Cyberevolution VII: Rules of Engagement

By

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Chapter One

Police work could be tedious, especially on stake outs, but this went beyond the pale. Zoe realized she was well past bored, also beyond uneasy. She'd always been a nervous space traveler, and that was when she was traveling coach on a commercial line. If anyone had ever asked her if there was any circumstance that would make her consider traveling solo, and well beyond the frontier, she would've told them to be sure and send her for a psyche evaluation if she announced such a thing.

“What the hell am I doing out here?” she muttered to herself for the umpteenth time.

“You are searching for your sister, who was kidnapped by rogue cyborgs,” the computer responded promptly.

Zoe glared at the console. “Half-sister,” she muttered after a significant pause while she tried to decide if responding to the computer constituted space dementia.

“You are searching for your half-sister, who ....”

“Shut up!” Zoe said irritably. She drummed her fingers on the console for a few minutes. “How far are we from the nearest habitable planet?”

Silence greeted the question.

Zoe rolled her eyes. The computer, naturally, was equipped with AI. Unfortunately, even with artificial intelligence, it tended to take everything literally. If being alone for so long didn’t tip her over the edge, she thought the damned computer was going to drive her insane. “Computer respond!” she snapped.

“The last habitable planet surveyed is seventy two hours, thirty three minutes, ten seconds earth standard time, from the current position of the Evening Star 9120, traveling at full hyper-drive. Folding would reduce the estimated time to reach the habitable planet to twenty hours, five minutes, thirty seven seconds. In the event of damage to the Evening Star 9120, it would be necessary to re-calculate the time required to reach the habitable planet according to the drive status.”

Zoe narrowed her eyes. Unfortunately, the computer hadn’t been programmed to react to a glare. “Didn’t I tell you that I wanted you to survey everything and search for anything even remotely
“Habitable?”

“I was ordered to survey worlds we passed close enough to that it was possible to utilize long range sensors.”

“And?” Zoe demanded, holding onto her patience with an effort.

“The last habitable planet ....”

“What about around us? In front of us?”

“Would you like for me to do that now?”

“Now would be a good time, yes,” Zoe snapped, infuriated to discover, after nearly three months of traveling, no less, that the damned computer had interpreted her command to mean only the bodies they passed. If she hadn’t known better, she would’ve suspected the thing was deliberately trying to thwart her efforts to find Bronte. Slumping in the pilot’s seat, she resumed drumming her fingers on the console, trying to bring her irritation under control. It was singularly pointless to rail at the computer, although a rousing good argument right about now might help to blow off some of her steam.

She missed her partner, and that was saying something because he rarely had more than two words to say to her—‘let’s go’ and ‘want donuts?’.

Truthfully she supposed she didn’t miss him nearly as much as she missed the life she’d flushed down the toilet to come on this wild goose chase.

She didn’t even know Bronte. She didn’t understand why she’d felt this compulsion to throw everything away that she’d worked so hard for and go after her.

She’d always meant to meet her half sister—at some point.

She’d told herself that for years anyway, almost ever since she’d discovered her biological father—the randy two-timing bastard—had been contracted and already expecting a child when he’d been pumping her mother.

Well, not quite that long, she supposed. She’d been eight years old before she had actually discovered her background, not that it had required any sleuthing on her part. Her mother had gone ballistic when the old bastard’s woman had died and she’d discovered he still didn’t mean to contract with her. She’d spilled the whole tale then, and Zoe had discovered that, not only did she have a name and face to put with ‘father’, but she had a sister, too, one that was only a few months older than she was.

By the time she’d gotten into her teens, she’d been too resentful over the fact that her father refused to acknowledge her to look kindly upon the ‘accepted’ one. At the same time, she’d yearned to get to know her. She’d spent her entire childhood wishing she had a sibling, desperately in need of a playmate and friend that would be there when no one else was.

There’d been no chance of that, though. Her father had taken care to keep his two families separate. The closest she’d come to meeting her sister was a chance glimpse now and then while she was growing up. She’d lost track of Bronte completely for years, until she’d shown up to take over the old man’s practice.
That shouldn't have bothered her, but it did. It was completely logical and understandable that Bronte, who'd studied to be a doctor, would step in their father's shoes, and yet it had resurrected all the old feelings of having been shunted aside, the feelings of unworthiness.

She'd let those feelings keep her away, and now she'd missed her chance to get to know her sister.

She pushed those thoughts aside. She wasn't going to just accept defeat.

It had been a blow when she'd been called in to investigate the abduction and discovered it was Bronte that had been taken. The rogue bastards had taken her with them, though. She didn't know why, but she knew damned well there wouldn't have been any reason to take Bronte if they'd meant to kill her.

She was alive—somewhere.

If it had been anyone but Bronte, she would've accepted that it was a closed case, impossible to bring to a satisfactory conclusion. Officially, she'd done just that, closed it on orders from her superiors. On a personal level, it sure as hell hadn't been a closed matter, however, and when she'd found out about the reward the company was offering for information leading to the stronghold of the rogue cyborgs, she'd taken leave from the force, sold everything she had to come up with the money she needed to pursue the case....

And here she was in the middle of no fucking where, running out of patience because she could see she wasn't going to crack this case and find her sister.

In a matter of a few weeks, the company she'd leased the Evening Star from was going to report it stolen, and that was the least of her worries. She'd taken two month's leave, and she'd been gone for three already—no job. She'd sold everything she owned to finance her jaunt—which meant she was flat broke because failure also meant she wasn't going to get a dime of the reward money she thought she'd get to put her life back together.

“Shit!” she growled, surging out of her seat and prowling the small cockpit area of the Evening Star. “They've got to be out here somewhere! They need basically the same things we do, damn it to hell! It isn't like they could just live on a rock!”

Ok, so technically, they weren't ‘alive’ to begin with, but they'd been designed and manufactured by humans and she knew from studying the information on the 'borgs that they had been constructed from almost as much biological material as inorganic and that meant, as far as she could see, that they needed a lot of the same things to sustain them. She'd seen the vids of the abduction. There was no deterioration of the skin or flesh that sheathed their titanium chassis. She might not be a scientist, but it didn't take that to figure out that the organic materials would've been damaged if they'd been living under conditions detrimental to humans.

That comforted her because she knew it meant Bronte had a better chance of staying alive until she could rescue her. It also limited the options insofar as where the rogues were holed up.

She still didn't quite get that.

She wasn't buying the story the company had spun on it.

