

## PERIGEE LOVE

The miniaturised whales were singing, their chirps high as a cicada's. Vigdis preter study their ceaseless circling: grey tadpoles no larger than the joints of her little Tiny bubbles trailed their darting forms.

Of course she had seen the aquarium before, but the glass reflected the hall qu and she disliked being too obvious. Still, she might as well have stared: the starsh was clearly interested in her. He had been drifting in her direction for the past ha sometimes craning his head to chat with one of the stiltlegged officials or pau- nibble a tiny silver stick with smoking meat.

According to the just released data sheets Earth had once again turned puritanica own view the pilot might well be acting shamelessly direct, though he had only gla her two, three times.

Vigdis had no illusions about being beautiful: her mouth was just that little bit to while her eyes were a was-hedout blue. And, though her short hair was a qui amber, nobody would care very much that it was her natural color. It didn't matt occasion being very ceremonial, with the assembled worthies mostly gracelessly p their third century, she was one of the better looking women and probably th available female here.

I'm lucky his tastes run in that direction.

He swerved to avoid a whirling dust devil, whichlevitated a bowl of chilled pineapple ending up, surprize, surpri-ze!, just behind her. The curved glass reflected his face handsome. She couldn't have cared less.

He's a starship pilot!

"You like them? The clever little buggers?" His voice sounded a bit hoarse. reaction, she thought disapprovingly. Didn't keep up his immunity shots.

She turned around, smiling. "They're nice. So..., so serious."

He nodded indulgently. "I think you're right. Still, you know, it's a kind of a letdown a have seen the real whales."

"You did?" Her voice rose in a chirp, just like the whales. I think he'll go for the little girl bit.

"Hajum. On Earth. You see, we didn't kill them all back in twenty hundreds. Or ma did and just reconstructed them. Anyhow, there's lots of them today. They jump fr waves. Like mountains. Wahoom, splash!" He threw his arms wide, almost knock glass from her hand.

Jumping like mountains... You sure ain't a poet, mister stars-hip pilot.

"You were on a real sea? On a boat?" It never hurt to give a man something to about.

