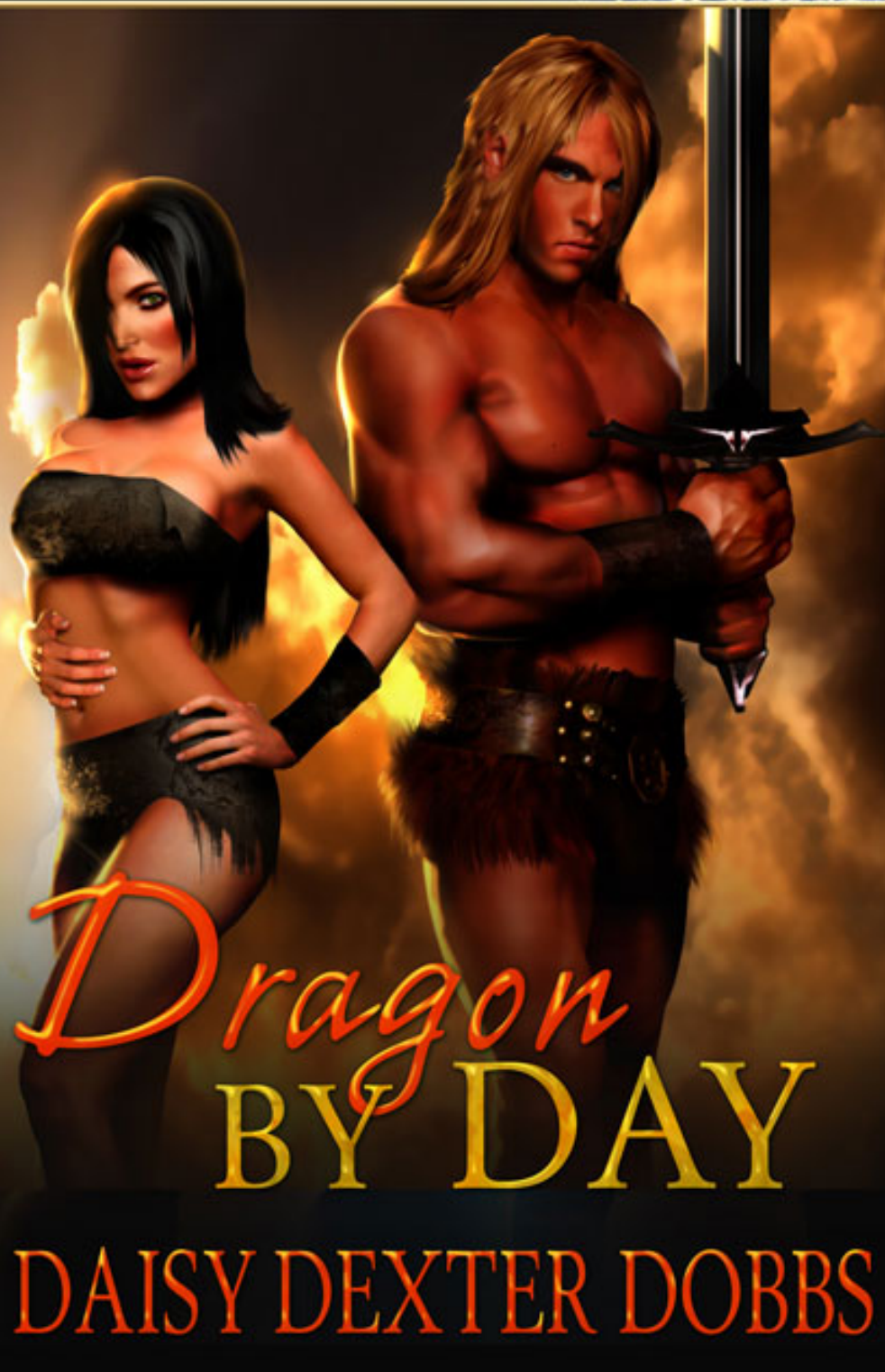


ELLORA'S CAVE XANADU



Dragon
BY DAY

DAISY DEXTER DOBBS

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Dragon by Day

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DRAGON BY DAY

Daisy Dexter Dobbs

Chapter One

In the Distant Antediluvian Past, When the World was Young

The searing sun was relentless. Her breath heaving, Suniko swiped the sweat from her eyes as she ran, wondering how fast and hard her heart could pound before it finally gave up and ceased beating. Breathless and exhausted, she stumbled, collapsing into a harsh patch of briars and brambles. They'd torn at her flesh often enough during her escape that she barely even noticed their sting now.

A strong hand gripped her wrist and pulled. "Get up, Suniko. The sound of their horses' hooves is still in the distance. If we don't continue, the Pushgans will hunt us down and slaughter us like the others."

Suniko gazed at the man with the long sun-kissed hair who stood above her, urging her, encouraging her as he'd done since they'd made their escape. How strong and earnest Jayket was. How generous his thoughts to save her as well as himself. It was unfair of her to impede him any longer. He'd never have a chance to survive dragging her bone-tired body along.

"It's no use," she said, clasping his hand and doing her best to smile up at him. "I can't run another step. Leave me, Jayket. You've already done so much for me. I won't let you sacrifice your life now because I can't keep up."

"I won't abandon you, Suniko. You can make it. I know you can."

She shook her head. "No, I'll be fine. I'll find a place to hide away in the woods where they won't find me. Now go, Jayket. Flee!" She swallowed back the sob that threatened to burst from her lips at the thought of never seeing him again, of crawling in a hole somewhere and waiting to die.

"Damn you, wench," Jayket growled, gazing down at her with those mesmerizing eyes of his. They sparked like the deep blue sapphire that had once adorned her throat.

“Don’t give up now. I’ve seen your inner strength, your will to survive.” He yanked her hard. “Get on your feet, woman. Run on your own two legs or I’ll throw you over my back and carry your weight.”

Suniko’s legs burned, ached beyond measure, but she had no doubt the damn stubborn man would do just as he said. There was no chance whatsoever that either of them would survive if he had to haul her weight too, even as slight as she’d become from near starvation. Tears flowing freely, mixing with the dirt, sweat and blood on her skin, she cried out as she leapt to her feet.

“All right.” She nodded, steeling herself to run, anticipating the throbbing pain deep in her limbs. “Let’s go.” And they were off again, Jayket’s hand still firmly clasped on her wrist, guiding her, pulling her. He was her lifeline. Her hero. And he was also a stranger.

With all that had transpired, it seemed like a long time had passed since she’d met Jayket. How peculiar that it was but a mere three days ago.

Rumor was rife among Tordanuk of Pushga’s prisoners that the prophesized queen had arrived in Zalvanus. Even amidst the hunger, torture and filthy conditions in which they were held, hope soared in their all but empty hearts.

Intent on escape and embarking on the long journey to Zalvanus, throngs of prisoners rallied, crafting plans of flight from the walls of Pushga. In a matter of days the first prisoners had made their escape. The other prisoners were dismayed, horrified, when a few days later all but one of the escapees were brought back and set to the rack for torture as an example to the rest.

Jayket was the one prisoner who avoided capture. But rather than make his way to safety, he journeyed back to Pushga each night, intent on helping as many others to escape as possible. It was on his final trip back that Suniko made her escape with the last band of prisoners who planned to flee. Those who remained behind were either too old, sick or had simply lost all hope or desire to escape and were complacent in their bleak captivity.

It was near impossible to ignore the intermittent cries carried on the wind. Like random notes of sorrowful music, the agonized screams of other prisoners caught and slain was bone chilling. It seemed Tordanuk's army was as ruthless as the searing sun. Jayket urged everyone not to look back, to look ahead to where their futures lay and to keep running, no matter what.

Suniko had no idea how many others beside herself and Jayket were still alive, for it was agreed upon that they would be more difficult to spot if they scattered rather than remain clustered together. Their group broke into bands of two or three, each with the meager amount of food and water they'd been able to gather in anticipation of their escape. Suniko had shared her food with a pregnant woman who clearly needed the crusts of millet cake and bits of meat far more than she.

Now three days without much rest or water had taken its toll. Ever-so briefly she wondered if they would have been better off taking their chances by remaining as prisoners. Then the ghastly reminders, the ugly realization of what they'd been through at the hands of the hulking, gray-skinned, three-eyed Pushgans galloped through her mind. And she knew it must be either freedom or death.

For brief moments during their getaway, she'd indulged in the sweet refuge of reverie. How different things would be if she and Jayket, her brave, handsome rescuer, had met at another place and time. The man seemed to have a will of iron as well as a bottomless source of vigor, stamina and optimism.

If they made it out of this hellish, terror-laced nightmare alive, she would do everything in her power to thank him—to pay Jayket back for his undying strength of spirit. Once they reached Zalvanus she would strive to restore her once-prized beauty. She'd soak in a bath of perfumed water, brush her long raven locks until they gleamed, rim her forest-green eyes with kohl, garb herself in flowing silk soft as rainwater. Then she'd lure her hero to her heart, keeping him there forever.

They broke through the woods to a clearing and Jayket pulled her with more force. Suniko felt the fierce heat of the sun baking her once soft, smooth, pale flesh. Now she

felt like a withered old hag and imagined that was probably just the way Jayket viewed her.

“Make haste,” he insisted. “We must find brush cover quickly, Suniko.”

In the center of the clearing, a riotous cry thundered above, bringing them to a shuddering halt. The sound was so deep, so piercing that it shuddered clear through Suniko’s bones.

“Great Ko’Loran, what is that?” she cried, terrified by the unknown, unseen noise.

“There’s only one thing capable of making that noise,” Jayket told her, looking to the skies. “A dragon. Look! See there?” He pointed in the distance and she could see and hear the mighty flapping of its wings. “It approaches fast. Run, Suniko! Your life depends on it!”

She had little time to draw a breath much less utter a gasp before Jayket yanked her ahead and they set a hurried pace of foot to dirt.

Again the great beast bellowed, causing her to shiver. Something about its call tore at Suniko’s heart, for it was akin to the sound of a wounded animal wailing its death song. Though tempted to look up at the dragon again, she followed Jayket’s lead and kept running, looking straight ahead.

