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TILL THE STARS FADE

Transcendent Love

Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3

Karen Sandler

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Originally published as *Eternity*.

“There are so many twists and turns in this book that I was on the edge of my chair through the whole thing. It was action packed, fast paced and most definitely a page-turner. I thoroughly enjoyed this book.” *RT Book Reviews*

“The writing is exceptional; the book a page-turner...a read for all time. Good job, Ms. Sandler.” Highly Recommended. *Under the Covers Book Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 Reviews*

“Karen Sandler knows how to tell a story. Kudos to this talented writer for science fiction romance that does honors to both genres!” Four Stars! *Affaire de Coeur*

“Ms. Sandler serves up an interesting mix of detailed and believable world-building, genetic theory, and the traditional ‘snowbound’ romance, although in this case the Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 blizzard is the airless surface of an asteroid, and the cozy log cabin is a cozy domed lab. I’d recommend this to any contemporary romance reader who fears futuristics are ‘too different.’” *Science Fiction Romance*

Special thanks to Eric, my son and fellow Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 writer, who suggested the title.

Chapter 1

Dr. Ian Llewellyn bent his tall frame over the keyboard in his lap, his feet propped on the console of his computer, Fuzzy. The rattle of Ian's long fingers across the keys silenced when his brain refused to produce the next data sequence. He slammed a fist against the arm of his chair Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 and had to snatch a precariously balanced cup before it toppled to the floor.

"Shuttle due today," Fuzzy said, his voice eerily human.

Ian sucked hot coffee-flavored nomi from his fingertips, then settled the lid more firmly on Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 the cup. "Already?" he asked Fuzzy. "Who're they sending this time?"

The meter-square light panel fronting Fuzzy's console rolled through shades of blue. "E. Krysynowski of the *Pegasus*. A new one."

Ian nodded with satisfaction. He didn't like seeing the same face more than once. "He'd better know the drill."

"She," Fuzzy corrected, then recited Ian's rules. "Pilot is to unload supplies by the dome's airlock. Complete delivery before the take-off window closes."

"And?" Ian prompted.

Fuzzy's panel faded into a reluctant sky blue. "Do not interrupt genetic research in process. But company would be good for you," Fuzzy protested.

"You're all the company I need. Sometimes more than I need." Ian picked up his cup and winced as he took a sip. After all these years Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 he ought to be used to the artificial coffee taste. "Run that last trial again."

Ian leaned his long body back in his chair and waited for Fuzzy to complete his request. Cup cradled in his lap, he stared out through the foot-thick glassite walls of his living dome. Outside, the asteroid Thea's stark terrain formed a bleak foreground for the steady Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 glow of stars beyond.

"Results negative," the computer finally said, displaying the trial data on the screen.

Ian's mouth tightened as he tapped out a sequence on his console. He could interact with Fuzzy through voice commands, but he still liked the tactile feel of the keyboard. "Trial 681—any chromatid pattern change at all?"

Fuzzy considered. "Mutational rate less than 0.003." Then his light panel drifted into a

yellow-orange that usually meant the computer was up to something. “I have the pilot’s scanned image,” Fuzzy said, much too casually.

Ian knew this trick. Fuzzy would take a feminine Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 image, juice it up, then watch Ian react. The computer had an absolute fascination for human sexual response.

Ian kept his eyes focused on his keyboard. “No thanks—”

But before the words were even out of his mouth, Ian knew Fuzzy had ignored him. He caught the barest shift of light as the image replaced the data on Fuzzy’s display.

Ian sighed. The computer’s fuzzy logic enhancement might help him process like a human brain, but that ability was a double-edged sword. Little passed Fuzzy’s notice, and he had an insatiable curiosity.

“She’s pretty,” Fuzzy said conversationally.

Fuzzy wasn’t giving up easily this time. Ian would take a quick look, say something non-committal, and then they could get on with their work. Resigned, Ian tipped his head up.

He Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 gave the image the briefest of glances before looking away. But as his brain caught up with his eyes, registering the wild coppery hair and wide-set eyes, Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 he had to look again. His heart squeezed tight and he stared Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 in disbelief.

She could be Saja’s twin.

Then he realized—this was a trick of Fuzzy’s. Ian tore his gaze away.

“You got the Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 eye color wrong,” Ian said, not liking the roughness of his voice. “Saja’s were blue, not green.”

Those blue eyes and Saja’s coppery hair had been a gene-tweak, a startling contrast to her brown skin. The pilot’s red hair looked original issue with that pale face, unless her skin was gene-tweaked too.

Damn it, he wouldn’t think about this pilot’s skin. Its color, its softness, how those scattered copper curls might look curled against her cheek—

“I don’t know what you mean,” Fuzzy said, blessedly pulling Ian from his dangerous thoughts. The yellow-orange of prevarication was frozen on Fuzzy’s light panel.

Ian gave the display a sidelong glance, this time steeling himself. Whatever Fuzzy had done to fool Ian, the Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 computer had restored the image to an accurate representation. She wasn’t the least Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love

Book 3 bit like Saja, never mind the red hair. Still, that initial impression lingered, damn Fuzzy, and with it, an unwelcome jumble of feelings.

“Do you like her?” Fuzzy asked, all innocence.

“Not fair,” Ian said. Not so close to the anniversary.

Soothing blues shimmered across Fuzzy’s screen. “I hoped perhaps if you liked Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 this one, you would want to meet her.”

“I have no interest in meeting a shuttle rat. Red hair or not.”

“You used to,” Fuzzy persisted. “When you first arrived here, you often invited female pilots into the dome for sexual—”

“I know why I invited them in.” Ian fought bring his body’s traitorous response under control. His hands moved blindly across the keyboard, scrolling page after page of data.

“But why do you avoid human interaction now? And why do you sublimate?”

Ian’s hands stilled. “*What?*”

“Robert says you work so hard to sublimate your sexual needs. He says it would be much more effective if you Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 simply satisfied them. In fact, studies have shown a 39 percent efficiency increase when sexual tension is released.”

Ian’s jaw tightened. “Robert Ishimoto may be president of the Chemical Genetics Institute and besides you, my best—”

“Only,” Fuzzy interjected.

“All right, *only* friend,” Ian conceded. “But my sexual needs are none of Robert’s business. Or yours.”

Fuzzy’s light panel darkened into a forest green, which meant the computer’s feelings, such as they were, had been hurt. With an exasperated sigh, Ian turned to stare out at the stars again.

His eyes caught a glitter of light in the velvet-black sky. One Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 of Thea’s inhabited companions in the asteroid belt. Ceres, probably. None of the other orbiting rocks was large enough to reflect the sun like that.

The sight of Ceres, Thea’s nearest populated neighbor, only sharpened Ian’s loneliness. Turning aside his dark thoughts, he pulled himself back into his work, rattling out a series of commands on the keyboard. He pushed back a hank of overlong black hair with an Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 impatient hand and waited for Fuzzy’s response.

“Fuzzy?” Ian chided when the silence lengthened far beyond Fuzzy’s usual rapid response time. “The Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 last three trials?”

Too human by half, the computer hesitated to say. Bad news, then. “Negative,” Fuzzy said. “All of them,” Ian could have sworn he heard the computer sigh.

Till The Stars Fade Till the Stars Fade: Transcendent Love Book 3 Transcendent Love Book 3

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