

Rapier

By Candy Dance



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Chapter One

The moment Lieutenant Bran Fowler saw the woman backed against the wall in the ascetic room, he knew she was a civilian. He could not recall how many years it had been since he had seen a nonmilitary woman. The differences were striking. The alien Trak-grub-wald behind him, roughly shoved him into the center of the circular room, with its coiled wald-tail forced into the small of his bare back. The woman backed away along the circular wall with faltering steps on bare feet, but of course she could get no further away from him or the Grub-wald. Her fear was palatable, in startling green eyes. It was an eye coloring that he had not seen on a woman before. Blue, gray, or brown, but never a living green like this. Real grass could be that color, he thought fleetingly.

“*Fucking!*” the Trak-grub-wald screeched suddenly, bodily shoving Bran toward the woman so that he staggered. *Christ!* He had thought many things could happen to him, when he’d been captured by the enemy grubs. *But this?*

“What *the* hell-!” Bran tried to turn as he cursed, knowing it was a mistake, but he was too disbelieving to stop. Predictably, a second later, he found himself dropped to his knees. The pain slicing through his body was mild, it only doubled him over as he clutched at the immovable metal collar around his neck, which produced the shocking pain. *The dirty grubs would have to do better than this*, he thought dogmatically, as he held back his scream. Then the spasm of pain stabbing from his head to his toes, stopped as suddenly as it had started.

The seven-foot tall Trak-grub-wald shrieked again. “*Fucking!*”

Bran did not move from his kneeling position. He was trained to withstand torture. He was born into the militaries elitist troopers. The alien grub behind him didn’t know that . . . and it never would.

The woman’s tortured screams were immediate and excruciating. Bran’s head snapped upward with his metallic-silver irises expanding as he saw the woman writhing naked on the smooth metal flooring. She was helpless beneath the torture of the collar around her slender neck.

“Death!” the Grub-wald howled within a piercing treble of high notes.

“Bastard!” Bran swore. The damned scorpoid grub was laughing. Bran stood swiftly, with lithe tightly muscled motion, and his voice raised to a rumbling snarl. “*Fucking,*” he growled savagely.

Then Grub-wald, used one of its four underdeveloped forelimbs to touch a place on the belt that strapped its distended belly inward. At once, the woman stopped screaming, to then lay weeping on the cold metal flooring. *She was soft. Too damn soft, she would never survive this.* Bran realized grimly that it would be kinder to let the Grub kill her, or conceivably he should. He knew that he could do it painlessly, within seconds, once he was close enough to touch her. He approached the woman then on silent bare feet, watching carefully as the Grub-wald back away. But, it was obvious the rancid grub intended to stay and watch.

He nearly laughed. Wouldn’t the Rapier Command love to find out that the scrappy grubs were voyeurs? *Where in the ninety-fifth nebula had the Trak-grub-wald race gotten a civilian woman from,* he wondered, as he went down on his hands and knees over the naked shivering woman?

Starling gazed upward with a sob caught in her throat, at the ebony haired muscle man kneeling over her. She had heard the seven-foot alien’s screeched word, and she *knew* what this man intended to do to her. She tried to stop shaking or even crying, but the tears that spilled from her eyes were relentless. Would it make any difference, in the continuum of horrendous events that she was untried?

“What is your name?”

The silver-eyed man brought his square hand upward, and Starling flinched with the expectation of pain. But, he only clasped his hand over the collar she wore and her throat beneath. His touch was surprisingly gentle.

“S-Starling,” she whispered, unable to stop the quivering in her voice. The man looked unexpectedly startled, when she said her name, and his silver irises swirled into a metallic dark coloring. She had never seen eyes like his before, but she knew from people talking that he must be a Rapier trooper. Likely, one of the highest rankings, and his eyes could see things that mere humans could not.

“Beautiful,” Bran uttered. He had never heard a more unexpected and feminine name, and it fit her completely, he thought, inexplicably releasing her slender throat.

“*Fucking!*”

Starling lurched beneath his looming body, grasping his forearms in reaction to the Grub-wald’s shriek as he continued to gaze down at her. He had never fucked a real woman in his life, and only a dozen or so sexual cyborg’s over the years. Cyborg’s that the military provided its troopers. He certainly never expected to see genuine large, moon-shaped breasts beneath him, so close that he could touch them. Breasts, firm and plump with thrusting nipple tips of rosy pink. Military women surgically lessened their chests to nonexistence and not one of them had pubic hair

topping their delicate cunts like Starling's was. Curls of rich brown color, shaped into an elegant V above the tender coral-colored slit of her pussy lips.

If he wondered, whether it would be possible to fuck Starling beneath these circumstances, he no longer did. His dick rose upward between his thickly muscled thighs. It was boldly hard and pumped red with blood filled lust. Unaccountably, he found himself craving hours and complete privacy.

"You *must* do what I tell you, beauty. Can you do that?"

Bran judged the endearment he used inspirational, and he was amazed at the way the foreignness of it had come to his tongue so easily. Starling, gazing up at him with fear and brittle surrender in her leafy green irises, changed when he called her beauty, her green eyes darken to a moss coloring with tentative hopefulness.

She had toppled to his command. "Yes," she whispered.

Resigned, yet unaccountably aroused, Bran gathered his forearms beneath Starling's bare back and he lifted her upward as he moved to kneel with his heels bracing on his flanks. The brittle tension of Starling's body was at odds with incredible softness of her shape. A softness that slammed into him like a Mach tank. He had never held anything as tempting. Sweat beaded on his brow as his gaze traveled the length of Starling's hair falling to the middle of her back, shaping and clinging around the firmness of her lofty voluminous breasts. Her hair was so long in this position that the auburn strands teased airy strokes over his jutting cock head, like feathers lapping over the slit. The fat swollen head bucked in reaction. Starling was strikingly petite and delicately boned compared to his girth. Her small hands clutched his compact shoulder muscles and he felt her long fingernails dug in.

"Put your legs on either side of my hips, beauty."

God, she was young, he realized as he felt her youthful ripeness fill his arms and he lowered his gaze to watch her sex fan open. *Christ*, her tender pussy was rosy and delicate, and his dick looked like a brutal weapon against its daintiness.

Starling felt the air leave her lungs as the black-haired trooper's gaze lowered, looking down at the intimate apex between her quivering thighs. She gnawed her bottom lip as she forced her shaking legs to the trooper's command. She edged them with a fearful shudder around him to rest them on his muscular hips. *She had no choice*. Fear of the agonizing pain of the collar, spurned her lacking bravery into shreds. Then the trooper's roughly calloused hand's spanned her waist, laying heavily on her bunched hips, as she urgently clutched at the tightly rolled brawn across his shoulders. He was resting on his knees on the floor with his buttocks resting on his heels, so her bare bottom settled on the heat of his hairy thighs, making her gasp again with a shudder.

Then suddenly, he pressed his knees further apart, stretching her thighs widely, until the inner tendons pulled tight. She clenched her eyes

beneath her helplessness and exposé to this stranger. She was untried, yet she knew what would happen, she knew millions of men and women did this. B-but this was her, and this was now! She had seen how large the trooper's male penis was, and she began to shake again. Then frantically, she realized there was something she *had* to know.

Her eyes popped and she whispered in an urgent and wavering voice. "What *is* your n-name?"

The trooper's head lifted, and Starling saw that the nostrils at the end of his hawkish nose were flared outward as if purposely inhaling a scent. She realized in anxious panic that he was young and grimly attractive.

"Bran."

Suddenly, Starling screamed and lurched against Bran's chest. Bran saw the end of the Grub's seven-foot wald-tail recoil from striking a lash across her naked buttocks. *Damn puke, grub*, Bran thought viciously. He ought to kill this one, only there were fifty more on the other side of the hatch and he did not want them to know that he could work through their pain collars. He needed to save that little surprise for his escape.

"Fucking! *Cunt!* Now!" the Grub-wald shrieked.

Starling heaved against his chest and began to cry as she throttled his neck with her weighty breasts plastered into the tough wall of his rib cage. He wanted to shout at the Grub that these things took time, but he knew Starling would suffer for it, just as with everything else that would happen.

Yet, he was hard as titanium, considering that through the last few seconds the gluttonous head of his dick had ended up pillowed between the slit of Starling's soft pussy lips, warm enough to melt him, but dry with fear. Grimly resourceful and resigned, he spit on two of his fingers, continuing to hold Starling to his chest with one strong arm as he unerringly sought out her dry hole with his wet fingers. "*Stay still.*" *Christ*, her breasts were heaped on his chest, and her quivering pussy had an ungodly tight sheath, buried beneath the downy brown fluff of her pubic hair. He was thinking crazily, as his desire loomed higher that he could nearly thank the Grubs for this—. "*Stay still, beauty—just let me touch you.*"

Bran's arm tightened like a band of iron as he held Starling's unwilling body to his administration of wet fingers, when she tried to bolt away beneath the crude prodding. His fingers entered her narrow sheathing with wet in and out strokes—moving deeper—feeling the heat and his jaw clenched with a rush of sexual tension. *Christ*, she was small. He had turned sex bot's humanly sculptured vaginas down to the tightest setting, but Starling's little cherry hole was going to be heaven fisting around his big cock.

Starling moaned helplessly, pulling on his hair, and he wished with his entire soul that he could have somehow provoked her to pleasure. Yet, there was no time to ease her terror. As much as he wanted Starling now, and the demand was staggering, he worried *why* the Trak-grub-

wald wanted this sexual display. Curiosity? *Damn*, he did not know and it seriously unsettled him.

Starling fought a tremendous battle. It was the terror between the known pain of the collar and the unknown fear of being brutally impaled on Bran's towering penis. It left her shaking uncontrollably as Bran lifted her aloft over his lap, while she clung to the small hairs at the back of his broad neck. He was so strong, he carried her weight entirely by his arms as he lowered her and she felt the thick, scorching head of his penis prodding her unwilling vagina. She whimpered.

"*Look at me.*" Bran's command was harsh, and he further nipped her neck with his teeth, making her body jerk, with her gaze darting to his. "Do *not* stop looking at me," he ordered. The color of his eyes was a piercing metallic gray and Starling was transfixed by their dominating quality. "I *will* go slowly." Starling slackened for a brief second, beneath the riveting stature of Bran's eyes and his reassuring words.

All at once, Bran thrust his hips upward powerfully at the same instant, he pulled Starling's splayed body down over his ironclad cock with his hands circling her waist. She screamed. "*Jesus Christ,*" he bellowed in astonishment, because he felt the barrier inside Starling ripping free with his upward thrust, and now he was buried to the hilt of his driving cock. He could feel the warm blood. He had *never*, in a million nebulas, *ever* thought that Starling could have been *a virgin!* By the darkest reaches of space, no one was a virgin anymore!

"*It hurts,*" Starling sobbed, as she tried to crawl upward off him. But, he held her firmly and he saw the Grub's rapt voyeurism, only five paces behind Starling's back. He was shocked, but still fucking horny as hell. He wondered if he could bluff the Grubs, making them believe that this was all of it?

But then the rancid grub started a mocked pumping gesture with his distended belly and wald-tail gyrating back and forth as he screeched. "*Fucking!*"

Starling nearly climbed his chest again, and he had to grab her hair pulling it backward, until her neck was stretched in an arc and he had her subdued and unable to move. Her bountiful breasts were heaving beneath his chin with rosy tipped nipples, and he felt like cursing foully. He did not want to hurt her. "We either *finish this* or I let the Grub kill you, beauty!" he snapped.

Starling tried to gasp, but her neck was stretched too far backward. She could feel the intrusion of Bran's unyielding thick penis driven deep inside her, stretching her impossibly wide and still burning. It was invasive. "I don't want to *die*," she whimpered.

Bran's chest tightened at Starling's vulnerable plea and he released her hair, becoming brisk with the sudden need to finish this for her sake. Certainly not his sake, which included the relentless visions of any number of rambunctious sexual intimacies that he would like to spend the next few millenniums doing with her.

“*Hold* onto my shoulders,” he commanded harshly, not waiting as he made his first in and out thrust. *Christ*, she was tight. He retreated and plunged inward again, until the slapping sound of Starling’s buttocks on his thighs was a rapid pounding sound. Starling clung to his shoulder, nails digging inward, and her big breasts bouncing with his sharp striking motions. He was lost in the feel of it, and shamelessly his emotions and the undeniable pleasure of his cock utterly ruled him.

Something changed for Starling. Altering somewhere in the pain, fear, and gorging vulnerability, as she rode the strong male pounding his rigid penis within her again and again. Thrusting, until friction started building deep inside her that had nothing to do with pain. But it had everything to do with a deep and striving, sweet ache. Pleasure building, stronger and reaching higher, making her whimper with need.

“*Christ*, baby, you are tight.”

Bran’s huskily strained voice titillated Starling’s ear as she saddled his lunging structure between her stretched thighs and he filled her with demanding male steel. Her hair swished over them as she lowered her hands clutching the mounded sinew of Bran’s powerful chest, trying to hold on with her fingernails digging deeply, as she huffed uncontrollably

Bran shifted his large body. He was seeking, searching rapaciously for more raw elemental pleasure. He pushed his hands under Starling’s knees, pushing his forearms through, draping her knees indecently wide over the crook of his elbows. Then each of his hands compressed around a rebounding fat breast. He was lost within the lavish demand of his arousal that consumed his body, making his skin, gut, and dick burn as he swung his hips faster . . . deeper . . . harder.

“*Ah . . . Christ—Star!*” Bran bucked his cock inside Starling deeply and stopped with a tendon popping convulsion, then he pulled out and slammed upward again with a deep belly rumbling groan.

Starling cried out feeling a hot sensation deep inside her, then the thickness of Bran’s penis throb again as she gasped. She nearly fell backward, but Bran caught her, letting her legs loose and tugging her against his sweaty chest, where she lay shaking and half conscious.

“*Come now—come now!*” The Grub’s wald tail coiled around Starling’s neck forcing her upward and off him, before Bran could barely catch his breath, much less think. The Grub pulled Starling away as five more of the grubby aliens lumbered into the room to surround him.

The last sight he had of Starling was as she was dragged barely standing from the room, by the wald-tail around her throat, while he knelt, immobile on the ascetic floor. A muscle ticked hard in his jaw as Starling disappeared through the opened hatch, with the five Grubs backing out of the room leaving him a solitary figure, kneeling back on his heels with virgin blood drying on his thighs.

Chapter Two

Bran lay awake for hours later in his cell. It was actually a hole twenty feet deep and no more than two body lengths wide with a surprising human made, yet primitive water spike coming out of the alloy wall and a drain on the floor. He was naked except for the metal pain collar and he lay on his back with his hands and forearms locked behind his head as a prop. What worried him and caused him a gnawing cynical discomfort, because he even felt the worry to begin with, was whether Starling was held in the same type of isolated cold prison as he was. He could not stop imagining Starling huddled in a corner naked, cold, and afraid. She was soft—*too* damned soft. She did not belong here, not in the middle of this rim war. It was like seeing a flitter star in the middle of a holocaust nebula. The fragile flitter star had no hope of surviving the harshness.

“Damn.” Bran flipped onto his stomach and started to pump push-ups. Twenty . . . fifty . . . one hundred. He collapsed with his sweat-soaked chest slick on the cold alloy flooring, and still, he could not get the innocence, vulnerability, and beauty out of his mind. He was afraid *that* was the point.

†

Five weeks later, by Bran’s rough estimations in the world of the Grub’s ascetic prison, and he was still not at all sure about the Grub’s manipulation of his coupling of Starling. He had not seen her since that one time, or anyone else but the Grubs, and they appeared to act as he expected enemy jailers to do. They tortured him daily, inventing new and innovative ways to try and force him to speak anything but his name, ranking, and serial number. This day had been particularly rigorous with an excruciating attack on his genitals, an attack that had broken him enough to gasp his Rapier ranking, the highest, Silver. It had shaken him that he had broken, even though it was insignificant information, and by design, he still felt he could go on for weeks giving only little pieces of

nothing information. It was his duty to do so, to drag the enemy along, waste their time, and in the end give the stinking Grub's nothing that they did not already have.

But, in that moment that he had hoarsely grunted his color ranking, he had felt shameful relief that the pain would stop. If even for a moment, and he was worried, nearly to the point of an obsession now, that at anytime the rancid Grub's would toss Starling into the chamber and start to torture her to force him to talk. It was sly . . . it was Grub like thinking . . . and it was the only explanation he could come up with for what had happened five weeks ago.

He had been hanging for several hours now, alone after he had given the color of his ranking. He was hanging by straps around his wrists attached to the high ceiling in one of the Grub's completely metal rooms. He still had the pinchers used for conduits of electricity attached, four of them to his limp cock and testicles respectively, and gradually he became aware of a change in his surroundings.

No, it was more as though it was outside of the room around him. It was a deep intuition, moments later aided by the radiant heat detectors in his eyes spiking. Some very high heat levels were snapping within one kilometer of the chamber he was in. He did a mental click and blinked his eyes, shifting their focus to x-ray, which could only pierce the wall to the chamber beyond. Still, it was enough, he could see that the Grub's were in an uproar. For the first time in months an audacious grin lifted his lips. Unless the Trak-grub-wald wardens were bombarding themselves, he was nearly certain they were under attack.

