



When solar flares spark random wildfires amongst the out-ports, stationmaster Tome Rimmer forbids females to travel there alone, a decision that doesn't sit well with Jexx. As a trader, the feisty spacer needs unrestricted access to her customers and she feels her battle implants more than compensate for her gender.

When the sexy hunk she picks up in the station bar turns out to be more than human, she has more important things to worry about than her profit margin.

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## Wildfire: Shifting Priorities

Jexx stalked out of the stationmaster's office, the charms woven into her intricately braided hair tinkling, and headed for the pub. *\$Of all the stupid pig-headed males, Tome Rimmer was the worst\$.*

She glared at the muscle bound enforcer smirking at her from his stool at the bar. *\$Damn all males in general.\$*

"Give me a double shot of your smoothest Xylin rum." She flexed her fingers, silently daring the barkeeper to make a comment. Any comment.

He just nodded and set a water-stained glass on the bar in front of her. Producing a bottle from under the bar, he filled the glass with a flourish. *\$Smart man.\$*

Jexx seized the drink and downed the fiery liquid in one long swallow, relishing the way it burned on its way to coil in a pool of liquid heat in her gut.

"You might want to take it easy on that stuff."

The amused male voice gave her the excuse she'd been looking for. Jexx whirled to confront the asshole, hands splayed out to bring her battle implants online.

"I don't think so." The stranger caught her hands in mid flight, his big hands circling her wrists like bands of steel. "Little girl like you wouldn't stand a chance."

Jexx looked up into the harsh face of her captor and choked back a snarl. Seven feet of solid, mouthwatering muscle flexed beneath a skin hugging port-suit. A strip of leather around his forehead restrained jet-black hair that hung straight to his shoulders. His angular face sported a roman nose and high aristocratic cheekbones. A different kind of heat raced along her nerves and pooled between her thighs.

"I'm not a little girl." She knew that her petite figure often caused people to underestimate her. She straightened her shoulders, pleased when his eyes dropped to her breasts.

The stranger smirked, but kept his hands clamped firmly on her wrists. "And I'm not an idiot. What's got you so riled up?"

Jexx tossed her head. "Nothing that concerns you." She ran her tongue across her lips in a blatantly sexual display. "Damn stationmaster restricted my access to the out-ports. He said the wildfires being spawned by the solar flares make it too dangerous for a woman." She eyed up the impressive display of muscle rippling beneath the man's thin shirt. "You look like a man who could handle a little danger."

"I'm not exactly a man, but close enough." Amber streaks swirled within the deep tawny color of his eyes as his gaze dropped to linger on her breasts, half-uncovered by her outfit. "And I can handle most anything comes my way. You have something particular in mind?"

Jexx met his gaze squarely. "Me."

He raised one brow and a slow lazy grin curled the corners of his mouth. "You sure? I'm not a gentle lover."

Jexx cocked her head and pointedly eyed the bulge straining the front of his station suit. "I'm not in the mood for gentle."

"Well then." The man slid his hands up to her shoulders and pulled her hard against him. "We'll need a room." He turned to the bartender hovering just out of earshot. "Got an empty cube?"

The man tossed him a data-latch without question, causing Jexx to raise an eyebrow in surprise. He was obviously known in the area, and his credit passed muster. Most spacers paid in advance.

Picking the data-latch out of the air, the stranger glanced at it. "Number 16. Close. I like that." Dragging her along by the wrist, he strode across to the cube panels and keyed the access grid. The door slid back smoothly and he stepped through the portal, Jexx in tow. The panel closed behind them with a quiet 'swoosh'.

Pivoting with the quiet grace of a Tlaxian cat, the man pulled Jexx in close, dropping his head to plunder her lips with a hungry urgency. Jexx opened to him without hesitation, dancing her tongue across his in invitation. Boldly, she reached down to caress the impressive bulge in his pants. He rewarded her with a deep-throated growl that made her wonder what, exactly, he was. *\$Not that it mattered.\$*

The man raised his head. His strange eyes, seething with desire, ran over her arrogantly, possessively.

