



## The Challenge

*Susan Kearney*

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**The Challenge** Susan Kearney

**She was shot protecting the president, and woke up naked, in the arms of a hunk...**

A hunk named Kahn, who told Secret Service agent Tessa Camen an outlandish story about traveling through time, saving the world, and a Challenge only she can accept. Kahn offers her proof she can't refute: Tessa has been brought forward through time to save Earth by winning an intergalactic challenge.

Kahn only has a few weeks to train Tessa to use the psi-abilities he insists she has. He is confident in the success of a time-honored method that uses sexual frustration to bring out her powers, but Tessa is dubious. She's a martial arts expert and can fight her way through anything, but she's never had much luck with emotions.

Luckily for Earth, Kahn can be very convincing...

## The Challenge Details

Date : Published October 31st 2006 by Tor Paranormal Romance (first published January 1st 2004)

ISBN : 9780765357335

Author : Susan Kearney

Format : Mass Market Paperback 377 pages

Genre : Romance, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Paranormal, Time Travel, Futuristic, Aliens

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## From Reader Review The Challenge for online ebook

### Ambrosia says

Seems like a poor imitation of Johanna Lindsey's Warrior Woman, except more offensive. Even the name of the heroine and the crystals on the "barbarian" world are similar. I remember enjoying Ms. Lindsey's book. I couldn't stomach this one.

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### Nightwitch says

This is definitely a romance novel rather than a science-fiction novel, and I had to check the publication date to make sure it wasn't, like, 1970. Nope. It has the gender politics of *The Flame and the Flower* and very graphic sex scenes, and the writing is frequently pretty clunky. The science fiction part is pretty... you know... pollution is bad, thousands of aliens, and a really talkative ship's computer that sounds like a sex-obsessed twelve-year-old girl. The author's note indicated that this was her first novel, albeit one that took years to sell, and it reads that way. Good science fiction romance is hard to find, and this isn't it. That said, if you like 1970s-style romance novels with the alpha heroes that are so alpha they verge on crazy, this might be a good fit. I was really hoping for more science fiction and less porn with this book.

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### Barbara says

Trust me I do understand some of the lower ratings for this book...

But ladies I honest to goodness could not put it down...maybe because it was different; I don't normally pick something so Sci-Fi(ish) but I'm so glad I did!

Of course there were things that bothered me...like everytime I heard the name Dora (which was all the time) I automatically started hearing the theme song to Dora, Dora, Dora the Explorer, and that kind of thing... you know something that breaks your "reading flow" is annoying. I wonder if I'm the only person that happened to while reading this?!?! Ha...probably so, I'm weird like that =)...So overall this was a great read, and at times very steamy (so Sara you may not like this one)...

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### Judy Lewis says

CAPTIVATING, INTELLIGENT, IMAGINATIVE AND DELIGHTFULLY ENTERTAINING !!!

Title: The Challenge

Series: Rystani Warrior

Author: Susan Kearney

Designation: Book One of Series, Full-length Standalone Novel, NO Cliffhanger, HEA

My Rating: Four Captivating Stars\*\*\*\*\*

After reading some of the negative reviews, I was somewhat hesitant to invest my time into reading it this novel and even more reluctant since Susan Kearney is a new author for me. It was difficult to make an informed decision since I had no experience with her previous work but the book was offered as a free download and I've always been a sucker for a free read, especially when it involves romance and science