She'd watched the security vids and she damned sure didn't see anything, beyond the kidnapping itself, that pointed to ‘crazed’. They'd planned and executed a virtually flawless abduction.
She wasn’t buying the ‘wrong place, wrong time’ scenario. Bronte had been clueless. They could've gotten in and out and she would never have tumbled to what they were doing.

It didn’t escape her that they took Bronte after the alarm had been tripped and the private security force had arrived on the scene. Maybe they’d taken her as a hostage, thinking that would stop them from trying to shoot them down, but not only did something like that require logical thinking, but they also hadn’t made any attempt to utilize her as a hostage, hadn’t tried to contact the ships firing on them at all.

They hadn’t used her as a shield when they were fleeing across the roof either. They’d been protecting her from fire.

She stopped pacing when she reached a view port, staring out into the vast ocean of space. She didn’t believe it was wishful thinking to interpret the abduction as she had, although she was aware that she wasn’t as completely subjective as she needed to be. There were just too many things that pointed to a predetermined abduction to dismiss it.

The cyborgs had hit the med center with the intention of taking ‘a’ doctor, if not Bronte in particular. They’d gone straight to her offices, emptied it, and taken her, as well. They hadn’t even attempted to access any of the other offices. There was nothing even remotely random about it, regardless of what those assholes at the company said to the contrary.

The question was, why? Why Bronte? Why a doctor at all when they were nothing but machines? Why hadn’t they hit the company and made off with records regarding their construction? Why not carry off a tech from the company if they thought they needed something?

“I have determined that there is a sixty percent probability that there is a habitable star system just beyond range of my sensors,” the computer announced abruptly, breaking into Zoe’s thoughts.

* * * *

“I have been thinking,” Kameron announced abruptly.

Damien, who had been perusing the communications from their home world, lifted his head and turned to stare at Kameron blankly, his dark brows drawn together in a frown of puzzlement as he scanned his memory for any indication that Kameron had been speaking to him before, any clue of what Kameron might have been thinking about.

He drew a blank. He could not recall that Kameron had said anything at all to him for several day cycles and the last communication had been regarding the length of time they had until they were relieved of sentry duty and would be allowed to return home. He was fairly certain that they had finished that conversation.

“I have been reviewing the available females,” Kameron continued before Damien could respond, “and I have decided that I will court Dalia. She has only two males in her household.”

“Reuel’s woman?” Damien responded doubtfully.

Kameron glared at him. “The law says she can take four. Reuel cannot object.”

“He will remove your head from your shoulders,” Damien disputed. “Why else do you think Dalia has only two partners? She is beautiful, and a hunter besides being a proven breeder.”
“By law, he cannot object,” Kameron retorted, his face taking on a belligerent expression.

Damien stared at Kameron while he considered the situation. After a few moments, a memory surfaced. It flickered at the edges of his consciousness for a few moments more before it emerged completely. “Is she not the hunter who nearly killed you when we were on Rialto?”

Kameron’s swarthy complexion took on a reddish hue. His frown deepened. “She did not even come close to terminating me,” he said stiffly.

“You came away from that battle with two holes in you and a broken arm,” Damien reminded him.

“Exactly!” Kameron agreed. “Nothing life threatening. She terminated the two who were with me. I escaped while she was occupied with them.”

Damien nodded, then frowned again. “Do you think she will recall that she battled you in the past?”

Kameron shrugged. “If she does, it is certain to make a good impression upon her that she did not succeed in terminating me. There are not many who have faced her in battle and walked away from it.”

Damien considered that and finally nodded again. “A female would not respect a male she could best in a fight. It says that in the mating manual. ‘Females will only agree to breed with strong males’.”

A look of uneasiness flickered across Kameron’s features. “There must be more to it than that.”

Damien shrugged. “It also says that you must be ‘attractive’ to the female and find ‘favor’.”

Kameron pursed his lips. “What do you suppose they meant by that?”

“That is the ‘courtship’ part,” Damien responded, nodding decisively.

Kameron glared at him. “I have accessed the manual, as well,” he retorted testily. “It seemed to me that the female must find the male attractive, first, before she will even allow courtship. How is one to determine that?”

Damien stared at him blankly for several moments, considering it, and then shrugged. “I am not certain.” He reviewed the file for anything that might explain it. “I must suppose that a male can only determine that if the female allows him to court her.”

Kameron shoved to his feet and began to prowl the bridge restlessly. “It also says that a female will study the male with interest if she finds him attractive,” he growled. “I have not noted that any of the females study the cyborgs with interest, have you? They are far too busy studying the hunters. How did the others get a female? That is what I would like to know!”

“Gideon CS46721 and his men, Jerico CS98300, and Gabriel CS61167 have contracted with a human female.”

Kameron jolted to a halt and swiveled around to stare at Damien, his jaw sliding to half mast. “A human female?” he echoed after a prolonged moment of disbelieving silence.
“It is in the news dispatches,” Damien said.

Kameron surged to the console and shoved Damien out of the way. “Where?” he demanded.

Damien glared at him when he’d gotten to his feet again, but finally shrugged. “They were in route to our world. It was the group that was sent on the mission to extract a doctor.”

Kameron flicked a distracted glare at him. “Cyborgs,” he muttered. “Why would a human female accept Cyborgs when even the Cyborg females favor the hunters?”

Damien shrugged, although Kameron wasn't looking at him. “Mayhap they forced her to sign the contracts?” he guessed.

Kameron turned to glare at him. “It says right here that she accepted them!” he said, stabbing a finger at the vid screen. “She was assured that she would be protected if they had used coercion to get her to agree, and she accepted them. She even claimed affection for them!”

Shoving to his feet, Kameron began to pace again. “They are not more handsome than I,” he muttered under his breath. “I am a series 45. I cannot believe that they would have evolved faster than I, so it cannot be that they have a better understanding of the courtship process.”

“Gideon CS46721 has yellow hair,” Damien pointed out. “Mayhap the female found that appealing?”

Kameron halted, staring at Damien for several moments while he accessed his memory banks. Finally, he shook his head. “Jerico CS98300 and Gabriel CS61167 are dark haired as we are. It cannot be that. There are as many of dark hair who have a female as there are who are fair.”

