



HIS

# VIRGIN BRIDE

INTERSTELLAR BRIDES® PROGRAM:  
THE VIRGINS - 4

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

# GRACE GOODWIN

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VIRGINS - 4

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by Grace Goodwin

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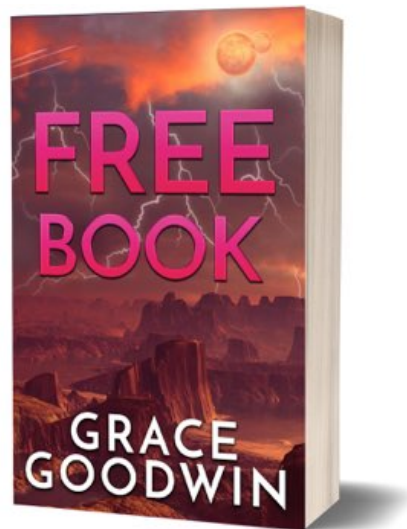
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*K*atie, *The Touchstone, Planet Everis*

HOURS OF PREPARATION. Days of seduction. Flirting and batting my eyelashes and pretending that my soul was as pure as my virgin body.

All for nothing. My beautiful ball gown was in a heap on my soft bedroom carpet two floors below. The hours spent on my hair and makeup, nothing but a huge disappointment. Bryn had escorted me to the ball, told me I looked beautiful, danced with me. Held me. Tormented me with his body, his scent, the heat he allowed to show in his gaze when he thought I wasn't looking. But when it was time to take things to the next level? Nothing.

Again.

"Stubborn jerk." The words were barely a whisper, but I couldn't be more committed to their truth if I'd shouted them from the top of Mount Everest back on Earth. The

Elite Hunter, Bryn of Everis, was *mine*, even if he wasn't ready to admit it. I'd dream shared with him. The marks in our palms heated whenever we drew close. What more proof did he want?

I stared at the man sleeping soundly in his bed a few short steps away. Yes, it was crazy to be here in his room—even worse, roaming the unmated males' floor of the Touchstone in just my nightgown. What was the saying? Desperate times called for desperate measures. And I was desperate. And needy. *And horny.*

I slid the thin straps off my shoulders and let the material fall silently to the floor so I stood naked in the light of the two moons. They were beautiful, one a small silver disk in the sky, held a prison colony. The other was the palest green, the color said to be caused by miles and miles of farming structures built into the moon. Both moons were glowing, the light on Bryn's face making him look too beautiful to be real.

Ethereal. Mystical. I wasn't one for romantic notions, but as I stared at his sleeping form brought to life by dips and shadows of moonlight, he looked like something out of legend. A vampire. A god.

Too perfect to be real.

I'd sneaked into his room, the formal ball over hours ago. The dancing over. The dreaming?

Over.

I was tired of trying to seduce him in the dreams we shared. I didn't want dreams. I wanted reality. I wanted to touch and taste and feel.



Stalking to the side of the bed on silent feet, I stared down at Bryn, the man who made me ache and want and burn. Made the mark on my palm pulse.

He'd given me a chaste kiss after the ball, walked me to the suite of rooms I shared with two other brides, Lexi and Dani, and ordered me to go to bed. Ordered! As if I were going to be docile and obedient when all I wanted was to be with him. Under him. Maybe then I'd let him be in charge. My nipples hardened, either from the cool air of the silent room or from the idea of a bossy Bryn in bed.

I ignored his command. Didn't go to bed. I didn't want to dream. Even in dreams he was implacable, refusing to touch me. We'd been dream sharing ever since I'd transported to Everis, the connection strong, just like my friend Lexi shared dreams with her Marked Mate, Von.

But Von acted as a mate should. He touched Lexi. Kissed her. Gave her pleasure and made her feel special, desirable, wanted. Lexi's virginities were being taken one by one in the sacred way of the Everians, the way Officiate Treva had told all the Interstellar Brides about upon their arrival at the sacred site known as the Touchstone, where new brides from the Interstellar Brides Program were sheltered and protected until they accepted their mates' claim.

A Hunter, a sexy-as-hell alien mate, was supposed to find me, seduce me, and claim my body in the sacred order of three. He was supposed to be so drawn to me that he didn't have a choice, he would *need* to touch me. He'd first claim my mouth. Then my ass. And only when I agreed to be his forever, he would claim my pussy, filling me with his seed.

The idea made me clench my inner walls. Ever since that first dream, I'd ached for him, yet he left me wanting.

