
AN OMEGA'S AWAKENING

The Alpha's Woman Book Four

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
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advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

"**F**^{*reak!*}" The snarled insult from one of the men who was passing her in the hallway—it was impossible to tell which one—drew snickers from those around him. The thought that she could—should—dispose of the lot of them entered her mind, more out of reflex than actual desire, but she quickly dismissed it. Although that was exactly how she'd clawed her way up through the ranks, she didn't have to do that kind of thing anymore. She aspired to better things—things she'd never expected to achieve or accomplish in this miserable lifetime of hers.

Besides, she'd heard it before, and she'd hear it again, she was quite sure, even if she ended up one day being the commander of this little bit of hell on earth. Her detractors might take a bit more care that she didn't hear it, but it would be there, regardless, and she had learned to choose her battles more carefully than she might have in the past. The likely price of retaliation wasn't worth the feeling of satisfaction that his—and his companions'—blood flowing over her hands as their eyes became lifeless would grant her.

The commander would likely treat her in much the same fashion as she had them, and she wasn't about to lose her life for such a useless reason.

And they weren't really wrong, either, she knew deep down, a fact that she rarely allowed herself to contemplate. She had neither the time nor the inclination to do so—she'd been too busy all her life just trying to survive, and now that she'd gotten to a better place—against all odds—she intended to stay there. Or to make an even better place for herself, preferably.

As far as she was concerned, her only other valid option was to die in the attempt.

She waded past the clumps of burly men who were waiting to see him, never making eye contact with any of them, either, as much more inventive and degrading—and less quietly spat—names for her met her ears. But her back remained ramrod straight as she continued to stalk by them, not about to give them the satisfaction of letting them know she'd heard them, either.

His door was carefully nondescript—no different from any of the others down that long hall. And it was closed, but—beyond knocking brusquely—she didn't let that stop her from entering the room.

"Commander." She stood at attention, not meeting his eyes, either.

He looked up at her, closing and putting aside the ledger he had been working on. "You're late."

She paled at his pronouncement, but, unlike many in her position, didn't try to make excuses or whine or beg. In fact, he watched with not a little admiration as she raised her chin and agreed calmly, "Yes, sir," remaining starkly still—and at attention—for him to issue whatever punishment he chose.

AND ZERK KNEW from prior experience that, no matter what

he settled on—how harsh it was—she would endure it as quietly and with as much dignity as she could muster—unlike a lot of men under his command who were three times her weight and had years more experience at it than she did.

For the first time, he took a long moment to really examine her. She was a small female, laughably so in comparison to the size of himself and his men, of whom he was indisputably the largest—and yet she had proven herself to be fiercer than most in battle. She used her size to her advantage, able to move more quickly and get to places that larger men—laden with armor—couldn't.

He had been skeptical of her at first—as had everyone else around him, most of whom he knew thought he was crazy when he allowed her into his army—and then began to promote her rather rapidly, purely based on her performance. Zerk also knew that many of those he surrounded himself with thought that he'd had her, but that was a lie. In truth, he had wondered about her at times, this woman amongst ruthless, barbarian alpha males. She could have been an Alpha female, he supposed. But as far as he—or anyone else—knew, she had never made any move towards taking any kind of a mate, which, as far as he—and those whose opinions he respected—was concerned, was one of the biggest tenets of being an Alpha, although he'd had no experience with female Alphas and couldn't be certain that that was true for them, also.

In fact, he'd always considered her to be an Alpha, really, based on her behavior and since he had no other way to categorize her.

And, frankly, it didn't matter to him in the least what the hell she was, as long as she continued to fight for him—and with him—as she had, despite the eyebrows it raised for him to have allowed a female not just into the ranks of his soldiers, but promoting her ahead of others and into a position that was only two below his.

She was a strange one; that was true. But she—like he—was a force to be reckoned with, and he had always had an eye for those with talent and loyalty, and she had a surplus of both.

A rare, fanciful thought entered his mind that he didn't really know what she looked like under her armor. He'd never seen any hint of hair, so he knew she kept it short, but that was the fashion of all of his men, as it could easily be used as a weapon against them in battle. He didn't think he'd ever seen a woman with short hair, and that made him wonder what her face looked like under that large, close fitting helmet.

Zerk ruthlessly shoved those unwanted thoughts out of his head.