Damien frowned, reluctant to give up his theory, particularly when it soothed his own smarting ego to consider that the fact that he hadn't managed to catch the interest of a female might have to do with coloring. In fact, the more he thought about it, the more certain he was that it must be something like that. Physically, aside from coloring—and of course a variation in facial features depending upon their genetic donors—there wasn’t a great deal of difference in any of the cyborgs. They had been designed to be physically appealing since the company had wanted to insure versatility in their end use, but it was considered most likely that they would be sold to the government to be used for soldiers—which, in point of fact, they had been. That being the case, they had been designed to be physically intimidating, ranging in height from six foot two to six foot five inches and heavily muscled.

They were all prime physical specimens. All documentation pointed to that conclusion, so there should not be any reason why one cyborg would be more appealing than another to the female—unless it had to do with the coloring.

“I am certain it must have been the yellow hair,” he informed Kameron. “They work as a team. Gideon took point—secured the female—and then she accepted them all because they were a squad and she saw the logic of contracting with the squad since she would have been required to accept at least two.”

“It was not the yellow hair!” Kameron growled. “And human females have no logic, so she would not merely have accepted because it was the logical thing to do!”

Damien planted his fists on his hips in a belligerent stance. “What is your theory then?” he demanded.
Kameron eyed the antagonistic stance Damien had taken. “I do not have a theory ... yet. I am still collating the data,” he snarled.

“If you do not have a theory of your own,” Damien said in a low, menacing voice, “then why have you dismissed mine?”

“Because it is not logical!”

“Emotions are not logical!” Damien shot back at him.

“Attraction is not an emotion! It is a physical and chemical reaction between a male and female that denotes compatibility in breeding on an unconscious level! In other words, instinct—because the human is an animal and animals are instinctually drawn to certain attributes that they subconsciously wish to pass to their off-spring! It states that clearly in the manual!”

“Ah ha!” Damien shot back at him triumphantly. “As you say—physical! And, physically, we are all much the same except for a variation in the color of the hair and eyes!”

Kameron studied his companion through narrowed eyes. “My face is not the same as yours. In that respect we are as different from one another as the humans are. And I must say, my gene donor was undoubtedly far more handsome than yours!”

“There is nothing wrong with my face!” Damien snarled. “It is as symmetrical as yours!”

“Except the nose,” Kameron muttered, dismissing the argument and turning to pace again.

Damien lifted a hand to examine his nose self-consciously since there was no reflective surface nearby to check it. “What is wrong with my nose?”

Kameron shrugged. “Aside from the fact it is nearly a millimeter too long for your features to be completely symmetrical? Nothing. Mine, on the other hand, is precisely the right length, besides being aquiline, which is considered both noble and aristocratic by humans.”

Damien dropped his hand and glared at Kameron.

“Your mouth is not entirely symmetrical either.”

Damien ground his teeth together. “I suppose your mouth is also aristocratic?” he said in a credible attempt at sarcasm, although it seemed to pass right over Kameron’s head.

“No. It is considered sensual.”

“By whom?” Damien growled.

“It is in the manual—the part where it describes the more desirable traits in a mate.”

“Since you do not have a mate any more than I, then I will assume that your comprehension of the data is far below one hundred percent.”

“Are you suggesting that my processors are faulty?” Kameron demanded in a low, dangerous growl.

Damien smirked at him. “I do not think that I suggested any such thing.” He ducked the fist
Kameron swung at him and landed a quick jab to Kameron’s perfect—no sensual—lips in retaliation, marring their perfection nicely. They’d just grabbed each other around the throat when the sensor alarm went off.

Both men froze, for a handful of seconds certain that they’d inadvertently slammed into something while they were tussling.

“Proximity breach,” the computer intoned. “Buoy number 8-7-0.”

Kameron and Damien both shot a quick glance at the console before they looked at one another again.

“A craft? Out here?”

“Replacement crew?” Damien hazarded a guess.

Chapter Two

“The replacement crew is not due for another six weeks,” Kameron retorted, releasing his hold on Damien as Damien released him and lurched toward his station.

“Outer quadrant,” Damien verified when he’d located the buoy on his star chart. “Not one of ours ... unless ....”

“Not one of ours,” Kameron confirmed grimly. “There have been no authorized flights in that vicinity.”

“Switching to buoy sensors. It is a small craft—private, not military.”

“Scout drone?”

“Negative. The sensors are picking up a life-form.”

“Fuck!” Kameron snarled. “How did it get so close without tripping any of the other buoys? You are certain it is not a drone?”

“Out of range now,” Damien responded. “It is moving too fast—heading our way. There was no more than a nanosecond that the sensor read it, but I am certain there is a life-form aboard.”

Kameron frowned. “It would not be someone lost—not this far out. Arm the missiles. It can only be human and that cannot be good news. Where there is one ....”

Before he could finish the thought another buoy signaled a proximity alert. The two men exchanged grim looks. “Protocol?” Damien asked.

“Disable or destroy if they cross the dead zone. Get a lock on it. I am tracking a half dozen crafts ‘ghosting’ the lead.” He worked his console. “Cloaking shields up. Let us try to get around behind them.”

“Charlie, brava, alpha,” Damien said into the communicator, “this is tango, tango, beta. We have company. About a half dozen guests. Acknowledge.”

“Mark,” Kameron responded.
Damien glanced down at the clock on his console. “ETA the new position?”

“We will be in position before they can respond.”

“Should we hold?”

Kameron shook his head. “Protocol is specific. If they cross that line we engage. Picking up four more ghosts.”

Damien’s lips tightened. “We will have a war on our hands now.”

Kameron nodded. “Even if we manage to take them all out, they will have our vector. Their last known position will have them at our doorstep. Weapons hot. Locking on targets.”

“Tango, tango, beta this is Charlie, brava, alpha. Confirm.”

Damien glanced at Kameron, one dark brow lifted. “At least a round dozen now. Whoever their scout is, he is good. He has led them right to us. One of ours?”

Damien shook his head. “Reprogrammed? I do not think that. There are none who know our position who would allow themselves to be taken alive.” He returned his attention to his communicator. “Charlie, brava, alpha—confirm a dozen guests. Set to engage.”

“Locked on targets,” Kameron announced. “They will cross the line in ten, nine, eight ….”

“Kameron?” Damien said in a strange voice. “I am picking up something on the scout.”

“… three, two, one …. missile away!”

“It is a female.”

Kameron’s head snapped around so fast he felt a twinge of whiplash. “Fuck!” he snarled, leaping to his feet and racing down the length of the craft to the particle transporter. “Give me five seconds after I hit the deck and snatch me back!”

