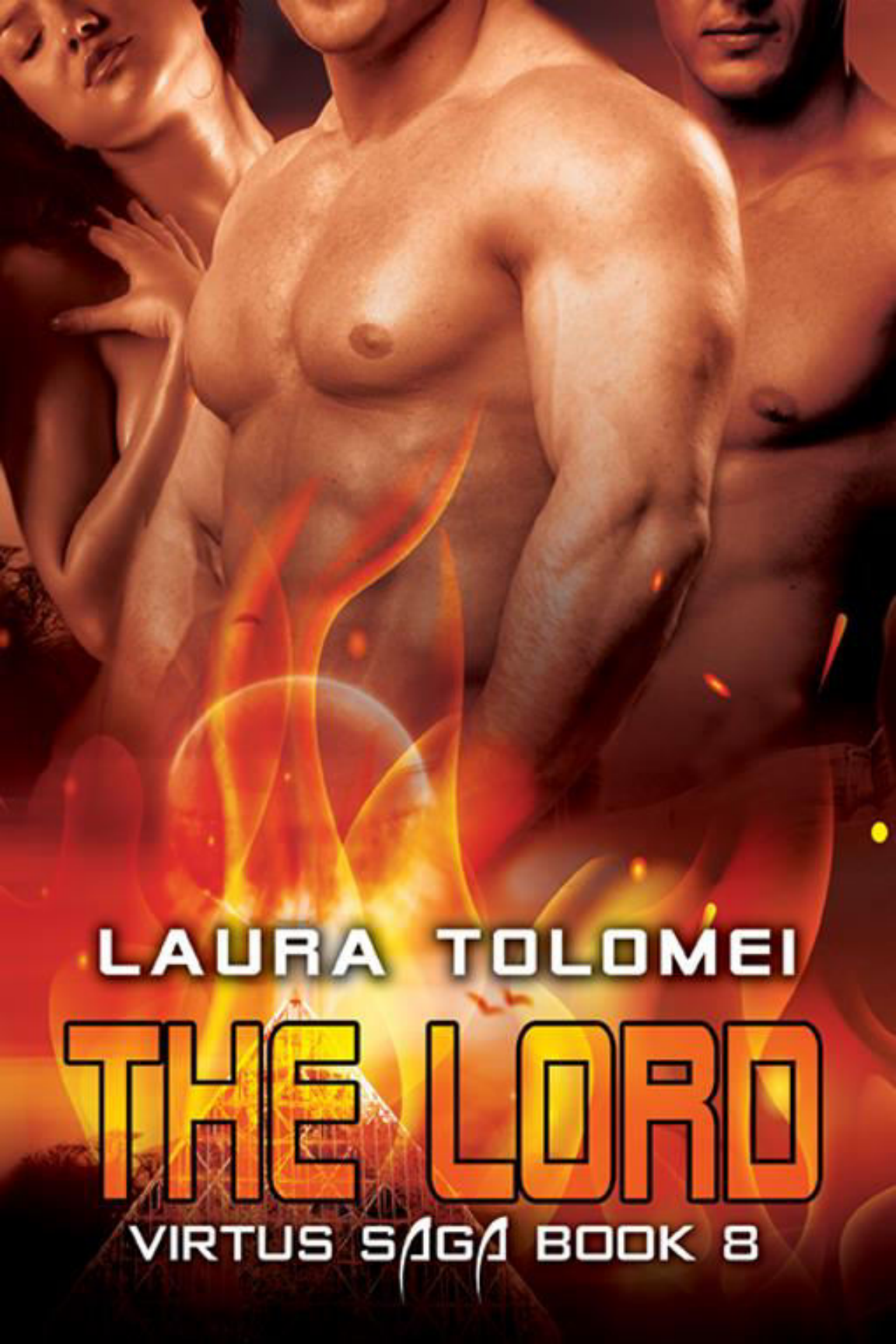




LAURA TOLOMEI

THE LORD

VIRTUS SIGA BOOK 8

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The Lord
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The Lord
Virtus Saga: 8

By

Laura Tolomei

Dedication

To J and Tina, my editor and my publisher, two wonderful ladies without whose help, support and teaching I'd have never completed this saga, nor would I've had the chance to share it with readers from all over the world. For this and for all the things I learned from both of you, I dedicate this last book of my saga, hoping it's a true testimony of how far you made me come and how effective you've been in everything you taught me.

*With love,
Laura*

Prologue

Floating on air, up high above everything else, the higher he went, the freer he was. Without physical boundaries to weigh him down, he was just his pure energy self shedding the material frame upon merging with the others.

With Duncan, his kindred spirit and opposite, as light is to darkness. With Ylianor, his bloody passion and his other opposite, as fire is to water.

Fused to Duncan, he fit her snugly between them. Like two halves of a sphere with a tiny glass-like pyramid core, they refracted the rays hitting them, fractioning them into different colored beams that irradiated the land below.

Gliding as one, there were no limits to his power, nothing to stop him except for the Nephis Valley Tower, the pyramids glaring at him now and flashing as angrily as Virtus itself.

But why?

This was supposed to be good Virtus not its evil black alias, the odious creature that had thwarted him and his lovers at every step. That one was gone. Long gone. Destroyed by their collective awareness. Because it had never been real, just a projection of their three separate Virts rolled into one.

Same way he was now with them—he, Duncan and Ylianor one single entity whilst still three.