"I have a job for you. It's very dangerous, and you likely won't be able to complete it before you're caught and killed...or worse," he added, knowing without ever having talked to her about it that the idea of becoming a sexual slave, which was quite likely if she was captured, would be a fate much worse than death to her. "But our survival could depend on it. I've sent out several others with the exact same orders, but, for some reason, I think you're the only one who's going to be able to—"

Suddenly, his mouth snapped loudly shut as he took an impossibly deep breath, his nostrils filling with an unmistakable odor that flooded his brain with potent memories of his past. Granted, it wasn't exactly the same, but it was close enough that he knew exactly what its cause and origin was. He rose without a thought and came to stand in front of her, all nearly seven feet tall, shoulders nearly three feet wide of him, easily dwarfing her entirely without any effort on his part whatsoever.

No wonder the men—if they weren't calling him "Berzerker", safely behind his back, they thought, for his wild, predictably ruthless moves in battle, so much so that it's diminutive had become his de facto name—were calling him "Neverest", referring both to his resemblance to the mountain, as well as the fact that he fought till the very end and then some of

every fight he'd ever entered. He had a reputation for always being in the middle of the front line at the start, and one of the very last men to leave the battlefield, lending his hand to a duty that most leaders shirked as beneath him—helping to cart away the bodies of their dead. Zerk always busy, always moving, always thinking ahead.

He was their commander, as well as the unelected governor of what passed for the small city—which wasn't really much more than the remnants of a military base from Before when he found it—that he had overtaken merely because it had been in his way, at first. But then, he had gotten drawn into the logistics of actually trying to run the place, his quick mind intrigued by the idea of finding solutions to the myriad problems that presented themselves to him on a daily basis.

Zerk still went out with them on patrols and raids as he always had and likely always would, deliberately keeping his fingers in everyone's pies, keeping himself as involved as possible in every aspect of ruthlessly holding and maintaining his rule, defending it against threats from both within and without.

But here was a situation he hadn't expected to encounter among his men.

She was trembling, he noted. They were fine tremors that she was obviously trying to suppress, but he had meticulously trained himself to be watchful of others. Most were ridiculously easy to read, but not her.

Not until now. Oh, once she'd brought herself to his attention by her brave actions and ability to reason within the heat of battle, he'd observed her carefully, but usually from afar or as they were both fighting. They hadn't really begun to come into contact with each other until he'd promoted her, up several ranks at once—despite how unpopular the move had been, a few days ago.

But she wasn't just scared, he noted; she was terrified.

As well she should be, considering that she'd earned a punish-

ment from him for her lateness. But he had already surmised that it was more—much more—than that.

When he stood before her, legs planted well apart, arms crossed over his impressive chest, he bent down so that his nose was next to her ear, as if he was her mate and he was going to nibble that very tender area as a prelude to taking her.

But instead, what he did was inhale, as long and as deeply and as slowly as he could, allowing his eyes to drift closed for the briefest of moments before they snapped open again and he reared back, schooling his face to careful neutrality before he said the words he knew she least wanted to hear.

But that couldn't have been a surprise to her, regardless.

"You're...coming into heat." He said the words with at least as much incredulity as she would have. As he did so, though, his mind was full of her scent—worse than that, his dick and balls were, too, one having immediately gathered close, the other at painful attention, just like she still was in front of him.

IF SHE OPENED her mouth right now, she knew she'd sound like every other female, and she loathed the idea of becoming some blathering idiot who had no control over herself. And yet that was exactly what her body was doing to her at this very moment.

She'd begun to see the first signs during the day he'd leveled her up so suddenly, and thus, she'd begun to be included in all of the meetings he had with his small cadre of sub-commanders that she'd never attended before. She'd almost immediately felt her breasts becoming tender and much more sensitive, swelling beneath the bindings she imposed on herself so that she would look as sexless as possible around her fellow soldiers, whom she knew would have absolutely no qualms about ripping her apart if they even began to suspect what she was refusing to believe about what her body was beginning to tell her about herself.

And—because her body had remained relatively sexless except for a few telltale outward signs—she had managed to pass most of the time.

She'd already determined that it was only when she was around him that the signs had first developed—she'd noticed the first tingling of a change, which she thoroughly ignored—when she'd been accepted into this—his—military force and he had given her her first uniform. That had only taken a matter of minutes, but it was enough, apparently, to start her down a road she didn't want to travel.