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Zoe felt a ripple with her sixth sense, the prickle of the fine hairs on the back of her neck. Even as she jolted out of her seat and whirled to face the threat, however, a powerful pair of arms locked around her, tightening and slamming her against what felt like a block wall. Her reaction was instinctive and instantaneous, and even so she had only just managed to lift her foot from the deck, aiming her knee at his groin, when she blacked out. Consciousness returned with a disorienting wave of dizziness, partly, she thought, because she was in motion even as she regained consciousness and the motion had nothing to do with her own steam. The man who’d grabbed her, she dimly realized, was running with her.

A jolt traveled all the way up her spine as the man carrying her paused long enough to abruptly plant her in a seat and then leapt away. “Strap in!” he barked at her as he dropped into a forward seat. “Reacquiring targets.”

Zoe gaped at the man, struggling to ‘reacquire’ her senses. Her training had deserted her, however. Even with a conscious push to penetrate the shock that had enveloped her, all she could seem to do was to stare around herself, dumbfounded, trying to grasp that the craft she was in
wasn’t the same one she’d been in five seconds ago.

The two huge men with long black hair would’ve been a dead giveaway even if not for the fact that the vessel she now found herself in was barebones and clearly military in nature.

Abruptly the word target rang through mind. “Target?” she managed to get out in a croaking whisper.

The second man, the one who hadn’t grabbed her, whipped a penetrating glance in her direction. His straight black brows snapped together over the bridge of his nose. “Strap in!”

Zoe gaped at him. By the time resentment managed to filter through her stunned surprise, he’d returned his attention to his console and missed the dagger glare she sent him. She shot to her feet as her mind, slowly chewing on the clue ‘target’, finally arrived at a dismaying conclusion. “Holy shit! Don’t you dare ...!”

A brief flare of light in the darkness of space made her break off.

“That was my ship!” she gasped in disbelief, her life flashing before her eyes. “Oh my god! You’ve blown up my ship! And it was a lease! What the hell were you thinking?”

She discovered that neither man had done more than glance in her direction and her shocked anger gave way to pure rage. “You bastards! Do you have any idea how fucking much that thing cost?”

“Acquiring new targets.”

“Bogey heading our way. I think they locked on us when I dropped the shields to transport you.”

The man nearest her, the one who’d snatched her off her ship, shot a hand out, grabbed her wrist and jerked. She sprawled across his lap. “Evasive maneuvers!”

Zoe wasn’t certain what she would’ve done if she’d had a chance to react to his highhandedness. Before she could even fully assimilate the fact that she was sprawled across his lap, however, the craft shot into motion so fast the artificial gravity didn’t have the chance to compensate and she was plastered against him. His hand, roughly the size of a dinner plate, was planted firmly in the middle of her back, and she suspected that was the only reason she wasn’t flattened against the back wall of the bridge.

The moment the drag against her subsided, she began struggling to free herself from his grasp. The hand in the middle of her back disappeared. Before she could congratulate herself on winning her freedom, however, the same hand clamped around her waist to hold her as he surged to his feet. He planted her in the seat she’d so lately vacated, grabbed the harnesses and quickly strapped her in. “Stay!” he ordered, pointing a thick finger at her nose.

He’d dropped into his seat again before her shock wore off sufficiently to react.

She glared at his profile. “Just what the hell is going on here?” she demanded. “If this is some sort of military ....”

She broke off as she glanced out the viewport again and saw several more flashes of light and a considerable amount of floating debris—too much, she thought, for her small craft alone. What
sort of military exercise would use live rounds? Actual ships? This far beyond the frontier?

Slowly, it filtered into her mind that what she was watching was not a mock fight, but a deadly earnest one. Dragging her gaze from the battle, she studied the two men for the first time, really looked at them. The easy answers that her mind had slipped into her subconscious to account for her situation crumbled to dust. Their hair wasn't long because they'd been on some remote outpost too long to get a haircut. Their hair was half way down their backs and didn't look as if it had ever been shorn into a military cut—not in years, certainly.

They weren't running around in their skivvies because they were stuck out here in the middle of nowhere and didn't have to worry about uniforms. They weren't wearing skivvies at all. She didn't know what to call what they were wearing, but it barely covered their privates. She could see bare skin all the way up to the cord that secured the thing around their waists.

She could almost feel the cogs in her brain click, click, clicking as she dragged her gaze from the two men and looked around the craft again, realizing abruptly that it was not a craft that had been built for the military but rather a private craft that had been modified for military use. Fear formed a hard knot in her belly for the first time since she'd been snatched from her craft, almost completely ousting the shock that had dulled her senses before.

“Oh my fucking god! Cyborgs!”

Both men flicked a hard glare in her direction. It was enough to galvanize her. Not enough to provide her with a lick of sense, unfortunately. Instinct took over. Her brain formed only one thought—escape. She clawed at her restraints, managing to rip free of them before either cyborg realized she'd lost her mind. She didn't manage much more than that. Before she'd done more than leap to her feet, the bully that had abducted her surged out of his seat and grabbed her. Her instincts kicked in again but less effectively this time. She bucked and kicked and slung her arms wildly, to no avail. He'd snatched her off her feet, making most of her efforts completely ineffectual. He shoved her into the seat again. After a brief struggle, he managed to catch her flying fists and straddled her lap to hold her in place. Gasping for breath, she glared at him furiously, more infuriated by the fact that he wasn't even breathing hard when she felt like she was going to pass out from her own efforts.

“Woman! You will get us all killed!” he snarled.

Before Zoe could think of a suitable retort, the ship lurched, pitching him backwards off of her. Unfortunately, he still had hold of her wrists and when he hit the deck, she landed hard enough on top of him to knock the breath out of her. It took the fight out of her long enough he managed to get them both up, shove her into her seat again, and grab the restraints. This time, however, he knotted them around her instead of using the buckles to fasten the harness.

He stood as soon as he'd finished tying her to her seat and managed to take one step toward his own seat before something slammed into the craft hard enough it sent him flying backwards. He hit the rear wall of the bridge hard enough he left a full body impression in the metal. Zoe was still gaping at the dents in the wall when he staggered past her, dropped into his seat and dragged his own safety harness on.

Chaos had erupted around her in the few seconds that had ticked past like the slow beat of a metronome instead of real time. Time bent. It seemed to take forever to drag her gaze from the dents in the rear wall and turn to stare at the man who'd made them. As her gaze lit on him, however, she saw that he seemed to be moving at twice normal speed while she was trapped at half speed. She stared at him without comprehension for many moments before she turned her
head with an effort and studied the other man—cyborg. His movements were a blur of speed, as well.

