

***“Carpe Scrotum.
Seize Life by the Testicles.”***

—Electra-Djerroldina

The Queen Consort of the Volnoth needs a sperm donor, and only one green-eyed god has the right stuff. Little does she know she has pinned all her hopes on the crown jewels of the fabled Royal Saurian Djinn. Not only is he the son of her greatest enemy, but he has taken a vow of chastity.

“When forced to choose between two evils, pick the one you’ve never tried before.... SEX.”

—’Rhett

The Saurian Knight is caught between a problem father who has all the moral integrity of a Mafia Don, and a married Princess who would stop at nothing to have his seed in her belly. No matter which way he turns, he’s “forked.”

**“Why would a male both hope for and fear a lover? ...Ah!
Inexperience perhaps?”**

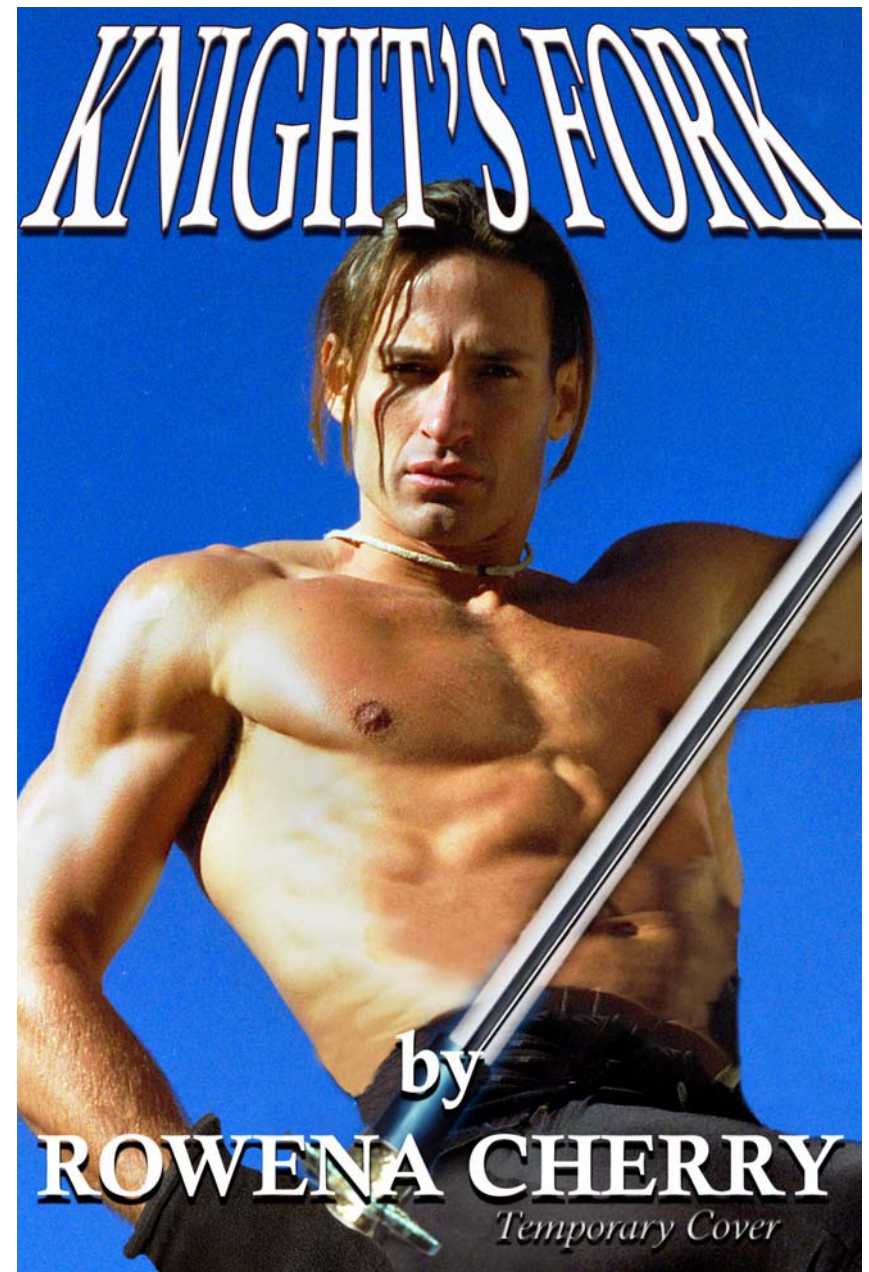
—Tarrant-Arragon

Taking the wrong lover...in the wrong place, at the wrong time...is dangerous. And when the High and Mighty intervene, it can be fatal. Can true love and a pure White Knight’s virtue triumph, when society loves a right royal scandal?

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***Rowena Cherry
Honorable Mention Recipient
2005 PEARL Awards for Best New Author***

Special Preview



SPECIAL PREVIEW EXCERPT

This is an excerpt of *KNIGHT'S FORK*, which will be published by
Dorchester Publishing in October, 2008.

**THIS IS AN UNEDITED, ADVANCE COPY FOR PREVIEW
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NOT FOR SALE.



Author Rowena Cherry

About the Author

Critically acclaimed, award-winning author Rowena Cherry is a self-described lifelong lurker and fact magpie.

Rowena's youth was spent on the tiny British island of Guernsey: a mystical, idyllic setting with its prehistoric earth-goddess, historic Martello towers, underground gun emplacements, and legends of faery men emerging from a cleft in the Hommet Headland to mate with human woman.

A school chess champion and winner of the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award, Rowena went to ancient Cambridge University for her four-year combined honors degree in English and Education, after which she taught at exclusive boarding schools, first in Dorset, then in London.