It was a good thing she did because she heard a roar and felt the scorch of flame licking at her back an instant later. Then came a resounding thud and the earth trembled in response. Even Jayket couldn’t resist slowing to see what had caused the crashing event. Finally, having reached the edge of the woods, he stopped hauling her forward and Suniko fought to suck in a breath.

Looking back from where they’d come, her eyes widened when she saw a line of flame crackling high. At the end of it a magnificent green-scaled creature lay sprawled on the ground. Its flesh was pierced with several arrows and crimson blood seeped from its lifeless body.

“Oh, Jayket, the poor creature must be dead,” she said.

“Poor creature?” Jayket coughed with disdain. “It’s a dragon, Suniko. And by the looks of it we were meant to be its final bit of roast meat before its demise.”

She noticed some blessed relief from the sun and gazed at the horizon where hazy streaks of orange and purple painted the horizon. “Night falls soon, Jayket. Do you think we’d be safe to rest here for the night?” Gods, how she hoped he’d say yes.

He gazed at her for a long moment and then smiled. “You look beyond fatigued. You’ve been very brave, little Suniko,” he said, brushing his knuckle along her jaw and chin. “With more endurance than many men might have. Wait here a moment while I make a check.”

She watched him move stealthily back into the clearing, past the dragon and the diminishing line of flame. Jayket got to his knees and bent low, resting his ear against the ground. He sniffed the air and made other checks before returning a few moments later.

“I no longer hear the hooves,” he said. “And the Pushgans’ smell doesn’t hang in the air. No doubt they saw the dragon, singeing the earth with its fiery breath upon approach. Perhaps it was their arrows that felled the beast. In any case, I think it’s relatively safe to say that they’ve decided to cease their pursuit for the night. We’ll catch a few hours of sleep before we continue.”

Suniko’s shoulders sagged as she hugged herself and indulged in a lingering sigh. “Sleep...I’ve almost forgotten what it feels like.”

“I’ll build a small fire to provide some warmth and give us enough heat to cook.”

Suniko chuckled at that. “Cook what? Roast grass and nettles?”

“I was thinking about roast meat.” Jayket gave a bright smile. “Dragon meat,” he clarified. Gathering kindling, he nurtured a fire. Once it caught it shed a gentle glow and crackling warmth.

Having served as a handmaiden to Princess Aladee of Rygava, Suniko had developed an educated palate. Oh how she missed her repasts of fruit-stuffed fowl,

tender, fresh grilled fish, wine and figs and dates and nuts and honey and... She closed her eyes at the sublime memory of it all.

Under normal circumstances the thought of ingesting dragon meat would sour her insides. However, slavery under the evil Tordanuk had taught her to appreciate whatever victuals she could get, no matter how unappetizing they may be.

Now gnawing hunger had her salivating at the thought of eating any meat besides the maggot-studded vermin so often provided to Tordanuk's prisoners. "Have you ever eaten dragon before?" she asked.

"No, but I feel it's only right that we have an opportunity to be the grillers instead of the grilled." Jayket looked at Suniko and laughed. "Don't look so uncertain. It can't taste any worse than the foul rats filling Tordanuk's fortress."

Jayket cocked his head. "Listen, Suniko. Do you hear that?"

She stiffened. *Dear gods, not more danger when we've finally had a chance to enjoy a brief respite from the horror,* she sent up in silent entreaty. "What is it, Jayket? Horse hooves?"

He clapped her shoulder, soothing it with his hand. "No, the trickling of water. There must be a stream nearby."

Suniko's fingers flew to her lips, brushing over the parched, cracked skin. "Oh, Jayket, it's been so long since we've had good water. Do you imagine it's safe to drink?"

"Let's hope so," he answered. "Fresh water would be a godsend." He gazed at the violet sky. The relentless sun had been replaced by the pearly cool glow of the moon. "Will you be all right if I leave you for a short time to find the water's source?"

"Yes." She nodded, not at all certain of her safety without brave Jayket at her side. "I'll be just fine."

"Don't wander," he cautioned with a chastising finger.

"I won't," she promised. "I'll just take a quick peek at the dragon, that's all. And I won't get too close," she added when she saw his warning expression.

He reached for her breast and she felt her skin flush. It was near impossible to keep a sigh from slipping past her lips at the thought of his intimate touch. Perhaps even their first kiss. But it was the thin rawhide cord resting crosswise over her chest that Jayket sought. His fingers closed around the string and he pulled it over her neck. She felt the disappointment lodge deep in her belly.

“I’ll bring both our goatskin pouches to fill,” he said.

Once he was gone the increasing sounds of night crowded in on Suniko. She chilled at the thought that animals were chatting amongst themselves about what a meaty morsel her thigh might make, or how gnawing at her bony ribs might bring satisfaction. Even the crickets chattered, perhaps deciding whether or not her toes would make a tasty tidbit.

Rubbing her arms and shuddering, Suniko got up from the rock she sat on and ventured toward the clearing to steal a look at the dragon. She’d never had the opportunity to see one up close before—few people had, and had lived to tell about it. While she’d heard many men brag of slaying dragons, hard evidence was forever lacking.

Along the scorched earth, small flickers of flame still burned, guiding her to where the dragon lay. But when she reached the clearing, Suniko was stunned to see the sizeable beast had disappeared. How strange. She and Jayket would have heard the mighty flap of wings had it taken off, or its heavy footfalls if it had risen and lumbered away.

If it had crawled off there would surely be a trail of blood, considering how severely it appeared to be wounded, but Suniko saw none. Instead, she stepped forward and tripped, falling over something.

Her hands spread as she attempted to push herself up and she was aghast when she realized she was pressing against flesh and not the earth. Scrambling off the form and crawling away from it, she looked hard. In the moonlight she saw that it was a man, facedown in the dirt.

He was naked and motionless. That's when Suniko noticed the arrows jutting from his arms, legs and rib cage and her heart lurched. He was probably one of the escaping prisoners, hunted down by the Pushgans. Perhaps the dragon had him in its grasp when the creature fell to the ground.

Moving toward his body, she touched her hand to his dark hair and stroked it, wondering what his story was, who his people were. She bit back a gasp when she heard him moan.

"You're alive," she whispered, amazed that he could be with the extent of his injuries. "Can you hear me?"

Another faint moan.

"Don't worry, we'll help you," Suniko told him, smoothing her hand across his back. "I'll be right back."

By the time Suniko reached the spot Jayket had chosen to spend the night, he was just returning, swollen goatskin pouches draped over his shoulder and a smile upon his lips.

"I have water, Suniko! Drink with abandon. There's plenty more."

She did, guzzling the water and savoring it as if it were the finest wine.

"How is our dinner coming?" Jayket asked as she drank. "Have you decided whether you prefer roast leg of dragon or a meaty slab of ribs?"

"It's gone," Suniko said, wiping the water from her chin. "The dragon has disappeared."

"But that can't be." Jayket was clearly astounded. "We would have heard something. Did you see it take off?"

"No. There's no sign of him, Jayket. It's as if the dragon was never there. But there's a man resting half-dead in his place. He's badly wounded but he still breathes. I imagine he must be a fellow prisoner. I told him I'd be back with help."

“Here, bring your water pouch.” Jayket grabbed her hand and they started walking. “We’ll see what we can do.”

“We must do all we can to save him, Jayket. I’m so heartily sick of death and grief.” She’d experienced more of it in this last year of captivity than she had all her days before. How helpless she’d felt, cradling the heads of dying men, women and children in her lap as they gazed up at her with the life ebbing from their eyes. How grave the heartache of loved ones left behind to mourn the dead.

They reached the wounded man and Suniko saw that he hadn’t moved at all. They got to their knees and Jayket examined his wounds.

“It looks dire.” Jayket searched the ground and picked up a sturdy twig, which he positioned between the man’s teeth.

“What’s that for?” Suniko asked.

“To give him something to bite down on if he rouses. It’s necessary to remove the arrows, but his pain and the blood flow will be great.” His fist tightening over an arrow, Jayket looked at her, his expression solemn. “Brace yourself, Suniko. He may flail and cry out. It’s possible this may even kill him, but it’s his only chance for survival.”

She’d never been particularly good dealing with the sight of blood or indications of severe pain. But the gods knew Suniko been exposed to enough of it these months to curb the instinctive queasy reaction in her belly.

“I understand, Jayket. I will do what I can to ease his discomfort while you work.” Prostrating herself, Suniko curled close against the man’s body, cradling him, offering some small bit of comfort should he stir. Clasping his hand to her breast, she whispered soothing words in his ear while stroking his scalp with her other hand.

It was painfully clear that removing the arrows was no easy task. The man moaned, his body jerking as Jayket set about his grim task. Blood flowed from the open wounds and she wondered if he could survive such a loss. It broke Suniko’s heart to watch the man suffer so. She couldn’t begin to imagine the pain he endured as, one by one, the arrows were extricated from his flesh.

Turning him over, Jayket held the man in his arms, propping his head up, smoothing the hair from his closed eyes. He removed the twig from the man's mouth and Suniko noted it had been bitten in two.

"Try to give him water, Suniko. He needs it."

She brought the goatskin to the man's mouth but he lay lifeless. She pried his mouth open with one hand, resting her knuckle between his teeth as she tried again to feed him at least a few drops of water. This time he took it. Not much, but at least it was a healthy sign, she thought.

Jayket began to rise, bringing the man with him. "I shall help you carry him," Suniko told him, slipping her hands beneath the man's body and praying she could support his weight enough to take some of the burden from Jayket.

"No, he's too heavy," Jayket said before amazing her by lifting the man's dead weight and hoisting him over his shoulder.

Once he got to his feet, Suniko gaped in awe at him. "Jayket, wherever does your strength come from? You haven't eaten in at least as long as I have."

"I had no mother or father when I was a boy back home in Farkol," he explained, walking back to their wooded spot. "My grandmother was fond of telling me that my father was Ko'Loran, almighty god of sun and sky, and that my mother had gone to live in his golden palace."