“We are hit.”

“Leaking O2.”

“Seal the rear hatch.”

“Can we make it home?”

“Negative.”

“Jump?”

“Not that far.”

Both men turned to stare at her for a long moment.

“C980?” her abductor asked.

The one with the straight, black brows shrugged. “We will know in a moment.”

The blackout caught her unaware. It flickered through her mind that they’d folded. She was shaken back into conscious. It took her several moments to realize that it wasn’t someone shaking her. The entire ship was shimmying so hard it felt as if it was going to shake her bones to powder. She opened her eyes, briefly, then closed them again when she discovered she was being shaken so violently she couldn’t focus her eyes. A wave of nausea followed the brief attempt to see what was going on. Tendrils of fear crept through her awareness as her brain slowly tried to determine what was happening. Piecing together the conversation she’d heard between the cyborgs just before she blacked out with the frenzied rattling of the ship around them, she realized they were caught in the pull of gravity of a planet. Her personal experience with space flight wasn’t vast, but she’d been out enough times to know that the entry didn’t even come close to being routine.

Then, too, one of them had said they were hit. Obviously it wasn’t anything minor.

Which was worse? Imploding in space? Or being splattered on some ball of dirt light years from home? Not that she had a choice in the matter. Apparently, they thought the odds were better in trying to land the crippled craft.

They were cyborgs. They would behave according to logic, wouldn’t they?

That thought almost cheered her until she listened to the few clipped words they exchanged.

“We are coming in hot.”

“The thrusters?”

“Non responsive.”

“Fuck!”

Zoe jumped at the expletive, her eyes popping open of their own accord at the fury threading the
single word in time for her to see her abductor throw off his safety hardness and stagger past her. Dropping to the deck, he caught hold of a recessed latch and then paused, lifting his head to stare at the other cyborg. “Damien, is there pressure in the lower hatch?”

“Affirmative,” Damien responded after a brief pause.

Wrenching the hatch open, the cyborg dropped from sight. She heard noises below, which her mind deciphered as the cyborg battling his way to whatever controls he’d gone to repair.

Then again, maybe not.

The hammering ceased after a few moments. “Try again!”

The voice was muffled by distance, the scream of the air streaming past the hull, and the teeth jarring rattles of everything around them. Zoe's heart slammed against her ribcage and tried to beat its way out of her chest as the ship bucked abruptly. It was followed by a loud crash below and a good deal more cursing. When the cyborg reappeared in the hatch, blood was running down his forehead from a wound at the edge of his hairline. Zoe stared blankly at the bright red trail, wondering a little wildly if she'd been wrong and they weren't cyborgs after all.

He barely glanced at her as he staggered past her again and resumed his seat. “What have we got?”

“Seventy five percent.”

“Can we set it down in one piece?”

The cyborg he'd called Damien shrugged. “I calculate the odds at roughly 87.3 percent.”

“In our favor?”

“Affirmative.”

“Any maneuverability?”

“Not much.”

“Then there is not much point in trying to find an ideal landing spot.”

Zoe jumped when the cyborg abruptly leaned in her direction, then discovered that he'd reached behind her. Twisting her head, she saw he'd brought up a topical map on the vid screen behind her. “At our current trajectory we are looking at jungle and mountains,” he muttered. “Three degrees would give us a plateau.”

He leaned away again, lifting his arm. Zoe was just about to drag in a breath of relief when he caught the knot of her restraints in one hand. The muscles along his arm bunched as he tugged at it. Apparently satisfied, he withdrew his hand and returned his attention to his console.

“Charlie, bravo, alpha this is tango, tango, beta. We have depleted our weaponry, dispatched five unwelcome guests, sustained damage to the vessel. We are setting down on C980. Out.”

Zoe squeezed her eyes closed, wondering how they could be so damned calm about the fact that they were about to crash.
But then they were cyborgs, she reminded herself.

She realized after a moment that they didn’t sound calm at all. They sounded like professionals, holding their emotions in check to do their job. Emotion threaded the words regardless and that thoroughly confused her. Were they men? Or machines?

“Kameron—give me a reading.”

She opened her eyes again to stare at Kameron—her abductor—realizing abruptly that he’d snatched her from her craft mere moments before they’d blown it up.

Why would do that if they were cyborgs?

Didn’t that defy logic?

She must have been close, too close, but why blow up her ship and not blow her up with it?

And who the hell were the other ‘guests’?

* * * *

Every muscle in Zoe’s body clenched reflexively as the ship slammed into the ground. The scream of metal against rock filled her ears deafeningly. Terror clawed at her mind as the craft continued to slide and visions of dropping off the side of the plateau filled her mind. Her heart and breath were so labored with fright by the time the ship finally ceased to skid along the rock that she felt as if she would pass out or throw up.

She felt like doing both. Blackness swarmed around her as she struggled with her frantic heartbeat and ragged breaths, trying to bring both under control. She felt a tug at her restraints. The sound of tearing cut through her drumming heartbeats in her ears and then she felt hands pulling at her, lifting her. Faint and completely disoriented, she wasn’t certain if it was the tug of unconsciousness that prevented her from seeing or her heavy eyelids, but all her mind registered with the effort to force her eyelids up was darkness and a dizzying kaleidoscope of images.

Were they on the dark side of the planet, she wondered as she rested her cheek against the hard surface she was cradled against?

She clutched at him instinctively to catch herself as she was lowered, releasing her grip on the shoulder she’d caught only when she felt a soft, yielding surface beneath her back.

“I can’t see,” she murmured, trying to keep the thread of panic from her voice.

“The ship is damaged. In any case, they may have followed us when we jumped.”

Zoe frowned as she felt his hands moving over her, but his touch was impersonal as he tested her arms and legs and ran his hands lightly over her body and she realized he was checking her for injury. “They who?”

He was silent for so long she thought he wouldn’t answer. “Those who came with you.”

“But ... nobody came with me!” she objected indignantly. “I came alone.”

“You expect me to believe your lies when we are here because our hull was breached by a missile
launched from one the ships following you?”

His voice was grim, accusing. It roused a strengthening surge of anger. She shoved his hands away and sat up. “I don’t give a rat’s ass what you believe! Who the hell are you?”

“I am Kameron CS45001.”