So why was good Virtus ordering the multi-pyramid structure to halt them in midair? Why was it attacking the leader himself?

It did not make sense.

A burst of enraged fire flared and hit them.

No, not them.

Him.

And him alone.

Repeated blows targeted him, so he responded with fiery bolts of his own, happy to see the tower waving under the assault. Adjusting his aim, he struck again, then again and again, until the pyramids began dissolving in thin air.

Tasting victory, he moved closer, dragging Duncan and Ylianor forward. Too late he saw the flash of blinding light coming his way, hitting him squarely at the center of his essence and breaking him away from the others.

Away from the sphere, hurled down and helpless, he precipitated from the sky down to the black void below, to the ground fast approaching and to the scream eerily setting the rhythm of the fall into oblivion. Into nothingness and peace.

Chapter One

With a start, Lord Christopher Templeton, permanent council member for the Dartmouth District and Co-Leader of the High Council, opened his eyes.

Not another damn dream!

Yawning, he looked around the semi-dark room. Soft light filtering from the door-like windows on either side of the bed reminded him he was in Black Rose, where he had been for little over a month. *And it must be real early, 'cause everyone else seems asleep.*

Not his cock, throbbing now that he shifted and pressed it to round, firm buttocks. At least the bad dream had not dampened his erection, which twitched once it realized it was stroking his mate's naked rear.

No doubt about it—Lady Ylianor Templeton, permanent council member for the Silcamore District and High Council Co-Leader, had the most magnificent ass around, which was the reason he had pledged to her.

Well, all right, maybe he was stretching it just a little. But he liked to think so to keep the erection going.

Too bad his full bladder had a mind of its own, one he best attend to if he wanted to keep anything going at all.

Throwing the covers aside and stumbling out of bed, he admired Ylianor's sensual form, curled up on one side, one leg straight, the other raised and bent above the hip. Thanks to their custom of always sleeping naked, everything was in plain view—what her long, dark hair did not partially

conceal that is. And luckily that splendid ass of hers gleamed in the pale dawn light. The crack between the tempting cheeks spread enough to reveal the tiny ring at its center seemingly urging him to take immediate action, sticking his engorged piece inside and –

Fuck! Who am I kidding?

If he had pledged to her after a long and tortuous path, it was because he loved her so much that his heart skipped a beat at the mere glimpse of her.

Yes, sex had nothing to do with it. It had been just a stepping-stone toward expressing his true feelings for a woman he had known since childhood. *Met here in Black Rose, as a matter of fact.*

Shaking his head amused, he went to the bathroom, images of little Ylianor playing in his mind. She had been a determined child. The most courageous he had ever known. She alone had the guts to challenge him so openly and so defiantly. In a world where some people had special powers—or Virts as the ancients called them—she had been aware of hers from early on, unafraid to use them to protect what she thought belonged to her.

Just her bad luck that he also was aware of his Virt since the day he was born. Because for everyone else, Virt awareness came much later in life, well into adulthood if at all. And always her bad luck that his Virt had the force of a towering blaze of pure, unabated fire.

Sitting on the toilet seat, he struggled to fit the huge bulging head where it was supposed to go, remembering how she had dared attack him—*Lord Christopher Templeton*, son of the High Council Vice-Leader, the one man who could have incinerated her on the spot. If he had not, she had to thank some merciful god, who had seen fit to steer Chris's attention onto something much better, though not before he had taught her a lesson demon-style.

Or had he?

In the end, Ylianor had the last laugh. After a ten-year separation, his attraction for her had been too strong and undeniable that it eventually determined his undoing.

But he was far from displeased. Not in the face of the mind-blowing experiences their Virts accomplished once combined.

Bladder finally empty, Chris returned to the main room but had to stop on his tracks. All his heart's fault for jumping to his throat and pounding ferociously, deafening to the point of altering his perception, which a solitary ray from Stella had already plunged into utter turmoil after illuminating the most handsome sight of Chris's entire life.

Sprawled next to Ylianor was Prince Duncan Caldwell, Leader of the High Council and Chris's phase mate.

How have I managed to capture the attention and the heart of the most gorgeous and powerful man alive?

Chris still wondered at times, also now that he could not help noticing how incredibly similar Duncan appeared to Ylianor, a resemblance Chris knew for a fact had nothing to do with any blood relation. The leader and the woman Duncan loved to call his princess had different parents, so shared no single drop of blood. Fact remained they looked like twins. Same dark complexion. Same lustrously heavy strands of long raven-black hair—to the shoulders for the prince, to the ass for Ylianor. Same way of moving. People had called it witchcraft back in the days before Prince Caldwell had restored Virts to their rightful importance. But in Chris's opinion, people had not been too far from the truth, which involved evil Virtus switching energy around until Ylianor, born Meyer, came out looking like a Caldwell. Evil Virtus's plan had been to create havoc and destabilize Computer Virtus's smooth mechanism of transforming people's violent impulses into sexual ones. When it turned out evil Virtus was in fact the embodiment of Duncan, Ylianor and Chris's connection, things had taken a whole

new sense and led them to the most unconventional pledge, not to mention the indescribable heat that inevitably followed.

As the stunning features filled his eyes and heart, Chris was thrown back in time, back to his eight-year old self, to the moment he had first seen his kindred spirit. Same day he had seen Ylianor, too. The striking prince had been the distraction that had saved his pledge mate's hide and started the most incredible love of his life, as passionately flaming hot today as it had been thirteen years before.

