

# Vinakti Duet

## Synopsis

Nan Klee

In this science fiction/ romance set on a desert planet, orphaned half-breed Jenna Orva, now successful business woman of rare paranormal talents, must confront her destiny with the handsome and equally talented off-worlder Dardin Haldane, whom she feels is responsible for her father's death years before.

Following his talents in the *Power* Dardin Haldane returns to his planet of origin to investigate a band of marauding aboriginals. Knowing the natives are not responsible for the raids that kill and enslave both locals and off-worlders, Jenna predicts Haldane's return. When they meet in Jenna's saloon, *Neutral Territory*, she is almost overpowered by the sheer magnitude of his psychic abilities, while he is enchanted by the one woman he cannot sense through his abilities. She guides Haldane and his brother-in-law Farand to the deep caves of her mother's desert dwelling people, where her great grandmother quickly tricks Dardin into a vow to protect Jenna for the rest of his life - with his life. At a gathering of the kith (tribe), Dardin fights two warriors over the vow he's made: Joemim, the father of Jenna's son; and her cousin, Mad Madagin. Dardin begins to admit his attraction to Jenna. During the strategy conference afterwards, a member of the ruling family is murdered out on the desert by the slavers, and this is felt by the several psychically gifted members of the kith. The warriors launch an attack, rescue the other slaves, but head slaver, Ead Kenard grabs Farand as a human shield. Madagin is critically injured trying to protect Farand, and Jenna must use her empathic healing skills to save her cousin, absorbing his injuries into her own body -- much to Dardin's fascination. Realizing that he's snatched the husband of a powerful ambassador, Kenard flees into the desert to organize a black market auction of this political figure.

Dardin Haldane returns to the city after an unsuccessful attempt to track Kenard and his brother-in-law, and gets a lead from the local sheriff based on a partial vehicle registration number. When Jenna returns to the city, she finds her apartment full of gifts and flowers from Dardin Haldane, whom she feels is responsible for her father's death, years earlier. Downstairs, in her bar, Farand's wife, Delah, her body guard (and Farand's closest friend), LongSten, and Cyril Carlton wait after their day of searching for Farand, who now spends his days gambling at cards with his captors. After an evening of strategic planning with his sister and her adviser, Dardin takes Jenna to guide him into the desert, while Daleh and her people follow up leads in the city. A grand zephyr of a sandstorm hits, stranding Jenna and Dardin at her father's desert home, giving them a chance to work out what really happened to her father -- as well as their feelings for each other. Once the storm has passed, they follow Delah and her people to the capital, on Kenard's trail. Arriving minutes too late, they find the slaver Kenard and his clients murdered, and Farand taken prisoner by the Intergalactic Royal Military Force (IRMF). Hoping to gain access to and favor with the provincial governor, they all attend the 250th celebration of the off-world Royals' rule at the governor's palace. Dardin romances Jenna during the evening, much to his sister's consternation, but she manages to contact the Lieutenant Governor and arrange for Farand's release. When Royal troops attempt to interfere with their departure, Mad Madagin drags a media crew into the mess, neutralizing the confrontation and allowing Delah, Farand, and all to slip away without a fight. Dardin and Jenna return to her underground kith, so Dardin can become better acquainted with his new extended family.