"Strip." His gaze burned through her as he released her to remove his own clothing with quick, economical movements, tossing the garments carelessly in a heap.

Jexx eyed the impressive shaft jutting aggressively from between his thighs and licked her lips. *\$Damn.\$* Looked like just what she needed after her run-in with the stationmaster. His droid, she corrected herself. The man didn't have the balls to face her himself.

Shrugging out of her spacer suit, she dropped to her knees and ran a teasing finger down the length of his gorgeous cock, smiling when it jumped beneath her hand. Licking her lips, she cupped his heavy sack and engulfed his shaft with her mouth, swirling her tongue teasingly along the length.

Groaning, he fisted his hands in her dark hair and thrust forward, forcing himself deeper. Jexx gripped his hips with both hands, tilting her head to accommodate more of his impressive length.

The man thrust shallowly with his hips as Jexx danced her tongue along his swollen member, coaxing it to swell to even greater proportions.

“Enough.” He pulled her to her feet before picking her up and tossing her onto the sleeping platform. He pounced on top of her and grabbed her wrists to raise her hands above her head. His eyes glowed with an eerie light as he surveyed her. His nose twitched and Jexx wondered if he could smell her pussy creaming. She wanted that big cock of his buried deep inside her and she wanted it now.

“So what’re you waiting for?” Jexx arched up to rub herself along his cock. “I’m not here for the conversation.”

A slow dark smile spread across his angular face. With a speed that betrayed inhuman blood, he shifted both wrists to one big hand, staring into her eyes as he dropped the other to toy with her breasts, pinching and squeezing the sensitive mounds until she writhed mindlessly beneath his clever fingers. Dropping his hand lower, he caressed her belly, her navel, the slight hollow of her hips while his mouth expertly teased her breasts into hard-pebbled nubs. He raised his head and caught her gaze, holding it with his own while he slipped one finger deep into her moist core, stroking roughly against the sensitive walls. The smile took on a knowing smirk as her juices coated his finger and dripped out. “You’re a horny little cat, aren’t you?”

Jexx gasped in reply and arched against his palm, seeking relief from the building pressure. He slid a second finger in to join the first. Slipping the other hand under her butt, he effortlessly lifted her hips up and positioned her. Removing his fingers, he slammed his big cock into her, burying himself to the balls in her slick channel.

Jexx whimpered in helpless lust, every nerve on fire as she bucked and twisted under the stranger. Grabbing his shoulder with both hands, she pulled him down to nip at his flat male nipples with her sharp little teeth. His smell teased her nostrils, wild and untamed, almost like a jungle animal. She ran her tongue over his chest, tasting the slick sheen of sweat as he shafted her with long, measured strokes.

*\$Damn\$*. She moaned as pleasure lanced through her.

Raising himself on muscular forearms, the stranger pulled his luscious cock out of her pussy.

Jexx whimpered and bucked her hips, trying to impale herself on the shaft glistening wetly just out of reach.

“No, I want you from behind.” Grabbing her hips, he flipped Jexx over onto her belly and lifted her onto her hands and knees in front of him, her legs splayed wide.

“That’s better.” He surged forward, filling her again, covering her like a were-cat mounting its mate. He dropped his head to nip roughly at the nape of her neck and Jexx felt sharp teeth puncture her skin. Reaching around her torso, he cupped her breasts, fondling them roughly as he ruthlessly drove his cock in and out of her pussy.

He covered her completely. Not normally submissive, Jexx found the total mastery wildly arousing. Bracing herself with her arms, she met him thrust for thrust. Heat raced along her nerves and hot fingers of fire danced down her spine. She felt the orgasm building, catching her up and carrying her along as it surged higher and higher.

Jexx threw her head back, arching into the solid mass of muscle. She let out a scream as the stranger rammed his cock home one last time, pushing her over the edge. Dimly, she heard his roar of triumph as his cock jerked, spewing hot seed deep within her molten core.

A million tiny aftershocks ran through her body as she collapsed on the sleeping platform, the stranger still buried deep within her. His harsh breath tickled her ear and she turned her head to stare into his mesmerizing eyes.

