



ASCENSION SAGA: 6

INTERSTELLAR BRIDES® PROGRAM

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

GRACE GOODWIN

ASCENSION SAGA, BOOK 6

INTERSTELLAR BRIDES® PROGRAM:
ASCENSION SAGA

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Interstellar Brides® Program: Ascension Saga Book 6
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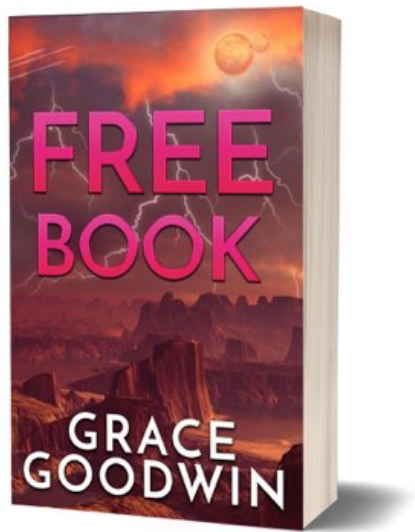
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PROLOGUE



Queen Celene, Aleran Dungeon

THIS NEWEST PRISON cell they transported me to was in Mytikas. I couldn't see outside, as there were no windows in the square room, but I knew what home smelled like, even after all these years.

The Aleran flowers that surrounded the citadel grew randomly throughout the city in a multitude of colors. The petals close to the honored building were nearly translucent and delicate. But farther away, they changed based on the environment in a way our scientists had never understood.

I knew it was the citadel itself that made them change, that they were part of the consciousness of the intelligence that designed them. Strange as it sounded, they were the citadel's nerves within the city.

And their scent was unmistakable. Sweet. Comforting.

Home. It smelled like home.

A fresh set of clothing awaited me once more, and I didn't bother arguing, changing quickly into what looked like the uniform of a low-level cleric. The basic black pants were comfortable, the white, silver and black pattern on the tunic symmetrical on the outside. Within, it was soft and warm. Thank the goddess they were warm. The dress they'd made me wear on the spaceship for a while had been thin and cold.

But then, making me uncomfortable seemed to be part of their plan. Until now. For included with the uniform were a thick pair of socks and comfortable boots.

I could have been preparing for a walk in the mountains with my husband on Earth.

Adam Jones. I missed him. Knew he was so far away. Unreachable. The emptiness inside me was even more profound than when my Aleran mate, the king, had been murdered.

That had been a young love. Passionate, but short-lived. We'd only been mated a few months when the attack occurred. When he'd been killed, and I fled Alera for Earth.

I'd mourned my mate and what could have been, what *should* have been. Time softened the ache and the goddess had put Adam in my path. A surprising twist in my destiny. With Adam, our love had been aged by years of struggle and shared victory. By raising three daughters. By life. He was part of me, and the longer I sat, isolated by my captors, the more my thoughts turned not to saving Alera, but to him.

I would leave Alera when the time came, step down and allow Trinity and her sisters to lead if that's what I had to do to feel his arms around me once more. If he could not come to me, I would return to Earth. To my life there.

He was my true mate. Not in the Aleran way, but in every way that counted. Heart, body and soul.

The door slid open and I hastily wiped the tear from my cheek. I was ruthless with my emotions so not to show weakness to these traitors.

"More news about your daughters, Celene. Would you like to hear?" A cleric I'd never seen before walked into the room; behind him, the scar-faced man stood with a scowl and his arms crossed.

Damn it, he was baiting me, but I could not resist. I was desperate to know how my girls were doing. "Yes."

He came in and sat on the small bed I'd been given, so close our thighs touched. I scooted away from the contact and he chuckled, as if my disgust amused him. They had yet to touch me sexually to get me to talk. I had to assume, since I was fully clothed, even down to boots, that kind of torture would not begin now.

I wondered why none had tried to force themselves upon me. To get me pregnant. It would be the easiest way to ensure their DNA would become royal. Perhaps they discovered from the ReGen wand scans that I was no longer fertile. For once, early menopause was a blessing.

"Your daughter, Faith, was arrested by the Optimus unit and headed for interrogation."

He knew her name. There was no reason to deny her existence now. But there was no reason to respond either.

Whatever he meant to tell me would be designed to torment me with worry. A worry I welcomed.

“She was arrested for snooping through Lady Jax’s private rooms. However, the Jax family refused to press charges, and Thordis Jax himself came to remove her from custody.”

Again, I waited. More was coming, I could feel the tension thrumming through his body like an electric charge in the air.

“Your daughter then returned to their home, and now Lord and Lady Jax are both dead. Poisoned.”

Lord and Lady Jax were dead?

“That is troubling news,” I said, spitting out the words as I considered the implications.

“Yes. Your daughter will not fare well in our care, I’m afraid.”

I glanced up at him. “What are you talking about?”

“She was a traitor who seduced Thordis Jax into bringing her into his bed and his home where she poisoned his parents. Her plan was to set up his well-respected family to fall and it worked. She will answer for her crimes, Celene.”

Faith, poison people? Maybe with her horrible cooking. People would go hungry because it was always burnt, but kill them? Impossible. And so I said as much.

“She did not poison anyone.”

A new voice came from the doorway and the scar-faced man stepped aside. It grated on my nerves even more now than it had when we were both young. My cousin, Lord Wyse, now leader of the Optimus unit, if his clothing was

any indication, stood before me with the same emotionless face I remembered. "Faith Jones Herakles is a traitor and a murderer, Celene. I will make sure to send her your regards."

"No!" I didn't want her to worry about me if she were held by the Optimus unit. She had enough on her mind as it was.

The cleric rose and walked out the door, leaving me with my cousin.

"I should have tried harder to kill you, Celene. You're like a needle in my boot, a constant irritation."

"You haven't changed, Coburt. Still sneaking around in the shadows like a snake." We'd grown up together. While he was a decade older, royal circles were small.

"Where is Destiny?" he asked.

I froze. Shit. How did he know Destiny's name? I shook my head and stared at the wall, giving him nothing. If he didn't know where she was, then she was still safe.

"I had men on Earth, Celene. They asked around. I know you have three daughters. I know Faith and Destiny are half-human twins. I know your pathetic human male is hiding from your own government, waiting for word from you."

"Don't you touch him, Coburt, or I will send you to the depths of the lowest hells myself," I hissed, my hands clenched in my lap. He had lived with me for over twenty-five years, knew Aleran ways, at least tangentially. But he was still an Earthling.

His laugh was not reassuring. "As of an hour ago, you are no longer my problem."

The door slid closed behind him.

What the hell did that mean?

I dropped onto my side on the thin cot, pulling the blanket up over me.

Damn him.

Damn him to hell.

I hoped my daughters killed him slowly.

And they would succeed. Coburt Wyse would die.

I simply could not think of anything else.