*Stubborn jerk.*

No one had ever wanted me that badly. The way Von wanted—no, needed—Lexi. The way an Everian was supposed to want his mate. Just the way he looked at her made my chest ache for the same from Bryn. Hell, no one had ever really wanted me at all. Not my parents, who'd always been more interested in their next fix or their next party rather than the two children they'd brought into the world. Not my brother, who'd found his real family in the ruthless motorcycle club and had died for them last year on a deserted dirt road two counties over. A drug deal gone bad was all the cops would say. Not my loser ex-boyfriend who only wanted me for my lock picking and carjacking skills. Not the string of foster parents who'd seen nothing but a smart-mouthed teenage girl and counted down the days until my caseworker could find a new place for me to live.

I'd left all that behind. Dead and buried, light years away. I was ready to try, one more time, to trust, to open my heart and take a chance. That decision had been a painful one. Trust was *hard*. Thankfully, with Lexi and Dani, my fellow Interstellar Brides and new best friends, the risk had been more than worth it. I had friends now, real friends. It had actually been easy. They were both nice, both like me, nervous about being sent to a new planet. A new life where no one knew anything about me or my past. I could start over. Try to be *open* to a relationship. No, a mate.

But with Bryn? If we dream shared and my mark flared whenever he was around, that meant we were Marked Mates. That gave me a little extra nudge, a little spark of hope that I could risk my heart with him.

But no. He'd left it beating, but bleeding. Why? Why was he being such a stubborn...a stubborn jerk about it? I wanted to hate him. I wished I could just shrug my shoulders and move on. But no matter how sternly I lectured the foolish organ, my heart refused to listen.

*Mine.* That was the only word my heart could speak when I looked at Bryn. I hadn't believed Officiate Treva's words. At first. But the first dream sharing had changed that. Like a switch had been flipped, I was the one focused solely on making Bryn mine. I never backed down from anything, and I wasn't about to start now, even if that fight was with a big, brawny alien.

If he was going to keep me at arm's length—much too far for me to get anywhere near that big cock of his—I was determined to change that. All I had to do was push him. He wanted me, I could see it. In his eyes, in the bulge in his uniform pants. We dream shared. He had to be feeling all the same things I was. So why didn't he touch me? Claim me? We were Marked Mates. Something that everyone on this stupid planet told me was rare and special. *A gift.* A gift he *refused.*

Bryn was mine but would not touch me, despite the fact that we were sharing dreams, that the mark on my hand burned, that my entire body *burned* for him. I had taken a huge risk coming to this planet, choosing to become a bride rather than rot in prison for three to five years only to hit

the streets again after. I'd taken an even bigger risk, listening to Warden Egara's promises of a fresh start, a clean slate.

*The past is the past, Katherine. You can be anyone you want to be. Start over.*

What a line of bullshit that turned out to be. Sure, Lexi and Dani thought I was a Midwestern princess, a farm girl from Wooster, Ohio with a golden fucking halo around my head, a woman who went to church every Sunday and volunteered at the homeless shelter every week. I had remade myself, and kept my secrets.

And Bryn didn't want me anyway.

Like a ghost, I slipped under the covers, moved closer to him. I feared Bryn would wake and toss me out, but I'd been in his dreams so often that it felt natural to be next to him, my naked flesh pressed to his muscled heat. Perfect.

As if sensing my presence, he moved toward me, pulling me closer when I draped myself over him and rested my head on his chest. The erotic scent of musk and man surrounded me and I breathed it in, breathed *him* in. Felt the beat of his heart, the solid feel of his chest beneath my cheek.

I closed my eyes to hold back tears as I knew the only way he'd hold me was if he was asleep. The connection was real. I felt it with every fiber of my being. Real, yes, but it wasn't forever since he wouldn't claim me. And I was willing to do almost anything to change that, to force his hand, to discover the truth. My mate had secrets. That had to be the reason he kept pushing me away. Damned secrets. Secrets that kept him away from me.

Enough of that shit. If he wasn't going to claim me, then I was going to claim *him*. That was why I was here, naked. To take matters into my own hands. No, to take his cock into them. To feel how big he was, how hot and hard. To stroke him, then to take him into my mouth. I had no idea what I was doing, but I was going to do it, even if I fumbled.

I kissed my way down his chest, the smattering of dark hair soft and springy against my lips. I pushed the sheet down as I moved lower and he groaned in his sleep, his hands tangling in my hair. I knew from talking to Officiate Treva that the Hunter would fuck my mouth first to start the claiming process, slide his cock deep into my throat and mark me there before he would touch me anywhere else.

If Bryn wouldn't give me what I wanted, I would just have to take it. And *it* was growing bigger and bigger before my eyes. Even with the minimal light in the room, I could see his cock.

I'd seen people fuck. The streets and the rough inner-city life didn't gloss over anything. These encounters—the casual, meaningless feel of them—had made it easy to say no to men. I didn't want a quick fumble in an alley. I didn't want to get on my knees and give a guy what he wanted just to make him happy. And I sure as hell wasn't going to trade my body for drugs. I'd seen too many people ruined walking that path, their lives snuffed out like a candle in a hurricane. No, it had been easy to pretend, to hide the fact I was a completely untouched virgin. My pussy hadn't warmed for any guy. Ever.