fiction. I was also quite intrigued after reading several of the comments from reviewers so I took the plunge and I'm so happy I did. I not only enjoyed this book, I actually loved it! Obviously, I rate books very differently than other reviewers. I base my opinions/reviews on a combination of factors including originality, world building, scene depictions, plot and character development, craftsmanship, grammar, editing and cover art but the foremost element for me is how well it holds my interest and whether I actually enjoy what I'm reading, and I very much enjoyed *The Challenge* by Susan Kearney. When I truly love a book, I'm able to tune out the world, all interruptions and immerse myself completely in the adventure and the world created by the author. And this story grabbed me right out of the gate, held my undivided attention and completely captured my heart. Additionally, I was impressed with Kearney's boundless imagination and remarkable creativity as well as her exceptional language and world building skills. Kearney's imagination is literally off the charts and she did a fabulous job of executing her vision for this story into a well developed and well crafted novel. The narrative was skillfully written in the third person with alternating his and her points of view. The dialogue was smart, snappy, well executed and flowed effortlessly. The characters were well developed, captivating, engaging, sexy and at times, quite humorous. I found myself immediately drawn into this story, completely mesmerized by the two protagonists, Earth Secret Service Agent Tessa Camen and alien Rystani warrior, Kahn. I fell in love with these two unlikely lovers, not only from different time periods but also from different planets with extreme cultural differences which added to the conflict in the story. I found myself empathizing with them, crying for them, cheering for them and urging them on, all the while hoping for them to find their happy ending. I will admit, there were a few things that seemed a wee bit far-fetched but hey, this is futuristic science fiction where anything and everything is possible. Heck, I don't have to be transported 300 years into the future to believe in the impossible. Things I thought impossible 50 years ago now exist. I can only imagine how my great grandparents would react to the luxuries we now see as everyday necessities, like cell phones and computers. Twenty years ago, who in the world would have ever dreamed there would be a computer in every household? I didn't. In several reviews, comments were made about the body suits featured in this story which were manufactured by a now extinct advanced alien civilization. I felt they were a unique and imaginative addition to the story. The suits were completely adaptable, always providing an endless element of fascination and wonder for me. So yes, I found them acceptable in the context of this story. If I can accept the possibility of traveling through time to an alien spaceship 300 years in the future to participate in a Challenge to save an alien planet, I can certainly accept and appreciate reading about a very advanced space age body suit that can function as clothing and body armor, providing protection from weapons, physical violence, heat, cold and even adjust for gravity, and controlled by the mind of the wearer. And yes, they take care of every need of the wearer including personal hygiene, body waste disposal, maintaining proper body temperature and even adjust for sex and normal bathing when desired. One reviewer criticized the author by commenting on the impossibility of having sex while wearing the suit but if we're truthful, I'm sure most of us have had sex at some point in our life while still wearing our clothes. I've found that people can become quite creative when sex is part of the equation. And these suits were designed to adapt for any and all situations. Were there a few problems with the book? Sure, I didn't particularly care for the fact that the suits negated the wearer's need to use the bathroom but this story was the author's vision, not mine. Yes, there were a few minor grammatical mistakes but none that actually distracted me from the story. I've never read a book that I would consider perfect. When I rate a book, I ask myself these questions: 1) What did I love about this book? I loved the originality, craftsmanship, plot, characters, the exceptional world building and vivid descriptions along with the author's ability to put her idea for this story into an intelligent, imaginative, enjoyable format. 2) What didn't I like about this book? Truthfully, I can't think of a single thing I actually disliked. 3) Would I recommend this book? You bet and I am but only for adult readers! 4) Will I reread this book? Probably - I'm definitely keeping it in my library for a future reread. 5) Will I read this author again? Absolutely! I'm very eager to read the next book in this series so I raced back to Amazon and purchased *The Dare*, Book Two of the Rystani Warriors Series. 6) And finally, Could this book have been better? Sure, what book couldn't. With a few little minor tweaks here and there, it could be improved but when all is said and done, my impressions are simply a matter of opinion and fortunately, everyone is entitled to their own. I will conclude my review by saying, if you love heart-pounding danger, heart-stopping adventure, spine-tingling suspense, imaginative and intelligently written science fiction with wonderful worlds and clever gadgets, courageous dominant alpha male heroes,

sassy, resourceful and very brave female heroines, steamy passion and dreamy romance, then you will assuredly enjoy this book. I loved this book and so glad I decided to give it a try. I don't regret one single second I devoted to reading this novel. The Challenge is a full-length standalone novel (274 pages) with a very sweet and satisfying happy ending. Fabulous entertainment and an awesome read.

