addison decided in the middle of week 24, wasn't the morning sickness or always having to pee. It wasn't gaining weight or squeezing boobs into a maternity bra. Even her baby boy's nighttime acrobatics were manageable. The worst part was the damned cravings.

Most of her cravings were typical: gelato at 1 a.m., peanut butter first thing in the morning, and the sudden need for blue Jell-o. Irrsomes, but tolerable. Usually.

At three in the morning Addison stood in the middle of Daniel's kitchen frowning at the dark cherry cabinets. Sleep escaped her again, and she craved *something*. Two spoonfuls of peanut butter, half of a banana, a glass of strawberry milk, five baby carrots, a cup of dry Cheerios, a slice of honey baked ham, some popcorn, and a glass of lemonade did nothing to sate her.

Her son somersaulted from one end of her womb to the other. It was uncomfortable, but not yet painful. *Enjoy it while you can, Little Prince*, Addison told him. She rubbed her bump, sending a pulse of love. *Your bedroom will get cramped soon enough*. He kicked wildly in denial.

Addison laughed softly and patted her belly. It wasn't so round yet to block her view of her feet, but enough to be noticeably pregnant. She'd overheard rumors and unguarded thoughts speculating on the father's identity. Most bets were on Daniel. Considering Addison's unofficial titles of "Gibson's Pet Psychic" and "Gibson's Fuck Bunny," she was less than surprised.

The amount of time that Addison spent in the spare bedroom of Daniel's suite probably didn't help any. To the best of her knowledge Daniel did nothing to discourage the rumors. If Addison cared about the gossip, she would have brain wiped the lot of them long ago. However, rumors were a fact of life at Triptych and those concerning her were fairly benign. Slander was a small price to pay for access to Daniel's luxurious quarters. In return Daniel got time with his "daughter" Ashlynn.

Addison opened the canister containing Daniel's roasted Kona coffee beans, inhaled deeply, then resealed the lid. No caffeine for her, unfortunately. Dr. Frasier was adamant. She was forbidden to ingest anything that might harm her precious cargo.



The craving reared up again, demanding to be fed. The sprog underscored it with a few kicks. “This just won’t do,” she told them both.

Addison surveyed the spacious kitchen once more. She’d gone through the cupboards three times and the refrigerator twice. Whatever she wanted wasn’t in the kitchen. Her manicured nails rapped on the countertop while she idly rubbed small circles on her abdomen. Her little prince seemed to like that, giving little punches where her hand rubbed, then kicks of protest when she stopped. “So, what am I going to do, little one? Go completely barmy?” The baby had no answer.

Addison left Daniel’s suite for the commissary, her sights set on blue Jell-o. Strolling through the facility’s hallways in a short maternity nightie and matching robe wasn’t the wisest of ideas, but she shrugged it off. She could always blame the pregnancy hormones. It wasn’t as though anyone would dare to call Addison on her apparel. She almost wished that someone would. It would distract her from the damned craving.

The intersection of the north-south and east-west corridors was crowded considering the late hour. A stocky security officer attempted to keep his eyes off of Addison’s legs and chest as she approached. A weedy-looking kid heading east stared at Addison and nearly stumbled. *There’s a mother I’d like to—* He flushed red, then tore his eyes away. *Shit! Did she hear that?*

Addison smirked as she continued north, relishing the kid’s trepidation and both men’s leers. The craving still gnawed at Addison, even as she admired the ass of a different, fit Triptych guard. Heat coursed through her body, settling in her groin.

Addison stopped short. She didn’t crave food. She was horny.

This hadn’t happened when she was pregnant with Ashlynn, probably because of her two lovers at the time. But now Addison had no good prospects to satisfy her. It was a consequence of being a psychic in Daniel’s inner court. Men admired her, but most were too scared to shag her. She could psychically compel them to do so, but Addison didn’t see the point. She wanted someone who was brave enough to be a man.

Standing in the corridor panting wasn’t helping any. Blue Jell-o forgotten,

Addison turned on her heel and headed south toward her quarters. For now she'd take matters into her own hands. Literally.

At the intersection Addison turned left, colliding with someone rounding the corner from the opposite direction. "Hey!" a male voice snapped.

"Watch where you're—" Addison looked up into the dark eyes of an annoyed Anglo face. *Myers*, was her first thought. *Fuck*, was her second, prompting images that she really didn't need at the moment. *What the bleeding hell is wrong with me? I do not want to shag him.* Addison's body disagreed with a surge of warmth and wet.

Myers opened his mouth, and Addison's control faltered. She lunged, kissing him hard. A distant part of her mind screamed that this was *Myers*, but its protest was lost when their tongues twined. His arms circled Addison as she cinched her legs around his waist. With the cool cement wall at her back, Addison savored Myers' heat pressed against her lips, breasts, and belly.

For a brief, terrifying moment Shane surrendered to lust. He'd been on his way to his quarters after a 14 hour stint at the lab when Harris, who'd been parading around the facility horny and half naked, bumped into him. She latched on to Shane with arms and legs and tongue. He responded in kind, pressing her against the concrete wall so his hands were free to explore her exquisite body.