Eventually Rowena met and married her auto designer husband, who whirled her off to Germany to live the glamorous life of an alien abroad.

Reassigned to America, she rode in pace cars at the Indy 500 and Brickyard; has flown in corporate jets to exotic locations. Her life so far has been fantastic inspiration for romance novel scenes and alien-world building.

Rowena lives in Michigan with her husband and daughter.

Visit Rowena online at:

<http://www.rowenacherry.com>

Paperbacks:

1. FORCED MATE (2004)
2. INSUFFICIENT MATING MATERIAL (2006)
3. KNIGHT'S FORK (2008)

Other:

Prequel : MATING NET (2005) e-book

“I’m at your service in this, Ma’am. I’ve never refused a fight.”

I’ve never lost one, either!

To his surprise, instead of making a pass at him, she sauntered over to join him at the service niche. She took up an Imperial armorers’ sponge in her fingers, and began cleaning and disinfecting the blade of an épée, which showed that she knew what she was doing.

Her curled hand stroked firmly up and down the long shaft, leaving a gleaming trail of moisture where the sponge in her palm had pressed. The erotic suggestion was almost certainly deliberate.

Two could play at that.

Two probably would. They both had a lot to learn, and most of it was about sex, one way or another.

“Are you ready to demonstrate your prowess at sword-play, Your Majesty?”

“Let’s make this interesting,” she whispered. “I challenge you to a proper duel. To the drawing of first blood. If you lose, you will impregnate me.”

He untangled his weapon and stepped back. It was such an unusual reversal of the way these things usually played out that it took a moment to come up with a suitable rebuff.

“If I lose, I impregnate you?” he rasped a follow up question when their actions brought them close enough to whisper again.

“And if you win, you don’t have to, darling.” She was breathing heavily, and her words were audible.

She was shameless! She turned morality upside down. She was in sore need of a very stiff lesson.

“It seems to me,” he said slowly, striving for the right balance of arrogance and legal pedantry, “that I don’t ‘have to’ anyway.”

Her heart rate increased. Hearing the faster beat excited him. As they circled and feinted, he found himself eyeing her with indecent interest.

