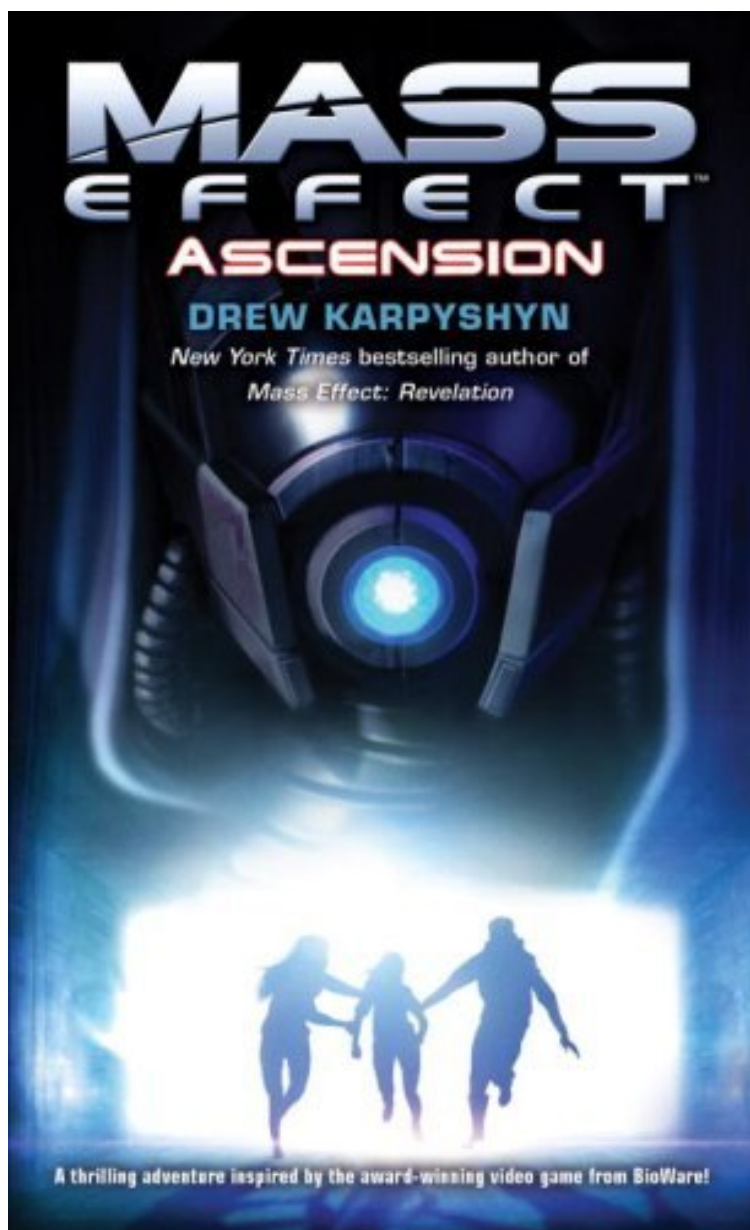


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Mass Effect: Ascension



*Par Drew Karpshyn
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[Ebook free] Mass Effect: Ascension

Par Drew Karpshyn : Mass Effect: Ascension before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mass Effect: Ascension:

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWhen they vanished fifty thousand years ago, the Protheans left their advanced technology scattered throughout the galaxy. The chance discovery of a Prothean cache on Mars allows humanity to join those already reaping the rewards of the ancients high-tech wizardry. But for one rogue militia, the goal is not participation but domination.Scientist Kahlee Sanders has left the Systems Alliance for the Ascension Project, a program that helps gifted biotic children harness their extraordinary powers. The programs most promising student is twelve-year-old Gillian Grayson, who is borderline autistic. What

Kahlee doesn't know is that Gillian is an unwitting pawn of the outlawed black ops group Cerberus, which is sabotaging the program by conducting illegal experiments on the students. When the Cerberus plot is exposed, Gillian's father takes her away from the Ascension Project and flees into the lawless Terminus Systems. Determined to protect Gillian, Kahlee goes with them unaware that the elder Grayson is, in fact, a Cerberus operative. To rescue the young girl Kahlee must travel to the farthest ends of the galaxy, battling fierce enemies and impossible odds. But how will she be able to save a daughter from her own father? This novel is based on a Mature-rated video game. From the Paperback edition.