To be honest, not all of it had been about the sex. Well, had it been up to Chris, it would have. Instead, he had to wait for Duncan to come round to the phase, the time when adolescents discovered sex with a friend of the same age and gender.

So what if Chris was not exactly the same age as Duncan? If he was two years his junior?

He had marked the prince as his from day one, doing all he could to seduce him and seal their fates together.

Then there had been that unfortunate incident about their two-year separation, when Duncan thought the phase had overgrown its usefulness, and that it was time for him to experience women, which he had until he had found the perfect one...for both of them.

Climbing back into bed, Chris settled again on the side where his shaft rested in the crack of her tempting ass cheeks. In the matter of seconds, it became as swollen and as demanding as it had just minutes ago, thanks also to Chris's decisive slide up and down.

With a wet finger, he probed the narrow hole to delay the pleasurable moment his bulging head would break into the crammed space and fill it all, regardless of whether she had woken up in the meantime.

Actually, awake or asleep made no difference to him. The way things worked between them, the three of them—she was a slave and they her masters, at least as far as the bed went.

In reality, things were a lot more complicated than he liked to envision them, particularly when the sheer hunger for her tightest spots made him lose all perspective and got his fire to roar impatiently. Now it would take just a minor adjustment to claim her. The way he was moving anyway, it would not be long before he did—

You aren't even going to wake her up? The deep, husky voice in his head made Chris raise his gaze, trapping it inside the black eyes flashing mischievously in front of him. *Is that your consideration for your pledge mate?*

She's your pledge, too. Had it been only a year before, Chris would not have been able to head-talk. Not with Duncan. Not with Ylianor, either.

All their unusual and out of any logic pledge's fault. In normal circumstances, it regulated men and women's reproductive cycles through a ritual blending of the feminine and masculine energy, kept separate from birth.

But I don't see you waking her up, either.

For the three of them, and like everything else about them, the pledge had meant so much more. For one thing, it had been a three-way affair. For seconds, it had changed the balance of their single Virts. For thirds, it had strengthened their connection above and beyond any feasible level.

And you're as hard as me, if not more. No amount of covers could hide Chris's awareness of his lover's arousal.

So I am, Angel.

Throwing away the blanket, Chris had no trouble spotting the enormous fat crown digging in Ylianor's belly.

What are you going to do about it?

Wake up sleeping beauty and let her handle it. In spite of his words, Chris's hand reached for the erection. *It's her fault*

you're in this state. And if we're lucky and she's real drowsy, she might turn out to be the perfect slave for a change. Clasp the piece he knew and adored best in the world, he jerked it the way Duncan liked, and his mouth became hungry all of a sudden.

Knowing her, she'll get the heat, sure enough.

The devastating primary side effect of the pledge had plagued the three of them ever since tying the knot at the Nephis Valley, almost a year ago.

And escape our control as easily as every other time.

There were no words apt to describe the madness of the senses that the heat induced, a burning sensation that scorched the body from the inside out until you could not stand your own skin.

Nah, she can't. It was not that Chris did not like it, for in fact he did. The problem with the heat was that it had an agenda of its own that did not allow for any fun or games in bed. *If everything went as she planned, we should have no need for the heat for the next seven or eight months.*

When prey to the heat, all he and Duncan craved was to plunge in her cunt, both cocks at once, and come in a series of unending convulsions lasting entire nights long.

It's too early to tell for sure.

Other pledges did not have it quite the same way.

So anything is possible.

Then again, other pledges did not have as much sex as they had on any ordinary day.

Yeah, but she seemed pretty determined on having sex on the hills outside. Still, if it was the way to have babies, so far it had not worked with them. *Plus we've only had the heat once since here in Black Rose, and that was before she was herself again.*

Poor princess. Lovingly, he brushed a loose strand of hair from her face. *She has been through a lot lately, hasn't she?* The tenderness tightened his erection.

This left Chris to wonder, not for the first time, how Duncan managed to fit both caring and lust into the special mix he felt for sleeping beauty. Something Chris had not yet learned how to accomplish, maybe because of his healer instinct or maybe because he just did not want to care for her, not in the conventional sense, anyway.

Never as much as you, lover, losing both your parents at once.

Actually, it had not been exactly like Chris was making it out to be.

I had the best help for that. Hers. Gone the tenderness, there was a very definite erotic note in his voice and in the fingers that clamped the curve of her hip possessively. And yours. The black gaze focused on him. I had you to lean on and help me through it.

The voice was so full of love that Chris stopped breathing for a long while. Images of Lady Sophia Caldwell's death blazed in his mind, of the funeral pyre that had set her spirit free, of the passionate, beyond-words intense kiss that Duncan had given him in front of the many people assembled, which had turned into an incredible orgy. Not because of them. Because of sleeping beauty's blooming Virt.

Also when we got rid of her last ghost, you were there with me every step of the way.

Just like when they had gotten rid of her first one, both cumbersome intrusions an unfortunate side effect of her aura tracing Virt.

However more painful it was this second time. Yes, because the leader had to say goodbye to his father, this time forever. The princess, instead, has had to face it all alone, becoming my father so my mother could make her peace with herself.

After her ruinous horse fall, it had been Lady Caldwell's express request and sole preoccupation before dying. And Chris was still glad he had disintegrated the black weight Ylianor had forced up to the surface for Duncan's sake and

for that of a better future for the spirits that had crossed paths more often than they should have.

Then having to relinquish my father after he had lived inside her for more than ten years.