Zoe stared at the darkness where his face was, trying to penetrate it, struggling with the fear that instantly knotted her stomach at his confirmation of her worst fears. “A cyborg!”

“Yes.”

Despite her fear, her mind instantly leapt to Bronte at his confirmation. “Where the hell is my sister, you son-of-a-bitch?”

Chapter Three

Stunned surprise suspended all thought processes for a handful of moments while Kameron stared at her. “Your sister?” he echoed blankly.

“Bronte! Don’t you dare try to tell me you don’t know, damn it! I know you cyborgs took her!”

Kameron sat back on his heels and studied the woman. His night vision was not sufficient for him to study her as he would have liked to, but it was certainly adequate enough to read her expressions. Unless she was very good at subterfuge, both her surprise at his accusation and her anger were genuine. “You are Doctor Bronte’s sister?” he asked in a voice he hardly recognized as his own, scarcely aware, if it came to that, that he’d spoken the question aloud since her announcement had thrown him into complete chaos.

“Kameron! We have trouble! Is the woman injured?”

“Not that I can determine,” Kameron said slowly, rising to his feet. “Company?”

“Affirmative. It will not take them long to locate us.”

He studied the woman a moment longer and finally turned on his heel and followed Damien from the cabin.

Zoe felt her jaw drop in disbelief as she heard their departure. From the noises emanating from the front of the ship, it sounded as if they were trashing what was left of the craft and it occurred to her that they were grabbing whatever they could quickly lay hand to.

It also occurred to her, forcefully, that they had no intention of taking her with them. If they had, they wouldn’t have left her, would they?

Rolling off the bunk, she found her way to the door of the cabin by waving her arms in front of her until she encountered the wall and then feeling along it until she found the opening. She didn’t know how they could see a damned thing. She couldn’t see anything but deeper shadows within shadows. She could only follow their movements by the noise they were making. “I demand that you take me to my sister!”

One of the cyborgs stopped. The other continued as if she hadn’t spoken. She could tell by the cessation of half the noise. Somehow, she knew it was Kameron who had ignored her and Damien
who’d stopped, and that he was staring at her. “Who is her sister?”

“She says that she is Bronte’s sister.”

“I am Bronte’s sister!” she snapped indignantly.

“Gideon’s Bronte? The human female doctor?”

“What do you mean, Gideon’s Bronte? Is that the one that took her?”

“Come,” Kameron said, ignoring the question. Before Zoe could decide whether he had included her in that command, Damien dispelled the notion.

“We are leaving her?”

“She will slow us down. Her people will come for her.”

In her haste to follow them as they opened a hatch and exited the craft, Zoe tripped over something lying in the floor and nearly sprawled out. Cussing under her breath, she hobbled after them, discovering once she’d reached the gang plank they’d lowered that it was actually a good bit lighter outside than inside the vessel—not surprising since the craft was like a cave and it wasn’t completely dark outside.

“You are not leaving me!” she said when she’d paused in the hatchway to get her bearings.

Damien threw a glance at her over his shoulder, but Kameron didn’t even slow up. It was Kameron who responded, however. “Your people are coming. Stay with the vessel. They will find you.”

Zoe trotted down the gang plank. “I don’t know or care who’s coming, damn it! I’ve spent three months wandering around bumfuck nowhere and every dime I have—had to my name to find my sister, and I’m not going back without her!”

Kameron stopped so abruptly and whirled to face her that she damned near plowed into him. There was just enough light to see that he was thoroughly pissed off and damned scary looking. “She is not here … and she would not return with you if you found her. She has contracted with Gideon, Jerico, and Gabriel. She is their woman now.”

Zoe gaped at him. Slowly, angry disbelief usurped her shocked dismay. “You expect me to believe she willingly contracted with … with a pack of cyborgs? Well, I don’t!” she said forthrightly. “I want to see her—talk to her.”

Kameron hunched his shoulders and lowered his face until he was staring at her almost nose to nose. “Humans lie. Cyborgs do not. Stay here,” he snarled through gritted teeth.

Zoe stared uneasily at his back as he turned and stalked off again. She glanced back at the wrecked craft, scanned the sky, and then turned to stare at the cyborgs once more. It scared the hell out of her to think of following them, but she’d risked everything to find Bronte. She wasn’t going to give up now, not when she’d found cyborgs who knew where she was. Briefly, she considered allowing them to think they’d left her and then shadowing them, but she was very much afraid they would know if she tried and beyond that, she wasn’t too keen about being completely alone on an alien world. She trotted behind them at a jog, trying to catch up.
They halted abruptly—not to allow her to catch up to them, but to survey the drop from the edge of the plateau.

She stopped, studying their rigid profiles. Obviously demanding wasn’t going to get her anywhere. “I want to go with you.”

Both of them turned to stare at her.

“Please?” she asked in her best, most ingratiating tone, bestowing her most helpless, pleading look upon them.

The two cyborgs stared at her for a long moment and then glanced at one another. Some silent communication obviously passed between them.

“She will get us killed,” Kameron said grimly.

“I won’t! I swear I won’t do anything to slow you down or … or … anything.”

Kameron studied her suspiciously. She could tell he wasn’t buying the helpless female routine.

Damien looked more susceptible. She smiled at him encouragingly. “I’m a cop. I know how to use a weapon. I can handle myself. I could be an asset.”

Kameron’s expression was clearly disbelieving. “Fine,” he capitulated. Grabbing her abruptly, he jerked her to him and pushed his face into hers. “But I will warn you, human, if you slow us down, or try to give away our position, I will leave you … and I will make certain that you do not follow.”

Zoe gulped. “It hadn’t occurred to me to try anything like that,” she lied.

“If it had not, you would not have assured us that you would not,” he growled.

In spite of all she could do, Zoe felt her face heat. It was a dead giveaway, and she knew it, but she was nothing if not persistent and there was nothing to be done once one started down the road of lies but staunchly defend them. “You were the one that said it,” she reminded him. “After I’ve come all this way to find my sister, I’m certainly not going to screw up my chances by helping whoever that is trying to catch you.”

His lips were still flattened in a thin line of disbelief as he straightened away from her, but he let it drop.

“We will climb down here.”

Zoe stared at him and inched a little closer to the drop off. “You have got to be fucking kidding me!”

“She cannot make this climb. I will carry her.”

Zoe had been on the point of flicking a smile of appreciation in Damien’s direction, but the last comment dried the smile on her lips. She stared at him as if he’d lost his mind.