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## Julie says

I remember being excited when Tor announced (several years ago) it had a paranormal romance line, so I looked for something from it. I found this book. Unfortunately, I had forgotten that I had read another book by this author and hated it. This one is better, but it still has some big flaws, in my opinion.

Tessa Camen is a Secret Service agent who throws herself in front of a bullet meant for the (female) President of the United States and is whisked out of time and into the future just before the bullet's lethal impact. She wakes up naked in the arms of Kahn, an alien hunk who tells her that she has been selected to be Earth's representative in something called the Challenge. He can't tell her anything about the Challenge--neither what she has to do nor when it will take place.

Tessa meets the qualifications of a candidate for the Challenge: she has no living family, she has no scientific background, and she is a virgin. \*snort\* OK, the first two I could buy with a little more salesmanship from the author. But virginity? Good grief. No explanation for this is ever given, and to make this requirement even more inane, it is later revealed that Tessa only has to be a virgin when she is chosen, not when she actually performs the Challenge. You can see where this is going, right?

Needless to say, Tessa and Kahn have sex quite a few times before the Challenge begins.

Kahn tells Tessa that if she wins the Challenge, Earth gets a trial membership in the Federation of Planets, and Kahn's people, the Rystanis, get permanent membership because of his assistance. Kahn tells Tessa that to win the Challenge, she must discover and master her innate psi ability--something Tessa swears she doesn't have.

Kahn decides that the best way for Tessa to discover her psi powers is by making her sexually frustrated. [At this point, this book sustained its first damage after colliding with my bedroom wall.] When Tessa was transported through time, Kahn took her clothes and replaced them with a psi-powered "suit" like all inhabitants of this future Federation of Planets wear (it's one the big benefits of membership--along with ...) . The suit is never removed. It can be made to appear as any type of clothing, and it automatically recycles human waste. It can also be warmed (or cooled) by psi-powers, allowing the user to to run about in the snow without additional clothes. How does miracle of conception take place, I wonder? Too bad the book never tells me.

Anyway, Kahn instructs Tessa's suit to stimulate her by "touching" her in inappropriate places. A kiss here, a fondle there. Oh goody, high-tech sexual abuse. [More damage to the book occurs. This seems to be a recurring theme in Ms. Kearney's books.]

In the time between Tessa's selection and the actual Challenge, the couple has time to travel to the home world of the Federation of Planets and then to Kahn's planet. Along the way, the couple gets married and has sex and has more sex. By the time the Challenge occurs, it is almost an afterthought to the story. One of the more ridiculous sequences involving Kahn and the group use of psi powers occurs during this part of the story.

Kahn is a jerk with a arrogant and backward attitude towards women. He treats Tessa like a child, and when she does something (which made a lot of sense to me) that doesn't fit with his plans (which he didn't tell her), he retaliates by not letting her speak for a day. When she can speak again, what does she do? Tell him off? Hit him with a clue-by-four? No, she seduces him. [More damage to both the book and my wall.]

This relationship is dysfunctional from start to finish. And that is too bad, because when Tessa isn't caving in to Kahn's macho demands, she is rather likeable. The non-romance subplots--which include an AI that has sex on the brain and Tessa's business dealings with an octopus-like alien--are far more engaging.

This was a story that could have been so much more than it was. If you like caveman alpha heroes, you'll like this one. If you like men who respect women, this one should be a pass.

I have read the other books in the series, and I liked subsequent ones much better, mostly because the heroes were more likeable and less control freaks.

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### **Night Goddess says**

The Challenge by Susan Kearney is a great start to a new sexy series!!! Very imaginative and funny with sensuality all rolled up in one makes a great read to pass the time.....

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### **Nicole says**

The characters have sex at wildly inappropriate times, and world-building and character development are sacrificed for very lengthy sex scenes.

However, it's fast-paced and a fun read. Our heroine is dogged, determined and clever. It's clear the author thought out certain aspects of world-building, even if she didn't show it all to us. I'll be looking for the next book in the series.

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### **Kathrynn says**

No holds barred, hated this one. The male "hero" was cruel and used sexual frustration to ignite Tessa's "psi" (mental powers). He had her walk around in an invisible body suit that gave her no privacy and manipulated her body to the point of orgasm then walked away--repeatedly.

