



RESURRECTION

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Coltra, princess of the Seaphorians, is desperate for a man who can incite her pheromones and, thereby, resurrect her people from their curse of abstinence. She dreams of a prince who will do just this.

When Gill Humphrey washes up on the sand of her island, Coltra knows he is not her prince. Between his memory loss, likeness to her dream lover and ability to get her hot, she is willing to pretend. That is, until Gill's memory returns, along with the knowledge he trusts no woman, least of all one who has lied to him from the start.

What the reviewers are saying...

4.5 Ribbons! "RESURRECTION is a wonderful short story that I devoured in about ten minutes. Miss Copeland has a true talent when it comes to writing. Descriptions are vivid, emotions run deep, and the overall flow of the story plays like a finely tuned instrument. Readers won't sit on the sidelines with this story, but instead, move and grow with the characters until the grand finale. I tip my hat to Jodi Lynn Copeland for packing so much punch into a short story. It is no easy task!" --Romance Junkies

"Jodi Lynn Copeland writes an appealing story with RESURRECTION. Her imagination is a wonder, as she creates a race of people who are different from us but the same, too. Fascinating characters, a wonderful backdrop, and a compelling storyline greet readers when they open up RESURRECTION, and hold them until the final page." -- Romance Reviews Today

4 Hearts! "This plot will fascinate readers and the book will end all too soon. The love scenes are incredibly hot, so keep some ice handy." -- The Romance Studio

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CHAPTER ONE

Go down with the ship, yeah right. What'd he look like, a goddamned martyr?

Though he knew it was futile, Gill Humphrey made one last attempt at steering the Motor Cruiser into the swell of storm-bolstered waves. He'd borrowed the fishing boat from his long-time friend, Mick, in the hope of escaping the plethora of shit that had come his way as of late. As the cruiser tipped at a precarious right angle and icy rain mixed with briny ocean water slammed into him, jerking his hands from the wheel and knocking him on his butt, it became clear he'd escaped those things. Those things and whatever years might have been left of his life.

Not ready to die, Gill fought off the chill that shook through him and pushed to his feet. Pinpricks of pain sliced through his limbs. He shut out the hurt and struggled to gain a foothold. Between the fast moving water that flooded the deck and the nonstop hurl of waves, solid footing wasn't a possibility and neither was saving this boat from capsizing. And that meant he might as well bend over and kiss his ass goodbye.

The storm had come out of nowhere and was wicked as hell. If that wasn't bad enough, this stretch of water was one of the least traversed in the area. Remoteness had been its appeal when he'd set out a few hours ago. Now, it would be his death.

The boat tipped right again, jolting as a reverse-course wave slammed into its left side. Saltwater pounded the deck, pummeling Gill's body and filling his eyes. The force of the water all but blinded him and had his fingers once more wrenching from the wheel. This time when he hit the deck, he didn't bother to fight his way back to his feet. This time the entire hull was flooded, the entire boat quickly sinking from sight.

This time he accepted his fate.

The last few months of his life might have been shitty. But this time he was just plain shit out of luck, because while Gill was about as far from a martyr as one could get, he was still going down with the ship.

Princess Coltra's prayers had been answered.

Or so she'd believed at first sight of the stranger washed up on the sand. Now, as she stared upon the man her younger sister, Adrea, leaned over, it was difficult to believe he was the one from the vision sent to her by the God Sammon. Difficult and, yet, it didn't stop hope from bursting forth in her hearts.

Perhaps he was not the prince destined to free the Seaphorians from their curse.

But, with his long, golden hair, sharply chiseled face, and what appeared a tall, sturdy build from what she could tell while he lay on his back, he looked like Prince Abisha. Appearance might be all it would take to convince her people their savior had come.

As for convincing the man himself...

The intricacy of that task only time would reveal. If he was the susceptible kind, Coltra knew enough about his planet that she could concoct a believable tale. She'd learned its native tongues during her training for the day when she would take over as Queen of Seaphor. Several others--ambassadors of the home planet--had learned them, as well. Outside of Narjl, her long-time confidante and healer, not one of those others had survived the explosion that ultimately brought her to this planet. Nor had the rest of her family, aside from Adrea.

Coltra was ruler now, had been for the nigh six years since the remaining inhabitants of Seaphor had crashed on this island. The Seaphorians were her people to lead and to see that they continued to prosper.

That wouldn't happen unless Prince Abisha arrived. Or a near enough copy to the prince that her people could place their faith in him.

"He breathes," Adrea cried over her shoulder, her body still prone over the stranger's, her long dark hair whipping in the humid breeze.

Coltra hadn't had time to consider that the stranger might not do such. The realization her plan was almost foiled before it had begun, had her drawing a deep breath and kneeling in the sand next to her sister. This man must not die. Already, too much depended on his existence. "As was clear from the moment we set eyes upon him," she lied. She placed her hand at her sister's shoulder and squeezed, proclaiming her authority without words. "Move away, Adrea, this man is mine."

Adrea drew back on her knees and laughed. "And what would you do with him were he to be yours? Not. Just as no other woman here shall. He is fine to look upon, yea, but what good will come of it?"

Every good, because Coltra knew her hearts and her mission. All were entwined with her people. Those responsible for destroying Seaphora were also responsible for placing the curse on the Seaphorian race. Six years now with neither pleasure nor procreation. Years that would continue to grow in number until Coltra found a man able to incite her pheromones. By rite of the curse, that man could not be a Seaphorian. But perhaps this man...

Coltra leaned over the stranger and studied him more closely. He wore no adornments on either his ears or his fingers, and his attire would have to be done away with immediately. The rest of him, however, was perfect. Sitting back, she took hold of his ragged shirt and tore it farther, until the material ripped in half. She pondered what it could be made of that it gave away so easily, then dismissed that wonder to take in his chest. His skin was a golden brown--not nearly so dark as her peoples--and his torso delightfully hard and muscled.

She ran her fingers over his sun-heated flesh, enjoying the way his chest rose and fell with his shallow breaths. Moving her fingers farther down, she inhaled sharply.

What was this? A hole in his stomach? Just above the waist of his oddly

fashioned pants, she dipped her first finger into the small cavity. Not a hole! At least, not a deep one. Perhaps this small indent was normal for his kind. As much as she'd learned all their many language, she'd never met an Earthling. Never had time to voyage past the triple suns of Seaphor before nigh all had been taken from her.

"Coltra?"

At Adrea's voice, she shook her thoughts away and looked at the man's face. Unlike his golden hair, his short beard was brown. His thick lashes the same shade.

With a prayer that behind his closed lids were the blue eyes she'd told her people belonged to Abisha, Coltra glanced at her sister, who stood brushing sand from her green robes. "Fine to look upon, you say. Foolish is what Father should have named you. Have you no idea who this man is?"

Adrea did not look up. "Have I no care is the better question."

Oh, how she hated to use her rank with her sister.

Coltra raised her voice to an authoritative level. "Sha! Go. Retrieve Narlj. Tell not a soul a thing, not even Narlj. Not even where you are bringing him."

Adrea rubbed at her robes one last time and then looked up and rolled her eyes. "As you wish it, Your Majesty."