The superb, layered cut of her outfit allowed for a surprising range of movement. When she twirled, the panels of her coat-dress top flew wide, revealing a glossy, lipstick red lining. Her reflection in the long wall of mirrors showed her long, slender, racehorse legs.

Nice legs. Shame about the... morals.

Early Reviews of Knight's Fork

Entertaining, fascinating, exotic.... and exploding with pent up sensual tension.

~ Susan Kearney, USA Today best selling author of SOLAR HEAT

A stellar ride through far-reaching outer space and the inward roads of personal inner space... Cherry's trademark style of space skullduggery continues to amaze me...

~ Brenda, Mystiquebooks.com

*I never laughed so hard in my life at the antics of Tarrant-Arragon and Djarrhett in this book, **Knight's Fork**. Poor 'Rhett is in a terrible position thanks to Tarrant-Arragon, and it is made even worse by his father's attempts to benefit and manipulate the matter to his own ends. Add to that, misunderstandings and meddling women, and Rowena Cherry gives us yet another fantastic read!*

~ Rose Brungard, Romance at Heart

More Praise for Rowena Cherry

If you haven't read one of Rowena's novels, I highly recommend them. She is one of the wittiest writers I know.

~ Joy Nash, USA Today bestselling author of

IMMORTALS: THE AWAKENING AND DEEP MAGIC

If you look up the word spellbinding in the dictionary of authors - Rowena Cherry is right at the very top.

She writes about alien universes as if they exist, she's lived there and characters as if they are real and she's know them. Fantasy fiction at its very best.

If you look up the list of fans of Cherry- I'm right at the very top.

~ M.J. Rose - international bestselling author of

THE REINCARNATIONIST

Rowena Cherry is one of the best sub-genre writers due to her skill at placing the heroic characters in impossible scenarios

~ Harriet Klausner, Affaire de Coeur

What reviewers are saying about Rowena Cherry's works

Forced Mate ISBN 978-0-505-52601-4

2006 Eppie Finalist

2005 PEARL Finalist

2005 Affaire De Coeur Readers/Reviewers Choice Awards, Finalist

2005 Desert Rose Golden Quill Awards, Finalist

2005 Beacon Awards, Third Place

2004 JADA Press Book Of The Year Awards, Honorable Mention

4 Stars. FORCED MATE is a highly unique, funny and sexy read. This is an author with a bright future

~ Jill M Smith, reviewer Romantic Times

A total hoot...one of the best and funniest Sci-Fi Romances I've read.

~Linnea Sinclair, RITA award-winner

Mating Net ISBN 978-0-97653971-1

2006 BEST BOOKS award for E-Fiction

2006 PEARL Awards, Finalist—Best Novella

2005 Preditors and Editors Poll—Fourth Place

It's a racy, razor edge of a tale, which will leave you amazed....

~ Deborah MacGillivray, author of A Restless Knight

"This is an incredible tale! ... I have no doubt that after reading this you will look up Rowena Cherry's other books. They're all this good!

~ Detra Fitch, Huntress Reviews

4 Stars. This prequel to FORCED MATE pits brother against brother. Both want to mate with the lovely Helispeta....This is a well-wrought and fast-moving tale.

~ Donna M Brown, Romantic Times

Insufficient Mating Material ISBN 978-0-505-52711-0

Finalist: Romance category of the National Best Books 2007 Awards

Spring 2007 N.O.R. Awards, Best Fantasy/Sci-Fi Romance

Finalist: Author Island Awards

A racy, wildly entertaining, futuristic romance

~ Writers Write

Once through the doors, Electra changed course and made for the other throne room, where the Banquet was to be held. As she had anticipated, extra liquor was being rushed to the guests' seating banks and tables, and hurried changes were being made to the place settings on the Imperial High Table.