A moment later, the hatch to the chamber he was in began to melt beneath an anti-matter bombardment. It had to be at least five Tack-rifles centered on the hatch at once to produce that intensity, he thought. That meant his entire Rapier team was still intact, *and* showing off.

He'd not felt so relived in years. It was unusual for his hardened soldier demeanor, and he was afraid that he knew where it stemmed from. He was hard-bones military, but something had softened him. *Damn*, he thought in irritation, that was *not* good.

"Oh, *whew*—son! Well, take a look at that fine white ass! This black bitch has found herself a hanging slab of white meat, *male* now!"

Bran scowled as he watched the body following the rapacious voice into the chamber, as his third-tail in command, Lee sauntered into the room. She was tall, muscle-lithe, and a smart ass. But she was good, the best assassin trooper he'd ever trained.

"I told you he would be in here!" Jammer rattled excitedly as he followed Lee into the chamber. Jammer was a whiz-kid with techno stuff. "See *co*-mander! I was the one that found you!" Jammer declared.

"Good work, Jammer. *Now*, get me the hell down from here!" Bran snapped.

He did not appreciate his helpless position in the least, not with Lee eyeing him like a piece of raw meat on a dating servo. And then there was

Cobalt his second tail, sneering sarcastically like a blond Hercules, who was master of all around him. *Damn*, he would gut punch Cobalt for that superior sneer! He and Cobalt were natural rivals, no matter how much, as the man's commander, he tried not to be.

Jammer was about to take a leg up from Lee, to laser cut the straps around his wrists, when he heard the suction pop of an antimatter plug. He reacted with incredible swiftness the second he felt himself falling.

"*Balls*, Cobalt! That was rude!" Jammer yelled after he had managed a body flip in the air, to land on his feet.

Bran hit the floor on a roll and everything would have been fine, except for his fury at Cobalt's tactics. *But*, he was still hooked by his cock and balls to those four pinchers! An involuntary grunt ripped from his throat as he finished his roll, while clutching his genitals.

"Hey, fem's and men's!" Wisetech's electro-injected voice sounded with a booming quality and too much bass into the chamber. The sound bounced around the alloy walls as Bran chomped down on the severe pain wracking him, eating it back into his gut. "We got Grubbies massing for one counter attack." Wisetech announced. "Only ten of the slugs down the hall five kilos—the rest are scattering."

With the ending of Wisetech's report, Bran went into action. He executed a tightly deported leap onto his feet, quicker than Cobalt expected him to, he was sure. Because, he had Cobalt by the balls, squeezing them with a savage grip through Cobalt's skin tight spandex pants. Using his wide hand that was capable of killing in seconds.

"*Balls! S-shit!*" Cobalt roared, just as Bran snatched the tack-pistol from Cobalt's thigh holster, then he shoved Cobalt into the metal wall, and he released him. "*Get to work!*" Bran growled at Cobalt's sneer.

"Sure thing, *co-mmander*." Cobalt slid his glacier blue-eyed gaze to the side with scorn, and then he spit on the metal flooring, before he sprinted out of the chamber with the rest of the team following.

Bran used the Tack-pistol's laser quickly on the pain collar mechanism. He was thankful a second later that did the trick as it popped open and he threw it disgustedly aside. He would not have to laser cut the collar and sear his flesh now in the process.

Still staying back, Bran grabbed Wisetech's one real arm, holding him back also, as he saw the rookie Cookie join the group, from where she had been keeping watch in the outer chamber.

"Other prisoners?" Bran asked Wisetech as they moved forward.

"Neg-a-tive." Wisetech slid his onyx gaze sideways catching Bran's gaze. "But I did pick up three heart beats when I did the first scan from onboard the Skitter. Now, nothing."

A snapping sound sounded ahead of them and both men instantly lower to a crouch, still continuing to move forward. "Woman or man's?" Bran asked.

"Weird ones," Wisetech grunted as they both slapped the wall with their backs, watching Jammer, Cookie, Lee, and Cobalt continue to

engage the Grub's with rapid fire, two kilos ahead. "One woman—sure, and then you, but the other was weird, but human," Wisetech finished.

Bran kept an eye on the corridor behind them, easily letting the team ahead take care of the Grub's in their way. "You said the Grub's were scattering? Are they taking ships?" Bran asked.

"Yup," Wisetech chuckled.

"How many?"

Bran watched Wisetech with only half his gaze as he kept their rear covered and Wisetech pulled down his chest computer panel, using one hand to access his link to the Skitter. "Um, appears—two's all. One's shielded though."

"Where?" Bran asked sharply, appearing to surprise Wisetech with his intensity.

"Ah-." Wisetech pointed behind them. "Two corridors, then all the way to the end-." Bran shoved away from the wall. "But, *hey*, co-man—whatca-?"

Bran interrupted Wisetech's yammering with a sharp command over his shoulder. "*Wait* fifteen, then skitter-split, old man!"

"Aye, aye, co-man!" Wisetech shouted as Bran turned the corner and began to sprint.

Chapter Three

Bran killed five grubs aboard their Wald-ship, before the sixth screeched out the location of Starling, and then the alien ran. Bran let him go as he pulled open the hatch to what he would consider the Wald-ship's cargo hold. He reconnoitered the entrance, then he moved halfway into the chamber, which was filled with gray colored alloy crates of all sizes and heights. Moving forward cautiously, he came around a large grouping of crates at the end of a long aisle way. Shifting his gaze swiftly over the area, he spotted her . . . barely.

What he saw was a strangely scooped out table with ghostly blue lights emanating from within its oval structure, and inside there was what looked like a lumpy length of black netting. When he stepped closer, he realized that the netting was moving, and he stopped cold at seeing Starling beneath its black strands. She was naked and she did not have a pain collar around her slender neck. The entire length of her voluptuous body was flexing in a sinuous motion that stalled him for long breathtaking moments, to watch the dark netting move along her nudity. *Christ*, the sight was charged with hot hormones and sensualism, and he had to haul himself back from the unexpected sight and a following avalanche of instantaneous lust.

"*Hell*," he swore out loud, trying to shake his immobility. That damn netting could be eating her, hurting her, or any number of things, he told himself, with a viciousness to get moving. "Starling!"

Bran grasped the netting with one hand and felt its rough strands, yet nothing appeared lethal, it was more caged. He looked closer, when Starling did not answer and he saw that her eyes were shut. But still, her nude body undulated on the length of the sunken table. Quickly, he picked her up, out of the table's scooped center, and when he did, Starling fell limp in his arms, and the blue light emanating from the table winked out.

He did not have time to worry over it, if he had any hope of getting either of them back to the Skitter before Wisetech wiggled the ship out into space. As it was, he was going to have one a hell of a time taking a civilian woman aboard the classified Rapier Skitter. Command would consider this one woman's life not worth the security breach in their realm of thinking, and he forced himself not to dwell on his own, more than unusual behavior, in forcing the issue.

He met minimal resistance on his jog to the Skitter, and he met Cobalt just as he was stepping through the trip hatch.

"I *don't* believe it," Cobalt rasped in his heavy voice, and for once, Bran noted not to his liking, that Cobalt seemed to have lost his superior attitude as he stared at Starling. The immediate lust in Cobalt's gaze made Bran want to gut punch him, and then cover Starling's nakedness. But instead, he bulled past Cobalt without a word, but the dark scowl furrowing his features.

"I *get* seconds." Cobalt sneered, behind Bran's retreating back.

Bran flinched, yet kept going. He would deal with the bastard later. Now he needed to get Starling to his cabin and get the Skitter lifted off. The disembodied voice of Wisetech sounded in the corridor in front of the hatch to his cabin, and followed him inside the small space after he kicked the hatch open and walked inside. "One minute to spare boss! How's about a liftoff now? I got a retreating Wald ship, we just might catch."

"Engage liftoff sequence," Bran ordered as he lowered Starling onto his bunk.

"Right-o!" Wisetech's voice sailed through the room around him. There was a crackling sound and then the Skitter rocked on its moorings as Bran's head jerked upward to hear Wisetech's voice over the comm. "Shiit! Reinforcements! Ground. Didn't break through the shields though. All hands, engaging liftoff. Stations!"

Bran knew that his crew could handle things for a while longer and he needed to get the netting off Starling and check her condition. He was worried about her unconsciousness. He turned away from her and jerked open the built-in cabinet that held his clothes, extra boots, and backup weapons. He laid the Tack pistol he had scarfed from Cobalt down on the pullout wall desk and he returned his gaze to the cabinet to find his spare knife. The Rapier's standard knife was a wicked looking blade, and he was just pulling it from its leather-rub sheath, when he heard a whimpering sound behind him.

Jerking his head around, Bran saw Starling fighting the net with pushing hands and wiggling feet. He did not want her to hurt herself, the net was rough and her skin was . . . well? He grabbed the back of her neck getting hair and netting. "Hold still, beauty, it's Bran. I'm going to cut you out of there."

Still, he had to force her into stillness with the pressure of his fingers spread around the nap of her neck as he watched her pant helplessly, and

then finally she focused her gaze on his face. It was like looking into turbulent green waters, while he watched her gaze slowly becoming clearer.

“B-Bran,” she whispered with her voice wavering.

“That’s it, beauty, you’ve been rescued.” Bran kneaded his fingers along her delicate nap as she clutched the netting with her fingers. “I need you to lay still, so that I can get this net off you. Can you do that?”

Starling sucked in several shuddering breath’s, raising her pink nipples to quivering points, and Bran could see that she was shaking as she barely whispered, “Yes.”

He wasted no more time. He could see that she was fighting panic over being in the netting, so he pulled the net below her feet and started to cut as he spoke with a powerful sense of needing to comfort her, that was completely foreign to him. “We are on my Skitter, Starling. My Rapier team rescued us from the Grub prison.” The knife worked, but the netting was tough and he had to saw on it.

“R-Rescued?” Starling whispered, sounding as though she were in a world of confusion, while her body continued moving with small worming undulations.

“Does the netting hurt you, beauty?” Bran asked.

“Yes,” she exhaled. “I’m trying not to move, but it is b-biting my skin all over.”

Bran did not like the sound of that at all, but he had enough of the bottom opened that he decided to forgo cutting any more of it and just pull it off her. “I’m going to pull it off now.”

Bran had his back to the open hatch, yet the hairs on the back of his neck prickled. A sure sign, then he heard Starling gasp. She was frantically trying to cover her breasts and the sweet little snatch between her thighs, while beginning to cry. Bran jerked his head around. “*Get to your post!*” Bran snapped at Cobalt, who was leaning leisurely, for him, in the open hatchway with his icy blue-eyed gaze hitched on Starling.

Bran knew because of Starling’s struggles that the netting must be hurting her more and he wasted no more time to see if Cobalt had obeyed his command. He grabbed the bottom of the netting and quickly began to pull it up over Starling’s bare ankles and calves, tugging it from beneath her thighs. “I’m getting it off, baby doll, just try to be still,” Bran muttered through his teeth. He could see the red marks on Starling’s ivory colored skin. He pulled the netting up over her hand, clasping ineffectually at the soft brown curls between her thighs, then up over her rounded hips, and smooth flat belly. *Christ*, she was ripe, he thought, pulling Starling upright against his chest, where he could lift the wadded netting off better.

“*Jesus.*” Bran heard the rough voice behind his back and knew that Cobalt had not left. “I’ve never seen a woman like this one. *Only* in my fucking dreams.”

Bran pulled the netting free and Starling sought shelter fully against his chest, curling up to him as if she could hide in his skin. He could feel her tears wetting the hair on his chest. “*Christ*, Cobalt. You are scaring her. Get the hell out of here!” Bran growled, shielding Starling now with his own bare body.

“Don’t want to scare the little doll,” Cobalt muttered behind them. “*Later.*”

Bran checked over his shoulder. “It’s all right, Starling, he is gone now.”

Starling continued to cling to him and he could still feel her tears as he wound his hands in her hair, holding her close, quietly letting her cry. He supposed that he was giving her comfort, or perhaps as strangely as it seemed, hoping that he was. Suddenly, the lighting flickered and the red security warning lights began to strobe with the intermittent screech of the alarm horn. Starling jerked in his arms at the invasive and blaring sound as her nails dug unknowingly into his back. “*What* is it now?” Bran growled, when the chamber intercom blurted Wisetech’s familiar voice.

“We got a *problem* co-man. The life support warning system is telling me that babe of yours is pregnant and it won’t let us take off unless I override it!”

Bran was thunderstruck, and without even thinking, he jerked Starling back away from him. Then, he forcefully pressed her down on the bunk to glare down at her. Both their hands collided on top of her stomach. Yet, his beat hers as he flattened his palms and she tried to pry his hands free. “*Is it true?*” He had not really meant to sound so vicious, but his entire world had just skipped a cosmic beat. Starling was shaking her head, trying to grab his hand, trying to wiggle her body out from underneath him at the same time. Her eyes were frantic—scared. “*Tell me, is it true?*”

Bran grabbed Starling’s arms and she collapsed to lay still on the bunk, crying out, “Yes!”

Inexplicably, his hand returned to her stomach and he felt the satin tenderness of her trembling skin, while he tried to force his mind to comprehend the reality. All the while red lights flashed and warning buzzers blared around him.

Starling lay paralyzed in anxiety as the man named Bran ran his calloused fingers gently over her belly. It was as if he could feel the baby somehow—or wanted to. It took her moments to understand that he was not going to hurt her, because of it, the shock—or the horror. She did not know how he would feel.

“*Damn*, beauty, we got a problem.”

Starling gripped Bran’s muscled forearms, wondering how much more she could stand. She felt so weak and cold. She had been so cold, until Bran held her. He scowled down at her now, with his strong features searching her face, while his silver irises turned into swirls of slate colors.

There were questions in his gaze, followed by firm and steely resolve and a decision. She awaited her fate, knowing that he controlled her destiny now.

“Get up! You have to put something on.” Starling grabbed one of Bran’s box-shaped hands. “We have to get out of here.” Bran’s dark head was turned, and he was rummaging through a cabinet, then he tossed a tee shirt over his shoulder muttering, “I haven’t got much that will fit you.”

Starling gathered enough courage as she pulled the tee shirt on to speak. “Go?” she asked.

Bran was standing, pulling on some strange black colored pants that hugged his lower torso like skin. “Yeah, beauty, there is *no* choice. A Skitter jump would kill your baby and most likely you with it. *That* leaves only one choice.”

“You’re going to leave me?” Starling clutched the end of the tee shirt that hit right above her knees, watching Bran stop in the process of pulling on a multi-pocketed black vest. He looked angry.

“*Damn* rancid Grub’s,” he cursed, raking a hand through his short bristly black hair and making her cringe, still wondering with terrible uncertainty what he was going to do. “No!” Starling flinched and then Bran was there taking her shoulders into his big hands. She was afraid to look into his eyes, so she watched his mouth wondering how he meant the snarled “no.”

Bran wondered what trick of fate had dealt him this hand. *A baby*—crap! How could he kill a baby and its mother? He squeezed his hands tightly, not hearing Starling whimper at the pain he was causing her. He would have to give up everything, *he* would be considered a defector. After that nothing he could do would get him back in the Rapier Troopers, and they would not like having him on the outside either. His entire life in one act. *Christ*, he had thought a lot of things might happen to him, but this was too unreal.

But, he was a commander, and he was trained to make impossible decisions in seconds. He had done it before, knowing that a man just had to deal with the consequences later. “Wisetech, drop out the Zach four runner!” he growled to the ceiling.

“Whoa b-but Boss-!”

“*Now!*” Bran released Starling, realizing belatedly that he might have been hurting her. “That is a class *one* order, buddy!” Starling nearly crumpled to the deck, before he caught her, holding her up against his chest as her head fell limply onto his vest. “And Wisetech, bring me a med-i-log and meet me in the rear bay. Tell Lee that she’s in charge of the wig out!”

“If you are *sure* co-mander?”

“I’m sure!”

Starling was in a half faint, and she was cold. Too cold, Bran thought as he lay her in back of the Zach vehicle, after he had carried her through

the ship, stopping only at Cookies bunk to grab some boots. Bran grabbed a thermo-blanket and a retiring bag to wrap Starling in, before he lifted her again into his arms and walked to the front of the Zach. He settled her to sit, in the second seat.

“Starling?” Bran shook Starling a little and she seemed to catch enough tension in her neck to hold her upright. “Come on, beauty, you got to help me here.”

“Are you going to leave me?” Starling mumbled.

“No,” Bran grumbled harshly, as he began to strap her in with efficient, but sharp motions. “Now stay upright, and hold onto this rail!”

Bran grasped Starling’s petite hands and placed them on the horizontal side rail, as she whispered, “Yes, Bran,” with tears in her tumultuous green eyes.

Bran turned away with irritated grimness, over himself and over her, over the situation *and*—his seemingly new and unreliable emotions. He felt the gates lowering the Zach to the outside ground level, and he grabbed a Tack-rifle, seeing Wisetec hurrying toward him carrying a med-i-log. Before Wisetec could raise a derogatory word, he beat him to the punch. “Drop your chest computer, old man!” Bran grabbed the med-i-log and tossed it on the rear deck of the Zach, as he continued to say, “I’m going to key in Lee as Top Dog.” Wisetec opened his half metal mouth. “*No* arguments—that’s an order!” Bran finished.