"Do you think it's true?" Suniko asked, quite used to hearing such stories of men and women who were half god and half mortal. "It must be. What else could explain your remarkable strength, Jayket?"

She felt ashamed for feeling the warm trickle of nectar between her thighs as she watched his impressive muscles bunch and cord. She should be focusing on the poor man who was so near death and helping to heal his wounds rather than be lusting after Jayket.

"I doubt it, although I admit that I do like the story and freely boasted of it to the other children and anyone else who'd listen when I was young."

Upon reaching their spot, softly lit by the fire's flickering glow, Jayket squatted and placed the man on the ground as gently as possible. Now able to get a better look at the man, Suniko's eyes roved over his naked form. Like Jayket, he was well-muscled with bronzed skin that indicated much time spent outdoors. Her gaze fell to his cock, which was generous in size, even in its flaccid state.

She looked up to see Jayket studying the man as well. "He's beautiful, isn't he?" Suniko asked.

"He is," Jayket answered, his hand grazing slowly over the man's chest and abdomen.

Suniko's fingers joined Jayket's as they stroked and massaged the injured man. For some reason she found it deliciously erotic to watch Jayket touching the other man. She noticed something resembling lust in his eyes. Whether the lust was for her or for the man, Suniko couldn't be sure. Perhaps for both of them, just as it was with Suniko as her gaze shifted from one beautiful man to the other.

"Fever sets in," Jayket said. "His skin grows hot. Stay with him, Suniko, while I gather some herbs and berries to treat him."

"You know of such things?" It surprised Suniko that such a virile-looking man might be familiar with the healing arts.

He nodded as he rose to his feet. It was then that she couldn't help noting the obvious evidence of his lust, pressing against the ties of his soft leather breeches. She had to stop herself from reaching out to touch it, to mold the generous bulge in her hand and give a gentle squeeze.

"As both healer and priest in my village," Jayket explained, and she reluctantly tore her eyes from his groin, "I was schooled in such matters. I won't be long. Keep trying to give him water until I return." She watched him retreat, aware of how lust-ridden she'd become because now the movement of his fine, firm ass had solidly captured her attention.

But Jayket a holy man? She was lusting after a priest? Suniko was stunned. It was the last thing she would have expected. With his strapping physique he looked more like a finely chiseled warrior or soldier. Maybe an athlete. But a priest? She huffed a disbelieving laugh.

Her focus returned to the injured man when she heard him moan. In hopes of rousing him, she chattered, speaking of whatever came into her head as she fed him trickles of water. Mindful of avoiding his wounds, she massaged his arms and legs as she spoke. She was encouraged when she spied his tongue slipping out to catch droplets of water clinging to his lips. By the time Jayket returned, Suniko had told the man of their daring escape from Pushga and what occurred since.

Using a flat rock and blunt-tipped twig, Jayket mixed bits of ash from the fire with some of the herbs and wild greens he'd gathered. After adding water to create a poultice, he smoothed the mixture on the man's chest and over each wound. Then, using a separate cluster of herbs and greens and wildflowers, Jayket mixed them with berries and water. Scooping the paste onto his finger, he deposited it into the man's mouth.

"It would do you good to eat some of this as well," he told Suniko. "While it may not be the most savory of edibles, it will provide healing and sustenance." He scooped another dollop onto his finger and fed her. She was pleased when the taste was actually quite palatable.

Again, inappropriate erotic thoughts assailed her as she sucked on Jayket's warm finger. She looked up to see him gazing at her intently as she swirled her tongue around his fingertip. Gathering some of the paste onto her own finger, she brought it to Jayket's lips, involuntarily licking her own as he opened to accept the offering.

He clasped her hand, making a show of licking her finger slowly and then marking a damp path with his tongue to the inside of her wrist where he deposited a kiss.

"So you feel the same," he said, stroking his fingers over her pulse, never taking his eyes from hers.

“What do you mean?” She noted his voice had grown husky, leading Suniko to believe she knew *exactly* what he meant. Nevertheless, she asked for assurance.

“The rapid beat of your heart calls to me, Suniko.” He tapped her pulse. “You yearn for me. You want me just as much as I want you. Tell me. Let me hear you say it.”

Swallowing hard, Suniko blinked. It was what she’d been waiting for, what she’d dreamed of since first setting eyes on the handsome Jayket.

“I do. I want you Jayket.” Shifting position so that her thighs were parted, she dragged her fingers along her inner thighs and held the glistening digits aloft for Jayket. “You see? I am already wet for you.”

Chapter Two

Jayket brought Suniko's nectar-covered fingers to his face, sniffing them as if they'd been dipped in the finest perfume, then he sucked them clean, groaning a most satisfying sound.

Without wasting another moment, he leapt to his feet, unfastened his breeches and liberating his cock. As Suniko had imagined, it was magnificent. Big, thick, proud and looking as if it were as hard as the steel of a sword.

She reached out to finger the column of pale flesh with its bold purple cap and delicate blue web of veining. Wrapping her fingers around its base, she looked up at Jayket and smiled. "It's so big." She leaned close, poking her tongue in the tiny hole at his cock head where she'd seen the pearly drop of fluid. "And so ready."

His cock jerked mightily at the feel of her mouth on him. Suniko feared her chamber was too small to accept it. No, that wasn't true. She knew they'd manage to work his cock deep inside her no matter what. Already her clit throbbed at the anticipation of being so profoundly impaled.

"Get naked for me," Jayket commanded. "Let me see if your womanly fruits are as I envisioned them."

Suniko was pleased to hear that he'd been picturing her naked. As she rose, she was gripped with an overwhelming hope that he'd find her appealing. That he wouldn't think she was rawboned and unsightly after her long months in captivity.

Upon peeling her garment away, she watched his eyebrows, his eyes and saw his face take on an expression she didn't recognize.

"My poor little Suniko," he whispered, examining her body with spread fingers. He skimmed her collarbone, outlined her ribs, traversed over her hipbone. "You're so thin, so frail."

Compassion. That's what it was. It was so long since Suniko had seen the expression cross someone's face she'd almost forgotten what it looked like.

"I may have lost my rounded shape but I'm not frail," she announced, wishing she was still soft and voluptuous for him. Elevating her chin, she continued, "I can keep pace turning a water wheel. I can plow earth. I can work all day to clean up following a night of Tordanuk's food and sex orgies. And I can damn well keep pace with you as we fuck each other, Jayket, so don't underestimate me."

For the first time since they'd met she heard Jayket break into full laughter. His face lit up as lines of stress and worry faded from his features.

"I shall never make the mistake of calling you frail again, Suniko." He pulled her to him, mashing her breasts against his abdomen and bending to brush a kiss across her lips. "You're quite a woman. I imagine once we get some meat on your bird bones that you'd be a formidable opponent."

"Let me show you how formidable I can be," she challenged, reaching for his cock and fisting it. "Let's see how long you can make it without succumbing to my bird bone charms and flooding my chamber with your hot cream." She gathered his sac with her other hand and squeezed. As a handmaiden she'd been schooled in the fine art of satisfying a man. She had no doubt she'd have Jayket collapsing from untold pleasure soon enough.

"On your knees, little bird," Jayket said and Suniko immediately obeyed. "I hunger to sample your ripe fruits, to succumb to your charms – of which, by the way, you have many." Settling behind her, he bit her ass cheek, then smoothed his hand over the abrasion. His other hand nudged between her ass cheeks. Jayket brought his fingers down to her chamber opening, spearing them inside and she moaned.

"Drenched. Sopping," he said. "Move with me to the right, Suniko." He began shifting position to bring them closer to the wounded man. At his side, with Suniko's face perched above the man's cock, Jayket stopped.

“Let’s see if we can make our injured friend stir,” Jayket said. “Can you think of anything that might bring life back to his loins, Suniko? Something you might like to do while I fuck your little bird cunt?”

A shudder of desire spiked through Suniko as she grasped Jayket’s meaning. “But he still sleeps. Are you sure it would be all right? That I won’t hurt him?”

“Who’s the healer here?” Jayket asked with a chuckle. “The best thing we can do for our mystery friend is to awaken him. The most-healing method that comes to mind is by stimulating his cock. Whatever his sexual inclination, I doubt he’d mind being roused in such a pleasurable manner.”

Suniko’s heartbeat thundered now. “And this is something you’d enjoy watching?”

“Deeply.” That was all Jayket said as his cock nudged her opening, beginning its welcome intrusion.

As her channel swallowed the broad cap, she leaned down close to the injured man and studied the still-limp cock nestled amid a cluster of dark curls. She swirled her tongue over his flesh, wondering if it would become as ample as Jayket’s when erect. She’d never been given the task of rousing an unconscious man by worshipping his cock but she felt certain she was up to the challenge. Just knowing that Jayket watched made the undertaking exciting.

“I’m curious, Jayket...would you like to tongue our sleeping mystery friend yourself? Would you like to claim this beautiful man’s cock with your mouth and suck him?”

Jayket was silent for a moment before he answered simply, “Yes.”

His thick flesh shoved deeper in Suniko’s channel and she shivered. Gods, the thought of watching two strong men together was beyond stirring. Her body vibrated with delight at the possibilities of an erotic threesome. Moaning as her mind filled with carnal images, she strove to hold back from climaxing too soon.

Her eyes journeyed over the sleeping man’s form once more. Great Ko’Loran, the man was stunning. An easier or more enjoyable responsibility she’d never been given.

The man's cock felt as fevered as the rest of him as she took it into her mouth and suckled. Almost immediately she became aware of its expansion.

She allowed his cock to pop free of her mouth long enough to say, "You'd enjoy his taste, Jayket. It's as unique as your own."

She recaptured the man's cock, loving the way it grew in her mouth. While she pondered the ecstatic delights of fucking, Jayket grasped her ass cheeks and thrust hard, burying himself balls-deep. Suniko cried out at the intense feeling of fullness, of being stretched to such a great degree. Jayket grunted his pleasure as he eased out partially and plunged hard again.