Coltra bit her tongue at her sister's action. Dare she hope on this planet young women knew no such form of rudeness? "Now is no time for your insolence! This man is the answer to all that we are, all that we stand to lose. He is the one God Sammon spoke of."

Adrea's eyes widened from their usual slant. "You think him the prince? The one to set us free?"

She never lied, but if it would help in her plan's success, Coltra would do anything. "No good ruler thinks, my foolish sister. She must know. He *is* Prince Abisha and when you return, I will prove it."

Adrea looked from the man's face to his naked chest and then his peculiar pants. Coltra expected her to ask of his wardrobe. She said instead, "He affects you?"

"Yea, he affects me. Now go! Get Narlj, before my prince dies."

"But he breathes."

"They may be his last." Coltra turned and placed her hand back on the man's chest. She felt only one heart beat, but it was a steady one. Her sister needed to know not. "Hurry, Adrea! If my prince dies, I will never absolve you of the blame."

Coltra watched her sister dart across the stretch of sand they'd covered on their daily walk. When the green of Adrea's robes disappeared from view, she turned back to the man. She moved to his feet and pulled at the white slips that covered them. Her hearts slammed against her ribs and she screeched at the sight there.

Sha! First a hole in his stomach and now these...things. She ran her fingers along the strange extensions. Five on both feet. Attached directly to his flesh. Not only were they ugly, but how could one walk? Swimming had to be nigh impossible. Thank Sammon she had not told her people of Abisha's feet.

Aware of how precious the time, Coltra moved to his pants. She fumbled with the odd closure, finally getting their front to part, and almost screeched again. His skin

beneath was blue. She rubbed a finger against it and sighed. Not skin. More of the material his shirt had been made of.

Why so many layers?

No time for questions, she straddled his thighs, grabbed hold of his stiff pants, and tugged. Grunting with her efforts, she worked the pants down his legs. Next came the layer beneath. When that too was off, she sat back, tipped her head and studied his sex. No odd holes. No strange extremities. A bit larger than what she'd seen in the past, but other than that it looked exactly like the cock of a Seaphorian male.

And what of its taste?

Prince Abisha was not a full Seaphorian, and so she could explain his few peculiarities away, but his cum would need to taste like her peoples. If it did not taste like such, when her assistant, Khawala, took him into her mouth, as part of the joining ritual, she would know of Coltra's lies. She had to be certain of such at once. She would not expose her people to false hope if there were not a chance of her plan succeeding.

The stranger's eyes had yet to open. Coltra spoke to him, hoping her words would raise him from slumber. "Wake up, my prince." Her legs astride his thighs, she came up on her knees and took hold of his penis. "I wish to suck on you, Abisha. Do you not want to watch me?"

She frowned when he didn't respond. Perhaps she spoke the wrong language, or perhaps it was her touch his senses craved. Leaning down, she used one hand to massage his balls while her other stroked from base to tip of his shaft. She drew in a breath as his cock grew until her fingers and thumb no longer met.

She'd thought him large before, now he was extraordinarily so. If he could evoke her pheromones, would he even fit within her?

Would he fit within her mouth?

Her throat dry as the sand, she brought her lips to the head of his rigid cock and rubbed. The hot flesh jerked beneath her lips, and he moaned. She rubbed a second time, smiling when the moan came again, louder. Pre-cum beaded at the slit on the head of his penis. She licked at the salty white fluid once, then again, greedily, as the taste of him filled her senses.

It had been so long since she'd known pleasure. Still, she could remember this taste, remember how remarkable the silky substance felt on her tongue, sliding down her throat. How fucking a man with her mouth made her nipples bead and her pussy throb.

Coltra licked one last time and then took his generous cock into her mouth. She milked his length with her hand and mouth. Wetness gathered between her legs. The insistent throb of her pussy intensified. She could not stop from lifting and spreading her robes, petting her moist, swollen flesh. Her body was afire. Her cunt so wet it dripped arousal down her thighs. The scent of that arousal reached her and her thoughts and actions caught up with her.

By all that was holy, she wanted to fuck this man! She wanted to feel his mighty cock in her pussy, her ass, milking her breasts. She wanted him everywhere.

Tears gathered in her eyes as she continued to pleasure him with her mouth. She

fingered her clitoris with abandon, chafing and circling the inflamed nub. She no longer cared if her sister and Narlj returned when she was sucking this man or fondling herself. For, whether Sammon had sent him to her or not, this man was her savior. Her peoples' savior. From this day on, he was Prince Abisha.

"Mmm..."

At his moan, Coltra lifted her eyes to his face and hummed her bliss against his cock. Blue stared back at her. Eyes the blue of the sea at its most turbulent point. The blue she'd--

"Oh, honey...fuck!" Abisha's hands pushed into her hair and his hips thrust upward.

Within her mouth, his shaft pulsed with urgency. He was nigh coming. She ached to come, as well. Continuing her sucks, she buried two fingers deep within her cunt and pressed the pad of her thumb against her clitoris. She pulled back and plunged again into her dripping sheath, in and out, in and out. Abisha's cock bucked between her lips, the plump head brushing the back of her throat. His fingers tangled within her hair, gripped, tugged. And then his delectable seed was filling her mouth, washing down her throat, and evoking tremors from deep within her.

Coltra pulled back and lapped at his cum, eagerly devouring all that he had to give while Abisha's elated shouts filled the afternoon air. The shouts died, and his hold on her hair released. Smiling, she let free his cock and sat back on his thighs. His eyes darkened to midnight as she worked her thumb faster over her clitoris. Within seconds, his thumb was there, too, covering hers, pressing harder against the bead of nerves.

One of his fingers joined the two of hers inside her pussy and pressed upward. Tremors, delicious and extreme, sliced through Coltra, and a scream of ecstasy tore from her lips. Abisha's finger moved within her sex, guiding her own with such skill it was as if he'd touched her body many times before. Then his free hand was on her, pushing aside her robe to palm a naked breast. He released the heavy globe and turned to the other breast, catching the nipple between thumb and forefinger. He gave a tug and bliss rocketed through Coltra the likes of which she hadn't felt in ages, perhaps ever.

Her hearts thundered, her limbs shook as her pussy exploded with juices. Abisha pulled on her nipple once more and, taking her fingers in his, thrust them together within her weeping cunt.

Tears filled Coltra's eyes as cream drenched their joined fingers. "I'm coming, my prince. I'm coming for you." The truth of the words had her tears streaming down her face. Her savior had truly arrived. Her prince. Her king before this day was through.

The last of the tremors ceased and she flung herself against Abisha, wrapped her arms around him, and laid a kiss on his chest. "I love you, Abisha. I love you so much, my prince. And I will always make you happy. Always."

Coltra would have been content lying against his sweaty, naked body for hours, but his silence worried her. And why should it not? Dread tightened her belly, with all that she hadn't considered these last moments. As much as she wanted him to be such,

this man was not Abisha. He would have questions. Many of them.

Pushing away her unease, she lifted her head to meet his eyes.

He grinned back, and the skin around his circular eyes crinkled. "If that's how you plan to make me happy, I have no doubts about it, honey."

He spoke oddly. The strange words did not matter. Only his knowledge of how he came to this place did. Only his willingness to agree with all that she claimed. "I love you, my prince. Do you not wish to say it back?"