“Alright, alright, co-man,” Wisetec muttered as Bran punched in the codes. “Can’t blame you, co-man . . . a babe and all—just . . . just-.” Bran slapped Wisetech’s chest computer closed.

“*What?*” Bran snapped.

“Ah, man, just tell me what I can do?” Wisetech grabbed Bran’s forearm. “Anything!”

Bran felt a force of emotions slam his gut as he held his facial features immobile. “You might-.” He gripped Wisetech’s forearm tightly. “-*Find* a way back here in nine months.”

Bran could not stand it, he’d lost all rights with his intended actions, and he felt weak for asking. He did it not ask for himself. He asked for Starling and for her baby, if he could keep them alive on a hostile Grub planet.

“You got it!” Wisetech exclaimed. “Yes, *man*, you just count on it!” he shouted as he sprinted back toward the inner hold of the Skitter.

Bran shook his anger, frustration, and helplessness free, as he let his last vision of Wisetech disappear—that and everything else, he had ever known. He growled with a sound that could have been pain or deadly intent, and then he threw himself up into the Zach’s driver’s seat.

Within seconds, he had the Zach four-runner rolling free beneath the Skitters belly and through the shields that had been lowered for a brief second. Right out into World War Six, by the looks of the flash battle going on, and directly into a line of Trak-grub-wald Blaser ground vehicles.

In the exploding strobe lights of battle, against the eerie purply night of the Grub world, Bran swore he saw a human type bulk, for one brief second, right before a Blaser vehicle blew up in a violent ball of orange. The fortuitous blast, left an opportunity for him to break through the Grub's Blaser line, and he geared the Zach, popping a wheely with the power he used as Starling squealed next to him and hung on tightly.

Chapter Four

When the vehicle lurched like a rearing stallion, Starling felt her heart in her throat, and the next second was nothing but blackness as she fell unconscious.

Only to wake in a strange place, in a strange position, and on top of a dark lumpy human stranger. She would have yelped in fright, if she could have found her voice. She was glad a few seconds later that she had not, because when she opened her eyes and then her senses began to focus in the darkness, she realized the stranger was really the tough-bodied trooper, Bran. While her frantically beating heart stilled to her surroundings, she realized slowly that she was safe and for some reason sprawled on top of Bran's hard athletic body. All six feet of him, and he had her wrapped in a bear hug that included one of his impossibly wide hands covering one cheek of her naked bottom, sticking out from beneath her tee shirt. He was bare-chested, but she could feel the warm material of his skin tight pants against her lower body.

She finally decided after long moments of concentration that he was sleeping, and with nothing else to do, she laid her cheek back down on his hairy chest. *He was not leaving her*, she thought in awe as she rubbed her cheek into the warm curly hair and sighed. She had not felt so safe in such a long time, nor been so warm. Bran's body was like an internal heater, sending waves of warmth around her. The Grub-wald prison had been so cold. Cautiously, she probed her toes between Bran's sinewy calves, feeling the immediate heat.

Bran woke to the unique experience of small toes wiggling in between his calves, as he lay still, but eyed the Zach's security screens through one barely opened left eye. Satisfied that everything was secure. Which meant there was not any Grub's within a hundred kilometers of their position, he turned his awakening mind completely to the experience of having a full-bodied real woman sprawled on top of him. And more important, the feeling of one of his hands covering a plumply rounded ass cheek.

Hell, there was nothing like a woman's butt, he thought grimly, thinking of all the lean, hard, and muscular butts he had seen in the troopers for the past ten odd years. Not this one though, this one was as soft as satin and pillowed enough to make his throat ache.

"At least there is *one* benefit to destroying my entire career!" he growled through the ache in his throat, as he grabbed hold of the now startled woman on top of him and dragged her up his chest. That full length body drag was inspiring, nearly as inspiring as the two hands full of squirming bare butt he now held.

"What are you *doing*?" Starling squealed as she braced her two diminutive fists on his shoulders, in what he supposed could be an attempt to push her body off him. He stared at her frantic gaze above him, feeling her long hair feathering across his chest, then pooling in the hollow of his throat. He wondered by her question, just what he *was* doing. He'd never considered doing anything with a real woman before. Sex bot's were playthings, but Starling was flesh and blood. Wasn't that the point though, somewhere in this mess? However, he could concede that he had no notion of propriety with a woman . . . *none* . . . zilch. But then, wasn't he owed . . . *something*?

"Fucking," Bran muttered, as he knocked Starling's bracing arms loose, making her squealed again. Then, with his arms full of a wiggling curvaceous woman, he rolled their bodies, until he held Starling pinned beneath him.

"You can't-you can't!" Starling gasped, shoving against Bran's block-shaped shoulders, nearly hurting her hands with the impossible effort.

"Why the hell *not*?" Bran demanded, grasping a hand full of her hair and another full of her tee shirt, which he began pulling up her squirming thighs.

"Because—b-because," Starling pleaded, feeling the heat of Bran's knuckles scorching her belly as he . . . *as he. Not like this!* She squeezed her eyes shut expelling a frightened whimper.

Bran stilled his hands motion between two mounds of firm breast, hearing that feminine whimper made him think—. "*Look* at me," he demanded, then he released his hand from its treasured burrow, and placed his hands on Starling's small skull to hold her up as her eyelids peeked open, along black eyelashes. "*Tell* me why not."

Starling's thoughts were in panic mode as her gaze searched Bran's hardened, attractive face. "Because we are not married!" she finally blurted, then she gasped and began to shove on Bran's chest again, as hard as she could. She was amazed when Bran's tough muscular body moved and he fell onto his back, causing her to gaze at her small hands in wonderment.

"Married," Bran groaned, of all of the things he'd thought to hear this was the most shocking *and* damn alien. "Married!" he snapped again, throwing a forearm over his eyes. "Christ!"

Starling thought it fortuitous to escape Bran's heat and looming masculinity, so she pulled her tee shirt down and grabbed a strangely texture blanket, while she scooted to the very back of the small space they were in. A space like a box and they were sitting on a deck of some sort. Ahead she could see two high-backed seats, and she realized they were in the vehicle Bran had strapped her into earlier.

"Let me get this straight." Starling's eyes widened as Bran rolled onto his stomach and he propped on his elbows, making his biceps balloon before her eyes. "You say you won't fuck me, unless we are—ah, *married?*"

Starling clapped her hands over her ears, exclaiming, "Oh, I don't like that word! *Please*, don't say it again."

Bran raised a dark eyebrow and tilted his head. "Marriage?" he guessed, a little too innocently for such a roughly masculine face. Starling shook her head vigorously with her ears still clasped, not realizing that it showed she could hear everything. "Well, just *what* would you call it then, beauty?" Bran asked in exasperation. A moment later truly regretting all that he did not know about shy, timid, real women—because then, he could have been prepared for—.

"Making love," Starling whispered, lowering her hands. "Married people, having a baby—make l-love."

Starling looked so serious, Bran thought. *Christ*, she looked hopeful. Hope, swimming in deep green melting eyes. What was he supposed to do? Rape her? Then, he made a fatal mistake by opening his mouth again. "Baby doll, there are *no* holy men here to take vows from, so I don't see—."

"*-But* you are a Captain, aren't you?" Starling interrupted, as Bran's jaw went slack. "A Rapier one," she added, looking as if that bolstered her point perfectly.

The problem, Bran reflected with an audible groan, was it did hit the point. It was an antiquated law, never, he was sure enforced in centuries—.

He swiped the square surface of his hand over his face. That might be stretching it, they probably did use it closer to the colonies of earth, but out here on the spacial rim . . . well, it was ludicrous. But, legally valid . . . ancient legally, he could marry people, but surely not himself. It could *not* apply to him!

The point, Bran decided, as he sidestepped all of it abruptly, was that he was *not* going to get laid. And that was the true misery. He's lost his career . . . he was stuck with a voluptuous woman for months . . . he was in the middle of a hostile Grub world . . . and now, he was stuck with a hard cock from here to eternity.

"Great," he mumbled. "Just damn, *great*."

Chapter Five

Starling hummed a bright tune as she nibbled on the nutrition bar, Bran had given her to eat. She liked music and she could even sing, but she settled for humming. Her gaze was jumping around trying to catch every sight outside of the window, as the Zach, Bran called it, bumped down a road it was making. The Grub world was dense with foliage, at least it was here. It was paradise, she thought, but Bran disagreed. It was a rain forest, although it was not raining, and she did not know if it even did rain, but surely it had to? Why, some of the flowers and plants looked familiar. She was certain that the creeping green vines she glimpsed with the delicate white five petal blossoms were moon vines.

“And what *is* this?”

Bran’s voice sounded deep with exasperation, and Starling realized that her mind had wandered again. Her gaze followed Bran’s long finger with its blunt fingernail as he pointed at a raised black triangle, setting in the thing he called the main control panel. She watched a little red light blink in the black triangle, as she chewed the corner of her mouth. “Isn’t that the thing t-that you push to stop, Zach?”

“Christ!” Bran swore in a swishing sound, making her jump. “Have you been listening to anything I have said?” His finger now pointed at her nose, bouncing up and down, making her feel like—well *like*, biting it! “Trackdar, baby doll!” Bran lowered his finger. “Say, Trackdar.”

“Track-t-tar,” Starling mumbled.

“Track *d*-ar,” Bran enunciated through gritted teeth. “You need to learn all of this, Star. Now pay attention!”

“I don’t see why, Bran? It’s like—well, its like a foreign language.” she twisted a strand of her brown hair around her fist. “Yes, that’s it. A foreign language,” she mumbled.

“But, instead you can ask me every damn question this side of the thirty stellar rings about trees and *flowers*,” Bran muttered, as he jerked on the Zach’s directional stick shift. The Zach lurched to the left and Starling ended up with her face in his lap. An interesting position, he thought in irritation. “I thought I told you to strap in!”

Starling braced her hands on thickly hewed thighs covered in tightly stretched black material and as hard as mountain rock, she was convinced. But, then another bump followed and her face again was plastered over Bran's—.

- It was better *not* to think of that word, she decided because it conjured up one of Bran's earthy euphemisms. But, she did wonder if it was intentional—the bump's, and not the male ones.

“Finding anything interesting down there, baby doll?” It was as sugary as Bran's voice would ever get in a male rumbling tenor.

“Bran, help me,” she finally pleaded, and then she quickly found herself sitting upright across Bran's lap, so she had no choice but to grasp his neck, and lean against his bare chest.

“I told you to strap in.”

Starling gazed at Bran's ear. Goodness, even his ear was male. Then her gaze shifted to his jaw which was chiseled with a dark shadowing of whiskers. “It's not comfortable, Bran, especially the one across my stomach,” she whispered.

He grunted at that, and then he pushed her head onto his shoulder with a comforting arm around her waist. She knew that Bran was uncomfortable talking about “the baby.” She had learned, even in their short day and a half together—. Or could it be three days, because this planet had such oddly long days and nights? The nights were purple? But, Bran always called the baby “your baby” on the two times he'd mentioned it to her at all. The rest of the time he mostly mumbled, and looked uncomfortable if she had to say anything about “the baby.”

That was difficult too, because she was worried . . . very worried, and she wanted to talk to him. She wanted him to reassure her. Only she was afraid to tell him, because then he might want “the baby” less, if he did at all. It was just that the Grub's had done things to her, and now she was scared. Frightened of what might have happened to her baby. But, she told Bran none of this as he stoically began to ask her questions again. The answers to be given in a technically foreign language that encompassed gears, parts, and even worse, tactical displays!

An hour later, Bran ground his teeth with a feral grimace that some might call a devilish smile, while Starling slept the sleep of innocence on his lap. She had not placed one . . . *not* one of the controls on Zach correctly, even after he'd told each one at least five times. And to top that off she'd fallen asleep, while he'd been explaining the Zach security systems. It was not that he was being perverse, he understood the Zach would be complicated and impossibly intricate to learn for a civilian. But, he'd only been striving for just simple comprehension. Things that could make the difference between life and death. *And what would happen to her and the baby if anything happened to him*, he wondered? A thought that caused him a feeling so uncomfortable, he immediately sidestepped it. No, she just needed to know for both their survivals.

Bran sighed heavily, while absently touching Starling's hair. His hand sifting through strands of rich brown, then down a spine, which was delicate and warm. "Too damn soft," he muttered to himself, wondering what in the spacial confines he was going to do with her?

The road he was making through the dense green foliage was leading to a mountainous area by the looks of it on the Zach's tactical display. He'd been lucky to get away from the area around the Grub-wald prison unnoticed and now he was reconnoitering the areas surrounding the prison. He did not know if this Grub world was heavily populated or not. The Zach tactical display could sweep one thousand kilometers, and in all of that area, this world looked desolate of population.

Just fine with him because, he needed a place to lay low and bunker down for the next—ah, months. They needed food, water, shelter, and to stay out of the Trak-grub-wald's way. To that end, he was steering the Zach toward what appeared, by the displays, to be a water source, plus the mountains beyond might provide shelter.

Chapter Six

Starling was having another nightmare. One of those terrible ones where she knew she was dreaming and she tried to push her mind to wake up, but she could not. She never had nightmares before the Trak-grubwald's took her from Master Otball's slave ship and made her another slave. A prisoner slave.

In her dream, she was running, being chased by Otball's five mercenary catchers. She tripped down the front ramp of her home on the planet, Ergo, a satellite moon of Neptune, and she ended on bloodied knees as the hot smell of unwashed human flesh surrounded her, making her suffocate. Then suddenly, she was kneeling, stripped naked in front of the obesely shaped Otball and he had her wrist in his corpulent lap. The tattoo needle he used to brand her made her cry, just as the thick fingers he used to pry inside her, to check her hymen made her scream. The scavenge hunters held her limbs splayed at all four corners with her knees bent in supplication to Otball's thick fingers penetrating her virginity.

"Young and sssweet" Otball lisped with a sickly high-toned voice. His fingers pushed, cleaving inside her as she whimpered in shame. "A virginss," he hissed.

"Yesss." Otball's double chin rolled on his chest as he licked his puffy lips and sneered. "Grubss payss, fifty thousssand, for thiss virginss cuntss."

He chortled then, portly with slobber. "But we'ss take her ass hole. Goods with no damagesss." Starling screamed then as Otball cackled. "On her belliess ass'es upss," he ordered.

"Wake up, beauty!"

Bran winced at Starling's terrified screams, while he tried to hold onto her without hurting her. The first he'd known anything was wrong was when she started screaming in his ear and he'd shut down Zach trying to calm her or wake her up. It was a bit disconcerting to have a

thrashing young woman in your arms, and he was forced to practically hog tie her with his own legs and arms.

“Bran! *Bran!*” Starling’s eyelids popped open with the green of her irises startling, they were so close to his gaze and filled with emotion. “*Please*, take my virginity. Please!” Starling struggled within his arms with her pink lips parted in frantic pants. “Make love to me now, Bran! Now!”

Bran’s jaw nearly fell open, yet he managed to tighten it into a grimace as he tossed Starling into the rear of Zach, where he followed. He landed on his hands and knees, straddling Starling as he rumbled. “Now you want me to fuck you?”

Starling’s eyes blinked open and closed slowly as she lay with her arms fallen out to her sides. Something was wrong, he had to admit, because Star had not gotten the least prissy or upset over his use of the word “fuck.” Of course, he had known that before he had tossed her back here, only the big solider between his thighs, pushing with rigid attention, against the snugness of his pants, demanded that he try. So at the moment, he was trying to compute the justice of simply helping himself to Star’s prime little body, while she was in this sleepwalking or laying unconscious state. *Hell*, she had begged him, hadn’t she?

The only problem with this scenario was he could not picture what she’d do if she woke up in the middle of it. He was not one of those savo-boys, who could wing his little chickadee to climax with finesse, thereby overcoming her objections, should she wake up. *No*, the problem was, now that he thought about it, *was* that he was kind of hoping to practice on her. *Damn*, he cursed silently, that was one deep, dark hope.

“Bran, . . . what happened?”

Bran jerked his gaze to Starling’s. *Hell*, he was too late now. “*Nothing*, Starling . . . not a damn thing!” he snapped, more harshly than he really intended. Then, he watched incredulously as Starling’s big beautiful eyes began to fill with tears. “Ah, Christ,” he grumbled, as he reached upward and gently brushed the hair from her temple. “You just had a bad, bad dream, beauty.”

“I did?” Starling’s plump bottom lip quivered. “O-Otball,” she whispered, with her voice cracking.

“Who’s that?”

Starling’s gaze jerked to his, just as he was thinking that it was a strange name that seemed vaguely familiar, yet he knew it was a name.

“No one,” Starling quipped suddenly, just as she began to wiggle her body upward to escape his hungrily body, he guessed.

“Now just a minute, beauty.”

Bran grasped a handful of Starling’s tenderly sloped belly, bringing her wiggle to a halt with a firm hand. He watched her rubbing her wrist with an unconscious gesture as she peeked at him warily. Her shy peek conflicting with a mutinous pout on her full delectable pink lips. *Christ*, he’d never seen baby soft pink like Starling’s lips were. Forcefully, he

tore his thoughts back to his curiosity over the action of Starling rubbing her wrist. Then with a swiftly trained motion, he had a hold of Starling's wrist so quickly, she could not get away.

"What are you doing?" she yelped.