A totally different situation from the first ghost they had dealt with at the Hall. One that Chris had no wish to recall.

Don't you think she's entitled to more rest?

As usual, lover, you're too good to her. He grinned at his own mockery. *And since you've never changed this part of you when it comes to her, I suppose I'll have to live with it.* Letting go of the cock, Chris rolled to lie on his back.

I wouldn't know about that. Crossing over Ylianor's body, Duncan came right next to him. *It seems like someone has erased my memory of my first years with this lovely princess.*

No lie the two of them had grown up together. No lie either that Chris, in a fit of jealous rage and unexpressed Virt, had wiped clean his phase mate's memory of any trace of her.

But I suppose you wouldn't know anything about that.

Actually, it had been one of Chris's Virt's acting out of control, the healer part helpless to stop it.

Hey, you adopted her, didn't you?

It had been in Prince Charles Caldwell's will, a provision his son had not readily agreed to until he had come round to accepting the depths of Ylianor's influence on his family.

That ought to have made up for any mistake I did.

So she had been officially a Caldwell when Chris pledged to her.

But you'd have been much better off leaving things as they were. If the prince wanted to play, Chris was ready for him. *Instead of spoiling everything by finding someone you weren't meant to find, much less fuck or fall in love with.*

What can I say? Briefly turning, Duncan squeezed sleeping beauty's buttocks. *In or out of bed, life just didn't seem complete without her.*

Yeah, but I'm curious. Curling on a side, Chris gripped the long gland sticking up in the air. How did you get past your aristocratic taste the first time you fucked her? It was something that had always puzzled him, also now that he had managed to cure the leader of it.

That she belonged to me was something I knew from the second I laid eyes on her, even if she was a total stranger to me. Pinning him to the mattress, Duncan took control of the situation in general and of Chris's cock in particular. Plus, the fact she looked like me was so exciting that I couldn't resist, like having sex with a twin.

At the slow and forceful strokes, Chris's mind began to empty.

But I might have ended it at the first time, had I not noticed what a spectacular ass she has.

And thought of me. The mere notion turned his already thick shaft to stone.

Couldn't imagine anyone else appreciating it more than you, Angel.

The way he pronounced the nickname, it sounded more like the *Demon Ylianor* loved to call him.

Or Demon, as you prefer. Prince Caldwell low chortle filled Chris's head. *You are both and one can't exclude the other.*

Funny how she noticed it straight away. Which was the reason she had attacked him in the first place, all those many years before. *I always thought you never saw the demon until she started talking about it.*

Wrong.

Black eyes locked on his, Chris could look nowhere else.

Why do you think I call you Angel if not because I saw also the demon side and balanced them out? The grip on Chris's cock increased. *Why else do I let you play demon with her if not because I know I can control it?*

It was another effect of their pledge. This had brought Prince Caldwell to join in the knife and sex game Chris had

initiated Ylianor into, to the point of becoming her master of pain.

I just call you Angel to remind you of how great you can be when you keep rage and violence in check. When you don't allow them to dominate you, like when you almost sacrificed your life to save the world from Virtus's destruction and without hesitating once.

That had been the freshly appointed leader, Prince Duncan Caldwell, giving him, Christopher Templeton, the very first order of his life when they had entered into contact with Virtus—the evil one, of course.

But lately I've come to appreciate your demon side, too. Then his lips closed on Chris's mouth.

And the tongue pushing down his throat made everything spin at a physical level alone. Duncan's mouthwatering cock soon replaced the tongue, gliding down to his stomach. As Chris opened wider to accommodate it whole, which was impossible, the prince's deep sucks were devouring his own equipment, engulfed tip to balls. Like drowning in a sea of pure velvet blackness while swallowing the hottest rod that burned his throat in repeated thrusts, all at the same time.

Choking was a predictable consequence, partly because Duncan's weight rested entirely on him, mostly because the impressive erection stuffed him completely. And using his hands to increase the jerking was not much help in the suffocation department. On top of everything, the leader was intoxicating his senses with lavish laps and hard intakes that always brought his bulging head to the edge of the plunge.

Now that was really mind-boggling! That in spite of all the years they had been doing it, Duncan still drove him as crazy with lust and passion as the first time they had sex.

It was an ongoing argument among some of his people about how phases spoiled a person's taste. To the point they

would never accept a pledge. Until recently, it had been Chris's same conviction. As hooked as he was on Prince Caldwell, he would have never considered anybody else as a mate, much less a woman.

Now, sinking into the man he loved above everything else, he realized phases were meant to open men and women to sex's infinite combinations, not close them into a fixed standard that would not allow them to evolve. Sure, Prince Duncan Caldwell would remain the top for Christopher Templeton, the paragon against which he would measure every other person—man or woman—he had sex with. So what if those others always came off a little short?

It never prevented him from enjoying what they had to offer. For everything else, he could always turn to his phase mate. No one ever expected anyone to sever that kind of bond. Phase mates were privileged relationships, above pledges themselves at times, because it was perfectly all right to keep the standard while sampling everything else.

Just Chris's luck he also pledged to his phase mate. Thus brought their union to a whole new uncontrollable level, fueled beyond flesh and spirit by the energy itself.

So Chris began to let go.

What choice did he have anyway?

Resistance was futile.

With a muffled groan, he expelled it all inside Duncan's mouth, much like the prince was doing himself, his sperm shooting in large jets down to Chris's stomach before slowing down to a trickle. All of which Chris licked off the scorching tip, careful not to miss a single drop for he positively adored the taste of his lover.