His grin faded and he looked around. "I don't know. The bitch of it is, I don't seem to know anything. Not even my own name."

Sha! This could not be true. Such luck.

Smiling harder with her happiness, Coltra planted another kiss on his chest.

"Your name is Abisha. You are my prince. And you love me."

"Abisha. Your prince. And I love you."

He sounded so uncertain. Far too much.

She moved down his chest, sat back and once more took his cock in her hand. "I shall show you, my love. I shall make you hard again, so that you can fuck me and remember all that we have shared. Not on this planet. On our home planets."

"Home plan--?"

"Coltra!"

Adrea! What timing her sister had. "We are here," Coltra called in Seaphorian, then to Abisha in his language, "I am sorry, my prince. I shall remind you of our love soon. First, we must speak with Narlj. He will prepare you after your long journey."

"My journey?"

So confused he still looked. Her hearts turned over with sorrow for him. Perhaps she lied to him, but, as she'd promised, she would make him happy always. Just as soon as he was her king. "To Zephan from your home planet. You've journeyed here to be my king. To love me and pleasure me and help lead our people."

Abisha continued to stare at her until finally the lines that bracketed his eyes vanished. One of his hands moved beneath the robe at her back; the other came behind her head and urged her face toward his. "What about kissing you?"

Coltra's breath caught as excitement again spread through her belly and deep into her womb. She licked her lips, already imagining how his would feel against them, his tongue plunging into her mouth. "Do you wish to kiss me, my love?"

She'd forgotten she held his penis. The sudden heat in his eyes had her grip on his cock tightening. His shaft thrummed in response, and he grinned a decidedly nefarious grin. "Honey, when you're stroking my cock like that, I wish for a whole hell of a lot of things. A kiss sounds like as good of place to start as any."

CHAPTER TWO

“Dimos gracias el Sammon de dias para si presencio.”

Yeah. Whatever the hell that meant.

Abisha tuned out Daylon’s gibberish and the idle stroke of the dark-skinned man’s paintbrush against his hair to concentrate. To remember why neither his name nor his title sounded right. The man Coltra called Narjl and, the only one outside of the princess who spoke his language, had told him he’d come here from a planet in the next galaxy to resurrect the Seaphorians from a curse of celibacy and marry his lifelove. They’d then secluded him to this hut with the groomer, Daylon, who painted his hair with some purple concoction in preparation of his joining with that lifelove. A lifelove he couldn’t remember any more than his own damned past.

Abisha could, however, see why a man would want to marry Coltra. The woman not only gave mind-boggling blow jobs, but she seemed eager as hell to repeat the act and many more like it as often as possible. Then there was the way she looked. Coltra’s deep brown skin was flawless and incredibly soft; her slanted eyes an ethereal shade of violet. Her breasts plentiful and tipped with large nipples the same shade of near black as her waist-length hair. He could only guess what color the hair at her mound could be, as when she’d pulled away her purple robes to finger herself, she’d revealed a shaved and glistening pussy.

The memory of her carnal behavior had his cock jutting to life anew.

Daylon’s gaze dropped to his lap and he chuckled. “La princessa sirá complocido.”

Ashiba smiled through gritted teeth. Something told him he didn’t often sit around buck-naked and let another man paint his hair. Something also told him he didn’t typically get hard around other men.

He had to stop thinking of Coltra. Or at least her positives. She had a negative. Make that three. Her feet were strange as fuck. No toes. How she walked without falling flat on her face was a mystery. Then there was her navel. Make that her lack of one. None of her people had one, just as none had toes.

The whisper of cloth against sand brought Abisha’s attention to the flap of material that served as a door to the hut. The flap had been pulled aside, and Coltra stood in the opening with a buxom beauty dressed in flowing robes the same vivid shade of red as her hair and, shockingly, her eyes. Both women stared at his lap, their appetites clear. His cock pulsed in response, bobbed toward them as if in greeting.

Daylon made one last swipe with his paintbrush, then set it aside and bowed to the women. “Princessa Coltra. Khawala.”

He turned back and, with a last bow and revered sounding, "Prince Abisha," left the hut, closing the flap behind him.

Coltra came forward, into the vee of Abisha's legs. Placing her hands on his thighs, she bent to kiss his cheek. "My prince, I have missed you." She glanced at his lap and smiled. "You've missed me, as well."

Her attention riveted on his groin, Khawala moved just right of Coltra. He tried not to shift on the crude wooden bench under the woman's scrutiny. The way Khawala brought her hands to her breasts and rubbed made that damned near impossible. He appreciated Coltra's open sensuality. He'd never imagined all of her people would behave that same way, touching themselves without a care for who watched.

Abisha looked to Coltra. Had he missed her? The near painful ache of his cock every time he thought of her suggested as much. But also there was something else. Now that she was again with him, her warm hands on his thighs, he felt more than the urge to touch her. He felt soothed somehow, no longer uneasy that he couldn't remember his past. "Yeah. I missed you, too."

Coltra stepped back. "We shall fix that."

"You plan to--did you say we?"

With a nod, Coltra signaled toward Abisha's spread thighs. "Yea. Khawala and I shall see to your needs, my prince."

Khawala moved between his legs and came down on her knees in the sand. Her hands moved to either of his thighs. Where Coltra's touch had been equally arousing and soothing, the same wasn't true of Khawala. With the princess's assistant, Abisha felt fifteen again and ready to spurt his cum at the first caress of a woman's soft breast.

Before he could reach out, spread Khawala's robes and take her large breasts in his hands, he looked at Coltra and gasped, "Both of you?"

"It is part of the joining ritual. Khawala is my assistant. She must see to your needs this first night with her mouth, then watch while I do so with my body. She will then share your seed by servicing each man on the island and set us free from our curse while locking us in holy union."

"By herself?" He hadn't met all of the Seaphorians, but he'd seen well over three dozen men and as many women. It was only young children the island lacked of. That, Narjl had explained, was the reason for Abisha's presence. By joining with Coltra, he would free her people from the curse that restricted them the ability to procreate, or know pleasure of any kind.

Pleasure such as one woman giving head to over thirty-six men in a single night. Holy shit.

"On our planet, I would have had many assistants," Coltra explained. "Now there is just Khawala. If you wish it, I can assist her in this task."

"No!" The idea of Khawala fucking so many men with her mouth was somewhat disturbing and yet stimulating. The idea of his princess doing such twisted his gut with disgust. Clearly, what Coltra had said on the beach was true, that he did love her, while he only felt the stirrings of lust for her assistant. That would explain his varying reactions to their touch.

Coltra's smile intensified. "Very well then. If it be your desire, I shall pleasure only you from this day forward."

Yeah, right. As if such a thing were possible; a woman loving one man enough to stay faithful to him forever.

Abisha frowned at the thought. Where the hell had it come from, and why would he think such a thing?

Khawala's hands moved from their idle state to knead the muscles of his thighs. "May I give you mouth pleasure, Prince Abisha?"

His shaft responded to the question with a savage throb even as the woman's words registered. He met her odd-colored eyes. "You speak my language?"

"Nae," Coltra said. "I told her to say such. She knows not what they mean. If you nod, my prince, she will begin."