It would hardly be tactful to sit Martia-Djulia beside her rejected Mate, or to leave empty places side by side in the seats of honor at the Consummation Banquet now it was obvious that no Mating had been consummated in public, nor would be consummated in private. The feast would take place without the unhappy couple.

I am the only Princess at a table full of Princesses. Electra smiled at the Master-of-Protocol, who came bustling towards her, with his eyes bulging in a visible effort not to appear relieved to see her. She gestured to the seating plan. There was no seating tag for a Knight of the Saurian Orders, known as 'Rhett, but there was one for the Great Djinn, Prince Djarrhett.

So he IS the Royal Saurian Djinn!

Electra pointed a finger to her own name, which was placed according to strict Imperial protocol and precedence between her father, the Emperor, and her brother, the Dominator, Crown Prince Tarrant-Arragon.

"We have one guest who may be feeling uncomfortable. I shall comfort him." The board was interactive, and she wore magnets. She dragged and dropped her name to where she wanted to be. Between her brother, and 'Rhett.

"Bring a tray of bones. My tigers will lie between me and The Crown Prince," she added, finding an excuse to move her seat a little further from her brother's and an extra two tigers' widths closer to 'Rhett's.

The Emperor would be delighted to have his son—whom he saw too seldom—at his side. With luck, he would engage Tarrant-Arragon in conversation, which would prevent either of them from overhearing what she had to say to 'Rhett.

As she watched, the bustle of royal servants muted their psychic signatures and effaced themselves, and the first, noisy guests burst into the amphitheatrical room and towards the long and laden tables.

She trembled inside. No more idle daydreams. She was going to do something truly scandalous. Electra rehearsed the words she'd use to ask the virile 'Rhett to impregnate her.

Knight's Fork

by

Rowena Cherry

Why is Martia-Djulia yowli—?

Before Electra could discern what had caused her sister's extraordinary outburst, the scrawny Prince Djetthro-Jason crumpled and flew backward. 'Rhett sidestepped gracefully, turning as he moved, so that his swiftly-drawn sword was held out of the way of flying limbs. Anyone who knew swordfighters—as she did—saw proof that 'Rhett's sword was no decoration, and that 'Rhett was an expert, elegant killer when he wanted to be.

Possibly a look of gentle concern should replace one's politely amused smile. Electra adjusted her expression, though no one was looking at her. All eyes were on the scandalous bride, who apparently did *not* intend to be Mated to the poor specimen now sprawled at her feet.

Even the massed male warriors' choral rendition of the Mating Anthem stumbled. They were superbly disciplined, but who can sing when an ultra-feminine Princess hurls a Djinn Prince across a throne room without touching him?

"Will she kick him?" "Will she take his hand and help him up?" "She'll lift her skirts and lower herself astride him where he lies!" Guests whispered and wished. One could smell their excitement and their vicarious arousal. They'd come to see Mating. If they only knew what debaucheries took place in a bid to rump start an infertile queen on Volnoth!

Martia-Djulia turned from her would-be Mate. She ran away.

A semi-silent communal groan rippled the heavy air as the disappointing Princess ran for the exit, then heads swiveled to glare at the fallen Djetthro-Jason, or else to look askance at the god-Princes—'Rhett among them—to see what they were doing about this unprecedented turn of events.

Electra made a decision and rose. "At my thigh," she commanded Alph and Bey-ta, the tigers that were her pets and her protection wherever she went. They padded beside her, snarling and whuffing at anyone who came close.

Heart thumping at her own daring, Electra glided to the doors that had been opened at Tarrant-Arragon's signal to allow Martia-Djulia egress. If anyone noticed Electra leaving the throne room, they'd assume that she was going after her sister to comfort her.

This was the chance one could never have created. *Carpe 'Rhett. Seize the Knight.* Such unimaginable luck did not fall into one's hands very often.

This is a work of fiction. While reference may be made to actual historical events or existing locations, the characters, incidents, and dialogs are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental.