Fuck, Angel, it wasn't enough. Duncan had barely gulped down the last of Chris's fluid when he rolled off. *We're still as hard as when we started.*

I told you I needed sleeping beauty's ass. Gripping his erection, Chris flicked it a couple of times to test its consistency.

Which is still off limits to you, remember? Shifting position, Duncan removed the last of the sheets from Ylianor and rolled her so she would lie on her stomach.

Oh, come on, lover. Yes, he was well aware pledges were all about babies, but the prince's concern was starting to sound exaggerated. *This way it's no fun –*

You made a promise, remember? As if wanting to taunt him, the leader laid across Ylianor's back, trapping her under his weight while spreading her buttocks apart. *And I need you to stick to it.*

The twitches of Chris's cock became painful at the sight of the constricted entrance in the middle of the cleft, then agonizing when Duncan rimmed it teasingly.

Your son is too important in the balance of things. Not that it was a question of blood.

He and Duncan had talked it over when sleeping beauty had startled both of them with her crazy idea of a three-way pledge.

I can't stress how important it is he should be the first.

It was rather a matter of passing down the Virt. And though all three of them had it in abundance, somehow the leader wanted his in particular.

'Cause he'll have to teach all the others.

What about your daughter? A touchy subject they should not be discussing now, but Chris would have done anything to tear his mind and eyes off the finger circling the puckered edges he so desperately wanted to possess. *Isn't she –*

She'll have other tasks. If it sounded final, there was no harshness in Prince Caldwell's tone. *You're dying for a taste of her, aren't you, Angel?* Rather all the understanding for Chris's extremely strained situation.

You aren't in any better shape. No question about it, the prince's erection had engorged way out of its earlier proportions in the short time he had been playing with Ylianor's asshole.

Have to admit it's irresistible. He grinned, a curve in the full lips that lit his handsome face up to his black eyes. *All right, you can lick it, but that's it.*

What if I promise I'll switch holes if you let me use it properly? The craving was unbearable by now.

I'm not sure you have that much control, the leader joked, sticking a couple of fingers in Chris's mouth. *Suck them,* he ordered.

As Chris complied, both cocks jerked in anticipation.

You can't seem to control it as it is. Drenched through and through, the fingers had no trouble penetrating inside the tight opening.

For Chris, it was the last straw. Bending, his tongue covered the entire cleft, fingers included, a luscious lap that reached also her cunt.

I swear, lover. As the fingers moved aside, Chris deepened his pampering, getting his tongue tip right where he wanted his shaft to be. *I'll pull out in time and come inside her cunt.* Thrilled, he continued the wet seduction, battling against Duncan's fingers for control over the small hole enlarged by the prince's determined thrusts.

A moan at the back of them told him sleeping beauty was waking up.

So what do you say? Curling his tongue around Duncan's fingers, he slid with them, trying to fit inside, too.

Another moan, this time louder, distracted the leader, who moved away and settled on his knees in front of Ylianor's face. *I'm not too convinced about it, but I want to trust you.* Picking up the dark-haired head, he placed it on his lap. "Now open up, Princess, and swallow."

"But first I need to —"

“Shut up and suck.”

At the words, Chris immediately propped up her ass, already knowing she would obey without hesitations. What else could a slave do?

When her masters commanded, she had no other choice.

He was just happy he had her ass all to himself finally, the fabulous shape thrown back and at his complete mercy. Kneeling behind her, he aimed and shoved, uncaring of how ready she was. It was the way he liked best, hard and rough. And the fact she had come to like it, too, would have surprised him, to say the least, had Chris not learned to expect anything from her.

The shove made her jump, and she would have also escaped had not the prince held her head on his beefy piece. It was so good Chris kept drilling until his balls slapped against her pussy. Having reached his limit, he settled more comfortably to ram more forcefully and reach her guts despite her clenched squeeze, his beast about to burst only with the sensations of having enlarged the cramped space to its convenience and of possessing her completely, like she were his appendage and nothing more. In addition, the sight of her head bobbing over Prince Caldwell’s monster was not helping any, so Chris slowed down for fear of not keeping his promise.

Masters, please I beg you, her soft voice filled his head, If you let me go pee, I’ll be able to give both of you much more pleasure.

“Have to pee?” Merciless, Chris slipped a hand under her belly and pressed her bladder.

Which made her jolt.

Please or I’ll do it on the bed.

“Now this sounds like a threat.” Chris caught the black eyes, glittering in amusement.

"To save us the trouble of cleaning up, maybe it's best if we send her." Yanking her hair, Duncan threw back her head and left his cock out in the cold.

"You're always too good to her, lover." Slamming a couple more times, Chris was reluctant to let go of his conquest. "I say we let her suffer a little more."

"And I don't want to run the risk you'd be forgetting your promise." Tugging her hair further, he tilted up Ylianor's face. "Go, but be quick about it."

"Thank you, Master." She looked so fucking adorable. That Chris had to avert his gaze, particularly since she was obviously restraining herself from kissing the prince.

Then she scrambled to get out of bed, but lost her balance in mid rush and would have fallen had Chris not caught her at the last moment.

"Thanks, Demon." The words were nothing compared to the dazzling smile she showered on him, together with the naughty glint of her arresting green eyes.

Fuck! It had been all going so well. He really had no wish to spoil it all with the wave of tenderness strangling him.

