

Love on a Forbidden Planet

By

Sterling Scott

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Part One – The Carpenter

Chapter One

Stardate 3527.6.23 – Three p.m. – Dr. Wilhelm's Office

"Miss Toller, you do understand what it is that you did wrong?" Dr. Kart Wilhelm rose from his chair with the unstoppable swelling of lava oozing from a volcano.

Amy Toller knew what Professor Wilhelm meant, but she still did not consider her action to have been 'wrong'. Nonetheless, she responded with, "Yes, sir. I do apologize for my rash action. I was simply—"

"You were simply disregarding your training and orders." His face reddened with the pending volcanic eruption of his anger. "How many times have you been instructed *not* to interfere with the local populations on the planets we visit?"

The answer was: at least a score. But when she had seen the female fall into the river, she could not sit idly by and watch the child drown. No amount of training would have kept her inside the secluded observation hut. Amy opened her mouth, and began to think of her response. She was saved from a verbal blunder when her superior continued.

"You willfully exposed our presence to the alien population." His voice began to crescendo. "A population that has been deemed to be intelligent. There is no means with which to measure the damage you have done to their natural development progression."

Amy had already heard this lecture from the Ground Control Officer.

She had not taken the time to reason out the ultimate outcome of her action. The child—no more than three years old—and two adult females had seen her. Surely they would tell others of their species the story of the mysterious being that had appeared from nowhere to pull the child from the river. The females would attempt to use their primitive language to relate the event to the

others, possibly create some drawings. Amy could only hope that the event would then be forgotten.

"In addition to exposing them to the knowledge of other beings—other *magical*, god-like beings—you have altered their genetic pool."

"Sir, I don't see how—"

"*Miss Toller*, you can't be serious! You are well on your way to earning a doctoral degree in Alien Anthropology. You came to me with the highest recommendation from Dr. Hinefellow."

Professor Wilhelm was correct. She did know exactly what would be the genetic result of her action. Still, she could not have stopped herself. Amy had been studying Alien Anthropology at the Eden University for two years when her advisor, Dr. Hinefellow, suggested this internship aboard the Star Cruiser *Carpenter*. "During the assignment, you will be working directly for Dr. Kart Wilhelm," Dr. Hinefellow had said as he presented the idea to her. "Dr. Wilhelm, quite literally, wrote the book on the determination of intelligence in alien populations." At the time, her objection had been to the year she would have to spend voyaging in outer space. She had thought that this long break in her studies would slow her progress toward her doctorate degree. Dr. Hinefellow had countered with a description of the adventure she would have. She would visit several worlds where man had never before ventured. She would be the first Alien Anthropologist to examine the populations they discovered. "You are at the head of your class, Miss Toller. This is a reward for your hard work. The richness of this experience will accelerate your career for many years to come," Dr. Hinefellow had said to seal the deal.

Amy locked eyes with Professor Wilhelm. "I misspoke, sir." She calmed her voice into a professional timbre, seeking to subvert his eruption, and her possible dismissal from the project. "I do fully understand the Darwin process of genetic selection, commonly, instinctively used within many primitive populations. I acted rashly and incorrectly when I interfered with this natural process. It won't happen again."

"Humph." The professor returned to his seat and picked up his tablet. Seeming to be ignoring her, he spent a moment reading. Gradually, he relaxed and his skin tone returned to normal. "Well then, after your discipline, you may return to your duties."

Amy paused, sucking in a breath.

Discipline? Whatever can he mean?

His strict declaration and demanding persona sent a shockwave through her belly. Quivering, she waited, but he did not continue. She remained standing before his desk.

"Well, go on." He looked up at her bewildered face. "Into the corner you go, twenty minutes."

"What?"

"Be grateful that I'm not going to spank you—this time. Trust me, if any similar event ever occurs again, I *will* spank you, most thoroughly."

Amy still didn't move.

Spank me?

Her cheeks flushed with heat. She was sure that her parents had swatted her bottom as a toddler, but she had no memory of such an experience. She had most certainly never been spanked as an adult. She imagined the humiliation of having her backside treated with a child's penance.

"Now, Miss Toller. You have earned yourself twenty minutes in the corner, during which time you will contemplate the error of your ways." He pointed toward the corner behind her. "Don't *make* me reconsider the *lenient* manner of this discipline."

Slowly, unsure of exactly what he required, she turned and stepped toward the corner.

Can he do this? Could he actually spank me? Wouldn't the Captain toss him into the brig?

"Stop, stand there," he commanded, when she was two feet from the junction of the walls. "Fold your hands behind your back. Without slouching, bend forward, and put your nose into the corner."

As her face flushed in shame, Amy complied. She was grateful that he could not see the evidence of her embarrassment.