Moaning around a burgeoning mouthful of cock, Suniko closed her eyes for a moment, drowning in a sweet abyss of pleasure. When she opened her eyes again it was to see the eyes of the injured man flutter open and the hint of a smile curling his lips. His body had developed a sheen of sweat, highlighting the moonlit slopes and valleys of his physique. His lush fringe of lashes covered dark brown eyes and Suniko felt sure she sensed well-being seeping back into his limbs as the fever broke.

"You see, Suniko," Jayket said, falling into a steady, potent rhythm of thrust and withdrawal. "Your magic mouth brings life to our friend." Jayket's words made her channel throb, clenching Jayket's cock, milking it. "How do you like rejoining the living this way, friend?" he asked the man through another pleased groan. "With a beautiful woman sucking you back to life?"

Small indications of awareness came from the wounded man. The haze of fever and confusion left his eyes and he seemed better able to focus. As her eyes locked with his, Suniko felt a distinct thrill coursing through her blood.

Jayket's pace picked up, as did Suniko's sucking. Her gaze followed the rise and fall of the injured man's chest. She watched as his hands struggled to move at his sides. His legs trembled as his cock pulsed happily in her mouth. How exhilarating that all of this was due to her intimate healing ministrations.

The man's lingering moan took on new life as well. As his hips jerked against Suniko's mouth, she heard him cry out. Almost as if planned in a concerto of bliss, Jayket's voice also rang through the air.

Two striking men, gripped in the throes of orgasm. What could be richer? Suniko imagined that Jayket's expression mirrored the one of bliss she saw across the other man's face. In that moment she knew the man would survive. It was as if his soul had sent a message directly to hers.

Ribbons of warm cream sprayed the back of her throat at the same time torrents of cream inundated her channel. The impassioned cries of the two men mingled with Suniko's own overwhelming need to come. She drank the man's seed, swallowing the warm, slightly salty liquid entirely before rapturous convulsions shook her from head to toe. Her heated cry rent the night air and she collapsed, her head resting at the man's groin as Jayket crumpled over her from behind.

One of Jayket's hands cupped her ass, another clasped her thigh and Suniko's heart soared when she felt a third hand stroking her hair. Shifting her head, she gazed at the wounded man to see him smiling at her with a gladness that reached his eyes.

"Thank you, Suniko," he said, just above a whisper. "And you too, Jayket."

Clearly he'd heard their names while in his half-waking state.

"What is your name?" Suniko asked, stroking his abdomen.

"I am D'Akola the Strong of Yassaria, Guardian of Zalvanus." With that his eyes closed again and D'Akola slipped into what seemed to be a restful, healing sleep, snoring loudly enough to keep the forest awake.

A throaty chuckle spilled from Suniko's lips. "Oh, Jayket, I never imagined the healing arts could be so thoroughly enjoyable."

"I don't remember any other healings being quite so agreeable," he said, rolling off her and clapping her buttocks. "We make a good team, Suniko."

“Indeed we do.” She sat up and smiled at him, trailing her fingers across his sculpted chest, gently flicking his flat brown nipples with her thumbs. “You must tell me about yourself, Jayket. I’ve never been fucked by a healer and holy man before.”

“I hope the experience lived up to your expectations.”

“It exceeded them,” she assured him. “Of course, now I feel terribly wicked.”

He drew Suniko onto his lap, cupping her breasts with his hands and raining kisses over her nipples. “And why is that?”

“One of the first things I was taught as a handmaiden was never to seduce a holy man. It could anger the gods and wreak havoc.”

“As I recall, this holy man seduced *you*,” Jayket pointed out.

She fingered the scars covering his chest, some new and some old, bending close to kiss the still-reddened crop of marks that appeared to be lashes from a whip. “What kind of priest are you?”

“A priest of Gavvina.”

“The spiritual cult of Gavvina...goddess of fertility. I’ve heard of it.” Suniko found the revelation somewhat surprising.

Jayket nodded. “It is the job of priests to minister to our tribes as well as to people of surrounding villages. We bring healing light into their lives when sickness intrudes or when wounds from battle with the Pushgans threaten to claim their lives.”

“And are you supposed to be celibate?” Suniko’s lips curved into a curious smile as she curled her finger through the fine dusting of hair at his chest.

Jayket’s laugh was low and earthy. “On the contrary. It’s my responsibility as priest to ensure fertility. If babes are not forthcoming after marriage, the husband calls upon the priests of Gavvina with a request for blessed seed to be planted into his wife’s womb.”

With this fascinating disclosure, he now had Suniko’s full interest. “Ahh...and you would accomplish this planting by...?”

“Through a formal fertility ceremony.” His eyebrow arched and he smiled. “I’m sure I need not explain exactly how the seed is deposited.”

“I think I can imagine it.” Suniko smiled, finding this unexpected vocation of Jayket’s both interesting and amusing. “So I would venture to guess that you’re a man who loves his work.”

“I do enjoy it. It’s very rewarding. Although, my naughty-minded little bird,” he cuffed her chin with his knuckle, “there’s very little sexual about what occurs during the ceremonies. It’s quite solemn. The room is filled with chanters and family and other holy people, praying as a priest labors to fill the woman with seed.”

“So you have fathered many children then.”

“No. The husband is the father. Gavvina blesses the seed so that what flows through the priest belongs to the husband.”

Suniko did her best to suppress a grin. She didn’t want to appear rude or unduly mock the spiritual cult of Gavvina, but she couldn’t help a bit of harmless wit. “So, Jayket, if I traveled to Farkol or the surrounding villages, would I see tiny copies of you running and playing throughout the village?”

Again he gifted her with the rich, warm sound of his laughter. “I imagine it would be so if I were deceitful and not truly a priest of the order, but that’s not the case, Suniko. Upon taking my vows I lost the ability to father children with my own seed. The only time living seed spurts through me is when it’s been blessed by Gavvina.”

“How is it you ended up as a prisoner of Tordanuk?”

“Able-bodied men are in short supply due to rampant slaughter by the Pushgans,” Jayket explained. “A number of us made the decision to become warrior as well as priest after seeing far too many babes we helped to bring into this world cruelly slain by those malevolent swine.” He shrugged, a deep sigh escaping his lips. “During one of the battles we were overcome and those of us not killed were taken prisoner.”

No longer beset with the urge to be witty or mocking, Suniko cupped Jayket's face in her hands. "You are truly a remarkable man, Jayket. Brave, protective and principled. I am honored to know you." She pressed a chaste kiss to his lips.

Wrapping Suniko fully in his arms, Jayket deepened the kiss. His erotic exploration of her mouth created a shimmer of sparks across her mind, evocative of the deep purple moonlit sky scattered with glittering stars.

"I may be brave, protective and principled," he told her once their lips parted, "but I am also a man brimming with passion and alive with desire. Trying to remain focused while plotting our escape has been torturous, Suniko. Because my thoughts, my loins, have been plagued with lust since first I glimpsed you."

"I'm so glad to hear you say that, Jayket, for I've been plagued with the same carnal thoughts and lusty images since you rescued me. I feared my romantic notions were one-sided."

"One-sided indeed." Jayket gave a husky chuckle. With Suniko still in his lap, he reclined. "Ride me, Suniko. We'll leave all thoughts and cares about escaping behind and journey to that oh-so-sweet place that exists between this world and the next."

She glanced down at his cock, a strong, pale shaft of flesh saluting the night sky and she sighed. Whatever the next days may bring, she would always have this moment, this blessed break from harsh reality.

Her channel moist with desire, she positioned herself for the sweet joy of impaling. Prolonging the ecstasy of entry wasn't a possibility. Unable to wait, Suniko sank immediately and fully onto his cock. His flesh grazed her womb, causing a brief twinge of pain that had her gasping before crying out in pleasure.

"It's as if we were made for each other," she whispered, not really intending to voice her inner thoughts.

Jayket's hands circled her waist and he watched as she writhed atop him. "Your cunt gloves me unlike any other woman's has, Suniko. And there have been many." His hands traveled up her rib cage and cupped her breasts. "Even your tits are perfect

handfuls." He plucked the nipples and Suniko moaned. "Let me see you take the plump berries in your fingers and pleasure yourself as you ride me."

Suniko knew from her training in Princess Aladee's court how much men loved to see women touch themselves, to pleasure themselves as they watched. Clasp ing her breasts with her hands, she squeezed. With her fingers she circled each areola, watching as it crinkled beneath her touch.

Jayket's attention was riveted to her breasts, just as she knew it would be. Mindful of the fine cock she rode, her hips gyrated as she took her nipples between thumbs and fingers and pinched them. The delicious sting of pleasure-pain flared, setting a blissful path from her breasts to her clit. Letting her head fall back, Suniko voiced a lingering moan.

"This is how I pictured you," Jayket said. "Riding me beneath the stars and pleasuring yourself for me. If you only knew how magnificent, how sweet the sight."

"And if you only knew how difficult it was slogging through the forest," Suniko replied, "wet, hot trickles of desire pooling at my channel every time I watched your muscles flex and contract." She took one hand from her breast and tucked it between her thighs. Jayket groaned in response.

Wedging her fingers between his thick cock and the walls of her inner chamber, she wet them thoroughly. They glistened in the moonlight once she held them aloft. "Behold the nectar of my desire, Jayket. My body creates this in anticipation of our cock-to-channel joining."

She ran the tip of her tongue between the seam of her lips, then opened her mouth and licked her fingers with a satisfying *mmmmm*. "Taste what you have created, Jayket. Taste the evidence of my yearning. The juice of my longing." She bent to place her fingers at his lips.

He took her hand and sucked her fingers, one by one, a rapturous glimmer in his half-cloaked eyes. "There is nothing to compare to the musky tang of your desire, Suniko. As I pulled you through the forest I prayed we'd be alive long enough for me to

taste you." His hips bucked, sending a new wave of sensation through Suniko. "Long enough for my cock to thrust high and hard into your sweet depths."

"As we ran from the Pushgans, thoughts of being with you kept me energized," Suniko told him, returning her hand to the juncture between her thighs. "At times the ache and pressure here," she jiggled her hand, "demanded to be relieved, but I had neither the opportunity to fuck you, nor an opportune moment to bring myself to release. Would you like to see me do that, Jayket? Would you like to watch my body tremble with orgasm as I think of you?"