It was no struggle really, he understood he could toss her with one arm—barely engaged. He turned her finely boned wrist to his gaze and he saw the tattoo. His eyes adjusted vision to magnification without thinking. What he saw was very small, and it made him instantly furious that someone would brand Starling like this. What could it mean? He knew instinctively that Starling had not done this to herself. Not freely. The tattoo was too crude. It was a snake like marking with a penis head nestled in a tiny rosebud and the whole of it, outlined with a deep red circle or the letter O, as in Otball, he wondered?

Starling tried to jerk her wrist free, but Bran was having none of that. His irises were doing strange things in silver metallic, expanding and contracting with pinpoint black pupils in the center that she had never seen before.

"What is this?" Bran was looking at her, with his eyes in that strange, nearly nonhuman way.

She immediately took the opportunity of his inattention to snatch her wrist from his fingers. "Nothing," she mumbled, trying once again to scoot out from underneath him.

Except, she halted with shocked immobility, when he stopped her with his wide calloused hand clamped over her bare inner thigh. She had not realized the scant tee shirt she wore was rucked up so high. Bran's fingers moved higher taking a fuller hold on her inner thigh muscle as she clamped her legs together with an inborn instinct. Only, she realized that it was a mistake, because now both her innermost thighs had male hands pressing—.

"Nothing?" Bran asked huskily, with his irises changing to swirling dark silver. "Do you know, beauty, that you just begged me to make love to you? Was that nothing?"

Bran's fingers moved higher and Starling could feel their presence brushing her dark pubic hair. "Bran, I—." She could not breathe and she could not move or think of anything, but Bran's powerful hand holding her. If he moved any higher, she would die.

"Let me feel you," Bran rasped, lowering his gaze with his black eyelashes sweeping the ridge of his high cheekbones as he looked at where his hand lay. "Just to touch—no more."

Starling saw Bran's cheeks redden as she gulped, trying to catch her breath. She was dizzy in warmth, like a cauldron of sultry oil had been poured over her skin and especially beneath Bran's hand. He had asked—not demanded—and she wanted so badly to—. Then, inexplicably she spread her legs with a whimpering moan as her entire body quivered.

"Lay back, baby."

Starling looked at the top of Bran's dark head, knowing that he would never stop if—. Then, she laid down and Bran used one hand to lift the tee shirt she wore, up over her breasts, baring them. That same hand lowered after it had bared her and closed completely around the sides of one of her breasts, as if measuring the fit spilling out of his fingers, just as his other hand released her thigh and spread wide and hot over her belly. Surprising her, because she thought surely he would grab her roughly between her thighs. No, that was not right, she thought, Bran was never rough with her. How could such a big man be so gentle, she wondered as the spread of his fingers spanned her from hipbone to hipbone?

"I've never felt . . . *ever* . . . felt anything so soft, baby." Bran's voice was a husky male rumble as he pressed his whiskered chin into the valley between her breasts. Those whiskers grazed her skin in a foreign, yet exciting way as he nuzzled her with his nose and lips. "Christ," he mumbled. "How can you smell of flowers after all we have been through?"

Starling tentatively touched her fingers in Bran's hair, then stretched them through the heavy short strands feeling his scalp. "I don't know," she whispered.

Bran moved his hands from her belly and wrapped it around the sides of her other breast. Both breasts were jutting high around his big hands, which squeezed and released them. She wished that he would kiss her—she'd never been kissed before. She wished—she wished that he would touch her nipples.

Bran eased himself down on the side of his hip next to Starling. She was letting him touch her, and he damn well, did not want to startle her. The only problem was that now that he had her, he did not know quite what to do with her. Sex bot's feigned pleasure, to heighten the experience, but a man could turn their voluptuous unreal bodies upside down and they would moan like you were the greatest lover in the universe.

He had never been a man to watch holo-porn or use the virtual reality implants. That was frowned upon in the troopers. Command did not want a bunch of hot dicks running around. That was probably why they encouraged the female troopers to surgically deplete some areas and hormone enhance others, such as muscle structure. All of this reality left him on the edge of uncertainty. A damned uncomfortable place for a man of his high proficiency in all other areas of his life. And, he sure as hell could not ask Starling. *Christ*, she was barely gone a virgin . . . or could he?

Chapter Seven

Bran tuned his superior senses to Starling's body and her response to what he was doing so far. Her breathing was heightened, her heart fluttered, and her skin was warm with misty dampness. That and her fingers were playing heaven in his shortly cropped hair. He concluded that she liked everything so far. If only he could master a way to bring her a shooter orgasm, then maybe she would forget this marriage stuff and let him hump her again. After that first time though, he was not going to force her. *Hell*, he never would have, she was just too damn sweet to be anything but willing. He'd jack off before he'd ever force her again.

Her breasts were indecent to a man of his celibate life, they were brazen paradise caught between his kneading fingers. Firm, fleshy mounds. *God*, he had never known that he loved big bold tits, but he could die cocooned in these babies and be a happy man.

He raised his head from Starling's cleavage to look at his hands so dark against Star's alabaster skin. Her big tits raised and lower with each squeezing of his fingers. They rose high, jutting and pink-nippled, with engorged tips thrusting up at him. He stilled his hands to leave those spikes quivering there, poking outward, begging him.

He risked a peek at Starling's face with a slow rise of his black eyelashes. Starling's eyes were closed, and her lips were damp . . . parted on little sighs. She liked what he was doing so far. Her back was arched pushing her breast upward to him as he held them both, filling his hands. Her hips moved with barely perceptible side motions, and her breathing grew more shallow the longer he held her, just looking, sensing everything about her.

"Please," Starling murmured. It was a soft feminine hush, surprising him into an instantaneous, warm melt down. He would take on a full enemy division, for soft little begging words like that.

Bran thought fleetingly of making Starling say what she wanted, then decided he would guess for a bit. It was male arrogance, pure and simple. He was not feeling so unsure of himself now. So while feeling

wise, in male ego, arrogance, and hope, he blew a hot breath across one nipple and he got an instantly affirmative answer with a mewl, sliding out of Starling's throat. Then, it all made sense. He just needed to do what he was dying to do!

Abruptly, Bran jiggled Starling breasts in his big hands. *God*. Then he jiggled them again a little harder, watching their big jello like quality. *Damn*, he loved big boobs, and he'd never known it—!

"Bran!" Starling's eyelids were popped open and Bran took that as encouragement to jiggle her bazooka's some more—. "Stop that!" Suddenly, his hands were empty as his mind tried to register the meaning of Starling's exclaimed words and the fact that she was slapping his hands away. "*What are you doing?*" she exclaimed.

Being a master lover, Bran thought righteously, raising one dark eyebrow in concentration as he acknowledged with his quick instincts that he *needed* to try for a save . . . quickly! Instantly his hand's grasped half-moon shaped hips, bare and squirming, in an attempt to escape. It was as far as Starling had gotten from him as she tried to wiggle upward out from underneath him. The outward slope of each of her bare hips was exquisite. The tangible clasp of velvet female flesh, massed between his fingers front and back was worth praying for, and the fact that his nose was nearly in Starling's baby soft pubic hair, was simply worth subservience. He would beg! He would—.

"Bran?" Starling's voice was soft and questioning, no more outrage. *Damn*, he was shaking. He tried to tell himself 'what man wouldn't' as his cheek lay on Starling's sultry little mound. He did not do anything more, he just simply laid there as though he were worshiping or cuddling a favorite pillow, while barely discernable tremors racked his tall frame.

Starling's prim outrage, chased itself into vast bewilderment, that eased itself into a sigh of half reluctant surrender and half-melted longing. She was not experienced enough to know exactly what she longed for. Only with Bran's hot breath, moving outward across h-her pussy—. Well, her intentions were not to get away from him any longer. He was like a small boy cuddling himself to her, only the sensations were carnal not innocent, and she could feel his muscular body, barely shuddering time and again. Was she doing this to him? A powerful swelter-weight man like Bran? She certainly felt like quaking, so perhaps—?

"Christ, Starling, I'm no good at this." Bran's heated breath saying those words, puffed right over her pussy making her hips jerk upward, more from the scorching sensation, than from being startled.

Starling's sudden hip jerking motion caused Bran's head to turn. Then with an earthshattering double induced wham, Bran found his mouth unbelievably submerged in sopping lips of feminine pastry. Spontaneously, his hands snaked under the curves of Starling's buttocks, as his mind warped to stunned. Those buttocks of so perfectly formed pink cheeks made by the celestial powers of perversity to incite him, as he grasped both plump pillows and spread them apart from cheek to thigh.

Furthermore, he groaned then, with his mouth filled with tenderly drenched cunt lips, exquisitely molded to fit his mouth. Then through his own dissembling conscious he heard.

“*Ohmm.*”

Starling’s moan was as musky and clinging as her hidden scent. Then her moan was followed by a spasm, an arching of her hips upward toward his mouth, where her juicy cunt split wide allowing him to nuzzle the inner folds of quivering flesh. A power of unknown certainty gripped him as he began to kiss Starling’s tender offering. A sense of possession flooded his body with a need to mark her as his, laying his complete possession.

“*Oh, Bran—oh . . . oh!*” With each sweet cry of surrender, his “beauty” spread her thighs wider, revealing hidden depths of lush scorching flesh, until her legs barely hung onto the edges of his shoulders. He buried his mouth into her sopping cunt as his hands encouraged the motion of her hips, when they began to undulate. His senses were detonating. The taste, scent, and touch combined to fill his straining dick to the strength of a steel rod. He was subliminally aware of his palpitating cock, but his mind was in a fever of discovery and he had the urge to use his tongue. Then he realized that he knew that . . . *he knew that*, but he had not been thinking. *Hell*, he had not been totally himself since he first set eyes on Starling.

His tongue bravely lapped upward and when he reached an enticing bud of swollen flesh, he paused and grasped it lightly between his lips. Starling’s reaction was abandoned, and he had to hold her down as she whimpered and called his name. “Bran! *Oh, Bran. Oh hh.*” Her words dissolved into desperate moans.

Bran could sense beneath Starling’s passion was a bit of fear, and he paused long enough to speak. “*Will keep you safe, baby,*” he growled, and he was surprised by how ragged and hoarse his voice sounded, before he returned to his carnal feast with renewed vigor. Over and over he tongued that one fat little bud. The very air around them seemed to strain and pulse with a powerful magnetism that gripped them both, holding them together, while Starling’s legs thrashed over his shoulders in total surrender

God, he was close, almost there. He could feel it . . . building *upward* . . . And then, guided by the instinct of a mating male and the lewd imagination of his baser male psyche, Bran slipped two fingers inside Starling’s snuggled sheath. And then he began to suck hard on the fat jutting bud. For a moment Starling stilled with a sharp pant and then her hips surged, pushing her cunt deeply against his face as he drew his lips harder around the throbbing kernel, while he immersed his fingers. He used heavy wide fucking motions with his pumping fingers, and the reaction in his body filled his balls tautly, and dribbled pre-come from the slit. Starling’s heels dug into his shoulders as she panted uncontrollably and the slurpy sound of his fingers fucking inside her, filled his ears.

Their bodies seemed welded in place, a moment in time, and then suddenly Starling unraveled with a cry of intense pleasure. The convulsing tremors of her exploding climax vibrated through his tongue into his throat, her inner walls grasped his fingers and sucked them deeper into her hot sheath. She cried his name, her voice straining with the force of her scream, and then subsiding into moans and after shocks. “Bran . . . *Oh hh*, Bran . . .”

Starling’s body fell limp and her voice deteriorated into small weeping catches as her legs continued to tremble over his shoulders. He quickly broke away from her sated pussy and rose, upward along her figure, catching her into his embrace, holding her tightly as he murmured soothingly, “It’s all right, it’s all right, beauty.”

It wasn’t hard for him to figure out that Starling was overwhelmed. *Hell*, he was staggered past belief, and every inch of his being multiplied, to protect Starling, so young and so beautiful. She clung to him, with her tears drying slowly, as did her shaking. He did not give a hoot for his own twitching dick. He had promised her, to only touch, and he would not go back on his word, no matter how painful it was. There was no way in hell, he could go back on his word now that he realized just how much trust *was* involved. What they’d started was too precious and his baby doll was too vulnerable.

So with a deep feeling of satisfaction that he’d been able to give Starling such intense pleasure, he vowed to go slowly. He actually wanted to go slowly. That first time together, he was forced to rape her. If he was truthful, they both had been raped. But now that he had a chance to tip the precarious balance back, he was determined to try and not offend Starling’s delicate and inexperience sexual awareness. No more jiggling of those gorgeous breasts. What he needed now were some sweet words. Women liked sweet words and flowers. Hmm—flowers instead of machines.

“Flowers,” Bran mumbled as he nuzzled Starlings’ cheek. *Hell*, he realized that he had already talked about flowers, and now with some quick serious thinking, he could not come up with anything else, but peaches and his favorite pastry.

Bran felt Starlings’ breath along his cheek as she whispered, “That was so wonderful.” Then her lips brushed his skin as she admitted, “I’m afraid.”

Wonderful—and afraid, Bran was torn and half afraid himself. What should he do? What could he say? At a loss, he simply resorted to offering comfort, holding her close, stroking her back, tenderly kissing her brow and murmuring nonsense words.

Starling accepted Bran’s comfort and curled into his embrace as if she were a lost little girl . . . and she was. To her, Bran was warm and strong, a solid presence. His tenderness touched her heart and tears of release slid down her cheeks. There was a small battle going on in her mind. She knew she was fearful of what she was feeling, of what had

happened to her, of what had seemed like a loss of control over her own body and mind. The feelings she had surrendered to Bran as the blissful pleasure had burst from her sex, taking her away to a special place and leaving her longing for more.

What Bran had done was so intimate, how he had touched her with his mouth and tongue. It was wonderful and now she understood that she trusted Bran . . . even more than she had realized. More than anyone else in her entire life, even though she had known him such a short time. She felt like she had connected with his inner being, intimately. It seemed they had become as one. The sense and certainty of that, was something that had never happened to her before. It was all very confusing, but she knew that Bran was all she had.

Bran was all they both had.

Chapter Eight

Suddenly, the Zach's control panel lit up like an old-time Christmas tree with lungs. Bran's senses snapped to attention like an easy habit as his tall frame tensed, while Starling screeched into his chest louder than all the buzzers blaring at them. Bran's immediate thought was that beautiful helpless women were a liability—they took precious seconds off a man's normally swift reactions to danger, while he tried to decide what to do with them. He had a vivid image of Starling bursting into tears as he barked out direct orders with his normal, but harshly commanding voice. It would not occur to her that those orders could save her life, she would be so busy crying—and she would have already forgotten what the orders were to begin with.

Bran realized that he would have to compromise and adjust every instinct he had honed to split second efficiency over his lifetime career in the Rapiers. Bringing his thoughts back to the present, he did a quick scan of all of the Zach's flashing displays, zeroing in on the blue shadowed ground display, while at the same time he grabbed a retiring bag, which he unceremoniously began shoving Starling into it.

What he saw on the ground display was a Trak-grub-wald unit closing in, closer than they should have been able to get to before the Zach's radar picked them up. Then subliminally, it registered in his mind, that Starling was surprisingly bendable in a quiet and wild-eyed way. He had managed to get all of her luscious curves wrapped up to her neck. Then, eating up precious time, he kissed her on the lips, quick and hard.

"Trust me, baby doll, this is for your own good."

"But, Bran—!"

Starlings' muffled response went unheard as Bran finished closing the retiring bag up over the top of her head. Then he strapped his wiggling feminine mummy, like prize, into the sidewall storage cradle, before he quickly turned back to the Zach's displays.

"Now I can work on saving our butts," he muttered.

What he could not figure out was how the Grub's found them to begin with. The Zach should be literally invisible, while its shields were up. However, all of the Zach's blinking colored displays showed a Grub ground unit closing in with unerring direction, and almost on top of them—only two clicks away.

"*Shit*, how did they know we were here to begin with?" Bran mumbled as he flung himself back into the driver's seat. There wasn't anymore point in trying to hide, by not firing up the Zach, he concluded as he voiced the ignition and Zach roared to life. The problem was, that

he was sure that he and Starling had gotten away from the Skitter undetected three nights ago. That fortuitous blast just as they left, the darkness, and Zach's shields all pointed, to it being a clean escape. So how come, it seemed like the Grub's could track them now?

The answer hit Bran as fast and as furious, as the Zach, popping its engaging wheely through the brush. "Damn it," Bran snapped, glancing back at his precious bundle wrapped in the retiring bag. Those damned Grub's had put a homing device *in* Starling, and probably something to disrupt the Zach's radar too. If that was the case, he would never lose them. But, it seemed to be the only viable answer.

So then, while thinking his options through, he continued to plow the Zach through the overgrown jungle of the Grub planet. It was a jarring escape at full tilt and while he steered he fiddled with the shield matrix trying to reconfigure them to hide the homing signal in Starling. After about twenty minutes in this futile effort, he reached the foregone conclusion that he was trying to avoid.

He had no idea about all of the Grub's technology and it was obvious that nothing he *was* doing was going to mask that homing signal. That left only one option—get rid of the homing signal at its source, as in finding it and tossing it out the window. He could only hope that it was not buried too deeply inside of Starling. That bug had to be injected under the skin somewhere, because he'd had his hands and gaze on every inch of Starling's full-figured curves, enough to know that no major surgery had been done to bury it deeper, or he would have seen the scarring. What in the hell did they want with her and *why* did they want her pregnant?