“Damn you’re good. Who are you?”

The stranger gave her a faintly mocking smile. “Tome. Tome Rimmer.”

Jexx raised her eyebrows. Fantastic sex always did have a way of taking the edge off her temper. “Was this by way of an apology? Because I’m not that impressed. You may have to go another round before I forgive you.” She reached between them to cup his sac gently, suggestively, in one hand.

He laughed, white teeth gleaming against his tan skin. “I’m not that easy. And you’re the one needing to apologize. It’ll take more than a few credits to repair the hole in my office wall.” He rolled to his side without releasing her.

A mischievous smile teased the corner of Jexx's mouth as she remembered the satisfying feel of simu-board crumbling beneath her fisted hands. "I thought I showed admirable restraint. I didn't touch that antiquated bucket of bolts you sent to deliver your message."

The smile disappeared as she remembered why she'd felt the urge to redecorate his office. "My battle implants more than make up for my being female. Denying me access to the out-ports based on my sex isn't fair." She splayed her fingers and felt the satisfying tingle of her implants coming online.

"I don't think that's wise." Tome casually reached out to clamp a large hand over her wrist, immobilizing it without effort.

She opened her mouth, and then forgot what she'd planned to say. She stared, mesmerized, at his hand on her arm. Dense black fur covered the forearm and sharp claws peeked out from between elongated fingers.

Taking advantage of her silence, he continued. "Solar flares have been unpredictable this year, causing wildfires to ignite on some of the out-ports. Miners are being squeezed onto the remaining bases, and a lone female could spark an ugly fight." He loosed her wrist and stared hungrily at her mouth. "All females heading to the out-ports must be accompanied by at least one male capable of retaining ownership if challenged."

Jexx ignored his outrageous declaration and stared at his heavily muscled biceps. They shimmered eerily before they too sprouted a lovely pelt of dark fur. She raised her eyes to his face. "You're a shifter."

A faint smile ghosted across Tome's face. "Yes. It does appear that way."

Jexx swallowed the lump in her throat. "What type?"

He tilted his head and studied her. "You look more than a little panicked, and I didn't peg you as the panicky type of female. What's up?"

She swallowed again and her eyes dropped to his arm, now covered in a luxurious pelt of black fur. "I had a bad experience with a werewolf a few years back."

Tome shook his head. "I'm about as far from a puppy as you get." He used one hand to lift her chin, forcing her to meet those strange eyes of his.

Slanted eyes, swirling in an ever-changing pattern of golds and browns. Cat eyes.

Startled, she stopped struggling, jaw hanging slack in surprise. "You're a Were-Panther!" Rumors of the lost Imperial Were-Panthers had been circulating for years. She'd never expected to meet one.

He shrugged his shoulder. "Not lost so much as unnoticed." He looked at the fur rippling on his muscular arms. "We've been keeping a low profile." He shifted his weight and she once again found herself trapped beneath his muscular frame. "I've been successful in concealing my true nature for decades. Legend has it the only thing capable of causing an Imperial Were-Panther to lose control and shift unintentionally is the scent of his Bond-mate's lust." He buried his face in the hollow of her shoulder and inhaled deeply.

"Hey!" Jexx struggled under his superior weight, not liking the direction the conversation was taking. "If you're implying what I think are, you can take a flying leap off a short asteroid."

The stationmaster lifted his head and Jexx wondered how she could have failed to recognize those fabled eyes.

"Most bond-mates are happy to be found." His expression let her know he wasn't under any illusions about her feelings. "You'll get used to me."

Jexx gave a very unladylike snort. "I have no intention of getting used to you." She paused, surprised at the regret stirring in her belly. "I'm a loner and I'm happy that way."

"Well." He lowered his head and nipped at the delicate hollow of her throat. "I'll just have to convince you life could be a whole lot better with an Imperial Were-Panther at your side."

"Not likely." Jexx twisted her head to avoid his lips.

A lazy smile spread across his face and he tightened his grip on her hips. "I'll take that as a personal challenge."

THE END