“I will carry her. You will guard our backs,” Kameron said decisively.
Before she could even think of an objection to such an insane plan, he grasped her wrists and bound them together with something he’d been carrying. She was still reeling with shocked disbelief when he leaned down to hook her arms around his neck, settling her on his back. It was instinct, not thought, that made her coil her legs around his waist as he straightened. “Now, wait just a minute ....”

Her throat closed as tightly as if someone had wrapped their fingers around it and squeezed as he crouched and went over the side. She tightened her arms and legs around him, struggling to breathe past the terror that constricted her lungs. She made the mistake of glancing down, once, and thereafter kept her face burrowed tightly against the back of his head.

“You cannot fall,” he said after a time. “This is why I bound your wrists.”

She nodded instead of pointing out that she’d damned well fall if he did, and what’s more, she would be on the bottom when they landed.

Not that that would make a hell of a lot of difference to her, but she supposed it might cushion his fall somewhat. “I hope you can see better than I can,” she commented shakily when she finally nerved herself to open her eyes a slit.

“I can.”

Strangely enough that didn’t particularly comfort her. “I don’t suppose they gave you mountain goat DNA while they were at it?” she asked after a while, trying for a touch of graveyard humor.

He stiffened slightly. “No.”

“It was a joke.”

“I have no sense of humor. I am a cyborg.”

“Right. I almost fucking forgot that.”

He was silent for several moments. “Did you?”

She was on the point of informing him that climbing down the side of a cliff with a woman hanging from his neck wasn’t the sort of thing human men did—even if they were insane and as strong as a bull—but there was a note of something in his voice that gave her pause. “You don’t ... act like I’d think a cyborg would,” she said tentatively, realizing the moment she said it that it was true.

He startled her by catching the hint of doubt in her voice. “I am a machine with artificial intelligence. You are simply unfamiliar with my kind.”

That was certainly true, in more ways than one. She hadn’t ever encountered a cyborg before. She’d seen pictures of them, studied the schematics, but she’d never interacted with one.

And she’d been interacting with this one from the moment he’d grabbed her off of her ship and transported her onto his.

Talking to him, moreover, was nothing in the world like talking to the computer on her ship. Maybe it was just that he had far superior and more sophisticated programming?

Relief flooded her when she realized they’d reached the ground—thought they had. It was so dark
by now, she could see very little but he’d stopped and she had the sense that his feet were planted firmly on the ground. He verified her guess by crouching down and uncurling her legs from his waist. “Why is the company so deter ....” She broke off as it dawned on her abruptly that the ‘unwelcome guests’ they’d spoken of had to be company ships. The sneaking bastards! They’d set her up! Offered her a reward, given her all the information they had, and planted a damned tracking device on her! Either they’d hoped she would succeed where they’d failed, or the bastards had been dangling her as bait!

“To destroy us?” Kameron finished her sentence for her.

“It's the company that's following us, isn't it?”

He caught her wrists, untangling them, but she sensed that he was studying her face and wondered if he could see as well as it seemed he could. “Most likely,” he said finally instead of accusing her again of having led the pack to them. “If we do not move fast, we will find out.”

Releasing her hands, he turned and moved away. Zoe was so busy trying to work the circulation back into hands that moments passed before she realized the sounds he was making were diminishing rapidly. She lifted her head then, trying to scan the area around her in the darkness. The effort was futile. She couldn’t penetrate the darkness, couldn’t discern much of anything but darker patches in the blackness, which could have been something solid and might be nothing more than a shadow. A mixture of fear and anger welled inside her as the realization hit her that she couldn’t hear Kameron’s movements at all anymore.

The first thought that struck her was that he’d tricked her. He’d pretended to capitulate to her demand to go with them and taken her down the mountain and abandoned her. Before that suspicion could become a certainty, however, she realized Damien had been climbing down behind them—mostly because she heard him.

Relief flickered through her. She had one more chance to latch onto a cyborg to prevent herself from being left alone in the dark, unfamiliar terrain.

She was so intent on listening to Damien’s descent that a shockwave rippled through her when a hand abruptly clamped onto her wrist.

“You said that you would keep up.”

Zoe’s throat closed with painful relief when she recognized Kameron’s voice. From out of nowhere tears stung her eyes and nose. She swallowed convulsively several times to kill the urge, embarrassed that the impulse had struck her at all and vaguely angry because it had and she knew it was because she was more afraid than she’d allowed herself to think. “I was waiting for Damien,” she muttered. “We're not waiting for him?”

“He has no need.”

And she did? Of course she did. It irritated her that he knew that. She wanted to inform him, again, that she could take care of herself, but she decided to refrain when it occurred to her that he might take her up on that.

Instead, she followed him the best she could, chaffing at her helplessness in the situation. After she’d tripped and plowed into him the second or third time, he stopped abruptly. “You are making too much noise.”
His voice sounded neutral, but she suspected there was an accusation in there. “Sorry,” she said stiffly. “I’ll try to be more careful. It's so dark I can't see worth a shit.”

She jumped when his hand touched her face.

“You cannot see at all.”

There didn't seem to be much point in trying to deny it, but she sure as hell saw no point in admitting it either.

“We will make better time if I carry you. You are too small to keep up.”

She eyed him resentfully even though she knew it was nothing but the truth. As long as his legs were she would've had a hard time keeping up with him if she hadn't been blind. It still rankled to find herself slotted in the ‘helpless, useless female’ file when she’d worked so hard for years to gain the respect of her fellow officers on the force. If she had to point out that she wasn't either, though, she might as well save her breath.

Taking her silence as acquiescence, he guided her hand to his shoulder and crouched down expectantly. Uttering a long suffering sigh, she placed her other palm on his back and felt her way up to his shoulder for a grip. Leaning in to him, she leapt up on his back. He hooked his arms beneath her thighs to help support her as she wrapped her legs around him and then he straightened.

She hadn't counted on her heightened awareness of him once she was perched on his back, mostly, she supposed, because she had been in a constant state of shock, fear, and total chaos since the moment he'd grabbed her on her ship. She hadn't been in any state to cope with the barrage, much less to focus on any one thing. Enveloped in darkness, she couldn't un-focus her attention from him.

She certainly hadn't thought of it as a caress at the time, but her palm tingled from the feel of his flesh beneath her hand as she’d settled it on his bare back and searched for his shoulder by feel. His skin had felt like—warm silky—smooth and soft to the touch. At the same time, the muscles beneath it had rippled at her touch, had felt as hard as granite. His long hair, which tickled her face, was as silky, she suspected far softer to the touch than her own.