"Do you remember what it is that you are to spend this time contemplating?"

"Yes, sir," she said to the wall. "I am to think about the inappropriateness of interfering with the alien populations."

"Very well, I've set the timer."

Amy did spend a few minutes reminding herself of the Interplanetary Council's requirements concerning contact with aliens. Contact with any population that had not achieved space travel was strongly discouraged. Taking any action that could possibly, no matter how remote the probability, alter the direction of the development of an intelligent population was strictly forbidden. As a scientist, an Alien Anthropologist, Amy was allowed to travel to the surface

of the planets and study the aliens in their natural habitat. As a member of the Ground Team, she had been drilled with the necessity to obey the Council's mandates.

On the surface of Hydrus-4, she had been concealed inside an invisibility hut while observing a herd-like group of primitive bipeds. This collection of females and children were catching fish in a river. They would stand in the rushing water with their hands close to the bottom. When a fish swam over their fingers, they would quickly scoop it up and toss it onto the bank. This maneuver was very common among primitive populations. And, as the elders were clearly providing instructions of the technique to the children, this was part of the determination that this alien population was actually intelligent, despite their lack of tools, farming, or social order. This, and other factors, had led to their score of six out of a possible ten on the Caldwell intelligence scale. Therefore, it was expected that they would eventually achieve language, tools, and dominance of the planet.

For this reason, Amy had slated that the planet was to be considered inhabited, and that lanthanum mining was inappropriate on Hydrus-4. While the *Carpenter* engaged in scientific study, the true purpose of their voyage was to locate deposits of lanthanum on the alien worlds.

Unfortunately, before her team could be invisibly extracted, one of the young girls had fallen into the fast water. The others had seen her fall, but did nothing to rescue her. Amy had been surprised by this inaction. Up to that point, the population had shown distinct empathy towards one another. After determining that the adult females were not going to save the child—perhaps they could not swim—Amy had exited the invisibility hut. In full view of the natives, she jumped into the water. Using her greater height, she waded over to retrieve the drowning child. Returning the child's lifeless body to the shore, Amy had used mouth-to-mouth to resuscitate her. Two of the females had seen her breathe life back into the child's body. As they stared, bewildered at the child's recovery, Amy had returned to the invisibility hut. As she had hoped, the females had not seen where she had disappeared to.

Standing in the corner, Amy's nose began to hurt. Her face burned with the humiliation of being treated like a child. She was a twenty-four-year-old doctoral student. Surprisingly, her butt began to itch, and her thoughts returned to the possibility that Dr. Wilhelm would spank her. He was at least sixty. The lecherous old man could almost be her grandfather. The mere idea of being paddled should have angered her, yet each nerve-ending in the taut skin of her bottom tingled.

There must certainly be a rule against such abuse!

Amy considered asking the Duty Officer. However, the notion of discussing spanking with anyone was unbearably embarrassing. She resolved to silently endure her corner time. She would not report Dr. Wilhelm's discipline, but she would also ensure that she never violated a rule again. She would not give him cause to make good on his threat.

Her hands wanted to scratch the spreading itch on her fanny.

How would he spank me? Over his lap like a child?

Amy envisioned herself folded over his knee as he swatted her bottom. Or, perhaps, he would bend her over his desk and use a paddle.

Would he spank me through the thin material of my jumpsuit, or force me to bare myself?

With her bottom jutting backward, she imagined Dr. Wilhelm admiring the curves of her backside framed by the taut, thin fabric of her jumpsuit. She had spent the past several years trying to lose the extra pounds that were attached to her hips. She wondered if the professor liked her round apple bottom. Suddenly, her pussy clenched. She pinned her thighs together in an effort to confine her swelling lady parts.

Crikey! Why is this turning me on?

"Time's up."

Amy straightened her stiff back. She rubbed her sore nose and returned to stand in front of his desk.

"To further cement your understanding of what has transpired, I expect you to provide me with a composition on the Darwin process and the possible results of your action. This will be presented to the Interplanetary Council with our report on Hydrus-4. You may go now, Miss Toller."

"Thank you, sir." Wondering what it was that she was thanking him for, she stoically walked from his office and straight to her cabin. She did not encounter any of her friends, although she knew they would eventually learn of her error on Hydrus-4 and rib her about the mistake. Hopefully, they would never learn about the corner time event.

Dropping onto her bed, she stared at the ceiling. She wanted to be filled with rage at Dr. Wilhelm, but the anger would not appear. She understood that she had been wrong to save the child. Her supervisor was simply doing his job, teaching her to be an Alien Anthropologist. He was ultimately responsible for the determination of which planets could be mined and which could not. He had escorted her during her first visit to an alien planet's surface, but since then he had

allowed her to be his eyes and ears. She had been the scientist who had made the intelligence determinations of the alien populations on the subsequent three worlds visited by the *Carpenter*.