She'd been okay for quite a while, being a plebe and not really having any kind of interaction with him, but it had only gotten noticeably worse lately, because the higher she rose, the more time she spent around him, even though she had carefully kept accepting dangerous assignments that put her out in the wasteland, just to avoid him. Having achieved the rank she had—having attained the rank she'd fought so hard for just a few days ago, had led to her not being able to avoid being in his presence—and, even though it had really only been hours, it was more than enough to stir her long dormant body.

That was why she had been late this morning. She'd been scrubbing herself—especially down there—as rigorously as she could, hoping to rid herself of her own scent long enough to get through a—hopefully—short meeting alone with him. But it seemed all of her attempts were in vain.

And the longer she stood in front of him, the worse it was getting. She didn't know what it was about him in particular. She'd passed by innumerable men on her way to him, but they hadn't inspired the deep ache she was feeling at his nearness, the one that made her want to cross her legs against the juices she knew were already seeping into the rags that passed for her underwear.

Now, though, he was bringing the internal battle she had only

just begun to fight to the fore, and it appeared that her own body was siding firmly with an unusual enemy—him.

"At ease. How long have you known?" he asked shrewdly.

Her eyes immediately downcast, she swallowed hard but didn't say anything, knowing she was tempting fate—as his soldier, and, more startlingly, more alarmingly, as a female in his presence.

"Answer me!" he snapped, although he hadn't raised his voice in the least.

"N-not long, sir," she replied, sounding much more tentative than she intended—than she ever had before—since she was an obscenely young child on the streets of this very same small town.

"Are you lying to me, little girl?" he growled threateningly, voice still low and surprisingly soft.

Her head wanted to snap up at that to meet his eyes, but she refused to do so, realizing starkly that it was the first time he'd ever called her anything but her proper title and knowing that he'd probably chosen that particular phrase carefully, deliberately reducing her—in two seemingly innocuous words—to her lowest common denominators, to the only role she would now be fit for, as far as he and any other Alpha was concerned.

And she was horrified to realize just how much of an effect it had on her—just those two words falling from his mouth had her body clenching and practically flooding itself with her own cream. She was worried that he was going to notice how it was now literally running down the insides of her thighs.

Her reaction didn't get by him, either. He took another long, slow sniff of her as he bent down again, being, she suspected, quite deliberately intimidating, his nose very nearly touching hers. At this close range, her cycle-heightened senses could smell him—the leather that he was wearing, the scent she recognized but didn't want to as his own, but the worst of all was the fact that she could both smell and sense his arousal.

And his deep musk affected all of her—raising gooseflesh along every inch of her body, bringing a hot blush to both sets of cheeks, her breath already coming in short pants. It was all she could do not to rip her clothes off to present herself to him in the most blatantly submissive of manners.

But she refused to do that, and would continue to do so for as long as she could physically manage to ignore the impulse, although it grew stronger by the second. Almost worse than that, it was affecting her ability to think, which she prized more than most.

"It—" Despite her highly disadvantaged position, she did her best to keep her head on straight, swallowing hard and raising her head, although still not meeting his eyes, to deliver her answer as she would have moments before he made this disturbing discovery. "It began no more than eighteen hours ago, sir. It developed during the meetings yesterday." That might be a bit more telling than she wanted it to be, but it was the truth. "But I have, until now, successfully hidden it from anyone else. I waded through almost the entire troop to get here. None of them noticed anything." They were all too busy carefully ostracizing her for her precipitous promotion, but she didn't say that.

IN A SPLIT-SECOND DECISION that was unusual for him, Zerk reached out a big paw, and she wasn't able to curb the impulse to shy away from it, although it didn't end up that he was trying to touch her but, rather, reached past her to calmly and quietly set the deadbolt on the very solid door. He knew that everyone in the hallway would have heard him do that, and he knew to what conclusions they were all coming at the moment.

"Then you experienced sheer, dumb luck, and I know I don't need to tell you what a rarity that is in this world," he whispered raggedly, grabbing her wrist. He also knew it was only a matter

of time before the scent of her wafted to the men outside in the hallway, and he had to act fast. The feel of his strong fingers closing surely around her flesh, controlling her, taming her, made her spasm intimately and gasp loudly in outrage, but he gave no sign that he'd noticed in the least. As he jerked her sharply towards him—and she knew she was in danger of crashing violently into his chest—he prevented her from doing so by unexpectedly connecting his fist to her jaw, dropping her like a stone.