Begin to fuck him while his soon-to-be wife watched. Christ, this all seemed too surreal. He glanced from Khawala's impatient expression to Coltra. She, too, looked eager, as if she was excited by the prospect of Khawala taking his cock into her mouth. "You're telling me you want her to do this?"

The princess's anticipation died slightly as her lips pulled into a thoughtful pout. "Did I not speak correctly? It is part of the joining. It must happen. After tonight, others may watch us, but they shall not take part unless you wish it."

But tonight she wanted another woman to fuck him. Odd. Damn odd.

Odd or not, it was what she wanted of him, and so Abisha nodded to indicate he understood. Khawala's hands tightened on his legs and her head buried in his lap, her long hair tickling his thighs. Her lips opened and her hot, wet mouth devoured his stiff cock halfway to the base. He gasped and looked to Coltra.

She laughed. "You nodded, my prince." She said something in Seaphorian to Khawala, and then to Ashiba, "You must forgive her hastiness, it has been a very long time since my people have known pleasure."

Narjl had said as much, that it had been over six years since any of the Seaphorians had last had sex. The man hadn't told him of this... Abisha's mouth fell open and thought fled. Coltra had pulled her robes up to her breasts and worked even now to free the rest of her body. "What are you doing?"

She pulled the robes over her head and tossed them aside. With one hand, she squeezed a breast while the other moved down her rounded, navel-less belly to caress her dark, naked mound. "Undressing so that I might ready myself for you."

Khawala's mouth lifted from his cock and her tongue lapped fervently at the head. He glanced down as she licked the silky fluid that weeped from the slit. The tip of her tongue delved into the tiny opening, as if she was trying to bury it within his shaft. Pleasure-pain sliced through him with the pressure she applied, and his hips bucked toward her mouth while a moan erupted from his throat. That moan grew into a throaty growl as Khawala used one hand to stroke his cock and the other to work her breasts free of her robes. They spilled free, dark and abundant; the nipples beaded and black. His mouth watered with the desire to wrap his tongue around them.

As if she knew his mind, the princess's assistant wrapped her fingers around a

nipple and twisted. She sighed her bliss, and his penis leaped toward her. Khawala laughed, then grabbed more firmly a hold of his shaft and licked from base to tip. He watched her take several more long, slow licks, each bringing a fresh bead of sweat coursing down his spine, and then returned his attention to Coltra.

Watching Khawala was a lesson in lust; watching Coltra was a lesson in control. The princess's eyes were closed and her head tipped back. Her long, dark hair cascaded around her naked shoulders and torso, and he noticed for the first time that it was streaked with the same purple concoction as his own. Her lips parted and, with two fingers, she splayed her shimmering labia wide. The first finger of her other hand circled and stroked her swollen clitoris.

Abisha's cock thrust hard into Khawala's mouth, nearly exploding with the look of rapture on Coltra's beautiful face. "You enjoying finger fucking yourself?"

Her eyes opened to reveal hazy violet. "Finger fucking? This is when I stroke myself?" At his nod, she thrust two fingers inside her pussy. Her slanted eyes narrowed further. "Yea," she cried, as she worked her fingers within her dripping sex. The scent of her arousal filled the sultry air and had his nostrils flaring. "I enjoy this much. I enjoy it more when you watch me do so. Would you like me to come for you, my love? I shall do so when you empty your seed into Khawala's throat if you wish it."

Fuck, if he wished it. Abisha shook his head, amazed yet again that this could be real. More amazing was how guilty he felt about getting off in a woman's mouth other than his lifelove's when it had been Coltra herself who'd said she wanted for this to happen. "I'd like that, honey. I'd like it even better if you were the one sucking me. Why don't we let Khawala get to work on the other guys and the two of us can see to each other's pleasure?"

The princess's fingers stilled and her eyes went wide. "Sha! Do not speak such foolishness. It offends Khawala."

As if she'd understood his words, the assistant's sucks had ceased and her gaze was trained on his face. Khawala looked fearful, as if she thought he would cast her aside. The idea was damned tempting; cast aside this knockout for the one who would soon be his forever. *Or rather, Coltra's idea of forever, which knowing women was bound to be closer to a few months of heaven followed by a year of sheer hell.*

Abisha winced at the thought. What the fuck? He didn't understand where it had come from any better than the first one like it had. He also had no plans to dwell on it. Not when he had a redheaded beauty ready to suck him dry and a black-haired one fingering herself for his pleasure. "I'm sorry," he uttered to Khawala. "You can continue." When she made no move to do so, he realized his mistake and nodded.

A smile reflected in her eyes as she ran her lips up the length of his shaft and then wrapped them around the cockhead. Her long nails trailed along his thighs and brought sensation shooting through his body. Her mouth tightened and slid down his length farther, her tongue working ceaselessly. He could come easily from her clever mouth. And he would do just that. The sooner he gave into Khawala, the sooner he would have his hands on Coltra.

Abisha closed his eyes and began to envision the look on Coltra's face as she

fondled herself. Before the vision could come clear, slurping sounds reached his ears. He opened his eyes and looked past Khawala to find Coltra riding three of her fingers with long, rapid strokes. Creamy, white juices rolled down her dark thighs and her gaze was fastened on his face. Just as he had planned to think of her as he came, she was thinking of him.

Coltra licked her lips. "Tell me what you wish of her and I shall translate."

He wished for Khawala to step aside so that he could bury his nose in his princess's cunt, but since that wasn't an option... "Tell her to take me deeper. Take my cock all the way into her mouth the way you did on the beach." Coltra repeated his request in Seaphorian, and her assistant immediately responded. The back of Khawala's throat caressed the top of his cock, her uvula drumming against the sensitive head. Blood surged to Abisha's groin in a near-blinding rush. Heat consumed him. Heat seemed to consume Coltra, too, as she increased the rhythm of her fingers and bit her lower lip.

"Yes, like that," Abisha grunted. "Now...my balls. I wish for her to squeeze my balls, to fondle them." He sank on the bench, until he was almost lying down. "I wish to feel her fingers at the base of my ass. At the spot--"

Ah, hell. She clearly knew the spot he'd had in mind, because even before Coltra could translate, Khawala's fingers had slid into the cleft of his ass and applied pressure on the sensitive spot within. Tension coiled through his body and he could feel the veins of his cock constricting within Khawala's mouth. Just a few more sucks...

"And now what, my love?" Coltra's words were strained. She, too, was clearly close to exploding.

"Now... Now, I wish for her to suck harder and for you to come closer so that I can kiss you when I come in her mouth. I want you to make yourself come at the same time. Will that offend Khawala?" And even if it did, did he really give a damn? He had to touch Coltra now, even if it was only her sumptuous mouth.

"Nae. I would like this, as well."

The princess hurried to stand behind him. She bent her head and angled his backward. Khawala's sucks grew longer, stronger. Abisha closed his eyes, focused on reining in his control. "Kiss me, my princess," he growled. "Now!"

Coltra's lips closed over his and her tongue stabbed between them, found his, stroked. The slurping sounds returned, telling him she again fingered herself. Abisha's hips jerked, pushing his cock deeper into Khawala's mouth. The fingers in his ass pressed upward, hard against the sensitive spot near to his anus. His control slipped. Coltra's tongue stilled and then jabbed at his. Her hands came up, clamped around his neck. All but stole his breath.