Harris felt and tasted and smelled heavenly. Everything seemed exaggerated, from her swollen breasts, rounded abdomen, and how she expertly teased him through his pants. Her mind entwined with his, heightening his desire. With so much contact he felt what she felt, including their son stirring in her womb.

*My son.*

That was enough of a shock to bring Shane to his senses. He fled to his alien side before Harris could do anything to his mind. The whole encounter could be a ploy to get a toehold there.

Harris noticed his sudden distance. Shane took advantage of her predica-

ment before she could squirm away. Despite her alarm, Harris was still hot and wet and wanting. Supporting her with one leg under her ass, Shane pleased her with one hand while the other roamed. It was a shame he had to experience it from his emotionless alien side. He would have enjoyed every moment, from Harris writhing in his grasp to the Triptych employees walking by, attention riveted but knowing better than to stop and gawk.

After Harris' orgasm ebbed, Shane set her on her feet and tugged her short nightgown down. "Was it good for you?" he smirked.

Harris stared, panting, for a few moments. Then she rushed forward, beating her fists against his chest. "Wanker!"

The woman's reaction was so unexpected that Shane didn't think to dodge. Instead he laughed, savoring her humiliation. To stop her hammering fists and enjoy her body for a little longer, Shane looped an arm around Harris' waist and pulled her close. He breathed into her ear, "From where I'm standing, I'd say it was very good for you."

Harris' desire and outrage lashed against Shane's mental shields. Anger won, and her shields walled off her mind. Yet Harris remained pressed against him. "Yes, thank you very much," she whispered. Sarcasm soured her words.

Shane knew he'd gone too far. Before he could disentangle himself from the woman, Harris added, "Too bad I won't be returning the favor." Her ardor surged into Shane, breaking his hold on his alien calm. He moaned when she ground against him. Then her mind withdrew.

"I didn't want to get in your head, Myers," she hissed. "I wanted this." Harris rubbed her hip against his crotch. Shane drew a ragged breath and grabbed for her, but the woman danced away. "It might have been fun. Pity." With a wicked grin she spun on her heel and strode away.

Shane stared after the bitch, his pulse pounding. It took a few moments for him to wrestle his body under control. Once he did, he headed north toward C wing. Although outwardly Shane seemed composed, his endocrine system screamed for sex. Fortunately he had an outlet.

Shane wasn't concerned about the handful of Triptych employees who saw him entering his head assistant's quarters in the wee hours of the morning. Sleeping with an unmarried, politically unimportant coworker didn't rate high on the rumor circuit.

He'd first propositioned Joon a year ago, three months after she'd transferred to the Alpha facility. The young Korean woman had quickly proven her intellect and diligence in the lab. That and her demure manner had prompted Shane's advance.

Joon waited for Shane look up from the binocular microscope. "Will there be anything else, Dr. Myers?"

Shane swept his gaze around the tidy lab. Everyone else had left for the evening. "Perhaps." Joon blinked. He added, "Dinner."

Her cheeks pinked. "Dinner?"

"If you like. Or we could skip straight to dessert."

Joon's eyes widened. "Dr. Myers, it wouldn't be appro—"

Shane chuckled. "Appropriate? You're in the big leagues now, Ri. Forget niceties. No one here cares what you do socially unless you're interfering with their political agenda, and you're too new to have done that yet."

He reached out empathically to be sure he'd read Joon correctly. As he'd guessed, the girl was a knot of nerves tinged with arousal. "I'm not looking for a relationship, Joon. We could have a good time outside of work. If you don't want to, say so. It won't affect our working relationship." By this point Joon should know that he meant every word. Shane didn't play games with his employees. He'd found that his team was most efficient when they knew the rules.

Joon blushed prettily. "I'm flattered, Dr. Myers."

Shane gave her a smile. She really shouldn't be. There were other attractive young women with their wits about them. Joon was the most convenient. And if Ingrid hadn't remarried, Shane wouldn't have approached Joon at all.

After a moment's hesitation Joon grinned. "Um, yes. Where...?"

Shane nodded, pleased. "Your quarters. Eight o'clock?"

Joon bounced a little. “Yes. C-24.” Then her face fell. “It’s kind of a mess. I—”

“I don’t care,” Shane had shrugged, and he still didn’t. Especially not after that bitch Harris had toyed with him in the hallway.

The musky smell of sex announced that Joon had company before Shane flipped the lights on. She and a young Indian man he didn’t recognize awoke in her bed with a start. The kid’s initial anger turned to fear once he recognized Shane. Joon, however, broke into a grin.

“Leave,” Shane ordered. The young man leaped out of Joon’s bed, snatched up his clothes, and was out the door without looking back. Shane was pleased that no empathic push was required.

Joon swayed up to Shane, purring. “This is a surprise, Doct— Shane.” She pressed against him. Although her breasts and hips were disappointingly small after Harris’ bounty, his body reacted to hers. Standing on her tiptoes she breathed against his lips, “What do you want?”

“Your body,” he replied, pressing his mouth to hers.