Until Bryn.

Now, I was willing—and eagerly wanted—to climb in his bed and suck his cock. Not for favors or payment. Not for short-term gratification or a displaced sense of personal worth. No, he was my mate and I was claiming him. But this wasn't Earth. This was Everis and if I wanted Bryn, I had to play by the rules. If that meant taking that big, hard cock into my mouth, licking it like an ice cream cone and then tasting every inch of it, then I'd do it. I wanted to. My mouth watered with the need to do so. I needed it. My body ached to find out his flavor, the feel of him against my tongue, how wide he'd stretch open my mouth.

And so I continued on, closer and closer. His skin was warm and smooth, hot against the cool press of my lips. I lifted my head, hovered directly over the broad crown. I had no idea it could stick straight out from his body, that it would almost aim right for me, seemingly knowing exactly where it wanted to be. In my mouth.

With a wicked grin, I parted my lips and sucked him down, swallowing around his huge cock until the head bumped the back of my throat. My eyes flared wide and I moaned at how big he was, how much more of him I couldn't take. He was awake now, the tension in his thighs making them feel like steel beams beneath my palms. The fist in my hair tightened as he protested, but I sucked harder, nipped his cock with my teeth in warning. He was mine, and I wasn't giving him up.

"Katie?" he growled. "What the fuck are you...?"

I scraped his thighs lightly with my nails on the way to cupping his heavy balls. I rolled them between my fingers as I continued to work him with my tongue. I had to hope

his stalled question was because he was surprised to find me on his cock instead of because I wasn't pleasing him. I hollowed out my cheeks, sucked as I slid my tongue over the pulsing vein. He stopped protesting then, using his grip in my hair to raise and lower my head, to fuck my mouth.

He was using me for his pleasure and for the first time, I felt powerful.

"Fuck," he grated out through clenched teeth.

*God! Yes!* He was losing control, trembling beneath me. Just as I'd imagined. Exactly what I wanted. I was done waiting for him to work through whatever issues he had. He was mine, and it was about damn time he accepted it.

I worked him hard, feeling him swell in my mouth just before his muscles tightened further. He groaned as he came, spurting hotly. I swallowed him down when his cum coated the back of my throat, keeping every drop of him, greedy for it.

Before it was over, he'd lifted me off him and flipped me onto my back. I gasped at the ease with which he maneuvered me and then once again when his big hands slid up my thighs and spread them apart. He settled his hips between mine with another groan.

"You shouldn't have done that." He looked down at me, his dark eyes met mine and I couldn't be sorry. Guilt? None. I had his tangy flavor on my tongue.

"What? Take your cock in my mouth?" I licked my lips and he tracked that small movement. "Have you claim my first virginity?"

He groaned as his eyes raked down my body. Even though my tone was street-tough, I wouldn't retreat now.

“You’re mine, Bryn,” I said. I had a soft bed at my back and a hard-bodied Hunter on top of me. He wasn’t the only one who could be possessive.

“Fuck. You’re naked.” He closed his eyes and lowered his forehead to my stomach as if he were in pain instead of just coming. “Katie, you don’t understand.” He kissed my skin, over and over, making me heat to the boiling point, making me squirm beneath him despite the fact he held me pinned—and he wasn’t moving. “You think I don’t want you?” He sighed heavily, his warm breath fanning over my skin. “You don’t understand. I’m trying to save you.”

Save me? From what? Orgasms? I licked my lips again and his eyes narrowed with the action. I still tasted him and the need for him—already desperate—pushed me to be even bolder. He might have come, but I hadn’t.

I opened my legs wider, hoping he’d scent the wet welcome of my pussy. I knew I was wet, could feel it on my thighs. I ached there, throbbed. I’d never been fucked. I was, indeed, a virgin. But I wanted him there, deep inside, stretching me open, filling me up for the first time. His fingers. His mouth. His huge cock, which I wondered how it would fit. “Bryn. Please.”

I’d never begged before in my life. Never stooped to giving someone so much control over my emotions. Until now. Until him.

With another growl, he moved down my body until his mouth hovered over my clit. There he paused, looking up at me, his face clearly visible in the moonlight. The sight of him between my splayed thighs was so damn hot. So was the breath he fanned across my eager flesh. “Oh, I’ll please



you. Are you sure though? I can't claim you, Katie. Not yet. This is all I can give you."

"Why?" The question nearly ripped my heart from my chest, but I had to understand.

His lips were soft, lingering on the sensitive skin over my hip. His hands roamed my sides, tracing my curves like I was a goddess, like he was entranced with every rounded line. "I can't stay here with you. I have one more mission. I'm not free to claim you."

I tried to understand what he was saying. A mission? He had to leave? Go where? I asked those questions aloud.