He could feel the tremble of her body in her kiss, her sigh of release into his mouth. His own sigh was harsh, ragged, as Khawala pulled almost free of his cock and then drew him in one final time. Abisha's heart squeezed tightly, almost painfully, as he shot his seed into the assistant's mouth.

Seconds passed, possibly minutes, and finally his breathing evened out. He opened his eyes. Coltra stood before him, happiness painting her features. Khawala was

several feet away, watching them.

"You are happy, my prince?" Coltra asked.

Fucking delirious. And something told him he'd be even more so when it was Coltra on her knees at his feet. Better yet, Coltra's supple flesh and dripping pussy, he poured his cum into. He didn't know what his revival time had been in the past, but now it seemed immediate. Already his cock was hard and aching for his princess.

"I'm happy, but I'm about to be even more so." Abisha stood and scooped her into his arms. He went to the brightly woven mats he'd noticed upon first entering the hut and placed her back on them, immediately covering her naked, sweaty body. Her fingers tangled in his hair, and she squealed as he brought his mouth to her breast and dragged a rigid nipple between his teeth.

He bit down on the crown and twisted until she squirmed. "Now I will have you," he vowed, as he moved down and between her legs. He pushed her thighs wide and took in her swollen pussy. The lips were the same deep brown shade as the rest of her skin, but as he spread her labia wide, he found inside she was closer to pink. Pink and dripping. "I'm going to eat you out now, princess. I'm going to pleasure your cunt until you're screaming."

"Yea, my love. I would like this."

Passion bloomed in Coltra's eyes, her face, but her words were far too cultured. He wanted her breathless. Abisha pressed his nose to her pussy and inhaled her womanly scent. He lapped at the juices that leaked from her sex, suckled at the folds of tender flesh. The princess squealed once more. Still, it was no scream.

Catching her thighs in his hands, he used his broad shoulders to push her legs wider still, his thumbs to open her labia completely and push back the hood that covered her clitoris. With his tongue, he circled her bared clit, pressed against the distended nubbin. Coltra's hands came to his head. Her nails bit into his skull and her breathing increased. "Yea, my prince. Like that, fuck me like that."

The urgency in her voice egged him on. Still, it wasn't enough. Still, no scream.

A low cry sounded from Abisha's right. He lifted his mouth from Coltra's sex and looked over to find Khawala sitting cross-legged a few feet away. One of her hands kneaded a large breast and the other worked furiously between her legs. Another cry left her lips, lower than the first. Her head tipped back while her legs unwrapped, providing him an open view of her dripping cunt as she plunged her fingers into it. Cum poured from her pussy, and his cock ached with the need to bury deeply inside Coltra and feel her own cum washing over him.

He looked back at the princess and his breath caught to find her doing the same as her assistant, fucking herself with her fingers. Both of their eyes were closed, their expressions that of pure ecstasy. "Christ. How can this be real?"

The princess's eyes snapped open and she stilled her fingering, reached for him. "I wish to feel your mighty cock inside me, my love. Please."

She thought she needed to beg him to fuck her? "Never plead with me, Coltra. I'm your prince, your lifelove. Your every wish will always be my pleasure to fulfill."

To punctuate his words, Abisha rose over her and thrust deep into her wet cunt.

Her very tight, wet cunt. He should have expected as much, given the amount of time it had been since she'd last had sex, still it came as a shock. A wonderful one. As it elicited the scream he'd promised her, along with her orgasm. Tremors rippled through her body and the muscles of her sex clamped around his shaft. Coltra lifted her hips, grinding against him. Her nails dug into his back. Her mouth found his, nibbled, sucked, demanded. Abisha answered each of her tongue's demands until he was no longer able. He could only hold onto his princess--now his wife, his queen--and pound his seed into her ravishing body.

Moments later, Abisha collapsed onto her. The breath screamed from his lungs in hitching rasps. Eventually, he found the strength to roll off from her and pull her into his arms. He noticed as he did that Khawala had gone. She would be seeing to her duty now, to sharing his seed with every man on this island by way of her skilled mouth.

Coltra stretched against him. Her breasts rubbed against his chest and her rapid heartbeat drummed into his own. Make that heartbeats; it seemed as though a half dozen pounded beneath her breast. He thought to ask of it when her mouth latched onto his. She nipped at his lips and then her tongue pushed inside his mouth. Her strong tongue tangled with his, licked with relish, and quickly reminded Abisha that his bride's mouth was every bit as skilled as her assistant's. Perhaps even more so.

She pulled back when both were again near breathless and smiled. "I love you, my king."

"I love you, too, my queen." And he would continue to love her until she proved to be the same lying bitch as those who'd come before her.

Abisha refused to frown at the disturbing thought, to even wonder over it. This night was for becoming one with his giving and gorgeous wife. For becoming her king, time and again. For fucking his queen in every way imaginable. He planned to take great pleasure in doing just that, starting right now.

CHAPTER THREE

Abisha had never felt more valued. In the ten days since he'd arrived on the island of Zephan, which he'd learned was named after Coltra's late father, Zephaniah, he had yet to regain his memory. Odd thoughts prickled into his subconscious several times a day, but nothing concrete ever followed. As disturbing as those thoughts often were, Abisha was glad for his continued memory loss. As he was for his people.

At times, he failed to understand what they wanted of him and had to look to Coltra or Narjl to translate, but always he knew the Seaphorians revered him. And for more than just releasing them from their curse of abstinence. He had taught them things: how to build stronger huts and fortify those existing, how to hunt for the wild pigs that lived on the far side of the island without risking the animals' deadly tusks, and how to dress and prepare the meat once they brought it down. How he knew to do those things was a mystery. One he was coming to realize he didn't care if he could ever explain. Particularly when each morning and night was spent making love with his beautiful wife.

The lilting sound of Coltra's laughter when he'd placed her back on the sand the previous evening filled Abisha's mind as he continued his run along the beach. That laughter had soon turned to throaty sighs. His cock stirred between his naked thighs as he remembered the look of ecstasy on her face as he'd driven into her.

They'd fucked at least two dozen times and still her cunt was as tight as the first. Maybe it was a characteristic of her race, as was the lack of toes and a navel. If it was, he wasn't complaining. Feeling her tight vagina squeezing around him like a glove made just for his cock was pure heaven. And yet hell, in that it made him want to come within seconds of entering her. A lot like he wanted to come now just thinking about it.

Abisha came to a stop and, inhaling long breaths, stared down at his sex. Damn, the things the woman did to him. He was thick, hard and throbbing, and all from the contemplation of thrusting into her taut sheath. He'd been naked when he'd met many of the Seaphorians, had grown hard before Daylon numerous times since as the groomer prepared him for Coltra, and still Abisha did not wish to return to the mainstay of the island, which was referred to as the village, with an erection.

As it was damned near impossible to run with his robes on, he'd left them at the outskirts of the village. Still, near enough that he would be spotted before he could dress. Given that part of his people's love for him resided in his sexual potency, he shouldn't care about his hardness. But he did. He wasn't returning with his cock saluting all that he passed.