Before this he had still been assuming that the Trak-grub-wald's were going to use Starling against him, through interrogation, only they had *not* gotten around to it before he and Star had escaped. Of course, it could be said that he was blithely ignoring this "baby" factor, because *that* did not fit anywhere. How could Starling have gotten pregnant during only one encounter? He knew it was medically possible, yet still . . . over *one* time! It seemed more rational to assume that the Grub's had done something to insure it.

This thought sent his skin crawling and did not improve his frame of mind for what he was about to do. Hell, Starling had been through enough, he thought with his hands tightening on the Zach's directional shift, until his knuckles turned white. She was going to hate him after this.

Bran quickly crawled into the back seat of Zach and reached for Starling bundled in the retiring bag. He hauled her beneath him as he crouched over her on his hands and knees. There was no way she was going to understand this, he thought, and he did not have the time to explain it to her. He needed to find the homing bug and pitch the bug quickly, before they had an army of Grubs up their ass. Starling struggles inside the bag were useless and he could tell by the position of her flaying limbs and muffled exclamations that he had her on her belly.

He decided then that he could use the bag to keep her restrained, and someday, if she ever spoke to him again, he could explain to her that it was nicer than tying her up. He started at Starling's feet, unsnapping the bag only a little, until he could catch both of her ankles in his hands.

"Starling, I *have* to do this," he hissed. "Stay still!" He was amazed that Starling immediately stilled her struggles. *Hell*, he should have thought about asking her before! However, his grace period lasted all of thirty seconds. He had searched her feet, arches, toes, heels, and then he was starting up her ankles, when her struggling resumed.

He heard her squeal with an exclamation of denial inside the bag, but he held firm, moving his body around to rest on her buttocks, while he held her calf up to inspection. His irises expanded to x-ray, but he knew the better bet was to feel the bug under her skin. His fingers stroked and explored every satiny inch of skin on Starling's calf as he held it firm against her wiggling. He could only imagine what Starling thought that he was doing.

Yet, the red warning lights and the beeping alarm from the Zach, kept him moving quickly. Then, Starling must have run out of gas, because she wasn't struggling as much. That was until he reached her inner thighs and he had to switch positions, kneeling her legs apart for a better view . . . feel?

He realized quickly then that Starling had just been saving up her energy, as his hand clamped to the small of her back to hold her still. No way! Starling was pissed and fighting for all she was worth to protect the tender haven of her sex. He could not blame her, he treasured it also. But prudently, for the moment, he veered away from her pink sweetness, and moved his hands and gaze toward a butt as soft and smooth as a baby's. He guessed?

He definitely liked its doughy qualities. *Damn*, he could spend hours on this ass. Starling had settled again, her movements were only small undulations now. It took him a minute of intense exploration over the slopes of Starling's buttocks to realize, in the back of his mind, that Starling *liked* his butt fondling. That jump started the thought to the head of the line in his mind, and no matter how much he tried to push it aside, it wouldn't go.

So his hands lingered to sweet little butt undulations on a perfect baby soft, plump ass. His hands were so large over each buttock that he could fill his palms with each pear-shaped globe. *Sweet*, he thought, so sweet and tender. The crack of Starling's pretty ass had peach fuzz light and airy along the inner curves. When he touched this gossamer fuzz, the flesh on Starling's buttocks drew upward into shivering little goose bumps. Gently, he pulled the crease open as his breathing hit a dead run and his gaze settled on the rosy-pink lipped slit of Starling's lower twat. Pussy lips that were wet, puffy, and smelled like sweet musk. Then his irises lifted to the rosy pucker of her tight little asshole. Christ. Shit. Damn.

If there was a God in heaven, he was on their side, because at that precise moment his middle finger on his left hand grazed over a bump on Starling's flesh. He had to lick his lips twice before he was able to turn his gaze downward where it needed to be. Just along the under curve of Star's left buttock there was a tiny raised circle no bigger than the head of a pin. He expanded his irises up two hundred magnifications. "Gotcha," he whispered.

Now came the tough part, he had to cut it out. There was no way in hell, he wanted to do this, but it had to come out. He also realized that the more Starling jerked around the more he was going to hurt her. He had no choice, he had to tie her down, at least her legs, and raise her butt upward a bit. Boy, she was going to hate him after this.

He reached over and grabbed another retiring bag, plus two of the cargo straps, then his gaze turned downward again to Star's shivering buttocks. *Christ*, he couldn't help it. It was the only place he could take time to kiss her . . . and he *had* to kiss her. When his lips slowly and warmly kissed against Starling's buttock, her flesh beneath his mouth quivered. "Star, I have to do this," he muttered. "God, I'm sorry, baby."

Later, Bran thought, he might wonder . . . or cringe at the lovesick wimp he was becoming. Yet, never in his wildest dreams, had he imagine that he had feelings like this inside him. But for now, he had an unpleasant job to do, and he had always been good at the unpleasant. Quickly, he wadded the extra retiring bag into a semblance of a ball and pushed it under Starling's hips, raising her stellar buttocks to him like a physical feast. Then, before she could really catch on and get a head of steam up to what he was doing, he grasped and tied each of her ankles to the outer edges of Zach. She was spread wide and bent over the wadded up retiring bag like a sexual offering.

"*M-m-m-mm-mmm!*" Starling cried a muffled exclamation as he secured her last ankle. *Christ*, a sadist would love this position, he thought, even as he had a very hard time ignoring it. As in a hard stiff straining pole in his pants, with pre-come dripping from the slit at the sight of that rose bud anus. He shook his head with a growl, trying to turn his thoughts and to toughen his gut. He swiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand and then he drew his knife, while expanding his irises to magnification again.

Starling screamed when he made the small incision and then she obviously fainted with her body going lax as he dug the bug out. When he had the bloody thing in his fingers, he opened the back window in Zach and flung it angrily out into the jungle. Quickly, he turned back to Star and put disinfectant and a small stitch bandage over the cut. The cut was not large enough to need a real stitch, but it would hurt to sit on for a couple days. He figured fear of the unknown and what was happening to her, plus the pregnancy had helped make Star delicate enough to faint.

"You are an ass," he muttered to himself as he untied Starling's ankles and then he lifted her back into the cargo netting for safe keeping.

It was going to be a dangerous bumpy ride, getting away from the Grubs closing in on them. “And now they know Starling is alive and moving on the planet,” he muttered, as he wondered just how much the Grub’s wanted Starling back . . . and why? Hell, he had been avoiding the why of it for way too long. But with all of that combined, nothing worried him as much as finally releasing Starling from the retiring bag.

Chapter Nine

Starling came out of the retiring bag like a wild cat, the spitting image of one he had cornered in a Digit-training session, years ago in boot camp. She was spitting, hissing, and clawing.

“Ouch! *Crap.*” Bran stifled his yelp of utter surprise with a more manly exclamation of cussing. *Hell*, Star had scratched his cheek drawing blood, backing him up by the sheer surprise of her dynamic fury and it appeared desperate survival tactics. He could not remember the last time he had yelped in his life . . . or backed up either. Fatal mistake that! Starling was past him like a flurried nebula storm, before he realized that her intentions might not be *just* to unman him, but . . .

Starling raced through the dense foliage like a nimble sprite being chased by a horned demon. Crazily, thoughts of Otball’s scavenge hunters pursed her, racing through her confused mind as she gasped short frantic breaths. The denseness of the jungle around her was humid, dark, and scathingly verdant. It was as though the jungle was a living breathing entity, with snatching fingers of grasping vines and a haunted mind of evil intent. Small squeals of desperation and fear wretched from her throat, as perspiration dripped down her body.

“Bran!” she cried, now more afraid of the alien jungle, than escaping Bran’s muscular authority.

Vines with bumpy black, sticky stems twisted around one of her wrists and another looped around her bare hips, directly beneath the short tee shirt she wore. Everyplace that the sticky excretions stained her bare flesh, began to burn like the touch of fire. The vines stopped her forward motion with a heaving bodily jerk as she cried out sharply and more lethal vines fell around her shoulders tangling in her hair.

It felt as though the vines wanted to gnaw on her . . . to eat her flesh ravenously. The aura around her was dripping hot with a gorging desire to devour. She screamed and twisted her body, trying to get loose, but she only became trapped more within the vines . . . and now, she could feel them slithering on her skin . . . crawling! They were alive!

“Bran!” she screamed. “Help me! Please, Bran, help me!” She could not help her frantic sobs as the excretions burned her skin in more and more places.

“Damn it, Star!” Bran’s voice bellowed.

Starling had not known Bran was there. She could not lift her head to see, but she could feel the strong tugs he used on the vines, thrashing her body to and fro in the octopus of the vines.

“Help me, Bran!” she bawled.

“*Damn it, they are carnivorous!*” Bran shouted. “*Yes, baby, yes I will get you out of there!*”

Then suddenly, Starling felt a tremendous weight slam into the back of her body, propelling her forward with superhuman force. The air shot out of her lungs in a huge whoof as her body seemed to take flight, snapping the vines around her. Bran’s arms closed around her from behind as her eyelids clenched in the only physical motion she could manage to do.

“Hell!” Bran shouted.

There was an edge! A cliff, or an incline, Starling realized frantically, as Bran’s hold around her was wrenched away by the law of gravity when her bare bottom hit the mud! *Mud!* She screamed . . . more of a squeal as she flayed her limbs and twisted her body with the instinct to catch a hold of something. To stop her downward slide! But the mud was slick as her body moved like a sled down a sharp incline.

“Bran!” she shrieked, uselessly, because he was sliding behind her and with his heavier weight trying to move faster than she was. Mud coated her completely as her body revolved on the slide, turning around with no hindrance, but the downward motion. It happened so quickly, only seconds of panic, barely enough time to understand the terror of where the mudslide could end!

But then, she was saved by the mud itself, as it came along with her haphazard skidding flight. Great oozing piles of it, so when she reached the bottom that would have been a rocky death, or certainly a broken limb, she instead plopped forcefully right into the middle of the large mud hill, made beside a stream at the bottom, by her precariously sliding flight.

In that split second, she screamed shrilly, realizing that Bran would crush her. Yet, miraculously with an impossible movement of physical strength, Bran lunged over her somehow. She watched with mud dripping off her nose as he rolled and came to a stop with an ominous thudding sound, just in the water, at the edge of a stream. Bran was on his back five feet in front of her as the mud hill she sat on slowly edged toward him, lowering her in its middle, while the thick mud languidly oozed outward.

“Damn it!” Bran’s voice exploded, with his prone body heaving once like one sharp tremor of an earthquake. He was okay! He was cursing—he was alive! Starling gasped a relieved breath. If Bran was

cursing that probably meant he was not hurt badly. She was surprised by the sudden heart-jolt of emotion she felt. *She cared for him*, she realized abruptly. Oh no! She liked him! Although, she thought he looked like a huge mud statue at the moment. A toppled over Adonis! A giggle cascaded from her throat. The surprise of its appearance opened her mouth, before she considered the muddy consequences.

“Your giggling!” Bran shouted followed by a string of outraged curses.

Starling tasted mud and spit outward with an instinctive gesture. Unfortunately, that flying mud happened to land on—er, Bran!

“*And spitting on me!*” he bellowed with his mud-caked body convulsing. Then his large frame curled into motion and he began to get to his feet.

Starling’s wide-eyed gaze followed his shape, etched in mud. He was a handsome masculine sculpture of sinewy strength. The large hills and valleys of his rigid muscles were outlined in sharp graphic detail, by the mud coating him. He was good-looking! *Oh my*, she thought, she had not realized how tremendously attractive she thought he was. But, what woman wouldn’t, she reasoned with heart-stopping appreciation? Bran’s shoulders were broad and heavy in strength, his biceps were mounded in heaps. His belly was lean, tight, and ridged with muscles, this she saw, as his vest came off and he slapped it aside angrily.

“Of all the stupid *mindless* things to do, Star!” he yelled, glaring at her through mud-hole eyes. “Damn it, woman! This is *not* a game! This is *my* life! Your life!” he shouted, as his chest expanded and the buttress of sinew over both his male nipples rippled.

That breathtakingly visual display of Bran’s male power and potency aroused her instantly. It was like a touch—a pinching of her nipples, and an intimate caress through the puffy lips of her sex. *Deeper*, she thought as her breathing faltered. It was like a rapid flicking over the begging thrust of her clitty. The matter expanding blatantly because her knees were bent and her bare legs were tumbled open is if in invitation, where she sat facing Bran on her slowly deflating mud hill. Then her surprising arousal bubbled upward, building ever stronger, as she watched Bran begin to use angry and jerky motions to remove his mud-soaked pants!

The entire time her immediate and shocking arousal had been spiraling, Bran was shouting at her. He was chastising her thoroughly. She blew a mud bubble as she sighed looking up at him with dreamy eyes. He had saved her three times now. He had left his ship because of her, and now he yelled at her, all because he cared. Rough around the edges, solid, and secure, Bran cared for her. He had even sealed his affection intimately with his mouth tasting her sex and his tongue licking over her clitty.

That had made her feel as though he loved her and craved her sex and passion deeply. Though she was a virgin, she had a private, exciting, and enjoyable sex life. Inventive, young, and passionate, she had ex-

plored many ways to pleasure herself. At the top of her list though, was imagining what a male penis must look like . . . feel like . . . taste like maybe.

Starling gasped suddenly, because the real life product of her youthful imagining was *now* right before her very eyes. Bran's male penis! It was straight, rigid, and thrusting outward as thickly as a pole from between his hairy thighs. It did not even spring when Bran moved, the stiffness was so tangible, so tractable. She had been too afraid in the Grub-wald prison to look then, but *now*, she could not tear her gaze away. His jutting male penis had to be as long as her hand . . . no to her wrist. Her eyes widened . . . *no* longer!

The inner most reaches of her sexual walls clinched instantly, dripping with juicy and welcome heat. Even the mud on her skin felt sexy. The ache in her vagina was deep, hot, and ravenous as her gaze lingered over the slit in the head of Bran's penis, then to the ruddy edge around the cap, down the stout length, with a vein throbbing on the surface, and downward still, to testicles round, heavy, and full.

"Damn it, Star! Are you listening to me?" Bran demanded with his fists planted on his hips and his legs braced apart, as he glared down at her.

Starling blinked, as Bran saying her name sharply registered in her passion-expanded mind. Her gaze jerked up to his eyes, then his gaze lowered to where she had been looking. It seemed that it suddenly dawned on him, through his anger just *what* she was ogling. Bran's dark head was bowed as he seemed to look at his own rigid penis. The muscles in his belly rippled once, and a moan escaped her throat instantly, before she had any chance of snatching it back. Bran's heavily thrusting penis bucked upward at her moan, as if seeking her call, while the sinew over his powerful thighs flexed deeply.

A charge flashed through her body, sparking her nipples, belly, and then lower, snapping her pussy hotly. She tried to scramble upright through the slippery mud, with the senseless thought of fleeing. It was a deeply inbred instinct to challenge the male animal before her. The tug and pull of her femininity, wanting to give in, yet fighting his power over her. Fighting the weeping liquid answer that was readying her sex for him even now.

She managed to stumble to her feet at the edge of the mud facing Bran, but her denial caused her hands to clutch between her thighs. It was a hopeless effort to try and clutch back her response.

Bran did not move, though his gaze raised just enough to watch her hands cupping uselessly over her pussy. The aura around him was like a heat wave, with the power of his desire to hunt. He was the perfect male predator, honed in strength, leached in desire, and splendid in male instinct. She moaned and gasped instantaneously, trying to cut off its presence, but a louder sound behind her, foreshadowed her whimpering, as Bran's head jerked upwards.

“Star!” he exclaimed, with his large body starting to coil into some type of action. Just as the heavy sound of liquid earth moving, made a sucking and popping sound behind her.

She threw her arms outward in surprise, just as Bran was reaching for her. But, he moved too late to pull her free and a short wall of mud slammed into the back of her knees toppling her forward. She squealed as she fell forward toward Bran. And in the effort of trying to catch her, he toppled backward into the stream. Yet, she went with him, forced by the mud’s impetus, flailing her arms, then her hands caught Bran’s waist.

Chapter Ten

The stream was shallow where they fell, a mere five inches at best. Bran landed on his back with a forceful splashing of water cascading over them, and she landed with here lips opened over the searing head of Bran's penis! Her tongue lay across the indent on the underbelly of the plump head, with the tip of her tongue touching the vein in the shaft. Bran's male beast throbbed against her tongue. The slit in the head slid across the roof of her mouth, and she could feel a dab of heated male seed there, salty and clinging. Her lips naturally pursed around the wide head with the urge to swallow. A moan coiled from her heart as her fingernails dug into Bran's waist.

"*Christ,*" Bran groaned as his fingers twisted into her wet muddy hair and she could feel his fists shaking against her head. She had the scorching fat head of his penis in her mouth and the moment was suspended on what she would do . . .

The feel of him in her mouth was elemental. She wanted more with a desire that went beyond craving and boarded on lustfully ravenous. But, what impressed the deepest part of her hungry femininity was the effort Bran used not to force her mouth downward. It would be so easy for him to impale her mouth over his engorged penis. Yet, she knew he shook with the effort not to do it—not to force her. She did not own the same strength of will that Bran carried so tenaciously. The why of it seeped into her heart further, and then she willingly lapped her tongue up the vein, over the firm indent, and through the tender slit of Bran's penis.