Jayket's impassioned groan was music to Suniko's ears.

"What a question. And what an impish, playful way you have, Suniko." Jayket's cock jerked inside her as his fingers dug into her thighs, stroking from groin to knees and back again. "By the gods, you'll have me shuddering with a climax so violent I'll be unable to function come the dawn."

"Perhaps the Pushgans will find us tomorrow morning," Suniko suggested, "lifeless and sprawled together after we've expired from a night of extreme pleasure."

"While it would be a fine way to die," Jayket said, "I have no intention of allowing either of us to depart this life until we reach Zalvanus." The wounded man's thunderous snore caught their attention. "And that goes for our new friend as well."

"Are you ready to come, Jayket?" Suniko squeezed her inner muscles against his cock and felt the vibration of another groan rise in his chest. "Because I'm ready to feel your hot cream bathe my womb. I want to watch you come before I do."

"No, you'll come before me this time," Jayket countered. "I won't be robbed of glimpsing the expression of ecstasy as you gaze down at me. Pinch your clit, Suniko. Now. Keep pinching it until you succumb to quaking. And never take those forest-green eyes of yours from mine."

Jayket's words had stolen the control she'd had over their lovemaking. He'd taken command and she couldn't be happier. In glad obedience, she grasped the slippery nub

between her fingers and pinched. The ultrasensitive spot came alive with sensation as she pinched it once more, keeping her gaze locked on Jayket's.

Wordlessly he crooked his fingers, bidding her to lean closer. He grasped her nipples and twisted them, rolling the aching buds back and forth, compounding the intensity of her pleasure. Lost in sensation, she didn't realize her eyelids had fluttered closed.

Jayket pinched her nipples harder, tugging them toward him, causing her to gasp as her eyes flew open. "Eyes on me," he commanded. "It's time, Suniko. Come for me, little bird."

Her cry pierced the night air as Suniko called out his name. She clutched his chest for support as crashing waves of bliss undulated through her, washing away any awareness but for sheer, raw pleasure.

As she was about to collapse atop Jayket, his strong hands kept her pinned in place.

"I'm not through with you yet," he told her, snaking his hand to the place where her body split, where a commotion of sensation prickled.

"Oh, no, Jayket," she said as his finger flicked over her sore, tortured clit. "I can't yet. Too soon."

"You will," he said, increasing the friction until Suniko thought surely she'd break apart. "I want to feel your cunt grip my cock again, sucking me hard."

The sensation was too much. Too severe. Suniko had to find a way to make Jayket understand, to teach him that, like a man, a woman required time between orgasms.

But she never had the chance because the remarkable Jayket had proved her wrong. The potency of the orgasm seizing her being now put the last one to shame. He'd managed to transport her spirit to new heights, a wondrous new dimension previously unvisited. In the distance she heard a primal howl tear from Jayket's throat as his body stiffened and shuddered and a surge of hot fluid bolted straight to her womb.

Her feral cry nearly matched his.

This time there was no flesh barrier that prevented her from slumping against him, from happily sprawling atop her Jayket and listening to the contented thump of his heart.

Her Jayket, her mind-talk had said. The notion caught her unawares. Though it was untried and somewhat foreign, Suniko liked the idea of it. Very much.

Night slipped away as they caught brief snippets of sleep between spirited bouts of fucking. It was probably just a few hours from dawn when they slipped back into their garments and nestled together for some needed sleep. They needed to be alert and rested for the morning would bring danger as the Pushgans resumed their hunt.

Suniko's head snapped up at the same time Jayket's did. The sound of galloping horse hooves was upon them and the stench of Pushgan flesh permeated the morning air. By the looks of it, dawn had just broken. They'd foolishly slept longer than they had intended.

"There!" came a Pushgan voice. "I spy them just beyond the clearing."

Dear gods, there was no time—not for talk, not for escape. They'd never be able to outrun the horses. A swift glimpse of the area proved that D'Akola was gone. Suniko only hoped the injured man had managed to crawl away in search of safety and was secure from the cruel fate that awaited her and Jayket.

They leapt to their feet, primed to run, exchanging one last, brief glance before facing certain death.

Hand in hand, they turned to flee only to find themselves surrounded by Pushgans with no possible path for escape. Jayket pushed Suniko behind him, shielding her with his body.

Just as a pair of heinous gray-fleshed, three-eyed Pushgans came upon them, swords uplifted and ready to sever limbs, Suniko and Jayket were snatched by two great sets of talons and swept into the air.

The ground where they'd stood a moment before became small and the Pushgans who gaped at them even smaller. Suniko was beset by a strange mix of dread and exhilaration as they were whisked through the sky by the great bird.

Aghast, she and Jayket exchanged bewildered glances as the wind whipped their hair. A deafening roar had them casting their eyes skyward toward the sound.

Shuddering fear slammed through her as Suniko saw that it wasn't a bird carrying them. It was a dragon. *Their* dragon by the looks of it.

After glimpsing the green-scaled creature, Suniko wondered if they might not have been better off with a beheading at the hands of the Pushgans—instead of suffering a fiery death by roasting.

Chapter Three

Suniko didn't bother to struggle as the large talons clutched her. She didn't find the idea of falling to her death from somewhere amid the clouds any more appealing than being seared. And there was always the chance that she and Jayket would be able to make a run for it and escape the dragon once they landed.

"Where do you think it's taking us?" she shouted, hoping Jayket could hear her over the roar of the wind and flapping of the creature's wings.

"To its lair, most likely," Jayket yelled back without a trace of optimism.

Her heart leapt to her throat as the dragon descended. But all hope for escape vanished when it landed high in the mountains with nothing but sheer rock surrounding them.

The smooth talons let loose their grip and both Suniko and Jayket fell to the broad rock ledge floor in front of a cave. Whether she looked up, straight ahead or down, the view was dizzying. She felt paralyzed, terrified to move even an increment for fear of falling. The only direction that steadied her was the view of the dark, yawning cavern.

The dragon eyed them for a long moment and it seemed to Suniko that the great beast swayed left and right, as if unsteady on its feet. If it fell on them they'd surely be crushed flat as millet cakes.

"He appears lightheaded from hunger," Jayket noted. His words left Suniko little doubt as to where the creature might find its next meal.

"No...I think it's hurt," she said, cautiously edging closer to the dragon. "Look at its chest, Jayket. Its legs and arms." She breathed in, sniffing deeply. "There are remnants of an herbal poultice like the one you applied to D'Akola last night. Someone or something has ministered to this beast."

With a piercing bellow, the dragon looked skyward and breathed out a blazing column of flame. Suniko scrambled to Jayket's side, whimpering and clinging to him, happy beyond all measure that she was not alone.

The dragon returned its attention to the pair, studying them before leaning close enough to draw in a satisfying sniff. The action left Suniko's knees trembling.

"Maybe he'll swallow us quickly without roasting us first," she said hopefully, only to gasp aloud a moment later when the dragon nudged both her and Jayket with its snout.

"Or maybe he just likes to play with his food before grilling it," Jayket offered.

To her shock, the dragon's rough tongue darted out, giving Suniko's face a thorough lick. Surprisingly, it seemed more an indication of affection than appetite.

"I think he's trying to befriend us, Jayket."

Jayket coughed in derision. "On the contrary, I'd say he's sampling the meat he'll soon savor."

It was then that Suniko noticed something curious in the dragon's eyes—a wounded countenance, a soulful familiarity. Without thinking she reached out to pet the beast, gliding her hand along its iridescent scales.

The dragon's nostrils flared. Nudging his snout between her thighs, he sniffed deeply of Suniko's scent. And then he licked her there. The unexpected erotic glide of his tongue left her trembling. Her soft gasp was one of surprise tinged with fear and uncertainty.

His eyes glittering, the dragon met Suniko's gaze and held it. A sound not unlike a moan rumbled from deep in his throat and seemed to mirror the soulfulness of his gaze. It was almost as if they shared an inner communication with that lingering look. Somewhere deep in her core Suniko knew the creature would never hurt her.

She and Jayket ducked to avoid its tail as the dragon abruptly turned and headed for the large cave in the rock face. As soon as the beast left them, Jayket examined their

surroundings, looking for some possible means of escape. Suniko could feel his frustration. He didn't appear to be the sort of man who accepted defeat or impossible odds well at all.

"It seems we're trapped here, Suniko. At the mercy of the dragon. The smooth rock doesn't afford any footholds or projections to grasp so there's no way to climb down." He stood at the edge and gazed down into the chasm, making Suniko's belly quiver. "The nearest ledge is far beyond our ability to jump and survive." His hand plowed through his hair as he paced.

Suniko moved to the cave's entrance, edging as close as she dared. In the dim light she saw the dragon's reclining form. It appeared to be sleeping, with faint tendrils of smoke curling from its nose as it snored. "Look, Jayket, the dragon sleeps."

"Good. We need to find a weapon so we can slay it before it wakes," Jayket said, glancing around them.

"No," she clasped Jayket's arm, "I don't think he means to hurt us." In fact, a crazed notion had gripped Suniko. No doubt Jayket would think her dim-witted if she told him about it. But tell him she must. "There was something in the dragon's eyes," she began. "Something kind and sad and —"

Yanking her back from the mouth of the cave, Jayket's fingers curled into the flesh of Suniko's upper arm. He pinned her with a disbelieving glare. "Sympathy for a dragon?" he said, huffing a humorless laugh. "I thought you more intelligent than that, Suniko, more rational. You didn't strike me as a typical foolish woman. Keep your compassionate nonsense to yourself. I'm not in the mood to hear it. If you have something constructive to offer concerning our escape then you may speak."

Releasing her arm, he growled and resumed his pacing.

Shaking off the initial shock of his harsh, intolerant words, Suniko stared Jayket down. Then she engaged in a dramatic bow. "Oh, thank you, great and wise holy man," she said, sarcasm clearly evident. "How benevolent and noble of you to grant me permission to speak when it suits you."

Jayket's eyebrow arched. "Suniko..." he warned.