Abisha let his mind drift to anything but sex. Minutes had passed when a blur in

the water a hundred yards ahead caught his attention. He squinted. A boy with long, dark hair. Tamot. It had to be Tamot; he was the only child under the age of ten. A long pole was in his hand, and he brought it down in the water repeatedly.

Of course, he was spearing.

Abisha smiled as he remembered spending many Saturdays with his father, spearing suckers and similar fish in the ditches near his childhood home. He'd been close with his father back then. Not anymore. Now he was...

Fuck. He had no idea what their relationship was like now. Was the old man even alive? It had been years since Coltra had had contact with his family, but it was possible she might know something of his father in the same way she had known of Abisha's journey to Zephan. Through one of her visions. He would ask her, just as soon as he educated Tamot in the fine art of spearing.

With a glance at his groin to ensure his shaft was again flaccid, Abisha made his way toward the boy.

"Holo." Hello was one of the few Seaphorian words he could remember.

Tamot looked up and a smile curved his small mouth and lit his slanted brown eyes. Coltra had explained that all Seaphorians were born with brown eyes and that they changed to their representative color upon maturity. Purple and blue were the colors of supremacy, with red and green following next in rank.

"Entranyo mia piez," Tamot said. "La hace dasea ayidar?"

Abisha deciphered the words "fish" and "help," and accepted the spearing pole. A small fish darted around in the sparkling blue-green water. Abisha angled the spearhead toward the fish and glanced at Tamot.

"The secret is to watch and wait until..." Until Tamot started speaking his language. Aware how pointless it was to explain, Abisha used his hands to illustrate the need for patience. The boy looked on intently as Abisha slowly moved closer to the fish. Finally, he was close enough, and Abisha lunged forward and thrust the spear into the water.

He pulled back and grinned to see the fish pierced through the center. He might not remember much of his past, but it seemed he still had the talent for spearing. Abisha swiveled around to show Tamot his catch. The young boy's mouth fell open to let free a bloodcurdling scream. His eyes filling with tears, he darted for the sand.

What the fuck?

Abisha stared after the screeching boy as he sprinted toward the village. Tamot stopped suddenly and chanted a word. A word that had the entire village pouring onto the sand. The Seaphorians surrounded Tamot in a flourish of brightly-colored robes and glistening dark skin. And then they parted and the boy was visible again. Visible and pointing at Abisha.

Dread came out of nowhere, clawing at Abisha's gut. He fought the urge to back into the water and sink out of sight. He hadn't done a goddamned thing wrong. But if that was true, why were all those who had regarded him with adoration now looking at him with contempt? Even his sister-in-law, Adrea, who thanked him regularly for freeing her body to pleasure and offered to do so physically nearly as often, looked

upon him with aversion. And Coltra...

Abisha scanned the mob, seeking out his wife. He found her standing to the right of the group. Her long, dark hair flowed freely as always and her robes were the same vibrant purple as those Abisha had left on the sand. Her expression wasn't the same joyful one she typically wore, though. Her mouth hung open and her violet eyes were filled with stark horror.

Coltra forced her mouth to close, her hearts to still their chaotic beats. She was queen, as her husband was king. A king who had committed a crime so heinous if she did not do something fast, he would perish at the hands of his own people. Only they were not his people now. Now they were hers alone.

Picking up her robes, she raced into the water and toward her husband. Her husband who held aloft a fish he'd skewered. Sha! How could he have done such a terrible thing and in front of Tamot, no less?

Abisha turned confused eyes on her when she reached him. "What's the problem? I was just showing the kid how to spear, the same way my old man taught me."

Perhaps his teacher had been an old man, but he was not a wise one. "Spear?" Coltra repeated the sinister word, struggling to find calm among her frayed emotions. "This is what you call such an atrocious crime?"

"A crime?" He frowned and waved the pole he held at her. "Honey, where I come from the ability to spear a fish this small's considered a talent." She flinched as the departed fish nigh touched her; one touch of the slain creature and her body would be tainted forever.

"Why is everyone looking at me like I just killed a sacred cow?"

Coltra's fear of the fish brushing her turned to dread for her husband. His time to seek absolution would soon pass and, with it, the Seaphorian's detainment to the sand. They would be in the water, in search of Abisha's life. She would not allow a soul to lay a hand on her husband, not when they owed him so much. Not when she'd come to love him as if he truly was the Abisha from her dreams.

"Sha!" Temper raised by her fears reflected in her voice. "Abisha you must not open your mouth again. You desecrate my people's souls."

"*Your* people?" he snapped; his confusion replaced with repulsion. "What the hell happened to *our* people? Or did you just say that so I'd fuck you and set *your* beloved people free of their curse?" In too many ways, the accusation was correct, and when Coltra remained silent, Abisha's sickened look grew. "That's it, isn't it? Christ, I should have seen it coming. Women are all the same damned way. All about them. All about what they want and what they're willing to do to--"

"Stop!" She could handle this no more. Not his ill look and not his anger. "You speak no sense, my king. You are angry, but I do not know why."

He chuckled, a chilling sound that brought a shiver along her spine. "Damn right, I'm angry, honey. I'm angry because...because..." He frowned once more, scrubbed a hand through his long golden and purple hair, and then shrugged. "Fuck, I don't know why. I'm sorry."

Coltra's fear vanished and she knew sorrow for her husband. Why had she not realized this before? He would not understand his own anger any more than hers or her peoples. He had no mind of a time before his arrival on Zephan, just as he had no knowledge of the Seaphorian's ways outside of what she'd told him thus far. "Do not apologize to me, my love. Apologize to them for killing what we hold most sacred. Only when you have done so, will they again accept you as their king."

"I killed...a fish. That's what you hold most sacred?"

Poor Abisha. So confused. She would make this up to him and bring his happiness back. "We are Seaphorians, my king. We come from the sea. Our children are born there. You speak of sacred cows. My people have scared fish. My people for they are not yours at this moment. Not until you beseech them to forgive your sin."

"Sacred? Sin? Then what the hell was Tamot doing?"

"Training his pet in the game of *Volla*."

"Training his..." Sympathy filled his eyes as he looked to the young boy with the tear-streaked face. "Oh, shit. I'm sorry, Coltra. I had no idea."

"Of course, you did not." She took his hand, offering her strength. "But you must speak this to them. Seek forgiveness and I shall help to wash your soul clean."

"I don't know how to apologize in your language."

"This does not matter. Say it in yours and they will understand." This she held faith in, for as much as Abisha had learned only limited Seaphorian, he had worked alongside her people, led them as an adored ruler these last days with ability and ease.

She gave his hand a squeeze and opened her mouth to urge him on, before it was too late. She could not get a word out, as already he was speaking to her people, their people, as with each word and finally his bow of acquiescence, the villagers' glares turned to looks of vindication. Finally, the last of them let free their anger and all started back to the village.

Coltra turned to Abisha and smiled. She had been too upset to appreciate his naked state before this. Now, she raked her gaze down his body and past the clear water. Her mouth watered and her pussy throbbed as his cock stirred under her attention. How she had gone nigh six years without pleasure was unfathomable, as she had her husband just this morning and already she burned with the need to fuck him. "Our people have forgiven you, my king. And now I shall do the same by helping to wash away your sins."