He smelled—wonderful. She was lightheaded from trying to drag his elusive, tantalizing scent into her lungs to identify it before she even realized what she was doing. Beneath the barrage of foreign scents that clung to his skin, though—of soap, the leather of his chair, the faint tang of synthetic materials that made up every surface within the craft that he’d brushed against—she detected the faint, musky scent of the man himself, the smell that was as uniquely his as his fingerprints. Like wispy tendrils of mist it meandered through her system as she sucked it in and finally coiled low in her belly and began to radiate a warming glow through her.

She shifted uncomfortably against him, trying to throw off the effects of it, but that only made it worse, made her abruptly conscious of the triangle of her femininity pressed intimately against him—her breasts and her sex. Her nipples stood erect at the slight movement, forming hard little points that dug into his back. Worse, the warmth in her belly seemed to be flowing outward from her sex, the heat condensing into moisture.

She wasn't certain if her sex just seemed to grow hotter and more moist or if it was only that she abruptly became acutely self-conscious about it, but once her focus shifted to her cleft she couldn’t get her mind off of it.
She hoped to god it didn’t feel as hot and wet to him as it felt to her!

“Be still!” he growled when she shifted again.

She subsided, realizing there was no way she could hold on to him and put any distance at all between them. She debated demanding he put her down, but was reluctant to do that for fear he’d notice why she wanted him to, or ask why.

Giving in to the inevitable, she relaxed against him, shifting her arms for a more comfortable hold and trying to think about something else, anything else.

It occurred to her abruptly that her mind, and everything else, was screaming ‘man’ when he wasn’t a man at all. Why was she aroused—and there was no denying that—when she might just as well have been plastered against the hood of a car? A cleansing unit? A computer, for god sake!

Because he didn’t feel like a machine.

She hadn't adequately considered what she was up against, she realized. In spite of everything, while she’d been collecting information to help her find Bronte, in the back of her mind she’d thought ‘machine run amok’. She knew from reading up on it that they were not metal men as the old androids were. Basically, they were human droids. Internally, they were all machine—a titanium alloy chassis that made them like a walking, talking forklift, a processor for a brain that meant they could carry around and process more data, faster, than the most brilliant genius. Externally, they were all human, but even that ‘weakness’ had been offset by nanotechnology. Similar to the human immune system, they carried nanobots, except that their ‘immune’ system repaired damage to both their organic and inorganic physiology many times faster than antibodies.

She'd still expected them to sound like her onboard computer, smell like synthetics, feel like a machine, and move with the awkward jerkiness of the old androids.

The fact that none of that was the case had totally thrown her for a loop.

The rationalization cooled her wayward libido. It didn't get rid of it completely. She still felt the discomfort of unappeased arousal, but she could dismiss that. After all, she reasoned, it had been a while since she’d had sex. It was understandable that she would react as she had to what appeared to be a very virile male.

That thought led her to the company and she wondered abruptly why they'd mass produced something so lifelike as the cyborgs to begin with. Playing at being gods, she wondered? Was there any logical reason for them to have developed the cyborgs as they had? Or had they done it just because they could? Money was undoubtedly the main motivating factor, but she suspected egotism had figured into it. Quite possibly, it had even been cheaper to produce them with so much organics. They could grow that, after all, in their labs—all of the biological materials they'd used in the making of them.

She didn't buy their hype about making them so human-like to make people accept them more easily and be more comfortable around them. She supposed it did, but she didn’t think that had been their motive.

On the other hand, she knew a lot of them had ended up in bordellos for both men and women.
She wished that thought hadn't popped into her mind, because the moment it did, she also remembered that they'd been designed and programmed to be pleasure bots because it was easier and cheaper to mass produce them for any situation than to be design specific.

War is all that any of them have ever known, but the strategies the cyborgs, Kameron, Damien, Gavin, and Kyle, are familiar with don't seem to work nearly as well in their campaign to win Zoe. She's human, after all and completely unpredictable.

Zoe isn't certain what to make of the cyborgs—beyond the fact that they're seriously big and dangerous—and quite possibly four of the most handsome males she's ever seen. She's their enemy. They've made that abundantly clear. So why is it that they've suddenly taken the notion to convince her to contract with them?

More importantly, why is that she finds herself wanting to when it's probably the worst idea she's ever had?

Length: Epic Novel
Genre: Futuristic Romance
Rating: Erotica

Author Kaitlyn O'Conner was first published by Harlequin Enterprises in 1994 under the pen name of Madris Dupree after nearly a decade of "apprenticeship"—struggling to learn the business, the marketing, and the writing skills necessary for a career in commercial fiction. That published book, a historical, (which was actually her fourth attempt at a marketable piece of fiction) was successful, however, selling nearly 80,000 copies in the U.S., Switzerland, France, and the U.K. She writes various genres (or sub-genres since she always writes romance!) under different pen names. She has written science fiction/futuristic/fantasy under several—Kaitlyn O'Connor, in honor of her Scottish grandmother, Lyssa Hart, and Angelique Anjou (for the French ancestry), all combined here now under the single pen name Kaitlyn O'Connor.

Other titles by this author:
Alien Breeders II: Deep Penetration
The Assassin's Blade
Atalantium I: Bride of Atlantis
Atalantium II: Neptune's Daughter (Coming Soon)
Atalantium III: Maiden of Atlantis (Coming Soon)
Babylon: The Rebel's Woman
The Barbarian Prince (Coming Soon)
Beastmen of Ator: Alien Abduction
Below
Breeder
Breeder Project
Chaos Forged
Children of Andromeda: Lords of the Sea
Conquest Earth: Prince Galen
Cyberevolution I: The Awakening
Cyberevolution II: Total Recall
Cyberevolution III: Abiogenesis
Cyberevolution IV: Cyborg
Cyberevolution V: Illumination
Cyberevolution VI: Cyborg Nation
Cyberevolution VII: Rules of Engagement
Dark Solstice
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Dragonlord
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Genus-Unknown: Adaptation
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Lords of Mayhem
Mirror, Mirror: A Real Man
Night Raven
The Ninth Orb
The Portal
Return to Eden

Be sure to check out this author's other pen names Madelaine Montague and Kimberly Zant
I liked this book, but not as much as Cyborg Nation. There was romance and...