No, he had no wish to acknowledge the deeper feelings she brought to the fore with a simple smile or a sweet word. When it came to her, all he wanted was the red hot, fiery passion, the same now boiling his blood with the craving to use her however he pleased, including at the tip of his knife. That hurting her was as much part of his pleasure as the sex itself was nothing new. Only he was coming to realize he needed the emotional distance to keep doing it. Otherwise, how could he justify to himself causing pain to one he loved so much?

Shaking his head, Chris cleared his mind of these nagging questions. It was getting harder to ignore them, more pressing now than when they had started. Back when he had acknowledged the depth and power of what he felt for her.

Something he had always thought to reserve to one alone. Instead, she had sneaked up in silence and conquered his heart, leaving him to wonder how to reconcile such very diverse impulses – bloody violent lust and love.

There seemed to be no way possible. Except ignore one in favor of the other, depending on the situation. The one he was in right now required his cock to be in charge, certainly not his heart. All the more reason to grab her viciously as soon as she returned. “What do you say if we change the setting, lover?”

“What did you have in mind?” Immediately interested, Duncan got up.

“How about the couch?” Already in his arms, it was no effort to carry her lithe frame to it, still thin in spite of his crash course on food and energy management held at Fair Haven.

“She’ll be at our complete mercy.” Carelessly throwing her down, he made her lie on her back, then grabbed her legs and spread them wide apart in midair pulling up her butt, too.

“Looks good to me.” Approaching, the leader stood on the side opposite Chris.

“And you’ll know I won’t cheat.” The mere thought aroused Chris beyond belief.

Oh, yes, she was exactly as Chris liked her – open and defenseless to his attacks.

To make it clear once and for all, he adjusted her narrow hole to his cock’s convenience and shoved to her guts. Same way Duncan was going for her stomach. And, given the force of their blows, Chris had no doubt their shafts would eventually meet in the middle.

“She looks too inviting...”

The position was just perfect. Legs up in the air, so far apart they hid nothing. Not the shaved cunt, glistening from

an excess of moisture. Not the swollen clit, begging for attention. Not the over-stretched butt ring stuffing Chris's repeated blows. Not the hard nipples of her elegant breasts. Not the wide-open mouth gobbling up Prince Caldwell's rigid equipment.

Ducking, Duncan's long hair covered her pelvis as his tongue ran from the swollen knot, now making a standing ovation, to her pussy down to her ass, flicking also on Chris's shaft.

"Lover, you really don't want this to last any, do you?" Forcing down the rush of sperm pushing upward, Chris pulled back slightly, wanting desperately to prolong the stunning sensations.

"Not a question of wanting, Angel." Raising his gaze, the leader locked their eyes after his tongue tip had drilled her clit. "It's a question of managing." His fingers slid down Ylianor's cunt.

She arched her back to get it all—the cock down her throat, the one up her ass, the fingers down her slit, the tongue around her clit.

And Chris knew he was at his own personal end. After a temporary lapse, the sperm had begun rising again up the long length to press without any restraint at the tip of his erection. Yet, he had a promise to keep.

Maintaining his gaze trained on him, the prince needed no words to understand Chris's predicament. Who better than the man he had been having sex with since the age of reason could interpret the slightest nuance in Chris's moves?

Sure, his pumping going deeper than before was an incontrovertible sign. He was also cracking Ylianor's ass. Literally. All clear indications of his approaching release.

Sardonically, Duncan spread the pussy wide, offering it to him. And when Chris did not comply immediately, he gave

it a luscious lap, just to add to the fuel already burning out of control.

But it was not until her scream of pleasure pierced his mind and her rear convulsed in frenzy around his erection that Chris knew he had to hurry. And seeing the first jets hit Ylianor's face and mouth made it all the more urgent.

Pulling out of the snug hole, he went for her cunt, getting to it in the nick of time, and only because the leader grabbed his cock and pushed it through the dense honeydew, holding it steady as Chris spilled his guts. Then his energy blasted up and away, until everything became a blur.

Chapter Two

My love, you must stop waking me up like this. Had she possessed a body, Ylianor would have giggled. She waved instead, being only an energy form.

It was an excuse to bring you here, the leader joked, sending ripples of his cool dark energy to the other two connected to him into a single unity.

Boundless and incorporeal, the three of them floated in a dimension Chris had yet to understand where it was. More than a physical place, it was an immaterial dimension all their own. Only with the other two could Chris reach it, thanks to a blending of their three Virt and to his powerful fire melting their essences that allowed them to have a space all their own, away from Computer Virtus and from anyone else wanting to spy on their private conversations.

You know it's the only way we can reach it. It was the only limit Chris could think of—sex alone, and a certain type of very intense sex, made it possible for their energy to combine and pull them through to here.

Wherever here was.

You're just making up excuses to have more sex with me. Now her mirth was an outright laugh.

And it was damn infectious. If he had to stop and think about it, Chris would have been overwhelmed by the sheer happiness he felt whenever he was this close to both his lovers. Being one with them. Sharing everything, from thoughts to feelings the same instant he thought or felt them.

It was plain incredible! And it filled his heart with a love so great he knew he could explode from the force of it.

Actually, I wanted to recap our situation. Taking the lead, Duncan's voice became graver, After the last message Laurely sent you, Princess, you received no other?

No. She would have shaken her head.

Chris was sure of it.

And nothing from her daughter, either. Which was also Duncan's daughter.