After the debacle with the child on Hydrus-4, Amy's three-person team had waited inside the cramped hut until darkness. Then she had called down the retrieval shuttle. While they waited, she had endured hours of silent treatment from her two teammates. Upon their return to the *Carpenter*, she had spent another hour being lectured by the Ground Control Officer. She had half expected the ship's captain to appear and reprimand her. Then she had been instructed to go to Dr. Wilhelm's office.

I behaved unprofessionally. Perhaps I really do deserve a spanking.

Somehow, Amy considered that she would feel better if he had done more than merely threaten to paddle her. It would be easier to put the Hydrus-4 business behind her if he had actually spanked her.

It had been a long time since she had slept. Glancing at the clock, she saw that she had three hours before her date with Mario. Rolling over and rubbing her still itching butt, Amy hoped that Dr. Wilhelm would not deem her to be unfit to travel with the ground teams. She closed her eyes and drifted off to sleep.

Stardate 3527.6.23 – Six p.m. – The Mess Hall

"So, I hear you had a busy day." Exactly two minutes into their date, Mario turned to the subject Amy least wanted to discuss.

"Good news travels fast." She returned to pushing her Salisbury steak around on her plate. The food aboard the *Carpenter* was healthy, but that was pretty much all one could say about it. The pseudo-meat was in fact some sort of processed chemical protein, no actual animal flesh was involved. In the kitchen, food was not cooked, it was constituted from the various base chemicals and flavor additives. However, the meat had an acceptable texture and taste. Her reluctance to eat it stemmed from her preoccupations with other concerns.

"What will come of it?" Mario continued.

"I have to write a report to the Interplanetary Council, confessing my transgression. Hopefully, this blight won't stain my ability to complete my doctoral studies."

"That's all?"

She looked up to examine his eyes. He had an excited glimmer, a twinkle in his eyes and a sly grin.

Could he possibly know about the discipline?

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing," he said and looked away. "Tell me about the surface." He finally changed the subject.

Ensign Mario Alvarez was Amy's favorite. She was currently dating two other men aboard the ship, but she liked Mario best. He was a communication officer, and never had a reason to visit the surfaces of the worlds that the *Carpenter* explored. Of the hundred or so men and women aboard the ship, only about half would get any time on any of the planets. Only a few, like Amy, visited all of them. Therefore, Mario was jealous of her position.

She began taking bites of her dinner, interspersed with descriptions of the planet. Most of Hydrus-4 had been an ocean, but the small tropical land masses were lush with vegetation. She described the stark mountains and babbling rivers.

"Any wild beasts?" he asked.

"There were several large carnivores that kept the populations of the smaller herbivores in check. But I didn't see any of those."

"The 'people', what were they like?" He used his fingers to make quote marks in the air to signify that the intelligent beings were not humans, but not wild animals either.

"They were rather small. The tallest I saw was no more than four feet in height. And they rarely stood straight up. I think they have only been walking erect for a few thousand years. They gathered roots and fruits to eat, and some fish. That was the source of my trouble. The child I rescued had been trying to catch a fish."

"They lived in a tribe?"

"No, they were not that well organized. They were more like a herd. They stayed close together, for protection from the carnivores, as they wandered from place to place. They returned to the forest to sleep in nests high in the trees at night," she said.

"What was so wrong about saving the child?"

"My observations had clearly indicated that they used the Darwin process to naturally weed out the weaker elements of their population." Amy had no idea what the word 'Darwin' meant, but

it was synonymous with the 'survival of the strongest' means to improve the population's genetics. "The others had allowed the child to drown simply because she was unable to walk on the rocks without falling. In order for the species to survive, and achieve their ultimate potential as the dominant species on the planet, the weaker elements must be removed from the genetic population." She paused for a bite of steak and a sip of fruit juice. "They don't do this consciously. I mean, they didn't *decide* to abandon the child. It's simply part of their instinctual behavior. Many primitive species act this way. Only with thousands of years of social development do populations lose this trait." She shrugged her shoulders and sighed. "By reviving the girl, I have allowed a weak element to survive and possibly breed. Thus, her weak genome will be propagated for a few more generations. This will slow the development of the entire population."

"Surely you can't be serious. One child's life will slow the entire population?"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is true. If one traces the genome with a computer model, one can see the significance of it. It's called the Butterfly Effect." Again, Amy had no idea what the word 'butterfly' meant. "That is, one tiny, seemingly insignificant, event can alter the outcome of the simulation dramatically over the course of say... a thousand years."

"But it's just a simulation."