Extrait One Paul Grayson never used to dream. As a young man he had slept untroubled through the night. But those days of innocence were many years gone. They were two hours into the flight; another four until they reached their destination. Grayson checked the status of the ship's engines and mass drive, then confirmed their route on the navigation screens for the fourth time in the past hour. There wasn't much else a pilot needed to do en route; everything was fully automated while a ship was in FTL flight. He didn't dream every night, but almost every other night. It might have been a sign of advancing age, or a by-product of the red sand he dosed himself with on occasion. Or maybe it was just a guilty conscience. The salarians had a saying: the mind with many secrets can never rest. He was stalling; checking and rechecking the instruments and readouts to hold what was to come at bay. Recognizing his own fear and reluctance allowed him to force himself to confront the situation. Deal with it. He took a deep breath to collect himself, his heart pounding in his chest as he rose slowly from his seat. No sense putting it off any longer. It was time. On some level he always knew when he was dreaming.

There was a strange haze over everything, a bleary film that left the false reality feeling washed out and muted. Yet through this obscuring filter, certain elements would register with exacting precision, minor details indelibly etched into his subconscious mind. The juxtaposition added to the surreal nature of his dreams, yet also made them somehow more vivid, more intense, than his waking world. His feet padded softly over the carpeted aisle as he made his way aft from the cockpit toward the passenger cabin. There, Pel and Keo occupied two of the four seats, sitting kitty-corner across from each other. Pel was a big man with broad shoulders and olive skin. His hair was cropped in a tight afro, and he had a thin black beard extending along the length of his jaw. Seated in the chair facing Grayson as he came into the cabin, Pel was swaying gently back and forth in time to the song coming over his headphones. His fingers tapped lightly against his thigh, his perfectly manicured nails rustling softly against the dark material of his suit pants. His tie was still tight around his neck, but his jacket was unbuttoned and his mirrored sunglasses were tucked away inside the right breast pocket. His eyes were nearly closed; he'd lost himself in the rhythms of the music, a peaceful, easy image at odds with his reputation as one of Terra Firma's top personal protection agents. Keo wore the same suit as her partner minus the tie, but she lacked the imposing physical size one typically expected in a bodyguard. She was a full foot shorter than Pel and maybe half his weight, though there was a tautness to her wiry muscles that hinted at the violence she was capable of inflicting. Her exact age was difficult to pin down, though Grayson knew she had to be at least forty. With advances in nutrition and gene therapy to reduce the effects of aging, it was common for people to look as young and healthy at fifty as they did at thirty, and Keo's unusual appearance made it even harder to estimate how old or young she might be. Her pale skin was the color of chalk, giving her a ghostly appearance, and her silver hair was shaved short enough to glimpse the pasty-white flesh of her scalp beneath.

Intermarriage between the various ethnicities of Earth over the past two centuries had made alabaster skin a rarity, and Grayson suspected Keo's stark complexion was the result of a minor pigment deficiency she had never bothered to reverse . . . although it was entirely possible she had undergone elective skin-lightening for cosmetic purposes. After all, visibility was a key aspect of her job: let people know you're on duty, and they'll think twice before doing anything stupid. Keo's odd appearance definitely made her stand out in a crowd despite her stature. She was facing away from Grayson, but she twisted around in her seat to watch him as he entered the cabin. She looked tense and coiled, ready for anything, a complete contrast to Pel's easy calm. Unlike her partner, she seemed incapable of relaxing, even under the most mundane circumstances. What's wrong? she demanded at his approach, eyeing the pilot suspiciously. Grayson froze and raised his hands in the air so they were level with his shoulders. Just getting a drink, he assured her. His body was charged with nervous anticipation, the tips of his fingers were actually tingling. But he was careful to betray no hint of this in his voice. This particular dream was all too familiar. Over the past ten years he had relived his first kill hundreds, if not thousands, of times. There had been other assignments, of course; other deaths. In the service of the greater cause he had taken many, many lives. If humanity was to survive to triumph over all the other species, sacrifices had to be made. But of all the sacrifices, of all the lives he had taken, of all the missions he had completed, this was