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other way round. It never had. It never would. Unhappily, Viz-Igerd's machismo didn't allow him to accept the scientific fact that his sub-species semen was incapable.

The timing would be less easy to explain, but—

War-drum thunder rumbled. Artificial clouds of hallucinogenic smoke churned. Electra's father, the god-Emperor, made his dramatic appearance, and pronounced the traditional, menacing speech about incinerating conscientious objectors to the Mating in progress. The massed male-voice choir roared out the Mating anthem. The great doors opened. Her heart thudded anew with irrational hope for a high-ranking late arrival, but the doors had opened to admit Martia-Djulia's Mate-to-be.

She looked again. Prince Djetthro-Jason was not alone. His tall supporter wore white, with multiple, rounded, catch-fabrics dotting a line along the breadth of his shoulders and down his tapered sides. The noble aura was unmistakable.

'Rhett!

Guests shifted in their seats. Garments and lips rustled like a sudden wind gust in dry-season swordgrass. Some exclaimed about the bearded Prince Djetthro-Jason's emaciated state, and wondered where he had come from, and whether or not he'd been tortured until he agreed to go through with this Mating.

Others whispered of 'Rhett, "He looks like Tarrant-Arragon." "Yet, he wears white." "Did you hear? He claims to be the *Royal Saurian Djinn* of prophecy!"

If word of that rash boast came to Tarrant-Arragon's ears, 'Rhett's days as an eligible stud would be cut short. Tarrant-Arragon did not tolerate *potent* rivals.

Was she already too late? Heart thudding, Electra assessed 'Rhett's gait, but she could tell nothing about the state of his genitals from the effortless, self-assured grace and economy with which he moved.

If I get to him in time, where could we could go? How quickly could he do the deed? She shifted her focus to the deep side-vent in 'Rhett's tabard and tantalizing glimpses of his long, lean thighs and tight, white-sheathed buttocks.

Would one time be enough? Appearances, even when the object of one's interest swung naked in full view, were no guide to how much potent exuberance...

Prologue

Tigron Imperial Palace

Mating Ceremony for Princess Martia-Djulia and Prince Djetthro-Jason

Carpe Scrotum. Seize life by the testicles...

Behind her public-figure smile the Princess ambassador, Electra-Djerroldina, Queen of Volnoth, pondered her private mantra while waiting for her sister's Mating ceremony to begin.

One sometimes wondered whether normal people entertained secret thoughts of doing scandalously inappropriate deeds, such as fellating a dignitary during some solemn ceremony or other. Not that a Princess would. Such behavior could get both of them incinerated on the spot for high treason.

Without looking down, Electra slid the undermost of her folded hands over her thigh until the backs of her fingers brushed the soft, bristly scruff-ruff of the collared Imperial tiger crouching on that side of her.

Being an Imperial Princess, and a barbarian's Queen, and also the representative of an interstellar superpower, meant that one had to spend long expanses of one's days and nights sitting still with the eyes of the Worlds upon one, obliged to appear pleasantly amused when nothing whatsoever was happening.

One sat in wait. Waiting for one's awful-god relatives to Mate, or die, or produce an heir, or sign a treaty.

To give strength and mystery to her royal smile, Electra conjured up testicles, mental images thereof. It was almost impossible to be intimidated by the all-powerful males who surrounded her when she imagined their little vulnerabilities. Strangely, she never thought of her own Mate, Viz-Igerd's.

Her wrists prickled a psychic warning. Someone was trying to read her mind. The more nervous of her black, saber-toothed protectors snarled.

"Quiet, Bey-ta."

Electra turned her face with ingrained regal dignity and—still smiling—inclined her head to her Great-uncle Django-Ra, who sat sprawled on the parapet of the royal family's tiger pit, stroking his jaw and probing minds for weaknesses.

