



# ASCENSION SAGA: 4

INTERSTELLAR BRIDES® PROGRAM

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# GRACE GOODWIN

# **ASCENSION SAGA, BOOK 4**

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INTERSTELLAR BRIDES® PROGRAM:  
ASCENSION SAGA

GRACE GOODWIN



*Interstellar Brides® Program: Ascension Saga Book 4*  
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## **PREQUEL**



Twenty-seven years ago Queen Celene was forced to flee Alera with her unborn child. Read the story of her escape to Earth in The Ascension Saga prequel — for free!

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## PROLOGUE



*Queen Celene of Alera, Transport Room, Location Unknown*

THE MALE I'd begun to think of as a hyena shoved me onto the transport platform, all pretense of trying to play nice... gone.

I hid my smile. There were few things in the universe that could put that look on an arrogant male's face—and being bested by a female—or three—was one of them.

"Where are you taking me?" I asked, trying to keep my voice mild and sweet.

"Do not speak, or I will wrap my hands around your neck and squeeze until you can no longer bother me."

I should have held my tongue. I wasn't stupid. But I was proud of my daughters. Proud of my people. Proud of the fact that I'd not only survived this monster and his master's evil plot to eliminate my entire family's bloodline, but had returned to Alera with not one, but three daughters. Strong



young women. Stronger, even, than me. “Four spires light the sky. A new queen is poised to take the throne,” I commented, not remaining silent at all. “Your master has failed. Do you really think he’ll allow you to live to speak of it?”

With a shove, he pushed me down onto the cold, black surface of the transport pad, flinging me so that I fell to my hands and knees before I could catch myself.

It hurt, but I placed my palms on the smooth surface and pushed myself into a sitting position so I could look up at him through the long strands of blonde hair hanging, unkempt, over my face. I’d been healed from their last bout of... evil. I was uninjured, but a bathing tube was a distant memory.

His face was pale, the blood gone from his lips. The hooked scar that ran from the corner of his mouth down, past his jawline, was an old one. Faded and puckered, I doubted the mercenary could smile, even if he wanted to.

“You know nothing, female,” he hissed, spittle flying from his mouth. “Not my name, nor the identity of my master. You have no idea where you are.”

That was true, and not true. I knew I was being transported off this ship. I knew we were orbiting above my home planet of Alera. And I knew that my daughters continued to defy the odds and survive. And keep peace on Alera. Was he truly that surprised by my words?

“Have you not thought this through? What did you think would happen to you in the end?” I asked.

“And what do you think will happen to you if my master does not acquire the royal jewels?”

I gave a bland shrug. "It no longer matters." That was also the truth. My daughters' spires were lit above the royal city. The entire planet knew of their existence, and their place in line to the throne. Trinity, Faith and Destiny. They each knew where the royal jewels had been hidden. There was no way I would betray my people and hand over such a powerful symbol to an enemy.

"Perhaps not. But since you won't cooperate with me, you're being relocated—to a less hospitable prison."

I could only imagine. There were ancient dungeons beneath almost every family palace as well as the police and Optimus unit. Also, larger temples run by the Clerical Order. Dozens of possibilities pushed to the front of my mind, all equally likely and impossible to monitor from the outside.

But at least I'd be on the ground on Alera.

Standing on shaky legs, I crossed my arms and remained silent.

He chuckled as he walked off the platform toward the control panel that would send me goddess knew where. All I could do was lift my chin and hope for the best.

I would not give up the jewels. They were a powerful symbol of sovereignty, passed down generation after generation from the original queen of Alera. They were thousands of years old, and had graced the neck of every queen since our history began.

No ruler could appease the people without the black gemstones proudly around her neck. The gems had been fashioned into a necklace, designed for female rulers, and I knew, one day, they would rest against Trinity's warm skin

and would sing to her in welcome, as they had to me, part of the citadel's life force, or energy, or awareness. I never truly understood exactly *what* lived in the citadel's walls, or perhaps, the ultimate term would be spirit. The spirit of the gems would sing to her in welcome.

They would not sing for a stranger, nor for anyone deemed unworthy.

They would be categorically useless to anyone who stole them, or wore them if they did not have royal blood.

But as a symbol to the people? I could think of nothing on Earth that was powerful enough to compare. A queen without these gems was like the mighty comic book heroine, *Wonder Woman*, without her sword and golden lasso. The people would resist accepting anyone as their ruler without one of the spires at the citadel coming to life.

But, even if my enemies could convince the people that they had no choice, that all true royal females were dead, they would never accept the absence of the royal jewels.

Hard to break thousands of years of tradition and crown a king, especially without the iconic symbol of power around his neck. A male? Wearing the jewels?

Never. I had seen to that. And now my daughters would carry the bloodline, defend our planet. The citadel would help them. They would become powerful beyond what these fools could even imagine. The three of them together? Unstoppable. .

I stood tall as the blinding cold agony of transport enveloped my body.

The last thing I saw and heard over the hum of the machines was the scarred man's laughter.