the one he dreamed of more than any other. Satisfied the pilot posed no immediate threat, Keo turned away from him and settled back down in her seat, though she still seemed ready to lash out at the slightest provocation. Grayson made his way behind her toward the small fridge in the corner of the passenger cabin. He swallowed hard, his throat so dry and tight it actually hurt. He half-imagined he saw her ears twitch at the sound. From the corner of his eye he saw Pel remove his headphones, dropping them casually into the seat beside him as he stood up to stretch. How long till we land? he asked, his words partially stifled by a yawn. Four hours, Grayson replied as he opened the fridge and ducked down to inspect the contents, struggling to keep his breathing calm and even. No complications? Pel asked as the pilot rummaged around in the chilled contents of the fridge. Everything's right on schedule, Grayson replied, wrapping his left hand around a bottled water while his right grasped the handle of the long, thin serrated blade he had stashed inside the icebox before the journey began. Even though he knew this was a dream, Grayson was powerless to change anything that was about to happen. The episode would continue without variance or alteration. He was trapped in the role of passive observer; a witness forced to watch through his own eyes as events unfolded along their original course, his subconscious refusing to allow him to alter his own personal history. Guess I'll go check on sleeping beauty, Pel said nonchalantly, giving Grayson the code phrase for the final go. There was no turning back now. There was only one other passenger on board: Claude Menneau, one of the highest ranking members of the pro-human Terra Firma political party. A man of vast wealth and power, he was a charismatic, though not necessarily likable, public figure; the kind of man who could afford a private interstellar vessel, complete with his own pilot and a pair of full-time bodyguards to accompany him on his frequent trips. In what had become a familiar routine, Menneau had locked himself away in the VIP room in the aft of the vessel just after takeoff. There he would rest and prepare for his upcoming public appearance. In a few hours they were scheduled to touch down at the civilian spaceport on Shanxi, where Menneau would address a fevered crowd of Terra Firma supporters. In the wake of the Nashan Stellar Dynamics kickback scandal, Inez Simmons had been forced to step down from her role as party leader. It was clear either Menneau or a man named Charles Saracino would succeed her at the Terra Firma helm, and both were making frequent trips to the various human colonies to drum up support. Menneau was currently ahead in the polls by a full three points. But things were about to change. The Illusive Man wanted Saracino to win, and the Illusive Man always got what he wanted. Grayson stood up from the fridge, shielding the knife from view with the bottled water in case Keo happened to be looking his way. To his relief, she was still seated facing away from him, her attention focused on Pel's back as he made his way with long, easy strides toward the VIP room in the tail of the vessel. The chilled condensation on the water bottle made his left palm cold and damp. The right was damp, too hot and sweaty from being clenched too tightly around the handle of his weapon. He took a silent step forward so that he was standing only inches behind Keo, her bare neck exposed and vulnerable. Pel would never have been able to get this close to her; not without raising suspicion and putting her on guard. Despite nearly six months working together as bodyguards for Menneau, she still didn't completely trust her partner. Pel was a former mercenary, a professional killer with a murky past. Keo always kept half an eye on him. That was why it had to be Grayson. She might not trust him. Keo didn't trust anybody but she didn't watch his every move like she did with Pel. He held the weapon poised to strike, took a deep breath, then stabbed forward with the blade, striking at an upward angle toward the soft spot in the skull just behind Keo's ear. It should have been a quick, clean kill. But his momentary hesitation cost him; it gave Keo a chance to sense the attack before it came. Reacting with a survival instinct honed over countless missions, she leaped from her seat, spinning to face her attacker even as the blade plunged home. Her incredible reflexes saved her from instantaneous death; instead of sliding smoothly up into her brain the knife buried itself deep in the flesh of her neck, where it stuck fast. *Présentation de l'auteur* When they vanished fifty thousand years ago, the Protheans left their advanced technology scattered throughout the galaxy. The chance discovery of a Prothean cache on Mars allows humanity to join those already reaping the rewards of the ancients' high-tech wizardry. But for one rogue militia, the goal is not participation but domination. Scientist Kahlee Sanders has left the Systems Alliance for the Ascension Project, a program that helps gifted biotic children harness their extraordinary powers. The program's most promising student is twelve-year-old Gillian Grayson, who is borderline autistic. What Kahlee doesn't know is that Gillian is an unwitting pawn of the outlawed black ops group Cerberus, which is sabotaging the program by conducting illegal experiments on the students. When the Cerberus plot is exposed, Gillian's father takes her away from the Ascension Project and flees into the lawless Terminus Systems. Determined to protect Gillian, Kahlee goes with them unaware that the elder Grayson is, in fact, a Cerberus operative. To rescue the young girl

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