Not surprisingly, sleeping beauty remained the only means to contact them. She was the link to the unconscious after all, Duncan's connection to the world beyond the merely physical, the guiding light the leader would inevitably rely on more and more as time went by. Then again, she had awakened his Virt, the telepathy Chris had been so jealous of in the first years of their relationship, at least until the pledge had evened things out.

Lover, do you really think Virtus plans to keep Ariel prisoner? Duncan's daughter had a beautiful name, if Chris said so himself. I mean why go to all the trouble of shifting energy around just to have a leader and a keeper's offspring if it just wants to hold her prisoner?

It was how Virtus had managed to have Laurely conceive with Duncan's seed. Since he had obviously not pledged to her, it was the only logical explanation.

Not forever. The leader seemed to be deep in thought. Just until Virtus is ready to play Ariel's card. He relaxed, probably having reached some kind of conclusion. Let's not forget she'll be strategic for everybody's future.

She already is. For Chris, there was no doubt. And she's barely three years old.

That was another strangeness, for Laurely and Duncan had sex not a year ago, right after the three-way pledge.

I'd be furious, and I'm not talking about Virtus. Despite her efforts, the bitterness could not help slurring Ylianor's

words. *Trapped in whatever time dimension Virtus uses as a training ground for his keepers and with the inconvenience of a baby, too.* Which must explain how Ariel had aged so fast, so soon.

We'll help both of them, Princess. Duncan's soft tone intended to soothe her. *I promise.*

Yeah, we'll get them both out of there, Chris assured. *And I can't wait to see her in the flesh.*

To have another little princess around will be wonderful. Hard to miss the pride and sense of anticipation in Prince Caldwell's voice.

For they had all seen Ariel from Ylianor's visions, so they all knew how uncannily alike to Ylianor the little girl was, a small replica of sleeping beauty in everything.

And I'm sure you'll be a wonderful mother to her, sleeping beauty.

Luckily, Ylianor did not reply to the last comment. With patience and effort, Chris and Duncan had made her understand the necessity of taking Ariel away from her natural mother and raise her at the Hall. For a keeper had no time to be a mother, like Carmel's experience had taught them.

Yes, if we can get her out of wherever Virtus has locked her up. Difficult to argue this—it had been Ylianor's vision, after all, so she ought to know.

Things may change, so let's not waste our time worrying about it now. More reasonable, Prince Caldwell had a clearer overview of what they should focus on. *If and when it happens, we'll figure out the way to solve it.* His cool energy squeezed the whole of them. *That's always been our way of doing things. As leader, I don't see any reason to change it, particularly while working with my co-leaders.* A surge of pride rippled through the continuum.

This time, Chris felt like he truly was what Duncan wanted him to be—the High Council Co-Leader, he and

Ylianor together with Prince Caldwell, their primary lead, like it had always been between the three of them.

True, until very recently, Chris had not believed him. There had been shadows, things not said or referred to without context that had brought them to the point of separation. Partly the leader's concern that Virtus could spy on his projects through sleeping beauty, she and her ghosts a threat Duncan had not wished to gamble on. The heat had not made matters any easier. Following its own agenda, it had given them little time to talk, think or do much of anything besides fuck among them from morning to night. The Hall had then precipitated the situation. What with the gossip, the things said and unsaid, the rumors and the wild sex going on, it was amazing to think they had survived it all and were still together.

And stronger than ever, Chris was happy to report, the co-leadership finally a reality after a very lengthy council meeting that had left everyone speechless for days. And nothing like the scene in the attic and the kiss in front of the funeral pyre could confirm it more. Mostly, it had been Duncan's will to make everyone, and he meant *everyone*, take notice that Lord Christopher Templeton and his lovely mate, Lady Ylianor Templeton, belonged to him, the Leader of the High Council, and to no one else. This simple declaration had cleared all of Chris's doubts. His connection reinforced, he would never again doubt the man destiny had been gracious enough to grant him.

You're right, my love, her tone softer.

Chris realized she shared his feelings, down to a Tee. She, whom the Hall had whispered was closer to the leader than his phase mate himself.

Not too far from the truth, considering Duncan had loved her before he ever set eyes on Chris. Growing up in Black Rose together, it had been kind of inevitable, also for her to

love the prince since she was a little girl, confused about who her real father was and grappling with an enormous Virt no one could properly explain, as alone in dealing with it as Chris himself had felt with his own incredible powers.

Besides, Laurely is still in training, so there's not much we can do for either of them until we receive a new message.

The perfect timing would be during Cecilia's Game, Chris sniggered.

For which I haven't yet received the invitation. Had he been in his human form, Prince Caldwell would have frowned. *Wonder what happened to it.*

Can't we just go to Blue Oasis regardless? Chris suggested.

Lord Templeton, you know what a stickler Lady Hurst is about following her rules, the loving tone caressed his spirit like a warm summer breeze.

The princess is right. The leader's own flowing love strengthened the general feeling. *She likes to keep things formal –*

As if to play masters and slaves you need to be formal, Chris snapped.

Such was Cecilia Hurst's Game – a combination of sexual obsessions her fertile mind had conjured while her body screamed for a satisfaction she was the first to deny. However complicated and elaborate her rules, it was nothing different from what most people did at the Hall. For sure, it was nothing more interesting than what he, Duncan and Ylianor did practically every day in their bed.

And the princess still hasn't said if and how she wants to play this time.