With a last smile at Abisha, she peeled off her drenched robes, then sank to her knees and beneath the water. Holding a muscled male thigh in each hand, she lapped at his balls until his legs jerked beneath her palms. Her own body growing more sensitive and needy with each jerk of his, she rimmed the purple head of his penis with her lips and then took all of his cock into her mouth and sucked his magnificent strength.

His hips gyrated toward her face and she could tell he was nigh coming. She wished to climax alongside him, and released his thighs to use her hands on her own body. Before she could sink her fingers into her cunt, Abisha's hands clamped around her waist and he jerked her free of his cock. She squealed, the sound all but drowned out beneath the water, as he turned her and banded his hands around her arms.

The head of his thick cock brushed her anus and she huffed out an elated breath as she realized his intentions. Once more she moved to finger her pussy, but her husband stopped her, filling her sex with his own large fingers even as his penis nudged between the cheeks of her buttocks. He stroked her sex with long, deep thrusts that had her hearts pounding madly and the rest of her on the verge of an explosive climax. When Coltra might have done just that, he slid his fingers from her and caught her clitoris between thumb and forefinger.

Abisha chafed the nubbin with a quick flick. Once. Twice. Thrice. And then, with a tug that had frissions of heat sizzling through her, thrust hard into her bottom. The water added a delicious friction as he pounded into her ass with his sturdy cock. One hand continued to sweetly torment her pussy and clit, while the other dug into the soft flesh of her belly.

Coltra struggled to keep her eyes open, to take in the beauty of the sea around her as she experienced delectation at her husband's skilled hands. When Abisha's mouth came beneath the water and latched onto her neck all attempts were lost. His coarse beard rubbed her sensitized flesh and his teeth nipped with such tender pleasure, climax was upon her in an instant. Her pussy contracted around his fingers, her cum flowing from her body and mingling with the life-giving sea. Growling her rapture, she tightened her buttocks and milked him with each spasm of her orgasm until he, too, was trembling with climax and filling her up with his seed.

Abisha's thrusts faded and he pulled from her body. Cradling her back against his front, he brought his head beneath the water again and dropped kisses on her nape. She smiled with each kiss, warmth blooming in her hearts so brightly she felt as though they might burst. Then all at once the kisses stopped, his hold let up, and he jerked her from beneath the water and stared at her, stricken.

"Coltra, honey?" he gasped out the words, his skin which had become a deep golden brown these last days nigh white. "Are you all right? I wasn't thinking. I got caught up in the damned moment and lost my head. I could have drowned--"

Realization set in, and she cut off his rambling with her laughter. At his frown, she stood and hugged him close, kissed his hair-lined chest. "I am fine, my love. Much better than fine. You forget, I am Seaphorian. We are a sea-bearing race, Abisha. We breathe water as easily as air."

Acknowledgment filled his eyes so great, it was as if everything had fallen into place. "You're part fish, that's why you worship them."

"Yea, this is nigh true. Our gills are within, and we do not have fins or scales."

The color came back into Abisha's skin, and he grinned. "Trust me, honey, I like you plenty without either. I am a little worried about your fish friends, though. If giving me head and then letting me take you in the ass is the way we wash away my sins, I'm going to want to be bad all the time."

Coltra laughed. "And so you shall, but only when we are alone and never when fish are involved." Sobering, she rose on tiptoe and brushed his mouth with a kiss. "I love you, my king, and I thank you for trying to help Tamot. It is not your fault you do not understand all of the Seaphorian ways. Soon you shall know all about our people."

"Until then, how about I learn all about you?"

"Do you not tiring of learning this? I have spoken of little else these past days."

Abisha slid his hand down her body, over her breasts and to the vee of her thighs. "I was thinking in terms of what makes you squeal, what makes you scream with pleasure until you feel as though your lungs will dry up." He moved his hand lower, cupped her mound, so that his thumb was angled against her clitoris. The nub was still sensitive from her last orgasm and the subtle touch had her moaning. "Or maybe until this tight little pussy of yours is going to break in two because I'm fucking you so hard and deep."

Two of his fingers sank into her sheath with his words, his knuckles grazing overly sensitized flesh. She arched against his hand and the breath hissed past her teeth. "Sha! I find I like this kind of learning, my king."

"And I find I love you, my queen."

CHAPTER FOUR

Coltra raced down the beach, almost tripping over her robes. She had to share this news with Abisha before she burst. He worked on the southern tip of Zephan today, leading a group in the construction of what he called a lodge. A place where they could gather to share meals and entertainment, or get away from the humidity.

The huts they lived in were fashioned of wood and bark; the roofs a cluster of grasses and brush. Often the heat seeped in and, on occasion, when the winds were at their highest points, the wood gave away and huts would cave inward. Abisha swore his new lodge would not have these weaknesses.

Abisha. Her husband. The man she could no longer imagine living without.

Eight days had passed since he'd made the mistake of skewering poor Tamot's pet. Abisha had regained all of the villagers' admiration, as well as helping Tamot catch a new pet. One the boy claimed to love even more than the first, because the two had captured it together. Tomat followed Abisha around now, and her wonderful husband ensured that whatever he did, he worked slowly enough the boy could understand and assist.

Coltra smiled as her hearts swelled with pride. Abisha would make an excellent father.

The skeleton structure of the lodge came into view on the hilltop ahead, and her smile climbed to new heights. Soon, she crested the hill. Some of her excitement faltered when not a soul was to be found.

But if Abisha and his crew were not here, then...

What was this?

Coltra put a hand to her brow and squinted down to the beach that met with the opposite side of the hill. Abisha was down there, with Tamot and a dozen others. They were talking and pointing. She followed the direction of their gestures and her hearts skipped at the sight of a large bobbing vessel. It appeared to be secured to the sea floor and a man waded toward shore. A man dressed in the same odd attire Abisha had worn the day that she and Adrea had found him.

Sha! This could not be!

Lifting her robes, Coltra barreled down the side of the hill. She hit the sand at a run, not stopping until she was at her husband's side. Her husband who was looking at this newcomer and frowning. Whoever this stranger was to Abisha, he could not mean more than her and their people. Abisha loved her, loved their people. Just as they loved him. He could never forget that.

She grabbed his hand and squeezed, urged him to look at her. His fingers stayed

limp in hers, his gaze on the man who was now almost to shore. That man wore a smile, Coltra noticed, right before he called out, "Damn, is it good to see you, Gill. I told them you'd never go down that easy." He strode onto the beach and straight for Abisha. "They called off the search days ago. Not me. I know you, man. If it had been me who got caught in that storm, you'd never have given up looking." The man's attention wavered to Coltra. "Hey, what's with the getup? And who's she?"

Coltra's hearts slammed against her chest as she waited for Abisha's response. Seconds ticked past. Minutes. Finally, her husband turned to her. His eyes held no love, no hunger. No sign of the happiness they'd worn night ceaselessly since his arrival.

He pried his fingers free of hers and gave a low chuckle. The same one he'd used that day he'd murdered the fish. That day it had sent a shiver down her spine; today it felt as though her hearts were breaking. "You know me, Mick. Always making half-ass choices. She's one of them. Or ex-wife number two if you'd rather."

His life was shit. Gill had known it a month ago, but never to this extreme.