Joon undressed him as his hands canvassed her backside. “It’s yours,” she whispered.

Soon they were tangled together on the bed. Although Joon was as attractive and compliant as always, the foreplay wasn’t satisfying. Joon noticed Shane’s waning interest. “What’s wrong?”

*You*, Shane thought, surprising himself. He sat up, pulling away from her. “I don’t know.” It was only a half-lie. What had Harris done to him?

Shane pondered the problem. Joon fawned over him as he thought, desperate to please. Her submissiveness was a double-edged sword. In many respects it made her an excellent lover. Sometimes, like now, it was trying.

Frustrated, Shane frowned at her. He was about to leave when she scooted closer, biting her lip. Shane stared for a moment, then smiled. Joon beamed from his improving mood. “Tell me what you want.”

“Lie down,” Shane ordered. He telekinetically summoned his silver prism from the pocket of his pants on the floor. Joon frowned curiously at the metallic object in his hand as she obeyed, but said nothing. “I’m going to do

something to you.”

Joon shivered with anticipation. “Will it hurt?”

“Maybe.” It was an honest answer. He’d never tried this before. Although he had no qualms about testing on humans, he preferred to have consenting volunteers. The surge of lust from Joon was obvious agreement.

Shane mentally connected with the crystal and watched for Joon’s reaction. Her curiosity doubled, mingling with a touch of fear. Otherwise she lay quietly.

Satisfied, Shane focused on Joon’s lips. He funneled some of his energy to her body, prompting it to grow muscle and fat where he wanted. Joon gasped as her lips changed shape, but continued to lie still. Two minutes later her lips were as full as Harris’.

After the prism’s light dimmed, Joon sat up touching her fingertips to her lips. Shane smiled, pleased with his work despite the fact that her lips didn’t flatter Joon’s round face. Amazed and a bit anxious, she peered at her reflection in the mirror on the far wall. “How...?”

Shane shrugged. “One of my many talents.”

Joon licked her now-full lips. “Can you, um, undo this?”

“Yes.” Shane was 99% sure that he could.

Most of Joon’s apprehension faded away. She crawled over to him, smiling salaciously. (*Is this better?*) she thought at him, pressing her soft, full lips to his.

Shane closed his eyes and imagined she were Harris. A groan escaped him. *Yes.*

Joon’s hands and mouth roamed. Shane shivered as she nibbled down his neck. (*It didn’t hurt,*) she complained. (*Only itched.*)

Shane smirked, grateful for Joon’s kink. *I can do more.*

“God, yes,” she moaned, flopping on the bed.

Shane ran his hands over her body, simultaneously pondering how to accomplish what he had in mind and how Joon could be possibly enjoy being so prone. He truly didn’t get the latter. Either she was supremely confident in her worth to him and Triptych or she trusted him implicitly. If the latter,

she was a fool, and lucky that he wasn't sadistic.

Again Shane connected with his prism, cupping one of Joon's small breasts with his free hand. The touch carried her arousal. Pushing thoughts of Joon from his mind, Shane remembered the warm weight of Harris' tit. Circling his thumb over her nipple, Shane directed lymph from her abdomen into her breasts. He felt her discomfort from stretching skin and pain from where she bit her lip to keep quiet.

Joon's newly enlarged breasts jiggled as she gasped and twisted under his touch. "More," she panted.

Once Shane imagined Harris lying prone on the bed begging it was easy to oblige. He made her belly swell to match the woman he wanted to screw but didn't dare. Joon's ecstasy from the pain/pleasure spilled over to Shane.

Tossing the dormant crystal aside, Shane straddled Joo— Harris, grasping her swollen breasts and abdomen. She whimpered and pulled him on top of her. Tongues danced and teeth nipped, distracting Shane from the shallowness of his partner's mind.

Harris cried out when he thrust inside. Their combined pleasure overwhelmed her pain each time their bodies slammed together. "You want me, bitch," Shane growled.

"Yes," she panted.

"Say it!"

Harris' body arched as she climaxed. "I want you!" Shane thrust deeper inside the whore and came.

Despite being sated, Shane couldn't sleep. Joon, after a few minutes of giggling and sighing, was out cold, leaving Shane with her altered body. Without the blur of hormones it was impossible to pretend that the woman was Harris. He almost felt ashamed about what he'd done, but not quite. The kinky freak had enjoyed it, after all.

"How long will it last?" she'd asked sleepily, running her hands over her engorged belly and breasts.

With so much of them touching Shane could feel that both had already

shrunk slightly. Her body was busy undoing the temporary changes he'd made. "A day, if I do nothing."

Joon giggled. "Leave the breasts, okay?"

Chuckling, Shane fondled her tits. "Sure."

Joon leaned into his touch and sighed. "You'll make my lips and stomach the way they were before you go?"

The note of desperation in her voice prompted another surge of shame. It quickly morphed into anger at that bitch Harris. She'd made him do this. "Yes." None of his resentment toward the mother of his son leaked into his voice.

"You're amazing," Joon murmured and slept.

Shane considered the not-pregnant woman curled around him. *You're not.*

He fixed her as she'd asked and left.

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