"It is a simulation of how the real universe works. If the child is unable to feed herself, then others will have to expend energy to care for her. Thus slowing the population's potential. If she reproduces, then her weak traits will be passed on to her children. Without a doubt, I have set the development of this species back several generations. There is even some possibility, tiny as it may be, that I am responsible for their ultimate extinction."

"I really don't think you should worry about it. I just don't see how it could possibly be so important." He reached over to hug her; she allowed his warmth to comfort her.

"And then," she continued, speaking softly into his shoulder, "there is the religious aspect."

"Huh?"

"You know, legends and myths—folklore. There are traditions and such that we do every day, and we have no idea of the true origin of these things. Most have their roots in ancient religions or mythology. Now, for the aliens on Hydrus-4, they have seen a mystical being appear and breathe life into a dead child, and then vanish. While they have poor language skills now, they can probably keep this story alive long enough for it to become a basis for a future religion. I may very well have altered their entire future society."

Amy felt Mario's chest heave as he failed to suppress a chuckle. "What? What's so funny?"
"Oh, nothing. I'm sorry, but I just had a vision of you as a goddess being worshiped by them."

"Oh, please," she groaned.

"You know, I worship you already," he whispered. He hugged her tighter. "While this is all possible, can it really be probable?"

"Oh, I'm not so worried about it. There is a far greater probability that the event will mean absolutely nothing. It's just that I violated the Interplanetary Council's mandate. In my career, I must stay in their good favor. I could be ejected from my doctoral program."

Mario released her and returned to his dinner. "We'll be at Corvus-3 in a week. Will you be leading the team on the surface there?"

"That's the big question. So far, Dr. Wilhelm has not indicated that I have lost his trust." She sighed. "But I imagine that the final word on the matter has yet to be spoken."

The devilish glimmer returned to Mario's eyes. "You know; the old man has an interesting reputation."

Amy's brow knitted. "What do you mean?" she snarled.

"He..." Mario studied his empty plate. "Well, I don't know anything for certain. But I heard that he... spanked his last intern—the one before you."

Amy's fork clattered as she dropped it to her plate. "What—*exactly*—did you hear?"

"So it is true. He did spank you."

"No," she hissed, "he didn't. But," she paused to ensure that no one was within earshot before continuing in a whisper, "he did say that he would, if I ever did something like this again. Is it true, he really does do it—spank?"

Mario's face burst into a full blown gleam. "Apparently so. If I were you, I'd watch my back." He did his best to suppress another chuckle, but failed. Amy mockingly punched him in the arm.

After their dinner, Mario wanted to go to the club for intoxicating drinks and cheek-to-cheek dancing.

"But I've had such a busy day," she whined.

"Come on, you've not given me much attention this week. I-I miss you terribly."

Like all starships, the *Carpenter* carried a crew of both men and women; however, the men outnumbered the women three to one. In their infinite wisdom—and the true motive for this was not lost on Amy—the men and women had different shifts. Each person had three eight-hour periods during the day: work, recreation, and sleep. The men were divided among three shifts: A, B, and C, while all of the women were on the D, or day shift. The A-B-C shifts rotated each week so that a different one was aligned with the D-shift schedule. Therefore, Mario, a member of the B-Shift, had his recreation and sleep periods at the same time Amy did during the current week. However, the next week, it would be the men of the C-shift that would be aligned with her schedule. Thus, during the women's recreation periods, the number of men also having their recreation periods matched the number of the women available. Each woman could have three boyfriends, one on each shift, and they would never have any conflicts. Well, almost never; some issues occasionally arose.

To additionally facilitate this distribution of the women, the women each had a private cabin with a bed large enough to sleep two people, while the men slept four to a cabin on narrow bunks. Amy didn't always invite Mario, or her other boyfriends, to sleep with her, but she did so more than once a week. It was additionally no surprise that the fleet commanders insisted that all women be given a time release anti-conception drug when the ship first sailed. The dose was sufficient for 15 months, to cover the duration of the cruise, with some overlap in case of a delay.

Therefore, there were minimal organized recreational activities aboard. The population was expected to entertain themselves. There was the library for individuals wanting to be alone. Most of the crew members gathered in the movie theater, the club, or the card room to meet or date each other.

Amy surrendered her arm to Mario and he led the way to the club. They sampled the ship's supply of synthetic intoxicating beverages, and joined the others on the dance floor. She was soon in his arms. With her eyes closed, she allowed his body to guide her. Swaying to the rhythm, they melted together.

After three dances, they relaxed with another drink.

"No, please, as you said earlier, I've had a busy day. I want to turn in early," she said when he invited her to dance again. She gave his elbow a teasing squeeze to ensure that he understood that he was invited to 'turn in early' with her.