The idea was to get Tessa (a modern-day police officer kidnapped by futuristic species) to use other parts of her brain that would enable her to compete in "The Challenge" which was an obstacle course of sorts on another planet. Their species believed sexual frustration was the way to "activate" other parts of the brain.

I continued reading this hoping the male character would redeem himself, but he did not. I didn't care for the plot or the characters of this one.

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## **Ira says**

3.5 stars

An interesting story, the heroine is great but the hero made me mad up to 64% or after the heroine save his ass!

While I understand his background, his attitude made him looks like an idiot, good things he was changing later on and I couldn't stop once I start read it.

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## **Lori says**

What a great surprise! This is one of my first sci-fi romance novels and I enjoyed it very much.

Tessa is a tough and resourceful woman. Sworn to protect the president, she jumps in front of a bullet meant to strike the president. However, instead of meeting her maker, she finds herself on a space ship, naked, and in the arms of a very large, very strong, and very handsome man.

This story was a lot of fun to read. Tessa is a spitfire, completely ruthless and clever in her tactics of negotiating what she wants, but she is also extremely loyal and caring. She finds herself thrown thousands of years into the future and told that she must compete in a challenge that will secure the membership of a planet filled with Rystani people (due to the success of her trainer who is Rystani) as well as help bring Earth (Terrans) into the status of being considered for membership into the federation as well. Kahn is the Rystani trainer who, while following the Challenge's regulations and rules, must get Tessa to use her psi powers to utilize her "suit." The best way that he knows how is to invoke frustration and sexual frustration is the route he takes. However, the obstinate woman thwarts him at ever turn and defies logic with her unconventional reactions.

I think what I loved most about this tale was the unique idea of the story with the various planets and aliens within the tale as well as the function of the "suit." Also the main characters are opposite in what they look for in a partner and I love how, because of it, the tension is high with their interactions. They each had really good qualities and the love story was romantic in a very non-conventional way. The overall plot kept me enthralled and I quickly downloaded the next book in the series once I finished this book.

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## **Vanessa theJeepDiva says**

I wish books would come with a virgin inside warning. This is one of the reasons I do not read historicals, young adult, or new adult. Readers first meet Tessa in present day and she is the special agent in charge of guarding the president. The prologue is action packed with an assassination attempt and Tessa doing everything in her power to protect the president. I'm excited at this point. Readers are taken forward into the future where Tessa is awakened to be told she has been selected as the Earth candidate for the Challenge. A badass secret service agent who is picked to go forward into the future to for all intents and purposes save the rapidly decaying Earth oh this sounds awesome. Keep reading to see where it went way wrong for me.

Kahn is the Rystani who is selected to prepare Tessa for the Challenge. He is also participating in his home

planet's second portion of their Challenge. This all still seems like a fascinating concept to me. Kahn is a bit disappointed by the fact that he must prepare a female for this, especially one who did not volunteer for the Challenge. He is a sexy alpha male, large and in charge. He is also a complete neanderthal in his attitudes towards women. I tried to cut him some slack on this. It is the norm for his people. He just made it too difficult to like him as a romantic hero

The concept of the suit and all it could do had many fascinating possibilities. The fact that the suit is used to provoke Tessa into using her unknown psi abilities in the manner that it was for the length of time that it was ruined this book for me. It was hard to wrap my mind around a futuristic world that is this technologically advanced to use sexual frustration as a means to the end that this tale was headed to. I could have handled the suit and the things it did to Tessa had this been an erotic romance, but this is not an erotic romance. The Challenge itself was lost at some point in this tale and then picked up again as an afterthought the give a final wrap up to Kahn and Tessa's tale.

I will not be moving on in this series. While there are many interesting aspects that would move me along in a series the heroine for the next is a definite deal breaker.

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### **Daria says**

About half way through this I rated and the rate stuck throughout the rest of the book.