Her hand held up in defiance, Suniko said, "Hear me out, healer. The poultice you made for D'Akola, where did you learn to concoct it?"

"From the other priests who trained me, but what does that have to do with—"

"Is the combination of herbs, weeds, flowers and berries you used last night common or unique?" Suniko asked.

"It is found only in the chronicles of the goddess Gavvina, why?"

"As I suspected." Her gaze solemn, Suniko pointed to the cave. "Into the cave with you. We go to visit our dragon and inspect its wounds."

"What?!" Jayket's eyes bugged. "Have you succumbed to lunacy, woman? I'm not going to disturb a sleeping dragon and neither are you. Now sit down and behave yourself while I think." He gestured to a small group of rocks.

Her eyes narrowing, Suniko's arms crossed over her breasts and she fumed. "If we weren't hopelessly trapped on a cliff high in the clouds, Jayket, I'd knock your empty head against one of these rocks."

"Hopefully there'll be ample time for rough play later, little bird," Jayket said with an annoying wink.

"You see? That's the trouble. Because I am a woman you charge me with irrational thinking, yet it's acceptable for men to think with their cocks instead of their brains." Suniko tapped her temple. "If I recall, great and wondrous thinker, your plan was to sneak into the cave and slay the dragon as it sleeps."

"It's a fine speck better than your plan of paying the beast a cordial lady's visit," Jayket accused.

"And just how do you propose that we escape from this crag in the sky once you slay the dragon?" She gestured to the nothingness around them. "Hmm? Tell me. Do we dive into the abyss and pray that Ko'Loran snatches us up in his godly arms and

deposits us safely on the earth? Be sure to remind Ko'Loran as we fall that he's your father. I'm sure that will help."

"Damn, but you set my teeth on edge, you mouthy wench," Jayket snarled, closing the distance between them and grabbing the back of her hair. He stared into her eyes for a moment before yanking her head back and assaulting her mouth with a harsh, demanding kiss.

Growling into his mouth, Suniko fought against him, pounding his chest and raking his flesh with her short nails. But Jayket's tongue only delved deeper, intoxicating her with its rhythmic swirls and thrusts. Soon she ceased fighting and clutched his ragged tunic, holding him close to her, crushing her breasts against him as their tongues warred.

His hips ground against her, providing ample evidence of a firm and ready erection. Again she wanted to tell him he thought with his cock but she decided against it, wallowing instead in the sheer erotic deliciousness of the fevered moment.

Jayket backed Suniko against the mountainside, his manner abrasive, more urgent and insistent that he'd been with her before. He tore at her garment until it fell at her feet and he growled in appreciation as he eyed her nakedness. With a quick unfastening movement at his groin, his cock was free and pressing against her belly. At the same time, he caught her nipple between his teeth and tugged hard.

His coarse, hurried conduct matched hers as Suniko heard herself cry out, "Yes, *yes*, fuck me, Jayket." The fleeting thought that this might be the last time either of them ever had sex raced through her mind. The twin aspects of fear and danger made their coupling all the more exciting.

Though rushed and crude, this pairing was no less satisfying than those they'd shared the night before. Before Suniko could take in her next breath, he'd lifted her by the waist and fully pierced her with his cock, leaving her feet dangling in the air.

Jaykey slammed her back against the rock, his fingers pressing into her shoulders as he fucked her, Jayket's fingers pressed into her shoulders. He growled as his tongue

again invaded her mouth and his teeth nipped her bottom lip, drawing the coppery taste of blood. Their hearts thudding fast and hard in their breasts, Jayket and Suniko fucked like rabid animals.

Unmistakable in its ferocity, climax was soon upon them with a swiftness and intensity born of fear-tinged lust and desire. The resulting quaking and convulsions seemed to go on forever as they clung to each other, muttering nonsensical syllables of affection.

When her senses finally returned and Jayket had set her feet back on the rock floor, Suniko looked up into his eyes. "That was rash and foolhardy," she said, slipping back into her threadbare garment. "We were mere steps from death, Jayket. One slip and we would have plunged into that chasm."

"I know." Jayket nibbled her earlobe. "It was magnificent, was it not, little bird?"

Suniko broke into a smile. "The best sex I've ever had," she admitted. "Now let's go into the cave."

A look of annoyance across his features, Jayket shifted his weight to one hip, crossing his arms over his chest. "I had hoped you would have forgotten that foolishness." When Suniko opened her mouth to protest, Jayket held up his hand. "Please, save me from your endless womanly ranting." She saw his expression soften then. "All right," he said, shrugging his broad shoulders in frustration, "into the dragon's lair we go." Jayket took her by the hand and led the way.

"Remember when you removed the arrows from D'Akola," Suniko asked softly as they stood beside the snoring dragon. "Can you recall their location?"

Jayket nodded. "I believe so. Why?"

Suniko pointed to healing wounds on the dragon's arm. "Were they here?" She walked to the creature's thigh. "And here?"

"Yes, but..." Jayket's brow furrowed. "Suniko, you can't possibly believe—"

“Smell the poultice covering these wounds,” she urged, feathering a finger through some of the herbal mixture bordering one of the injuries. “Taste it.” She held her finger beneath Jayket’s nose. He took a whiff and then licked her fingertip.

It was no surprise to Suniko when his eyes widened.

“It is your healing poultice, Jayket, is it not?”

“It is.” He gawked at her and then shifted his gaze to the dragon. Looking back at her, he said in wonder, “D’Akola?”

She nodded. “As impossible as it seems, yes. The dragon and the man who slept beside us last night are one in the same.”

“A shape-shifter,” Jayket said.

“I’ve heard of such creatures,” Suniko agreed.

“He said he was a Guardian of Zalvanus, from Yassaria,” Jayket noted.

“I’ve heard that all males of the Yassarian tribe are trained to be guardians at an early age,” Suniko said.

Jayket nodded in confirmation. “They’re wholly dedicated to the Zalvaneans. The Yassarians helped our village battle the Pushgans several times. We’ve all heard stories of Shivrane bringing down a curse on a small band of guardians who dared to rescue prisoners from Tordanuk’s dungeon.”

Suniko shivered at the name of Tordanuk’s vile sorceress. The three-eyed beast of a woman was said to have a lump of onyx in place of a heart. “I’ve only had the displeasure of glimpsing Shivrane from a distance,” she told Jayket. “But I’ve seen the results of her malevolence far too many times. Poor D’Akola must be a man by night and dragon by day.”

“It seems so. That’s why the dragon snatched us from certain death this morning.” Jayket glanced at the creature. “It’s why he didn’t kill us. Even in his fearsome animal form D’Akola the Strong recognized us as the two who ministered to him throughout the night.”

Suniko sat on a rock, hugging her knees to her chest. "Oh, Jayket, do you realize what that means? If we hadn't helped D'Akola last night, if you hadn't been there to tend his wounds and—"

"And if your sweet mouth hadn't caringly tended his cock," Jayket added, sitting next to her and wrapping a strong arm around her as he tongued her from chin to temple.

"We'd be dead," she went on, delighting in Jayket's affectionate attention. "The Pushgans would have killed us because D'Akola probably wouldn't have lived through the night. He wouldn't have been there to save us this morning." The grim thought chilled her.

"So it seems your womanly compassion for both the dragon and the man saved us from a visit from Shorana."

"Ruler of the dead," Suniko acknowledged with a shudder.

"If not for your sympathetic leanings," Jayket continued, "we might be lingering in Niranjan with the other spirits instead of perched atop a mountain paying a visit to our dragon." He lifted Suniko's hand to his mouth, brushing a kiss across her knuckles.

"Perhaps in the future you'll remember that before you resort to name calling." She smoothed the hand he'd just kissed along his jaw.

A hearty sigh seeped from Jayket's lips. "As much as I hate to admit it, Suniko...you were right. I apologize for the unkind things I said earlier."

"Of course I was right," she responded with a confident smile. "I am a woman." Her mighty yawn prompted Jayket's to follow. "We didn't get near enough sleep last night."

"Because we couldn't get enough of each other," Jayket said, rimming her ear with his tongue, cupping her breast and kneading.

"Yes." Stilling his playful hand, Suniko rolled her eyes in remembrance. "Which almost cost us our lives. We must never be that foolish again."

“Then you must promise not to be so damn appealing,” he told her. “If it’s true that men think with their cocks, then it’s unfair of you women to give them so much to think about.”

Slipping to the rock floor, Suniko curled up far enough away from D’Akola’s dragon belly to avoid being crushed should he turn over in his sleep. Jayket situated himself behind her, molding his form to hers and draping an arm over her.

“Today’s events have sapped the last of my energy,” she said with a sleepy sigh. “I need to sleep, Jayket.”

“As much as I yearn to glove my cock in your heated depths again, little bird, I too must sleep.”

“Jayket...”

“Yes?”

“You can’t pinch my nipples that way.”

“How shall I pinch them then?”

“You’re supposed to let me sleep, remember? How can I sleep when you have me lusting anew for you?”

“Ahhh, my poor little Suniko, you’re plagued with lust?”

“Deeply.”

“Never fear. You’re in the hands of a master healer,” he whispered into her ear. “I have the cure.” His skilled fingers speared her channel and she moaned.

Sleep didn’t claim them for another few hours.

* * * * *

The roar of the dragon roused Jayket and Suniko from their slumber with a start. Rising to a sitting position, Jayket glanced across the cave, only to catch the backside of the creature as it exited the cave.

“The sun is setting,” Suniko said, rubbing her eyes as another of D’Akola’s soulful howls rent the air. “Perhaps he’s beginning to shift.” She and Jayket got to their feet.

“The sounds he makes seem as if he is in agony,” Jayket noted. “Keep your distance as he shifts form, Suniko. D’Akola may lash out in pain and hurt you without realizing it.”

“You’re right. I’ve avoided a roasting so far and I’d like to keep it that way.”

Jayket’s belly growled from gnawing hunger. If he was that hungry, he knew poor Suniko must be near starving. The delicate little creature was in sore need of meat on her bones. Ah, but what lovely bones they were, adorned with plump tits, a curl-cloaked cunt and a round, firm ass.