"Star!" Bran groaned sharply, with his husky thighs shuddering beneath the full pillows of her breasts.

She moaned too, as more of Bran's seed seeped from the slit, branding the tip of her tongue with fire. She was all powerful, the Captain of the moment. She had Bran down and completely within her control. The thrill of it gave her an authority she had never had before, and trembling delight shivered down every inch of her body. She kissed the head of Bran's penis with warm soft lips, right on the fascinating slit. It felt so good, so solid, so male, and wonderful, she did it again with her

gaze lifting to Bran's vibrant silver eyes. Polished eyes, colored with silver lust and riveted to her blush pink lips kissing the big head of his penis as his large body shook.

The water lapped against them, washing away mud where it touched, leaving her laying over the sinewy strength of Bran's legs. She grasped the wide throbbing base of Bran's penis in one hand, holding it firmly, as her tongue smudged the rounded head in circles. The stiffness, the tensile rigidity excited her. It was a potent unbending prod and the more she loved it with her lips and tongue the stouter it enlarged.

"*Ah hh, baby,*" Bran groaned with his hands clutching her hair and moving with her heads motion as she licked her tongue down the shaft to his testicles. The abrupt and forceful groan that erupted from Bran's throat then was resonant and heady, as his thighs separated. Then his buttocks clenched and his hips rose with needy and tense motions as she tasted the fullness of his sweltering male saks. The tough acorns beneath the fullness, lured her mouth to suck and feel more.

"*Oh, God,*" Bran gasped.

Starling rolled first one then the other inside her wet mouth, suckling like a babe, while Bran splayed his thighs wider, and moaned sharply. Water lapped at her chin as she filled her mouth with plump male testicles. Each time she rolled the acorn beneath along the roof of her mouth using the flat of her tongue, Bran gasped with rough tenor cants as his large body shook around hers and the ache in her pussy twisted deeply. A hunger to throw her legs wide and show Bran her swollen wet sex washed over her in waves. She moaned beneath the raw lust of it with her mouth full of Bran's engorged testicles.

Then suddenly, over Bran's tenor panting, the sound of mud popping in movement sounded behind her again. "Starling!" Bran shouted, at the same instant he hooked his hands beneath her arm pits. With a powerful tug, he lifted her body up the length of his, while his larger frame rolled. Swiftly, his hands left her armpits as his arms closed around her in a tight embrace. The drive of his larger body rolled them through the water three times, before they came to a halt with her body beneath his as he cradled her in his arms.

The water was deeper where they landed, lapping up to the sides of her breasts, sloshing over the sizzling heat of her bared and exposed pussy. Her nipples were rucked tightly, like small pencil erasers fiercely pushing against the clinging wet tee shirt she wore. The bottom edge of the tee shirt was bunched under her breasts leaving her bared from her slender rib cage downward to where her legs straddled the muscular thickness of Bran's thigh.

The urge should have been to look back to see what the mud had done, yet neither of them took their gazes off each other. She could feel Bran's naked penis laying across the upper mound of her sex, while the fullness of his rounded male saks kissed and nudged the puffy slit of her pussy. Her head fell back as she moaned beneath the feel of Bran, and her

arousal pooled, then leaked from her aching hole, to stain the underside of Bran's testicles. A rumble rolled through Bran's chest as her long dark hair floated in the water around her face, and she clutched the bulging strength of his biceps.

Bran's head lowered and she saw his smooth firm lips part as they hovered over her mouth. "Star," he murmured. It was a tenor masculine question and she saw his lust, his desire, but also his uncertainty. For an instant, the presence of his uncertainty surprised her. She imagined his well-toned masculinity attracting many women into his arms. Yet, his next words aroused her far beyond her meager imagining.

"Never kissed a woman before," his tenor voice sighed, just as his lips settled over hers.

It was as though desire sighed through her lips, and nothing else existed but the heated press of their lips touching each others. Her arms wreathed around his back as he lifted her up to him and their lips moved over each others slowly and intimately. Warm sounds of pleasure danced from her throat, as her breasts covered in a thin wet tee shirt flattened against Bran's bare chest.

Whap! Whap! Whap!

Starling yelped in surprise at the sound filling her ears, while at the same instant, Bran hissed a sharp breath, stinging her mouth with the expelling thrust of air. Yet, before she could comprehend anything, she felt Bran's powerful body moving upright, dragging her less-skilled body along with him.

Whap! Whap! Whap!

Whatever the terrible sound was, it was nearly on top of them, as Starling stifled her imminent scream and Bran lifted her into his arms. He sprinted toward the edge of the stream and the aspiration of the concealing jungle beyond. Over Bran's shoulder, Starling tried to see something, then realized that the threatening sound came from above their heads. Before, she could raise her gaze upward to look, Bran had sprinted into the jungle obscuring her view.

Bran's back hit the trunk of a foot wide tree and he slid to his hunches with Starling straddling his lap facing him. He had her encompassed in a bear hug, holding her to him as though someone might try to snatch her away from him. Her face hugged his neck and he could feel her lips soft and trembling on his throat as he looked upward. It had to be the Trak-grub-wald's. He'd never heard the sound of a flyer like it before. But were the Grub's searching, or was it just simply a routine flight across the planet?

He could see the thick canopy of vines and leaves overhead concealed them completely as he held a tight breath. The noise centered over them for an endless five seconds as Starling clutched him with the effort to burrow into his flesh. The sound sluggishly moved overhead as the need to put air in his lungs became excruciating. Then just as he filled his

lungs sharply, he could detect the sound was not hovering, but moving on.

“*Bran,*” Starling whimpered fearfully, with her lips pressed moistly to his throat.

“It’s leaving, Star.” His throat felt scratchy and dry and his voice sounded like a rasped tenor rumble, pushing into the thick strands of Starling’s hair. “*Hell,*” he muttered tightly. He’d never been so hard, so savagely turned on in his fucking life. The adrenaline rush pumped through his body, adding retro-fuel to his lust and magnifying it off the charts!

His normal sized cock was a beast of length between his stretched thighs. It arched upward in throbbing mass between Starling’s outstretched thighs and splayed buttocks. *Hell*, he could feel the juices from her hot little hole wetting the base of his cock, they were ground together so tightly. His chest expanded, branding Star’s turgid nipples deeply into the ropey muscles as his hands cupped around the two full moons of Star’s shapely ass. All he needed to do was lift and plunge. His bone and muscle, the blood thick and hot in his cock screamed with the demand to do it.

He groaned. The sound as helpless as his tenor voice could become, as his head fell back against the tree and his neck arched. “*God,* I need you so bad, baby doll.” His voice shook. “But, I am *not,*” he choked. “Going to fucking *rape* you again,” he finished desperately.

“*Bran!*” Starling cried into his throat, with her head rising. “*Bran!*” she called again and her moist lips pressed to the square bone of his chin. If that was *not* a yes, he did not know what was!

Bran kneaded the fullness of Starling’s stellar ass with his long fingers. “I don’t know what to *do,*” he admitted harshly, lowering his mouth, until their lips were inches apart. “I do not *want* to hurt you or scare you again.”

“Make me *come,* Bran,” she whispered with a strikingly feminine and pleading tone. “*Please,* make me come, baby.”

Bran’s chest lifted tightly, as he gazed into the swirling green of Starling’s eyes. He was not unaware that their position was so closely reminiscent of the past, and he was acutely aware of his inexperience with real women. *Sure*, he had eaten her sopping little pussy once . . . but, that did not—*no way in hell*, make him any kind of an expert. Besides, his dick was driving him insane, while sweat dripped down the sides of his face with the effort he used to master it.

“*Show* me.” It burst from his throat like agony. He was a fallen and desperate man. He would plead on his knees if he had to. None of his ability mattered in this moment, because he had none. His soul lay opened in small feminine hands, and he was not afraid or embarrassed to lay his vulnerability open to Starling, he suddenly realized. “Show me how to touch you, baby doll. I want to learn how to make you come.”

Starling murmured a sound of welcome and excitement, as her lips kissed first one side of his jaw, then the other side. Then, before she reached his lips, she spoke the words that won his heart completely. "I've never kissed a man before you."

They kissed so fiercely, so deeply, they both gasped in pants, breaking apart for seconds to pant, then driven to go deeper still. They licked and nibbled and smeared each others lips, tasting and thrusting their tongues against each others.

"Touch my pussy," Starling gasped against his mouth. "*Touch* me, Bran."

Starling's hand frantically grasped his hand and she guided his fingers to the fire of her twat. Wetness dripped and covered his fingertips as Starling urged two of his fingers to the lips of her swollen pussy and burrowed them deeply over fragile tufts of flesh. One rosy bud of her flesh throbbed and filled, swelling tightly, to thrust against the stroke of his fingertip.

"Oh, yes-yes," Starling gasped, squirming up his chest as her fingers showed his fingertips the rhythm of her desire. "*Bran*," she puled excitedly, with a thrilling feminine tone that he had never heard before. The sound was for him only, burrowing deep and lusty in his mind.

"So *hot*, baby doll. So wet for me," he whispered with a lust-roughened voice.

"Stroke my *clitty*, Bran," Starling whimpered. "*Oo*, faster. Faster," she panted, as the stiffly thrusting points of her nipples rose before his mouth like twin beacons begging his attention. Starlings twat was so wet and hot, his fingers made blood-tingling slurpy sounds as he rubbed tight circles faster and faster over Starlings thrusting and needy rosebud clitty. The rosebud swelled to a taut miniature ball beneath his flicking fingertip, and each touch elicited an excited and harried moan from Starling. His mouth opened around a nipple imploring to be sucked on and he pursed his lips drawing on the protruding tip.

"Oh *hh Oh hh*," Starling cried, as the inner folds of her sweet twat flowered outward and the fluid of her arousal streamed over his fingers.

"*Christ*," he expelled, uncontrollably, as he held onto his lady's frantic gyrations, while he continued to delve, his fingers deeper . . . moving them harder. He could feel it. He could feel Star's whole body shuddering and straining at the summit. "*Come*, baby," he hissed. Willing it with his entire body as he leaned forward straining with her and seating the fat head of his creaming dick to the opening of her shuddering hole.

Starling screamed then, a careen of passion as she willing thrust her body downward over his seething dick. He bellowed, deep and strong, straightening on his knees as he pulled her down further pushing to the complete shank of his cock. Starling screamed again passionately arching like a bow backwards as he felt her hot hole contract, grip, flex, contract, and grip against the deep column of his cock.

“*Climax,*” he hissed. *God,* and Starling quaked all over him, as she panted in spasms, and he clutched her buttocks lifting her body to begin thrusting his cock in and out with rapid deep stabs. The sight of his huge cock pumping in and out of her small pinkness, stretching her pussy around the invading thickness was vivifying and hot beyond belief. The warrior, soldier, . . . the male of him surged faster and stronger, bouncing his woman with solid and staunch fucks, until the sweat dribbled down his buttocks.

Then Starling careened again, a lover’s cry, and he felt her inner reaches grip him in torrents. He sounded a bellow then as his cock enlarged to new dizzying size, and an ache as deep as fire, coiled in his balls and surged up the shaft, taking his shouts of pleasure with it. His hips continued to pump, wringing tremor after tremor down his tall frame as his cock grew hot and slippery within its sheath, smeared in his seed.

Then in a split-second, through the passion-numbed recesses of his mind, in a place so highly tuned, it was the purest of instinct, Bran heard the click.

Too late. The green fluorescent light of a Tack-rifle set on stun, pierced the darkness of the jungle, and washed over his and Starling’s flesh like green vomit.

Then there was no more.

Chapter Eleven

Under the influence of the stun-rifle Otball had used on Bran and herself, Starling regained consciousness unwillingly. She remembered the moment of terror and confusion, just seconds before she lost consciousness, when she had seen the corpulent and grisly Otball. *Why . . . how*, her mind cried as insistent pain in her wrists and shoulders wrenched her fully awake. With her eyes wide and unblinking against the pain, she gazed upward and saw synthetic ropes, binding her wrists, which secured her to pipes over her head. She was hung by her wrists, completely nude and exposed. Helpless, imprisoned . . . captured, *again*.

Instant terror drove her gaze frantically to the side “Bran!” she cried, seeing Bran hanging from his wrists a few feet away from where she was suspended.

She could see that Bran was breathing, only he was unconscious. His face held evidence of harsh treatment. Blood had dried at the corner of his mouth, there was a cut under one eye and another across his temple. He was completely nude and there was a reddish purple bruise on his lower rib cage.

By craning her neck sharply, she could look down and she saw a bench seat, a little behind her, against the wall. Struggling, she managed to reach it, gaining a precarious balance on the tips of her toes. The instant relief of the pain in her shoulders and around her wrists brought tears to her eyes, as she tried to calm herself. Then she forced herself to look around trying to judge where they might be.

The area appeared to be a small storage room, she could see an atmosphere suit hanging in a partially opened metal locker. An acrid odor in the air reminded her of unrefined ore and strewn in the corner were pieces of what appeared to be spacial mining equipment.

“We are in space,” she whispered with a shudder wracking her body that had nothing to do with her nakedness. *She knew this ship! She had been here before. It was Otball’s slave ship.*

Suddenly, Starling heard the clang of the hatch opening and then she watched in terror driven panic as Otball lumbered into the room. His

blurry amber eyes raked over her shaking nudity from head to toe, and she began to struggle hopelessly against her bonds, whimpering in fear.

“Little virgin’s cuntss” he hissed as he took Bran’s chin in his puffy hand and gave it a hard shake. *Bran did not wake up!*

Otball lumbered to stand in front of her and Starling turned her head away from the horrible intent in his lewd gaze. “You’s haves returns to me’s” His voice dripped oily with horrible suggestions.

“No!” Starling gasped, losing her tenuous grip on the bench. She cried out in pain as the full weight of her body once again stretched her wrists.

“Hurtss?” Otball chuckled evilly “I remembers how’s you begss, slaves?” Otball lifted his large hands upward to grope the outside of her bare thigh and his fingers felt like sandpaper scraping against her skin. She twisted her body, struggling hopelessly, trying to get away from his perverse touch.

“No,” she panted as Otball’s hands inched their way around the edges of her bare hipbones, painfully groping the curve of her buttocks, making her wince in revulsion. Otball’s mouth curled into a lewd slobbering smile, puckering his features, as his eyes fumed with the lust. Raising his hands, his mouth twisted into a sloppy, but a lethal sneer. “No,” she screamed again helplessly, frantically trying to wrench away, as her eyes clenched again her fear.

“*Opens* eyes slaves bitchess!” Otball demanded. Starling turned her head away, burying her face in her upper arm with a whimper, refusing to look at him “I says, *opens* eyes!” Otball’s rough thick-fingered hands began tearing into her hair, taking huge handfuls as he yanked her head backward, forcing an unwilling yelp from her throat. Using his other hand, he took a brutal grip on her breast, forcing tears to her eyes. She gnawed on her bottom lip to keep from screaming as his fingers dug and pinched her nipple brutally. Abruptly, he stopped, leaving her gasping on the edges of pain.

“Painss first,” Otball said harshly, then he released her hair and rubbed his hands gently, but firmly up her rib cage to cup her breasts, “Then’s this.”

The reaction she gave, tore an agonizing sob from Starling’s throat as she shamefully felt her nipples harden under the obscene pressure of his thumbs. “Please,” she cried humiliated and shaking in revulsion. Her head was hung backward with tears careening off the sides of her face into her hair.

“Pleasess, what’s,” Otball rasped thickly into her ear as his hands continued their invasive plucking over her nipples. Then, his horrible puffy lips sucked at her neck, making her skin crawl. Trembling under the nauseating feeling, Otball must have mistook her reaction for emotion, because his head came up, and he had a pleased sneer on his face, as he gloated, “You’s like’s?”

“No,” Starling gasped raggedly through her tears.

Otball's slid his hands down to either side of her waist. "You's do!" His voice was heavy with lust, as he moved his hands lower, squatting his body to move lower with his hands. "Let's sees" His pudgy fingers began to move over her belly, toward her sex.

"No, please, *no*!" Starling pleaded, trying wildly to wrestle away from his assault, but only managing to help as his ugly fingers groped her sex.

"*Fat pig!*" A deep voice thundered in the small room.

It was Bran! Starling's eyes flew open with a rush of hope as Otball started to rise, a curse forming on his lips. At first, Starling did not understand what she was seeing, as Bran's long legs dropping down over Otball's shoulders completely enclosing Otball's head between his deep powerful thighs. With Otball's head gripped tightly Bran drug Otball backward. Then abruptly, Bran twisted the weight of his whole body with his thighs like a noose around Otball's pudgy neck. She could see the powerful tendons stretch and raise in Bran's thighs, as he squeezed them around Otball's neck. Otball's face grew red and his eye balls bulged. Then, she watched Otball's body go limp and his eyes dimmed, leaving only a blank stare of unconsciousness, as her sobs stole her breath away.

Bran swung Otball's unconscious body sideways, letting it fall with a rolling thud to the deck, while using his wrists, still lashed to the pipe above him to lever him. "He *won't* put his hands on you again," he ground out.

His gut clenched to acid churning rigidity as he saw Starling break down completely, sobbing and naked, strung helplessly from the pipe. His anger and frustration pumped his adrenaline and he heaved once, snapping the pipe over his head, until he was able to pull his wrists free.