Not being able to imagine waking up in a world not your own, Tessa does just that and everything she has been taught will be challenged. Kahn a warrior and dominate male if there ever has been one. He knows women and knows how they act.... he thinks.

Tessa acts like no woman Kahn has known, and how he can he train her? Tess is strong sassy and more than capable of taking care of herself. Being a Special Agent and protecting the President of the US give her advantages that, the women of Rystani has never heard of. Rystarni is a male dominated world, that Kahn is leader of. Kahn will have to adjust his thinking if he is to get Tessa trained to win the challenge. The Challenge will allow both his world and Tessa's world advantages in the Federation of Planets. Tessa needs to win this to help both world survive.

I don't think I can say anything negative about this book, I loved the story line and each of the characters. Kahn and Tessa meshed and made the storyline exciting and fun to read. Their chemistry was on hit and the scorching scenes just made you want to keep reading. Dora!! was awesome!! yay for computers!! Awesome job Ms Kearny!! I cant wait to read the next one!! Enjoy!

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### **♥ WishfulMiss ♥ says**

This could have been so good!!! The time jumping, the space travel, the Osarians and Dora! It all was creative, vivid and and kept me throughly entertained. If this was a sci-fi read I would have loved it. The world building alone deserves some serious stars.

The romance plot was what really dragged this rating down. Although I really liked Tessa when she was by herself or with Dora and Osari, I couldn't stand her when she was with Kahn!

Kahn was just a horrid hero. He was offensive, insensitive, callous by action and thought and with a huge superiority complex that I just hated.

He was always talking down to her, high handed and bossy. And Tessa just accepted this. When she misstepped on issues she had no prior knowledge about or acted like any 21st century woman would, he would have no sympathy or understanding. She was always the one taking the blame and excusing his behavior or worse, apologizing!!! She became such a spineless heroine. So desperate for attention that Kahn's unbalanced affection and lust was enough for her.

After the gag scene and her falling apart after his humiliating rejection I was hoping for a huge groveling scene from him but we get Tessa easily forgiving his effed up actions because she wants a chance to make their messed up marriage work. Nothing Kahn has done warrants this thought process. Why does she want to stay with someone who would treat her like this? It just made no sense. Same with her almost dying at the hands of his people because she saved a drowning boy and preformed CPR!!! The attempted murderers get let off with an apology and everything is fine??? Where is the feeling of anger? Or outrage that his woman was put in danger? Even after his acceptance of Tessa, Kahn never convinced me he was genuine. I cant help but think he settled for Tessa because his people needed her for their very survival. It was all too convenient to have Tessa. After all she was willing to change completely in order to be with him. No effort was required of him, throw in some hot sex and Kahn is pretty much set.

Safety: H is not a virgin, is widowed, loved his wife. Compares her constantly to the h. I don't believe he is over her. The h was a virgin. Had been in love with someone before but she was young and it never went beyond kissing. Humiliating and borderline abusive relationship between the H and h. Not safe!

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## **namericanwordcat says**

The Challenge Review he was shot protecting the president, and woke up naked, in the arms of a hunk...A hunk named Kahn, who told Secret Service agent Tessa Camen an outlandish story about traveling through time, saving the world, and a Challenge only she can accept. Kahn offers her proof she can't refute: Tessa has been brought forward through time to save Earth by winning an intergalactic challenge. Kahn only has a few weeks to train Tessa to use the psi-abilities he insists she has. He is confident in the success of a time-honored method that uses sexual frustration to bring out her powers, but Tessa is dubious. She's a martial arts expert and can fight her way through anything, but she's never had much luck with emotions. Luckily for Earth, Kahn can be very convincing...

## Review

This is a five star read for me because the world building is excellent, it launches an amazing series, and I love the heroine. It is also funny.

I always recommend this book to newbies to the romance and SFR genres because it is compelling, fast paced, and a lot of fun.

I have reread it many times and highly recommend this book. I was given the e book for my honest review but have a well worn and well loved hard copy.

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## **Mei says**

I've read this series head over heels! LOL

So, this is how everything begun! I'm very glad I've read this one! Even if Kahn is often a caveman!

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