He watched it sway as she walked in front of him to the mouth of the cave. That ass of hers had tempted him mightily and he planned to partake in its tight, cock-clenching offerings the next time they fucked.

Jayket had never been without the charms of a woman for long. His elevated stature as priest and healer, as well as his warrior exploits, had plenty of lustful women offering themselves to him. Of course, his well-muscled physique and handsome features, or so he’d been told, didn’t hurt. And then there was the added attraction of his rumored parentage. After all, what woman would pass up the opportunity to be fucked by a half god? Not many he’d come to know.

While Jayket appreciated the attention of beautiful women, he’d never found himself particularly enamored of just one. Why settle for one when there were so many beauties from which to pluck?

Until Suniko.

The first time he set eyes on her Jayket knew she was different. This was not an ordinary woman, content with cooking and cleaning and sewing clothes. No, Suniko burned with an inner fire, a passion for life, a lust to learn. While embracing the typical female traits of compassion and sympathy, she also embodied the soul of a warrior, a

true survivor. Perhaps it was because she was so headstrong. The thought brought a smile to his lips.

As much as it amazed Jayket, willful little Suniko had somehow managed to capture his heart. The notion that he'd found a woman, just one woman, to love was strange. Most extraordinary, yet entirely appealing. He'd had a good, fruitful life but never had Jayket experienced such raw passion, such incredible ecstasy in the arms of another woman.

He joined her just inside the entrance to the cave where they watched the dragon pace. Suniko leaned into him, resting her head against his chest and he knew she belonged there. Always.

"There, Jayket, did you see that?" she asked.

He watched as D'Akola's form quickly shimmered from dragon to man and back again. The implausible image left him at a loss for words.

"Oh, look at him," she continued, clutching Jayket's biceps. "He seems to be in such pain. How I wish I could comfort him."

"I'm sure he'll appreciate your comfort more after he transforms," Jayket assured her. Watching the dragon's body hunch and twist wrenched something deep inside Jayket as well. It was thorny watching D'Akola suffer so and not being able to assuage his torment.

After what seemed an eternity, the dragon was no more and in its place, D'Akola, the man, knelt, his head bowed as deep breaths shuddered through him.

Suniko ran to his side, wrapping her arms around him and cradling the man.

"Are you all right, D'Akola?"

Jayket watched D'Akola turn his warm brown eyes on Suniko and smile. He nudged her cheek with his nose and then he licked her face, just as he'd done while in dragon form. Witnessing the simple gesture of affection hardened Jayket's cock.

"I am much better with you here, Suniko," D'Akola answered.

“Wherever did you find the strength and stamina to fly while carrying us in your talons?” she asked him, feathering a light touch at his wounds. “With such grave wounds I feared you might not make it through the night. Surely such strength is why you have earned the title D’Akola the Strong.”

“I found renewed strength through your benevolence,” D’Akola answered, threading his fingers through her hair. “You gave me a gift. Both of you.” He glanced at Jayket and smiled. “Healing, affection and camaraderie. It’s been so long since I’ve been treated with such kindheartedness. Living as a dragon by day doesn’t allow for much time to develop friendships.”

“I imagine not,” Jayket said, imagining the looks of horror on people’s faces at the sight of a dragon approaching. “What of those who have learned your shape-shifter secret? Have they not become allies?”

D’Akola huffed a humorless laugh. “The few that found out have either been terrified to the bone or they’ve made it a mission to slay me in hopes of gaining acclaim.”

“Is that how you came upon your most recent wounds?” Suniko asked. “From friends turned hunters?”

“No, the arrows belonged to Pushgans who spotted me as I flew low over a field to snatch up a rabbit.”

“How awful.” Suniko smoothed her fingers up and down his arm.

“I must admit to having had thoughts of slaying you,” Jayket admitted.

“Yes, but that was before Jayket realized who you were,” Suniko jumped in. “Neither of us would ever dream of killing you now, D’Akola.”

“I know you wouldn’t,” D’Akola told them. “In these last three or so years since suffering Shivrane’s curse, I have learned to judge people quite well. When I am fortunate enough to find a true friend, I do all I can to be a friend in return.”

With a lung-filling breath, D'Akola got to his feet and stretched. The sight of his magnificent, powerfully built naked body highlighted by the moon's glow had Jayket's cock throbbing. The man was a vision of strength, beauty and intelligence.

"I had shifted into dragon form shortly before the Pushgans found you early this morning," D'Akola said. "While I was still weak from my injuries, I dug deep for the strength to take you to safety. Fortunately I have greater vigor and endurance while in dragon form."

"We're so grateful," Suniko assured him. "If not for you we'd be in pieces on a blood-soaked field."

"The hardest part was not eating you," D'Akola admitted. He laughed at Suniko's surprised gasp. "You see, there's the ever-present problem of fighting my animal instinct and not allowing it to overcome when it's inappropriate. My dragon belly was empty and there you stood, two succulent morsels ready to nibble on."

"I thought I saw that hungry look in your eye," Jayket quipped. "Suniko and I feared you'd roast us for sure."

"Yes, that was a consideration too. Although when I breathe fire it's more of an anger or pain response. If I were to eat you it would be raw."

Suniko shuddered and D'Akola laughed again, gathering her into his arms.

"Sorry. Probably more than you care to know," he said. "But while we speak of food, I have some edibles for us at the back of the cave. Mostly vegetables and small animals or birds that I've caught in my clutches during flight." He clapped Jayket on the back. "Help me build a fire, my friend, and we'll enjoy a belly-satisfying feast."

The simple but good fare was quite unlike the vile scraps Jayket and Suniko were used to eating as Tordanuk's prisoners. After filling their bellies they sat around the fire and talked, getting to know each other better.

D'Akola told of how he and his brother, Danior the True, had been among the Guardians of Zalvanus who'd planned the rescue of tortured prisoners from Tordanuk's dungeon. The cruel shape-shifting curse Shivrane spouted had turned

D'Akola into a dragon at the same time Danior became a stallion. Other rescuing guardians suffered similar fates. All animals by day, men by night.

The only flexibility they had was the ability to shift into animal form at night if necessary. But they were unable to take human form by day.

"It's been more than three years since I've seen my brother," D'Akola said. "While I slept I dreamt of Danior, though I can't recall much, other than I remember him talking to me. My dreams while in dragon form are vivid but soon forgotten upon waking."

D'Akola had a distant, wistful look in his eyes as he spoke. Shrugging it off, he added, "In any case, Zalvanus is my destination. We guardians have pledged our loyalty to the good Zalvanean people, so I know Danior will journey there...if he's still alive."

"It's our destination as well," Jayket said.

"While prisoners in Pushga," Suniko told D'Akola, "we heard stories of the arrival of the prophesized queen in Zalvanus, along with her two princes."

"I've heard the same," D'Akola said. "It's most exciting, to be alive in such a blessed time, is it not?"

"Truly," Jayket answered. "We can travel to Zalvanus together."

"Good." D'Akola nodded and gave Jayket a hearty clap on the back. "Zalvanus will need our help now more than ever. Tordanuk of Pushga will do everything in his power to prevent the queen from her foretold mission of bringing peace to mankind."

"You must promise not to eat us during our journey." Suniko patted D'Akola's thigh.

"Ahhh, we find ourselves on the subject of eating again," D'Akola said, his lips curving into a grin. "As I slept fighting off fever last night, I remember hearing talk of you wanting to suck my cock, Jayket. Just as sweet Suniko had." He cupped Suniko's chin, smoothing his fingers along her jaw. "Have I told you how much I enjoyed your warm mouth nurturing my cock back to life, Suniko?"

“It was indeed my pleasure, D’Akola.”

D’Akola returned his attention to Jayket. “And would it be your pleasure?”

Jayket’s lust for D’Akola ignited as he read the carnal interest in the man’s eyes. His engorged cock pressed so firmly against the ties of his leather breeches that Jayket felt sure it would be forever imprinted.

Shifting position, D’Akola reclined, crossing his hands behind his head as he rested against a small flat rock. Offering Jayket a lazy smile, he stretched one leg out before him while the other rested with knee bent. The fire’s orange glow highlighted the apex of D’Akola’s muscled thighs and the proud, hard prize that stood there.

The unmistakable summons nearly had Jayket trembling. It was an erotic invitation he wasn’t about to refuse. His gaze dropped and Jayket eyed the guardian’s rigid cock and the tiny pearl of moisture seeping from its rosy cap.

“It is said that action is more valuable than words,” Jayket said before fisting D’Akola’s cock and claiming it with his mouth.

Chapter Four

Lust raged through D'Akola as Jayket swallowed him. His fierce dragon need to dominate, to ram his cock high, hard and brutal against the wet silk of Jayket's throat, darted to the surface. But D'Akola controlled it. Instead he let loose a pleased groan, relaxing into the slick glide of his cock between Jayket's lips.

It had been so long since he'd enjoyed the exquisite feel of having his cock sucked. Suniko's sweet mouth had treated him the other night but, still gripped by fever, D'Akola was unable to focus and embrace the ecstasy as much as he would have liked.

Life as half-dragon hadn't been easy. Only here, perched high on a mountaintop, did he allow himself to give in to some semblance of calm. It was the only time he was relatively safe from being hunted for his prized dragon hide. The only time he could evade the constant threat of arrows, spears, lances and swords—except for the times he was pursued by those who rode dragon-back through the skies.

Even by night he wasn't safe as, naked, human and weaponless, he sought refuge from predators. The few precious hours by moon's light he lived as a man were usually lonely and frustrating, devoid of the benefits of camaraderie, companionship or sex.

Ahhh...and now this. This sweetest treasure, the most opulent luxury.

A sigh tripped past his lips as D'Akola closed his eyes and relished the feel of Jayket's tongue licking his shaft, of Jayket's hands cupping his balls, stroking and squeezing. He'd become so accustomed to the feel of his own hands pleasuring himself in the night, he'd almost forgotten the rich gratification of another's tongue and hands capably ministering to his flesh.

D'Akola found Jayket's revelation that he was a healer and priest of Gavvina in the village of Farkol surprising. No doubt his years of practice in the carnal arts accounted for the high level of skill he employed with his mouth.