"It's all right now, baby," he uttered tightly. "Hold on while I untied you."

Bran pressed along Starling's shaking body as he worked to untie her wrists, with one of his arms around her waist, and he took her full weight as her wrists came free. She cried in pain, bawling in catches now as she threw her arms around his neck.

"Sweetheart," he murmured. Then, putting an arm under her legs, he lifted her securely against his chest, where she buried her face into his shoulder with her tears dripping hotly on his skin. She was incoherent for a time, until gradually she wrung herself out and her sobs turned to hard caught hiccups as he began to brush back wet strands of hair sticking to her face, while he kissed her temple.

"Better?" he asked with concern.

"Y-Yes," she managed.

Bran lowered his head and touched his lips to Starling's slowly. Her lips were trembling and swollen as she returned his kiss, wrapping her arms around his neck. He was aware of her nudity as he brought his arms tighter around her bare back, tangling his fingers into her long thick brown hair. He deepened his kiss and she accepted it eagerly.

“Bran-Bran,” she whispered beneath his mouth covering hers with hot kisses.

He was perhaps shaken, considering all that he could feel was the overwhelming urge to take away Otball’s hurtful touch, until she never remembered it. It was foolish, they were in danger, yet his hands willfully cupped and stroked her curving and ripe body. Down the arch of her supple back, over the sleek, womanly curves of her buttocks. Measuring the tone and lithe muscle of her outer thighs, sketching intimate light touches between the apex. Warm, creamy inner thighs that surrendered open to his petting, until her buttocks were undulating sensuously over the rigid outline of his naked cock.

Starling’s kisses were frantic, urgent, soul catching as she caught and suckled his tongue, making him groan. His muscles tighten, expanded and flexed, growing hard and firm against her softness, as his hands cupped her breasts. He gazed into the green passion of her eyes as she took a deep breath and her breasts filled his hands with plump pressure, while her nipples raised to the middle of his palms.

“Kiss me,” he ordered, as he tested the weight of her lush breasts with his hands and she tilted her head to do his bidding eagerly. She seized something inside of him that he would not have given away freely. Only the point was mute, because he’d never experienced desire like this before. He knew as he stroked her supple and lush flesh that he would never have enough of her.

Her lips were full and hot on his as she open her mouth to his sweeping tongue. She was uninhibited, urgent, and clearly enjoyed touching his strength as her hands explored the roped muscles on his chest, moving lower to the ridges of sinew along his abdomen, and then around to squeeze and knead his tight flanks. His muscles tensed, bugling outward with hard massed quality, while she fondled and stroked his body intimately, sensually, and enthusiastically.

When she reached for his thick hot dick, he caught her wrist firmly. There was only so much he could withstand. She whimpered in disappointment beneath his devouring lips as he wound her wrist behind the small of her back and pulled her tightly against him. Their position put her thighs spread over his thighs, and when he touched and cupped her mound, she wriggled into his hand invitingly, breathlessly. Her pussy was warm and the lips were drenched. He traced the tender crease of her pussy with the tip of his finger.

“Bran-Bran.” He kissed her harder, squeezing her heated pussy in his large hand, searching with his fingertip, until his finger became drizzled with her wetting arousal.

“Ohm-mm,” she moaned beneath the heat of his lips as she scraped her nails down his back and then with a feminine undulation of her hips, she mounted his finger.

“*Hell*,” he hissed lowly in appreciation, as he bent her back over his arm and mouthed one of her puckered nipples into his mouth. Her head

fell back and she offered breasts up to him as he buried his fingers in her pussy. When he touched the swollen pearl of her clitty, she trembled and gasped.

“Touch me more, Bran—*please* more,” she mewled passionately. “*Ah-oh. God—ohh-ohh!*”

Bran circled Starling’s clitty with his fingers . . . harder . . . faster—*faster*, then he hitched her up over him, spreading her knees on either side of his hips, until he had full access to her open and splayed cunt. Then, he thrust his finger inside her tight cherry hole, and her nails dug into his flexing biceps painfully as she gripped him inside and out with a soft scream of pleasure.

“*Want* you to come, baby.” He thrust his fingers inside her again and her head fell forward into the crook of his neck as she mewled low and passionately. “*Want* you to *come* in my hand.”

Starling’s entire body was quivering in his arms as he circled his finger, deeper inside her hot creamy sheath, while the flat of his thumb rubbed over her tautly throbbing clitty.

“*Now*, baby. Let me feel you come *now*. ”

In that instant, he took Starling’s mouth beneath his, just as she climaxed, and the hot air of her scream of pleasure filled him as he felt her convulse and grow fluid and quivering in his arms. Her pussy rippled in his hand, hot and moist, as her inner sheath clutched his finger over and over. He was shaking with the force of his feeling as he continued to kiss her more slowly now, while he held onto her tightly. She was beautiful and he lifted his hand from her pussy, then he took both of them to a stand in one fluid motion with his powerful strength.

Chapter Twelve

Bran tried to tell himself that he should not be doing this. That he should go no further, however, Starling was raining hot kisses on his neck and jaw line. Crimping his short black hair with her fingertips. And then—

- And then he had her sitting on a counter attached to the wall that had been behind them with her lissome, bare legs hugged around his hips. One solid plunge and he could be inside her, where he wanted to be. Needed to be so badly.

He broke their fevered kiss, breathing hard as he rested his forehead to hers with his arms locked on either side of her. “We can’t do this,” he growled tightly.

“What, Bran—what,” Starling whispered, pecking at his lips once. The sight of her firm naked breasts was lustful.

He heaved a raw breath and tried to straighten away from them, but that was a wrong move, because with Starling’s hands which were clutched to his neck, it only helped to bring her body flush up against him. From her plump breasts compressed into his chest, down to her loved-heated pussy cleaved over his rock-hard dick.

“*Christ*,” he cursed sharply, then he grabbed Starling’s arms from around his neck and pushed her upper body backward, until her spine was tilted at an angle away from him. “We are in danger here,” he uttered.

Starling did not look properly threatened as he intended or the least bit worried. She looked stunningly aroused. She looked as if she’d found what she wanted and he was it. She reached upward to stroke his clenched jaw and he let her, loosening his hand from holding her back with his strength.

“You will keep me safe,” Starling murmured.

Starling didn’t care about the danger at the moment. None of that mattered with the hard, muscular, and powerful feel of Bran wrapped between her bare clinging legs. She could feel the forceful ridge of his arousal pressing against her and she wanted him with a need so deep it made her tremble.

“Please,” she begged him shamelessly, holding herself out on a tottering limb. He could crush her feelings with only a look or a word of denial. She let him see everything in her gaze, opening herself to him completely to take or to crush. He growled harshly in his throat with his silver irises turning into scintillating fire.

“*Please*,” she pleaded—and finally Bran leaped over the barriers holding him back so strongly.

Then his hand was in her hair, dragging her aggressively upward to his mouth and their lips slammed together in passion. She felt his aroused penis laying like a scalding impression from her belly button down to the first curling hairs between her thighs. He was huge, so long and thick.

“*Christ*, you’re beautiful,” he uttered in a rasped tenor as his lips plucked hers repeatedly and his big hands worked their way beneath her wriggling buttocks. He squeezed her plump cheeks into his palms lifting her off the counter. She could feel the sizable head of his penis asking for entrance as he held her body poised.

“Look at me,” he demanded, as the wet head of his penis prodded the opening of her very core. She could barely lift her eyelids they were so heavy with passion as her hands clutched his tough shoulders and she looked up at him. Everything was there in his gaze, his tremendous willpower holding back his lust, how much he wanted her, how much he needed her. He was asking her with his gaze to show him what she desired.

She answered him in the only way possible—she locked her ankles behind his back and pulled downward. “*Oohhh!*” she squealed in surprise.

“*Baby*,” he expelled sharply jerking his arms and holding her from completely impaling herself on his thick penis. “Slow, baby—slow,” he uttered in a low hiss. Immediately, he was kissing her and rocking his hips, slowly relieving the unbearable tightness inside her.

“Please,” she whimpered.

“Anything,” he uttered, and then hoarsely he asked, “Am I hurting you?”

“I don’t know,” she whispered sharply, clutching his shoulders as he moved in little increments in and out of her. They were wet together and the way felt full. “I don’t know,” she whispered again rubbing her face over his neck and the side of his face as he rocked her on his towering penis.

“It’s all right baby, I will let you go,” he murmured.

“No!” she exclaimed clutching him tighter. “No, I don’t want that,” she finished in a whisper.

“*Hell*, beauty, neither do I. *God*, you are so tight,” he uttered and then there was a clattering sound and Starling realized that he’d swiped the counter beside them clean. “Lay back, baby doll,” he urged. Then, he helped her lay down even as he hooked his arms beneath the crook of her knees lifting her legs up and outward, spreading her thighs open wider.

“There,” he hissed and she felt it, the slight easing of his fullness inside her. But at the same moment he rubbed her clitty with his first finger.

“Ooo,” she squealed at the sudden electric shock of pleasure that contracted inside her. She heard Bran chuckle deeply through the roaring in her ears as his finger smeared over her fevered clitty even faster. *“Oh hh!”* she cried, and then suddenly he thrust completely inside her, while her sex burst open, pleading to be filled and she tottered near a climax.

“Yes,” Bran hissed, and then he was moving, thrusting inside her with long deep strokes.

“Oh Bran-Bran!” she cried as he rocked her on the counter top, drawing her legs up over his shoulders, until her feet brushed the side of his face on each side. His forearms held her thighs tightly as he invaded her with deep hard thrusts. The bursting edges of a climax absorbing inside her tottered . . . tottered—then exploded! *“Oh hh hh hh hh!”* she screamed. *“Bran!”*

But he wasn’t finished with her yet, even as she convulsed and rippled along the length of his huge pitching shaft, he began to change their position again. *“More,”* he uttered as he pulled out of her pulsating core and lifted her up—then off the counter. The back of the bench was next as he urged her belly over its rounded back. Her knees were weak and wobbly from her lingering climax, yet the back of the bench supported her stomach as Bran thrust into her from behind with one solid stroke. It lifted her toes off the floor as he held her naked hips with his hands and thrust solidly again. *“OGod!”*

“Christ!” Bran hissed, seeing Starling’s nakedly displayed buttocks slap against his belly was nearly as carnal as her sheath clutching him like a clenched fist. He rode her up on her toes again and again with each thrust that he took as she whimpered passionate cants beneath him. He clamped his tough muscular thighs over her thighs holding her to his driving motion and then he reached around her waist and down her belly, until he was fingering the lips of her feverish pussy. He kept the solid driving motion of his dick thrusting inside her even as she squirmed, trying to open her thighs to his fingering, but he held her thighs clamped tightly and bent her over the bench more.

“Bran!” she gasped, when his fingers delved between the lips of her pussy and found her swollen clitty, which he rubbed rapidly. *“Oooo!”* she shrieked.

She was his complete but willing prisoner as he coupled her harder, while bringing her to a climax with his fingers. He could not hold back any longer, when he felt her quiver and clench over his pumping cock with her third orgasm.

“Christ, baby,” he groaned through his clenched teeth, as he swung his hips rapidly, while his balls drew up tightly with his imminent ejaculation. He bent his knees and reared up deeply inside Starling’s clenching sex. *“Aaa—baby!”*

He spilled his seed, shaking his head and torso to keep his roar of ecstasy clogged in his throat. But still his cock rippled with pleasure as he panted a hard breath and he bellowed beneath the pleasure. Bending over Starling's back, holding her throbbing pussy cupped in his hand. Once . . . twice . . . *three* more times his dick pulsed inside her, before the rage began to subside.

"Bran," Starling panted once beneath him, as he rubbed his lips over her cheek, neck, and shoulder. *Christ*. He could still feel little ripples of pleasure. It was incredible.

"Hush," he murmured hoarsely, soothing Starling with his lips now behind her ear and his hand gently cupping her feverish cunt. Each tremor that ran through her body calmed slowly and he knew the only thing holding her up was the back of the bench. Still he was reluctant to break their connection, the one he could feel with his fingers and cock. But he did a few moments later, lifting Starling into his arms to carry her to the front of the bench.

"Let me see if I can find something for you to wear," he murmured, and then a few moments later he said from behind her, "I could only find this miners jacket."

Starling felt the coldness of the slick material as Bran placed it around her shoulders. It was a yellow rubberized jacket, used to wear underneath the miners atmospheric suits and Bran helped her put her arms through the sleeves. It was uncomfortable, but she was thankful for anything to wear.

"Starling, I have to leave you here." *Everything had* changed, and Starling could hear it in the detached rumble of Bran's voice. There were so many unanswered questions, and the future was suddenly uncertain again. "There are more of these scum left. I have the surprise now, and I *need* to keep it."

Starling quickly glanced at Otball's body, she could understand that, more slavers, Bran risking his life . . . again. With a soft cry, she was off the bench reaching for him. "Bran, be careful."

"This is what I do," he stated grimly, but his lips on her mouth spoke otherwise. His lips spoke of their future . . . together. And then he broke away from her and he turned and crouched by Otball's body, quickly tying and gagging Otball. Then he began searching him, coming up with a knife, and she saw him find a small weapon, Otball had tucked into his belt.

"A Tack pistol," he said with satisfaction. Bran stood and started to hand the weapon to her. "I will leave the pistol with you."

She immediately lifted her hands in protest, shaking her head. "I don't know how to use it. You take it, you will need it more than I will." Then she walked over and picked up a length of pipe, "I will jam this pipe in the door latch after you leave, that way no one can get in."

Bran looked on the verge of issuing a command, but he shook his head in reluctant agreement. “Let *no one* in, but me,” he emphasized strongly. Then, he walked to the hatch.

“H-How will I know how long I should wait?” she asked anxiously.

“I will be back in one hour,” Bran answered, reaching for the latch.

“Bran . . . ,” she exclaimed softly and then he was gone.

Chapter Thirteen

Bran stopped a short distance outside of the storage room, in the corridor, and then backing against the wall, he looked down each end side. Seeing them clear, he shut his eyes, taking a few moments to regain his focus. The events in the storage room had affected him, and it was not only that he had made wild and passionate love to Starling, but the lingering dregs of the intense rage he'd experienced having to watch Otball put his hands on her.

He had revived from the effects of the stun with Otball's jerk to his chin. Faking unconsciousness, he had endured watching with impotence as the slaver Otball abused Starling. Knowing then, his only chance lay in waiting, praying Otball would move into the right position. He had never felt a rage so deep, nearly blinding him as he witnessed Otball hands pawing Starling's helplessly naked body.

Yet now, he must leave that behind and concentrate on what he was about to do. There would be more slavers still onboard a ship this size. He needed all of his skill, and ten years of his military training fell naturally into place with the thought.

He shoved away from the inside wall, then checked the Tack-pistol in his fist. He could tell by the markings over the hatches that this was a broken-down Trevin mining ship. That was why Starling was alive. These antiquated mining ships used atomic propulsion, not warped drives like a Skitter. She—and their baby—would never survive a warp drive. It seemed the slavers had hijacked a mining ship and turned it to corrupt purposes. Now he understood how the Trak-grub-wald's had gotten Starling to begin with. It was cold hard cash, yet the why of it still escaped him.

He could only be grateful at the moment. Because Otball, who probably had been looking for Starling because of his dissatisfied Grub customers, had now provided him with a way to take Starling home. He looked down the aisle way. He knew this mining ship would have two levels. The propulsion system on the lower level and the flight deck on top.

First, he reconnoitered the cabins on the short length of the corridor away from his position, and then he worked his way silently passed Starling's location and moved forward toward the propulsion chamber. He found the first two slavers in the propulsion chamber. Using the exposed pipes overhead, to the right of the hatchway, he swung upward, working his legs over the pipe, until his knees caught. Still holding on to the pipe with his hands, he shouted in a garbled voice. "*Hey . . . ! Have to see this! Won't believe it!*"

Curiosity overrode caution and the man closest to the hatch rushed forward to look out into the corridor. Bran swung downward, using his knees as leverage, and seized the man around the neck in a choke hold. Bran could hear the footsteps of the other man coming from the back of the propulsion chamber. Escalating the pressure of his choke hold, the man went limp and Bran allowed him fall to the deck beside the entryway. Instantly, he swung back upward and grabbed the pipe with his hands. Judging from the sound, he gauged the other mans approach and keeping a firm grip on the pipe, he released his knees and launched the rest of his body through the air. The man never knew what hit him as he took Bran's heel on his chin.

Bran let himself down from his perch and quickly hauled the men into the back of the propulsion chamber, out of sight, where he stripped the pants off one of them and put them on. Picking up one of their Tack-rifles as he went. The propulsion room was located at the end of the corridor, which meant any remaining slavers had to be on the upper level. Luck was on his side when he heard two of the slavers descending the metal ladder from the upper level. Concealing himself around the corner of the boxed in ladder, Bran listened to their approach.

"Tell Master Otball we have the Grub ship sighted, two days away. I check on Dreg. See if he has the thermal jack repaired."

"*You* tell Master. He is with the 'slave pussy'."

"He'll share," the first man replied as his feet hit the deck with a thud.