Luckily, he was prepared for her to do that and was able to catch her up in his arms before she hit the ground, surprising himself by frowning at the bruise that was already darkening her fair skin. After reaching into her pants to rip off her underwear—which he noted with great satisfaction, despite their deplorable condition, were literally drenched in her heady scent—Zerk ruthlessly clamped down on his own rampant desires. After throwing her panties on the floor near the door, he turned to skirt around his desk and stand in front of a large bookcase, juggling her only long enough to reach into it and move a particular military tome, which resulted in the entire large—supposedly built in—unit moving to one side to reveal a small door.

Keeping her firmly in his arms, he crouched down to enter the dark passage.

But a loud knock at the door stopped him from doing so.

"Commander?"

It was Dune, his legate.

"Commander, are you all right?"

He knew that Dune knew that he was perfectly fine—and his next words proved that to be undoubtedly true.

"We, I, the men and I...there's something unusual coming from your office and we're concerned for your safety."

No, they were concerned that he was going to claim the omega she had revealed herself to be for his own, before they had a chance to fight him—and each other—to the death for her.

He moved back to stand near the door with her clasped to his side, his weapon—which was always nearby—in his other hand to push her would be underwear closer to the very slight crack at the bottom of the door, knowing that would provide plenty for them to smell, thus they would continue to think that she was in the office. "You and the men are to return to your quarters. Please inform the leaders of each strike team to be in the command room in sixty minutes. Those are my orders."

There was an abnormally long pause before his legate responded, as well as wholly unacceptable grumbling from the rank and file about his orders—neither of which would go unpunished.

Finally, there came an extremely reluctant, "Yes, Commander," and they could hear him literally having to physically fight some of the men away from the door.

Zerk grimaced, knowing he was going to lose some good men over this, and at a time when he could least afford to. Some of them would sneak back, he had no doubt, and they would have to be killed. But he and his Sec—the girl—would be long gone, and he would have created a nice diversion that might deter them from looking for them for a while, at least. Some of them would be actively hunting for her and wouldn't appear at the Commander's Call, and they would have to be killed, too. So be it.

He lifted her back into his arms and as he looked down at her, he knew exactly what he had to do.

The passageway eventually branched out in several directions, and he chose the one that went to his quarters. He'd had his room heavily fortified as soon as he had killed off his predecessor and taken command, and it would be the closest thing to a safe place for her to be.

Once there, the door he'd used closed behind him as another heavily built and fully stocked bookcase then moved into place in front of it.

Zerk put her down on his bed, then began to move about the spartan room, quickly and efficiently divesting himself of his armor and the clothes beneath it, until he stood there at the end of the big bed, looking down at her, completely nude.

He then proceeded to do the same to her, each piece of armor and clothing he removed only making it harder and harder for him to control himself as his mind and body were deluged with the almost living thing that was the evidence her body produced for him of her arousal, of her readiness—her need—to be bred, even though she was unconscious.

When he got to the bindings, he used one of the huge knives he always kept close to him to slide under them, between her breasts, slicing them as he went. It wasn't until he had thrown them all on the floor that he realized to just what extent she had been willing to go to subvert her own gender in order to succeed in this world.

Her breasts were so beautiful—despite how cruelly they had been treated—or perhaps because of that—that he could barely tear his eyes away from them. She was quite generously endowed, but he hadn't known it until seconds ago.

That was just a crime, omega or not.

He knew that some of his soldiers thought she was a man, and she had done an excellent job subduing any feminine tendencies or characteristics she had—this was a case in point. But she'd also kept her hair criminally short, and he suspected that she'd only spoken when she absolutely had to, keeping her voice deliberately deeper than it would be normally.

But she had also proven herself to be a braver and more naturally competent, thinking soldier, which is why he'd promoted her. Until now, he hadn't really cared whether or not she was female, just that she did what was asked of her and did it well.

Things had changed radically, though, and he could no

longer afford to disregard her sex if she wanted to live and since he intended to have her for himself.

Allowing himself to press his lips with surprising gentleness to the now angry black and blue bruise on her jaw, he placed himself carefully over her, between her widely-spread legs—which she then became physically unable to close—reaching out a big hand to pat her unmarked cheek firmly but gently.