She'll be our slave, lover. He made it biting on purpose. *What other role can she possibly play? She certainly can't be the master. You are the leader and need to talk to Malcolm Dower from the strongest position possible.*

I can be a guest, Lord Templeton. Quick to reply, the gods only knew who had given her such adept and intriguing

tongue, sleeping beauty bit back, *See how you like being a slave for a change.*

Sorry, honey. If she wanted to play, he had no qualms about it, not even in this energy form that could hardly satisfy the purely material lust he felt for her every goddamn day of the week, all thirty-six hours of it. For our leader to be most effective and reason with this Malcolm pervert...

How else to define someone who believed that their world could survive without sex? Who wanted to limit it to one partner alone, thinking it would improve their quality of life?

He must have a weak woman by his side. A slave he can offer him, so that she can teach him a thing or two about the real values of our world. His voice became a husky whisper, Like you did at Darkley with Maximilian Lenz.

The truth about their world was that there was a mechanical device turning everyone's violent impulses into sexual ones and that switching it off had almost caused Chris his life. So no thanks! He had no wish to try it again.

Only if Malcolm sees you as dependent will he listen to you, 'cause I get the feeling he's scared shitless of having sex with his same gender.

I think the angel is right. The leader's support was like a cool balm on his heated spirit. But you don't have to make any decisions now, Princess. We still have some time.

A ripple of something Chris could not quite put his finger on broke their mass of energy.

And thinking to do, 'cause Malcolm isn't sick or foolish. I think he perceives Virtus's control at a level he can't interpret and fights it in the only way he can. He paused a second. Who knows? I may even find clues or useful insight on how to shut down Virtus's...how did you call it, Angel?

Its evolvement. Chris had no trouble supplying the missing word. Not the entire machine itself, just the part that talked to you.

Same part that had kidnapped the leader right before the pledge and revealed what a thorough bastard it was for what it was doing to their world and to the three of them in particular.

Because, for Chris, this had all turned personal the moment he had realized how hard pressed the damn machine was to get them to do its bidding, or what it claimed had been the reason to call on Duncan from whatever dimension he was at. No, worse, what grated on Chris's nerves was knowing the rotten piece of metal had not wanted the prince to bring either of his lovers in this material reality, alongside him. Chris in particular, considered too uncontrollable and unpredictable for Virtus's sophisticated tastes. Well, guess what?

He was there, right next to the leader, so Virtus could just kiss his ass for all Chris cared.

It's your only logical course of action, Leader. Her tone sounded accommodating. Anything more, like turning off the whole computer thing, would be too risky, impossible to accomplish in several lifetimes, let alone one.

From the first time Duncan had learned of Virtus and its influences, he had vowed to free his world from it. His determination had grown along with his power as a leader despite all that had happened when he had ordered David Smith, his faithful servant, to stop the ticking device inside the three-sided pyramid, the heart of Computer Virtus. That chaos was an inevitable consequence was as clear now as it had been then. To no avail would all of Duncan's courses and training, some taught by Chris and Ylianor themselves, come to.

Sleeping beauty had been the first to say it so clearly and in not so many words, spelling out the truth of what Prince Caldwell had refused to accept at first.

Though she had managed to sway his resolve, somehow. *From the moment we're born, the control takes over us, even if it doesn't become complete until the phase.*

This had been Chris's personal contribution to discovering how exactly the device worked, him and his course on rage management.

So you'd have to take apart every human being and replace the artificial control with...something...

It was evident she had thought it through up to a point.

Then put them back together and hope things work and no one starts killing off his neighbor.

You are perfectly right, Princess. That's why I have amended my strategy about Virtus.

Well, it made sense to Chris, too.

And my goals.

And we'll be here to help, lover.

And while you're at it, my love, I'd also take a hard look at a few of your links at the Hall, she pressed her point, If the demon and I are to become true leaders, shouldn't certain...contrasts be resolved?

What are you talking about, sleeping beauty? And why did he have the funny feeling she was referring to him without wanting him to understand?

You are totally right. Evidently, the prince had no problems in understanding. I will see to it. Thanks for reminding me.

What are you talking about? Had Chris possessed eyes, he would have looked from one to the other. What do you need to smooth over? Oddly, it felt like when Ylianor and Duncan could talk among themselves without his being able to share their thoughts. With the increase in his Virt, he thought he had taken care of that once and for all.

Or maybe not.

Nothing you should worry your pretty little head about, the leader teased.

Which annoyed Chris.

Sleeping beauty, whatever it is, I swear you're going to regret it. The power keeping them there was his, so he let it go. They had done talking anyway and not a moment too soon.

The boil in his blood required for him to have hands, eyes and cock to teach the witch a lesson. Without thinking twice about it, he toned down the collective energy and plunged them all back to Black Rose where her beautiful green eyes challenged him openly.

"Think I'm afraid of you, Lord Templeton?"

"No." The fact she was not, added to his arousal and to Duncan's, too. "But that's your problem." His was to have her at his own terms, something the long day ahead gave him all the time to do.

About the Author

First Laura Tolomei lives in Rome, Italy and is the author of 27+ books. She has been traveling the globe since age five and has no intention of quitting. After having been an avid reader her entire life, she decided at age forty to write her own stories and has not looked back since. Writing novels that are on the edge of accepted conventions is her trademark, and she guarantees an erotic earthquake with each book! Among others, they include the Virtus Saga books, all eight of them, not to mention the Soulmate and ReScue Series, along with several horror novels and a few historical ones, too.

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