"I'm a Hunter and I was assigned a new hunt by the Sevens prior to our arrival here at the Touchstone. Before you. I can't say no, Katie. I have to go."

The Sevens? Since my transport, I'd read a bit about this planet, sat through hours of talking about Everian politics, culture and history with others here at the Touchstone. The Sevens was the collective term for the government, the rulers of this planet. There were seventy-seven senators and seventy-seven judges that made all the laws. They were led by a council of seven made up of the most powerful members from each council. The leader changed every year, elected by the joint councils to be the planet's Prime, a term the leaders of the Interstellar Coalition understood and respected. The council of seven held the most powerful people on Everis. They were like gods on this world. More powerful than any President or royal on Earth could dream of being because Everis ruled over several star systems.

Their Hunters were the most respected and feared assassins and bounty hunters in the entire Interstellar

Coalition, which was made up of over two hundred worlds. They were sent on the most dangerous missions. Reconnaissance. Hostage rescue. Tracking escaped criminals. They were like all-purpose Black Ops in space, supposedly having an innate ability to find their quarry. The silent and deadly arm of the Interstellar Coalition Fleet.

And my mate, my Bryn, the perfect alien looking up at me from between my parted thighs, had been selected from all the other Hunters on the planet by the Sevens? Just how dangerous was he? I knew he was fast, strong, fearless. He walked like a man who knew how to handle himself, someone no one else would dare threaten. I recognized the look, the power. I'd seen it before on Earth, on the rough streets and back alleys. If I were being totally honest, it made my pussy clench with heat. He was dangerous, but so was I. And the hard edges to him only made me want him more.

But this wasn't my old neighborhood back in Cleveland. This was outer space. And this stupid mission was the reason he was holding back? What male refused to fuck a wet and willing female? The answer was simple.

Bryn. And only Bryn. For being ruthless and dangerous, he was too damn honorable.

"Where are you going?"

I watched as his jaw clenched and he practically ground his teeth. "Hyperion. The planet is not part of the Coalition. Its population is uncivilized, animalistic and criminal. Its outer moon, Rogue 5, is even worse."

"And that's where you have to go? To Rogue 5?"

"Yes."

I considered. Fine. He could go on his mission, but there was no reason he wouldn't be coming home to a mate. "How long will you be gone?"

"I don't know." He kissed the inside of my thigh and I squirmed, taking a deep shuddering breath.

"Why do you have to go?" I wondered how much he could tell me. Did Everis have Top Secret clearance and all that crap, like on Earth? Was he some kind of alien CIA operative where he'd have to wave goodbye, get on an airplane headed for Asia when his wife thought he was going to Tulsa for a business meeting? Was Bryn going to lie to me?

It seemed strange having a conversation with him between my parted—and bare—thighs, but I had to know. When he nuzzled my clit with his nose, his tongue darting out for a quick taste of my wet heat, my fingernails dug into his shoulders. "Bryn." His name was a plea. He must have understood because he lowered his head once more, licking and sucking my sensitive nub until my back arched up off the bed. More. God, I needed more. I needed him to fill me up. I was so empty.

"Has anyone ever done this to you before?" he asked between licks.

"No," I gasped. I couldn't surrender, not yet. He was talking, telling me the truth, but obviously trying to distract me by eating me out. I'd wanted him to do it, but I needed answers and I needed them just as badly as his mouth on me. "What's so bad about Rogue 5?"

Bryn rolled slightly to his side, his body resting on one thigh. My other thigh he pushed wide, exposing me

completely, moving me so that the folds of my pussy opened, the cool air of the room a stark contrast to the heat of his gaze.

His hand slid down slowly toward my open core. He wasn't holding my leg now, but I didn't shift. I wanted him to reach his destination. I wanted him to touch me.

His fingers played with the lips of my pussy, running up and down the wet folds, exploring my body as if he were making a map. His middle finger moved over my clit, massaging slowly before dipping low to tease me. Coated in wet heat, he repeated the voyage. Over and over. Teasing. Never fucking me with his fingers...or his tongue. "Bryn!"

"About four hundred years ago, a coalition ship crashed on Hyperion. The planet sits inside an asteroid belt and there is a quasar on the edge of their star system. It interferes with communication so no one knew they were there. Even the Hive who had attacked them assumed they perished and did not follow."

"But they survived?" War. Crash landings. Those aliens obviously survived. But I wasn't going to. Not unless he stopped teasing me. I tilted my hips in blatant invitation, but he just grinned down at me. Staring into my eyes, he slicked my own juices all over my clit, rubbing it hard, then soft, fast, then slow, making me pant. I tried to shift again, but his weight on my thigh held me pinned to the bed. I couldn't move enough to impale myself on his roaming fingers. Damn it.

His grin was worth the suffering. I'd never seen that look on his face before and I froze beneath him as he answered my question. "Yes. There were, by rough