"Wake up. Come on, now, wake up." What was her name? He had a fairly good memory for things he'd heard, but he couldn't recall hers. In fact, he couldn't recall anyone—least of all himself—calling her anything but whatever her rank had been at the time, and despite the fact that she'd been working under him for several years, he'd never heard her volunteer it to anyone, either.

Her eyelids began to flutter eventually, once or twice, then, suddenly, they were wide open and looking more alarmed than he had ever seen her—and he'd watched her confront almost certain death in battle and face it entirely without flinching.

She began to try to buck him off of her immediately, and for such a small thing, which had been a bit of an advantage in some physical fights she'd been in, she was quite strong and an undeniably skilled fighter but nowhere near enough to dislodge him from his chosen place.

"Get off me!" Her screamed words had no effect, except what had to be exactly the opposite of what she intended as he captured the wrists that were punching—humiliatingly ineffectually—at him and pinning them to the mattress by her head.

SHE COULDN'T BELIEVE where she'd found herself when she awoke—he was naked atop her, and there seemed to be very little that she could do to move him off. She'd managed, through skill and not a little luck, to avoid exactly this situation throughout her

life, depending, at first, as a free-range child, on her knowledge of the streets and her quickness, then, eventually, her words, and finally, her largely self-taught ability to fight to keep herself from ending up exactly here, held helplessly against her will.

He subdued her almost matter of factly, rendering her unable to move in what was a few careless seconds for him but was a devastatingly short amount of time for her. It forced her to rearrange how she thought about herself and her own safety within the world around her that she'd tried to arrange so carefully for her own protection, all while tantalizing her with what she now wanted—all while hating every second of both shocking situations. But hating herself for what she was becoming, most of all.

She'd always thought of herself as strong—as almost invincible, in some ways, despite her size. The genderless-leaning-towards-male exterior she'd constructed for herself had kept her relatively safe.

And now, her own body was fucking all of that up for her, and she wanted to cry—another unfamiliar impulse she was horrified and humiliated to realize she had.

His face was inches from hers, and she could feel that part of him that was most male—very, very male, matching his proportions in its size—poking insistently against that part of her that was most female.

It was the very part of her that was most demandingly needy, at the moment, weeping copiously around his undeniably threatening presence.

"You know what I have to do."

It was a statement, not a question, although his tone wasn't threatening, either, really—not that it helped her to deal with what he meant in the least.

Despite the circumstances of her childhood—her life—up to that moment, she hadn't had any experience whatsoever with men. She thought she knew the rudiments of the act, but she had

been much more concentrated on avoiding confronting it personally to explore any of the details, or indeed, even to find out if what she thought she knew about it was valid.

Zerk ignored the horrified and downright disgusted look she gave him as she revived her attempts to get away, holding her easily in place such that all of her considerable efforts did not succeed in moving her so much as an inch out from under him.

The firm "No!" she intended to issue came out much softer and more pleading than she had intended, by far.

He nodded resolutely. "Think about it, little one. Being bonded with the strongest man in the known area will give you at least a modicum of safety."

She didn't necessarily know what the word "modicum" meant, but she inferred from context.

And he wasn't likely wrong about that.

But, although her body was already busy making itself ready for him, had indeed been doing so for nearly a day, her mind rebelled as much against the idea of being bound to this man as she would have to any other man. She didn't want that—railing not so silently against a fate she considered to be worse than death. She wanted to continue the life she had created for herself. She wanted her independence, to make decisions for herself and then act on them, without having to look to anyone else for permission.

If she allowed him to do what he wanted to do to her, she would be lost to him—to herself—forever. She'd become no better than his slave. She hadn't seen it for herself, but she'd heard about how men treated the rare commodity that was an omega female—they were closeted and cloistered, under their mate's thumb at all times, mindless with the need to mate and bred as often as was possible, kept constantly pregnant and entirely dependent.

They were bred to their mates, even when conception wasn't possible, such as when they were already full of their mate's baby

as a method of control. She wasn't sure exactly how they were controlled that way, but it wasn't something she was interested in finding out for herself.

But she had a terrible feeling that she wasn't going to be given a choice in the matter.

And, in the next second, she uttered an angrier, more full-throated scream than she ever had—even in the midst of fighting for her life—as he drove himself deeply inside her with one powerful jab, his insistent head nudging forcefully up against her tender cervix.