Where was I? Hmmm, seizing testicles, she mused, and met Great-uncle Django's star blue stare. *You might be interested if I were to think about my Volnoth subjects' bizarre fertility rituals. On the other hand, Uncle, if you know that I'm aware that you're trying to read my mind, you won't know whether or not I'm pulling your positor, will you?*

He looked away. Django wasn't a coward, and he couldn't be shamed. However, he was a consummate predator and easily bored. He preferred unsuspecting prey.

I wonder...? Is my green-eyed White Knight here?

Covertly, Electra scanned the guests, seeking one enemy Knight among the choppy white sea of alien ambassadors.

Because the godless Saurian Knightly Orders were on the wrong side of the old, cold war, all the Knights wore diplomatic-immunity-white, all the time. While they wore white they could not be touched, which presented a practical difficulty for a would-be seductress toying with the idea of seizing a particular dignitary.

Will I know him, if I see him?

Most Knights hid their identities under distinctive lizard- or dragon- headmasks, ostensibly for life support. Yet, Electra felt sure that she would recognize the one she sought by the slant of his broad shoulders, by the elegant arrogance of his deportment, by how Djinn-tall he was. And by his gold-flecked, rare-mineral-green aura.

She had first seen "her" Knight's face—quite by chance—at her brother's Mating ceremonies less than three cycles ago. Her throat had contracted. Her stomach had flipped. She'd gasped in the shock of recognition. Apart from dark eyes that were as green as Viz-Igerd's, the Knight looked like a lean, mean, younger version of Tarrant-Arragon.

"I wonder if *HE* could get me pregnant," she'd thought.

Before she could ask him, he'd disappeared. Of course, he was an enemy, and much too young to endanger her heart. But the Queen of the Volnoths wasn't looking for a lover. Haunted by his Igerd-green eyes and his near-Djinn stature, she'd made discreet enquiries. All she'd been able to find out was that his friends called him

'Rhett, and he was known for his virtue, his deadliness with a sword, and his unattainability.

The trail turned as cold as his eyes. All hope seemed lost, until the summonses went out for all the worlds' leaders and their spies to watch Martia-Djulia take her new Mate. Surely, she reasoned, the Saurians' leader would send 'Rhett.

The Imperial fanfare's first blast from the upper balconies jolted her thoughts back to the present, and to the descending throne-stage. Electra watched the appearance of her overstated, ultra-fashionable younger sister on the stark arm of their wicked brother, Tarrant-Arragon, who always wore black.

The ceremony had begun.

Wistfully, Electra scanned the masked males in white. There was one among them who might be... But no. That Saurian ambassador was a tigers'-length tall, but heavier.

One after another the four sets of great double doors thudded shut. Latecomers wouldn't be allowed in.

'Rhett isn't here. He isn't coming. Electra stroked the sleek, heavily muscled tiger's shoulder on her left, as if it were Alph who'd suffered the disappointment. *Fewmet, what a pity!* The more she thought about 'Rhett, the more perfect he seemed for illicit, urgent baby making.

Through half-closed eyes Electra watched her ruthless brother and her frivolous, embarrassing sister parade down the steps of the Heir Apparent's throne-stage; and she visualized the child that 'Rhett might give her, if she could catch him with his lower body out of uniform.

Its hair would be dark. 'Rhett's hair was an iridescent black, which he wore long, with thick curls breaking over his shoulders. Hers was dark, too. All Djinn were either dark-haired or silver. Hair color didn't matter. It was the eyes that would be decisive in allowing Viz-Igerd to believe that 'Rhett's child was his own.

It was worth any risk for the chance that 'Rhett's son's eyes would be green like Viz-Igerd's. However, it was more likely that the desperately wanted child's eyes would be dark blue-grey like her own for the same reason that, for all his elaborate fertility rituals, and for all his alpha-male virility, Viz-Igerd was having such trouble getting her pregnant.

Djinn genes were dominant. A Great Djinn male's "smart semen" could impregnate a Volnoth female, but it didn't work the