Bran swung the Tack-rifle to his back and coiled the ends of the long black rifle strap around each of his hands. He watched, the first man step away from the ladder, making room for his companion with his back turned. When the second man reached the deck, Bran, pulled the strap tight between his hands and raised it over the nearest man's head, then he crossed his hands and jerked the strap tight around the man's neck. The man had no time to react, other than a startled woof. Instantly Bran hauled him around in a half turn and used the momentum to place a flying kick squarely into the other mans jaw, crumpling him instantly to the deck.

The man Bran held captive with the strap was choking, struggling, and digging at the strap around his neck. Taking both ends of the strap in one hand, Bran placed a well-directed elbow jab to the man's temple, dropping him. Then using the straps from the Tack-rifle the men had

carried, Bran secured their hands and feet together. Grasping both men by their collars, he dragged them over to the ladder and stuffed them behind it.

Stopping for a moment to catch his breath, Bran absently wiped a trail of sweat from his face. He knew there would be at least one more slaver on the flight deck left, to pilot the ship. Making his way quickly up the ladder, Bran headed straight for the flight deck. Swinging the Tack-rifle around and holding it ready in one hand, he approached the entryway to the flight deck, cautiously. What he saw, stopped him cold.

It was Cobalt! Instantly, Bran's thoughts recalled the shadowy human shape, he had glanced, when he had taken Starling from the Skitter in the Zach, through the Grubs fire line. Cobalt? It had to be! Cobalt was standing sideways to the entryway, in front of the pilotage, about fifteen paces inside the cabin. He had a Tack-rifle slung over his right shoulder, the side facing Bran, and a pistol tucked inside his belt.

Bran stepped through the threshold boldly. He already knew this fight would be deadly. It was a long time coming, between him and Cobalt. *And* he knew what it was worth. Cobalt wanted Starling! That is why he was here. It was the only thing that could make a bastard, but a trooper still, a renegade. A real woman like Starling. *He wasn't getting her!* "Cobalt!" Bran shouted. "What the *hell* are you doing here?" he spat. They both knew. He wanted to *hear* it.

Cobalt swung his Tack-rifle upward and around as Bran continued stalking toward him with his rifle pointed at Cobalt's chest. "She's mine!" Cobalt shouted.

Bran stopped, while they both kept their weapons leveled at each other. "Why," he spat out savagely.

Cobalt's lips pulled tight over his teeth. "I needed a ship. That fat slaver provided it. Trail you, find the girl, and I get her after the Grubs are through with her. Otball is so greedy, he sells her three times and he thinks I'm going to settle for that," he sneered. "You know why the Grubs want her? Research on humans! They were going to clone that baby, make more, do experiments. Find human weakness." Cobalt spat on the deck, disgustedly. "Rapier Command will forgive anything for this information," he sneered.

Bran knew Cobalt was giving up the information, because he knew one of them was not walking off this deck alive. Cobalt was a bastard, but he was still a trooper . . . loyal in his own way, making sure the critical information was getting out, no matter who lived. "We don't have to do this," Bran tried once. "Both back away."

"Fuck that," Cobalt spat. "Alive, you are a fucking liability on my future, man. Like I said, she's mine!"

"Then it seems we are at a stand off," Bran stated grimly.

"Yeah," Cobalt sneered. "Let's see who really is the *best*."

"*You* got it," Bran snapped.

Cobalt nodded, anticipation apparent in every move. Slowly, he took the Tack rifle with his free hand, and he tossed it off to the side. Bran released the trigger on his rifle, but still kept it pointed at Cobalt. Then both men moved in slow motion, setting down their weapons simultaneously, and carefully stepping backward. Each of them began slowly circling, moving a little closer with every step. Bran waited for Cobalt to make the first move, and from his stance, Bran could see Cobalt was going for the kill.

Cobalt moved first, with the swiftness of experience, he let loose a side to side stiff legged, round house kick to Bran's head. Bran ducked the high kick and came in low. Cobalt spun through the revolution of his kick, bringing his arm up in anticipation of another head blow, but Bran caught his balancing leg with a solid kick to the thigh, and Cobalt's back swing glanced off Bran's shoulder.

Bran instantly fired a rapid succession of tight-fisted jabs to Cobalt's rib cage as he attempted to regain his balance. Bran heard the woof of air leave Cobalt's lungs as he staggered backward. Immediately, Bran launched a standing dropkick to Cobalt's chin, following the man down as he fell to the deck on his back. Bran jabbed his knee into Cobalt's gut and shot an explosive blow to his face, securing his unconsciousness as he heard bones crunching. It was over. Cobalt never had a chance.

Just as Bran was uncoiling from Cobalt, he heard footsteps. Swinging around swiftly to place the sound, he realized it was rapidly fading. *There was someone else on the ship.* Racing, Bran picked up his Tack-rifle and he rushed from the chamber. When he reached the ladder, he heard some unknown man bellowing.

"Otball let me in!"

"Starling," Bran hissed under his breath. She was lone and defenseless. Quickly, grabbing both sides of the metal ladder, Bran swiftly slid down, ignoring the rungs. He was not taking any chance that the pipe Starling had used to jam the door would hold. He could feel his heart pounding, and he forced himself to move cautiously. The man at the hatch was so intent on getting in, he never looked up when Bran approached.

"Don't move!" Bran shouted, leveling his weapon at the man. The man immediately obeyed, raising his arms into the air. This was no soldier, Bran thought as he stepped behind the man and struck the base of his skull with the Tack-rifle, watching him falling sideways onto the deck.

He knew Starling would be frantic. He pounded the door. "Starling, it's Bran, open up."

It seemed like an eternity, before he heard the rattle of the pipe being pulled free. His hand already on the latch, he shoved on it, when it swung open and Starling fell into his arms. He caught her and held her tightly, pressuring her closer, reassuring himself she was all right. The slick yellow fabric of her jacket slid against the perspiration covering his chest.

Her petite body shuddered as he wound his hands into her hair and tilted her head backward so he could see her face. Concern etched his features as he looked into her expressive green eyes and found only worry for him written there.

They both spoke at the same time, asking, “Are you all right?” Then they both smiled as their words mingled.

“We don’t have much time,” he explained, quickly. Regretfully, he released his embrace as Starling stepped backward and winced, hopping on one bare foot, looking down.

“Ore fragments,” he said, answering her questioning look. “They’re all over the decks, too much for bare feet.” Then as he crouched to tie up the last slaver, he told her, “I have to get back to the flight deck, there’s no one flying this rust bucket.”

“What can I do?” she asked.

Bran gazed up at her standing in the oversized slick yellow jacket with bare legs and feet.

“Go and check those cabins for shoes and clothes. All the slavers are tied up, so you won’t have to worry about them,” he explained. “In the mean time, I’m going to head back to the flight deck.”

Bran watched her hesitate, her face expressing worried concentration as she nibbled at her bottom lip. “Where are we g-going?” she asked hesitantly.

“I’m taking you home,” Bran answered lowly.

Chapter Fourteen

I'm taking you home. Bran's words echoed in Starlings mind as she peeked into a chamber that appeared to be the Captain's cabin. Bran had left quickly after saying those fateful words. He had given her no further explanation, just sprinted away, leaving her standing in the corridor to wonder.

"I should be happy," she whispered, as she walked into the chamber looking around. She should be happy that she was going home. But, Bran had not said the rest. *I will stay with you. We will get married. Love our baby.* "He's a solider—he's not . . ." Her breath caught. "He's not going to stay with you!" she expelled, through the ache in her throat. "Better to accept that," she muttered. "Yes, better to accept that right now."

It was just going to be her and her baby. That was good . . . yes, she could raise her baby on her own. Determinedly, Starling began looking around for clothes, and it was then she saw the shower. "Yes, that's what I need," she mumbled "Start a fresh life. I *can* do that."

Resolved, she headed toward the shower. She didn't need Bran at all. She wanted him, but she did not need him.

Bran set the auto pilot on the ship. Hell, he did not even know where Starling lived. It really did not matter at the moment, they were out in the spacial rim, and it would take weeks in a ship this old to get anywhere near the populated planets. Still, it bothered the hell out of him . . . that he did not know . . . that he'd never taken the time to ask.

He scraped a hand over his jaw, grimly. He had it all now . . . everything he could want. With the information he had, plus the slavers still alive to tell the rest of the story, he could write his own ticket. Go back to the troopers, get raised in rank even . . . or—. He looked at the entryway leading into the flight deck . . . or—.

"Starling," he whispered. He knew when the moment was. It should have been any of the times when he'd had killer sex with her. Made love to her . . . or maybe, when Cobalt had tried to claim her. But it had happened before that. The moment he knew he loved her had been in the corridor, just a short time ago really. It was the second when he had thought, 'their baby' in his mind instead of her baby. That was the moment.

“Hell,” he muttered. He had been in the troopers for more than ten years now. “It’s time to start fresh.”

He grinned then, and he didn’t even mind it. Heck, he was no longer a trooper anyway. “Just too damn soft anymore,” he grumbled happily. “Yeah, and a father soon too,” he smiled. Now he just needed to go clench the deal. The thing he like about that best was . . . *now*, he *knew* he could.

“Wing my little chickadee a shooter orgasm,” he grinned as he sprinted toward the entrance to the flight deck. Oh yeah . . . he knew how to do that!

Starling squealed, when he stepped naked into the shower behind her. *God*, he loved that feminine squeal. But, he noted right off that his baby did not seem too happy to see him.

“Get out of here!” Starling exclaimed. “Go away,” she further tried, as she turned struggling in his large wet embrace.

“Whoa, darlin’,” he grunted to Star’s elbow jabbing to his belly as he tried to hold onto her slippery wet figure. “What the heck is wrong, beauty?” he asked with a huff. He wasn’t giving up his hold either, not this soft and curvy wet skin struggling all over his hard body.

“Wrong?” Starling exclaimed. “You are taking me home!” she puffed. “Now, let me go!”

Bran hitched Starling up tighter against him as she pushed ineffectually on his chest, gyrating her hips with an energetic wiggling that rolled her mound over his hard cock rousingly. The hot water from the shower sprayed over the top of Star’s head and hit him in the chest. *Dang*, she was pissed, he thought with a smile. The thing was, she was feisty and sexy when she was all worked up like this. It was kind of hard not to enjoy. Plus, she felt like heaven rolling nude and wet over his body. He could not help it, . . . he egged her on.

“So what, baby doll, don’t you want to go home?” He grinned, but luckily Star could not see that, she was too busy wrestling in his embrace.

“Oh!” she squealed in outrage. “We are not married!” she exclaimed. “You can’t just come in here and-and—!”

“-Ok, *marry* me,” he shot back at her.

“*Hold* me against my will like this-s—*what* did you say?”

Bran chuckled, as Starling puffed agitated breaths glaring up at him. “I said o-k,” he emphasized.

“Ok, *what*?” she hissed at him with fire in her green eyes. *God*, he loved her.

Suddenly, Starling felt Bran hooked his hands under her armpits, and then he lifted, hoisting her up and up, until their eyes were level. “Marry me!” he grinned. “Now!” he snapped, but he was smiling.

She could only huff, suspended in the air, wild-eyed as she looked at him. Finally her hands caught his shoulders for balance and that instinctive movement of her body seemed to break through her shock. “You are not going to leave me,” she whispered.

“Never, baby love, . . . if you will have me,” Bran said, with a serious determined look now in his silver irises.

“Bran,” she whispered hopefully.

“Say yes,” he whispered back.

“Yes!” she gushed suddenly. “Oh, yes!” she cried more strongly, lurching forward to try and take Bran into a spontaneous embrace. The sudden shift in their body weights sent him staggering backward, but the shower wall stopped him. Bran laughed then. Starling looked down at him in amazement, with her hands now braced over his head, thrown there from their reeling backward motion. She had never *seen* Bran laugh before! “Bran,” she gasped.

He held her higher now, so that her uplifted breasts were right below his nose and the water from the shower head behind them hit her buttocks. Her pussy was in the middle of his chest, and her knees were pressed around his hard penis. Then she watched with aroused attention as his mouth zeroed in on one nipple. The peak was thrusting and pink and she gasped excitedly when Bran sucked on it, flicking his tongue over the very tip. Her body undulated in happy anticipation of pleasure as she squeezed her knees around Bran’s rigid penis. He groaned and nipped at her nipple in response making her gasp. His little bites shot pleasure from her nipples to her pussy, as the hot water gushing over her buttocks made her squirm with new erotic feelings.

“Mm, baby love, you taste so good,” Bran murmured as he slowly began to lower her down his body, with a sexy smile, as his lips reach up for hers. Their lips melted together as her feet touched the ground. Bran wrapped a strong arm around her back and pressure her body backward arched over his forearm as their kiss deepened into tongues lapping against each other. Her back arched and her body bowed over his arm, until the water from the shower was steaming in her hair. Bran lifted his lips from hers and raised his other hand to run his fingers through her hair, helping the warm water massage over her scalp, as he rubbed his stiff penis against her pussy. She clutched his powerful shoulders feeling them and then running her hands over his big biceps as she ground her pussy over the thickness of his shaft.

He smiled down at her with his silver eyes dark and sexy. “I love you, beauty,” he murmured.

Starling felt her eyes melting into his. “Oh, Bran, I love you too,” she sighed. Bran’s return grin was heart-stopping as his black eyelashes lowered and his gaze looked slowly down the length of her wet naked body.

“Mmm, I want to eat you from head to toe, baby doll,” he murmured, then he raised his eyes and winked at her. A thrill coursed through her body, making her nipples ruck tighter, she had never seen Bran like this, and she fell in love with him more each minute. Then he bent forward and took her lips beneath his, at the same moment he lifted her back to stand straight, hugged up against his tall muscular body.

“Turn around,” he murmured against her lips. Her body yielded happily, turning in his arms, then his hands were on her wrists, raising them to the wall in front of her. The water sprayed down over her sensitive breasts as Bran’s hands stroked her from her wrists, down her arms, over the sides of her breasts. Then he cupped her waist, and shaped her hips. Here he stopped and his hands moved slowly over her hips toward her pussy. She arched her back pressing with her hands high on the wall, and rolling her buttocks over Bran’s hard penis behind her. Then his hand cupped her pussy and he lifted, one finger splitting her pussy lips, while her buttock cheeks spread open and the length of Bran’s penis burrowed in the crevice.

“Bran,” she gasped at the feel of him, pushing back and grinding the crevice of her bottom over his penis as he caressed his finger between the lips of her pussy.

“Oh yeah, baby love,” Bran groaned at her buttocks undulating strongly over his penis.

His finger touched her clitty, just lightly, yet she cried out as though he had flicked it hard and fast it was so sensitive. She swayed her hips harder with a circular, and then an up and down motion. Her body pleading with Bran to give her more.

But, instead he moved his hand way and she whimpered in need trying without words to call him back. But then, she felt his body lowering behind her and a new thrill began to fill her hotly. His hands slid over her hips to the front of her thighs, and she could feel he was kneeling behind her. Abruptly, he tugged on the front of her thighs, bringing her stance backward as her hands slid down the wall bracing her body.

The position bent her at the waist and she felt Bran’s hands move to her ankles, then caress up the inner reaches of her calves. With each movement of his hands higher, he pressed outward, coercing her legs wider apart, as he stroked her inner thighs. Then his hands reached her lower buttocks with his thumbs nestled the crook on each side, and slowly he spread her buttocks open.

“*Bran*,” she gasped, excitedly, and the next sound she made was a squeal of intense pleasure as Bran licked his tongue over her pussy lips from behind, bringing her up on her tippy-toes.

“*Yes*, baby love,” Bran groaned, stroking the tip of his tongue over Starling’s pussy lips, so tender and so soft. Then he buried his head deep between her ass cheeks and stretched his tongue forward to reach the bulge of her hard clitty.

“*Oo, Oo*,” Starling puled, squirming her buttocks back onto his face as he flicked his tongue up over her clitty with nice hard strokes, while he held her ass cheeks open so he could reach. The back of Starling’s thighs shook against his chest as he flicked her stiff clitty with his tongue repeatedly, making her squeal passionately. Then when he thought she was near to climaxing, just on the edge, he reared his back, stiffening his tongue, and the thrust it forward deep in her cherry hole.

“*Bran,*” Starling screamed. Not losing an erotic beat, Bran began to fuck Starling’s cherry hole with his tongue. He used his hands on her hips to drag her back and forth, poking his tongue in deep and then pulling it out as Star cried out senselessly over and over. “*Oo, oh hh hh hh hh!*” Starling screamed.

When Bran felt Starling starting to climax he surged to his feet behind her holding his dick, and positioning it to thrust deep into Starling with one solid driving stroke. She screamed again as he felt her climax grip his cock in waves.

Her cherry hole so tight around him, he could barely pull back to thrust. But, he did and he began to fuck her hard, with rigid plunging strokes. He jerked her body forward and back, pulling her onto his cock, as the hot water sprayed down over their joining.

His knees became wobbly and his balls began to burn, as the water slick on their skin, began to make slapping sounds each time he plunged inside her. He braced his hands on the wall above Starling’s, bending more at his waist and then he really began to swing his hips rapidly, as he felt himself about to explode.

“*Star-Star!*” he bellowed.

“*Bran!*” Starling cried.

Another climax! Bran’s mind went blank with gut wrenching pleasure, but long moments later, he remembered that split-second when he had known that he had winged his baby love to two, . . . *count* them, *two* shooter orgasms in a row!

“*Yes!*”

The End

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