When he'd set out on Mick's boat, it had been in an attempt to forget the chaos left in the wake of his ex-wife's departure. He'd been married to Amanda for a year and half when he'd found out she was not only sleeping with his one-time business partner, but helping the man run Gill's architecture company into the ground. Amanda was also the reason for the rift between him and his father.

His father had forewarned him that she didn't love him and was only out to better her own life. Gill had told his father he saw all women as liars, cheaters because his mother had run out on them for another man. As it turned out, his father had been right. Amanda had lied on him, cheated. Just as his mother had.

Just as Coltra had.

Almost.

Coltra hadn't cheated on him. The tears in her eyes when he'd tossed off his robes and left Zephan with Mick suggested she might even have cared about him. Loved him.

Gill rolled over on Mick's living room couch--his temporary bed since he'd sold the house he'd lived in with ex-wife and had yet to find another--and pounded his pillow. Damn it, he didn't want to think about Coltra's tears any more than her love. But he did. All the time. Day. Night. Now. At three forty-five in the goddamned morning when he should be sleeping. Instead, here he was, thinking about her, about their--make that her--people. About Tamot and that damned pet fish he'd killed.

At the memory of the looks of horror on the Seaphorian's faces when they'd seen what he'd done, Gill laughed. She might have lied to him about his identity, but the time he'd spent with Coltra and her people had still been the best he could remember. He'd been happy. Valued for his hard work and knowledge.

And, son of a bitch, how he missed that. Missed her even more.

"Go back."

Gill rolled over and found Mick sitting in the chair opposite the couch. "What are you doing up?"

He snorted. "What the fuck kind of question's that? I've been listening to your sorry ass toss and turn for hours. You love her, man, that's obvious. Go back. Forget I ever found you. The people there care about you. I wasn't there long, but I could see it on their faces. I could see her face. See the obvious adoration there. She loves you."

She did. Gill knew it was true. Coltra loved him, despite the lies she'd told. "What about my father? You? The business? I can't just walk away from it all."

"Yeah, you can. I'll sell the business for you, and bring your father for visits, if that's what you want. Hell, I'm overdue for a vacation myself. From the times you've talked about Coltra's assistant and a few of the other women there, I'd say I could have myself a pretty damned good time on Zephan."

Gill smiled thinking about the talents of the Seaphorian women. Yeah, Mick could have himself a good time, all right. Mick who looked more somber than he'd ever seen him. "You're serious?"

"Hell, yes. Go back. You belong there."

He did. He belonged there. His life wasn't shit. It just felt that way because for too damned long he hadn't felt like he belonged anywhere or with anyone.

He sat up, no longer able to even consider sleep. He had a place to go. A place where he belonged. A woman he belonged to. With. "You'll take me?"

Mick's somber look passed and he grinned. "What part of I need a vacation didn't you hear? Get your stuff together, man. The boat leaves at six a.m."

"Make that four-thirty and you've got yourself a first mate."

"The first day I saw you, I thought your feet were odd as hell. I still do."

Coltra stood from where she collected berries and nearly screamed at the man before her. "Abisha? Uh...Gill."

He smiled. "Abisha's good. I like that name coming from your mouth."

He did? And, oh, what a smile. She had not seen anything so wonderful in days. She had not thought to see anything so wonderful again. "I do not understand. Why are you here? I thought you wished to be gone from me?"

"I was wrong."

Did that mean he had missed her? She could not have such hopes. She had cried far too much when he'd gone to allow herself to go through it again. To allow her people to see her acting so weakly. Having to confess to them that while Abisha did not love her, they must always revere him for what he had done for their race had been the severest punishment she had ever know. Severe and, yet, fitting for her sins. "As was I. I am sorry for my lies. I only wished to free my people. I did not mean to hurt--"

"You did lie, yes, but for the right reasons. You wanted to resurrect your--our--people from the curse, and you did. And you resurrected me, too."

"You were cursed?" And why did he say "our"?

"In a way, yes." Abisha stepped closer and took her hands in his, squeezed. "I was miserable, Coltra. You made me happy. Our people made me happy."

"Our? You have said this twice now. Do you mean that you wish to be king again?" Sha! How she could hope for such. But, nae, she'd already promised herself she would not. She would place her fate in Abisha's hands. And what fine hands. They felt so wonderful, large and warm, within hers.

"Yes. I wish to be your husband again. I love you, honey. I had another wife once. A wife who was pretty awful. You, you're pretty incredible. I don't need you in my life to go on, but I do need you to be happy. I need our people and Zephan."

Coltra closed her eyes against the emotions that surged forth. She had placed her fate in his hands and he had turned it into a beautiful thing. She fought the urge to fling herself in to his arms. First, there was more to be shared. "And do you need our babies, my king?"

"Yes, and the babies we'll have some day, too."

"In five days."

Abisha's vivid blue eyes went wide. Eyes she had once dreamed of. Eyes she had determined even in her dreams had belonged to this man, because this man was Prince Abisha. King Abisha. Her husband. Why would he have a name such as Gill if he were not meant to marry a princess ruled by the sea?

"What do you mean, in five days?"

"I wished to tell you the day your friend arrived, I am with children. I will lay them in the cove that feeds from the sea in five sunsets."

"Children? Lay? Cove? *What?*"

Ah, to have her confused husband back. Not that she reveled in his quandary, but there was a sweetness to it. "I am Seaphorian, Abisha. I told you we are born in the sea. Our children will stay there in the water for several weeks. We will watch over them with help from our people. And then, when they are ready, they will come ashore."

"How many children are we talking about?"

"Ten, perhaps twelve."

"Holy shit."

Coltra laughed, for she had learned while studying his people that even three or four babies at once was a rare thing. "It is a great amount, even for a Seaphorian. I believe I carry so many because of the potency herbs Daylon added to our food and painted in our hair." Hi eyebrows raised, and she clarified, "It was not you I was worried about. It had been so long since I could want a man... I need not have worried. I want you always, my love. I have wanted you so badly these past days. I have you missed you more."

Abisha's surprise faded. He pulled her close to him, until their bodies were aligned and Coltra could feel his heat and the hardness of his body through her robes. "You can stop with the missing part, honey, because I'm here to stay. I'd say that covers the wanting part, too, since I plan to let you have me at least three times a day."

Tears misted her eyes. Surely more splendid words had never been spoken. She

pulled from his arms far enough to see his face. "Then you are truly happy here?"

"Oh, yeah. Crazy, just thinking about surviving all of our kid's first dates in another fifteen or sixteen years, but more happy than I ever could have imagined being."

It would seem she had been mistaken, for these words were far more splendid than even his last. She rose on tiptoe and brushed her mouth against his, wanting more and, yet, needing a moment to savor his nearness. His warmth. His place by her side. "I love you, my king, with all my hearts."

"And I love you, my queen." He grinned and his eyes lit with rich humor. "But I still think your feet are odd as hell."

About the Author:

Jodi lives with her husband and two children minutes from Michigan's state capital. She learned early on that family and friends and love and laughter are the most important ingredients in happiness. While attending Central Michigan University, she discovered her love for writing and that those same ingredients blend for the perfect romance. Over the years and across the genres, Jodi has found that one thing remains the same...a dash of heat and humor and a heaping spoonful of love make for the best recipe of all.

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