Spellbinding. This was a man who fully understood how to bring another man to his knees.

His strong, adept fingers tapped and pressed along D'Akola's sac as if Jayket were playing a flute. The calculated curl of Jayket's tongue, the nearly painful scrape and bite of his teeth, the way in which he managed to butt the back of his throat against the cap of D'Akola's cock, all combined to make this an erotic experience to remember.

When he opened his eyes again D'Akola's gaze settled on the small bundle of woman that was Suniko. Huddled against the cave wall, she watched him and Jayket with rapt attention. The rosy stain on her cheeks and the heated look in her eyes told him she yearned to join them in ecstasy.

Before the night was over he'd have her. He'd fuck Suniko and Jayket both until they were boneless and spent. He'd fuck them until his own cock was tender, raw and swollen from an excess of pleasure-pain. Yes, tonight he would truly live, not merely exist. He would relish every waking moment as a man and commit every thrust, every moan, every warm, slick glide to memory.

"Your nipples are hard, aren't they, Suniko?" D'Akola asked, glimpsing the erotic evidence poking the rough material of her tunic.

"Yes," she answered without hesitation. "Hard and aching."

"Are you consumed by desire as you watch Jayket suck me? Do you enjoy watching him caress my balls? He is a true master at fucking, is he not?" D'Akola clenched his teeth as his own words further stoked his passion. It was too soon to give in, too early to surrender to the commanding tremors of orgasm. He wanted this ecstasy of flesh to last as long as possible.

Her hands clutching her breasts, Suniko closed her eyes and moaned. A moment later her eyelids fluttered open again and D'Akola noted the forest color of her eyes had darkened to a deep, shimmering green.

“The sight of two strong, masculine bodies caught in lust is most erotic, indeed,” she said. “The memory of Jayket’s cock deep in my channel makes me tremble. The anticipation of my being filled by you does the same, D’Akola.”

He opened his mouth to respond but Jayket sucked D’Akola harder. A primal grunt escaped D’Akola’s mouth as his balls pulled tight against his body in anticipation of climax.

“Ahhh, Jayket, if you only knew the untold pleasure you give me. Gratitude mixes with lust deep in my loins, friend. Tell me, would it give you pleasure to have Suniko suck you now? She is eager to participate and I would greatly relish the sight.”

After a masterful lick around D’Akola’s cock, Jayket gazed up into his eyes. Words were entirely unnecessary. The feral look in his sapphire eyes told D’Akola all he needed to know.

“Do it, Suniko,” D’Akola commanded. “Quickly, before I erupt with climax. I want to watch Jayket consumed with rapture at the same time I am.” Jayket moaned at D’Akola’s words. “I want to see you wrap your soft pink lips around his cock and treat Jayket to the same joy you gave me last night, little bird.”

Her eyes widened. “Little bird...that’s what Jayket calls me.”

“Yes, I heard him use the term and I find it most befitting, little Suniko. Now make haste, woman. My cream scalds and begs for release.”

Suniko wasted not another moment repositioning herself and capturing Jayket’s cock with her mouth. The pleased sound of Jayket’s groan vibrating around D’Akola’s cock brought D’Akola another score closer to orgasm. He strained to get the best view of Jayket’s mouth on his own cock as well as Suniko’s tending Jayket’s.

“Take one of your pretty tits from your tunic and let me watch as you pinch your nipple,” D’Akola said. “Imagine your fingers are mine, Suniko. Imagine they are merciless in their task and their insistent pressure rips a moan of ecstasy from your throat.”

Suniko did as he asked, clearly enjoying the feel of her fingers against her erect flesh. She moaned around Jayket's cock, eliciting a reciprocal groan from him. D'Akola watched the consistent draw at the hollows of her cheeks as she focused her attention on her oral mission.

Jayket's gratified moans provided confirmation that he was being treated to a dazzling mouth fuck. Even so, he never abandoned his carnal duty as he treated D'Akola's cock to one rapturous tongue torture after another.

Amid fervent noises of sucking and slurping, the impassioned trio chorused sounds of bliss. Echoing off the cave walls, it came back to them, encasing them in an erotic harmony of euphoric moans, gasps and panting.

In the last moments before the warning of climax rippled along his spine, D'Akola reveled in the deliciousness of the threesome's carnal delight. He focused purposefully on the sweet liberty from terror and carnage, the blessed reprieve from loneliness. He submerged himself in this superb slot of time, intent on remembering it always.

D'Akola felt Jayket's finger slipping alongside his cock in the warm, wet cocoon of the man's mouth. After moistening the digit, Jayket removed it, sweetly assaulting D'Akola's anus with the wet fingertip.

His fierce dragon need to dominate returned at the delicious invasion. With a mighty growl, D'Akola fucked Jayket's mouth with a vengeance as Jayket's finger became persistent, pushing past the tight ring of muscle and driving deeper into D'Akola's taut channel. Another glance at Suniko had D'Akola wishing he could reach her tit, sucking it into his mouth, biting its plump berry tip until she begged for mercy.

As the mounting orgasm surged through his balls, D'Akola dragged in a jagged breath. A euphoric roar rumbled up from deep in his chest, releasing just as his cream shot against Jayket's throat.

Jayket drank down D'Akola's seed before succumbing to his own orgasm, his body shuddering as Suniko milked the fluid from him.

Suniko's fingers still played with her tit while her other hand slid between her thighs. It seemed that almost as soon as she made contact with her clit, she burst apart, crying out her ecstasy.

Spent and satisfied, the three slumped against each other. D'Akola listened to the contented sounds of their breathing, felt the pounding of their brisk heartbeats, smoothed his fingers along Jayket's and Suniko's hot, moist flesh. Supremely relaxed and comfortable, D'Akola closed his eyes and lingered between sleep and wakefulness.

It was then he recalled details of the dream he'd had earlier while still in dragon form. Just after he'd deposited Jayket and Suniko on the rock ledge, D'Akola had retired to his lair for some much-needed rest. He'd yielded to sleep quickly and dreamed of his brother.

I'm alive, D'Akola, Danior had told him. And I know you are too...I can feel your life force. I am in Zalvanus with Jia-Nian, the queen. Aydon and I are her royal princes.

By gods, could it really be true? D'Akola's chest swelled with a buoyant sense of hope he'd long abandoned. How mightily he missed his brother and Aydon, fighting at their sides against the Pushgans, reveling in the grand triumph of victory after the slaughter, sharing camaraderie, brotherhood and a joint purpose as Guardians of Zalvanus.

How unbearably cruel that the malevolent Shivrane's shape-shifter curse separated one man-animal from another, setting them far apart from each other with little hope of reunion.

More of Danior's words came to him now...

Thanks to a gift from the gods, D'Akola, I am able to communicate with you, but only while you are in animal form. Listen for me with your dragon's ears. Remember my words and heed them. I will guide you to my side...to safety, beloved brother. But beware, fierce dangers await you and your friends along the trail. Be prepared for battle.

Suddenly alert, D'Akola shot up to a sitting position, clapping his hand over his chest where he felt his heart galloping like thunderous hooves.

“D’Akola?” Suniko asked, propping on an elbow and reaching out to touch his leg. “Is something wrong?”

“My brother...he’s alive. He came to me in a dream and told me so.”

“Oh...” He saw she was clearly trying to hide the doubt in her gaze. “You feel certain it was actually a visit from your brother?” she asked, her tone soft and kind.

Clasping Suniko’s shoulders, he smiled. “I’ve never been so certain of anything before. Danior confirmed that what we’ve heard is true. Jia-Nian, the prophesized queen, is in Zalvanus. Danior and our good friend and fellow guardian, Aydon the Bold, are her royal princes.”

“Truly?” Suniko’s eyes widened. “Oh, D’Akola, this news is beyond joyful!” After getting to her knees and planting a kiss on D’Akola’s lips, she turned and shook the snoring Jayket. “Awaken, Jayket, we have thrilling news!”

Dragging himself up until he sat next to them, Jayket scratched his chest and yawned. “Hmm? What’s this clamoring about?”

Excitedly, D’Akola told them everything he remembered about the dream, ending with Danior’s promise to guide them to Zalvanus and his warning of pending attack. “Tomorrow at dawn we will be off,” he said. “We must get plenty of sleep to be prepared for the perils ahead.”

“That leaves us little time to enjoy each other tonight,” Suniko said with an adorable, soulful look that made D’Akola want to just eat her up—but in a purely carnal sense, not in a dragon sense.

“Ahh...but if we use our brief awake time wisely,” D’Akola suggested, “I believe we can manage to savor each other quite well.”

“Many excellent ideas come to mind,” Jayket agreed. He grasped his cock and smiled. “And those ideas already have me rock hard and ready.”

D'Akola yanked at the fabric of Suniko's tunic. "Take this ragged thing off. Once we arrive in Zalvanus I will ask the good queen to provide you with a silken garment befitting your milky-soft skin."

"Oh, that would be wonderful." She removed her clothing as she spoke. "I've worn coarse, abrasive fabric for so long I've nearly forgotten what it's like to feel soft and feminine."

"I have no trouble picturing you garbed in silken finery," Jayket told her, skimming his fingers from her throat to her rib cage.

"Nor I," D'Akola agreed. "I know of Jayket's past, Suniko, but what of yours? Where are you from? Were you highborn?"

She huffed a small laugh. "Hardly that. But I was fortunate to live a privileged life. I am from the village of Rygava where I served as handmaiden to Princess Aladee."

D'Akola nodded. "I witnessed a procession of hers once. Tell me, is she as benevolent as she is beautiful? Or perhaps she's as haughty as she is stunning."

"She is a true jewel," Suniko answered without hesitation. "An empath. If she possesses a character flaw it is that she has too much compassion for her own good. Princess Aladee always treated me and the other handmaidens well. It was my honor to serve her."

"Was she also captured by Tordanuk?"

"She was, but I never saw her again after we were taken prisoner. The Pushgans separated royalty from the rest. I don't even know if she's still alive or if she managed to escape with the rest of us, but I think of her often and fear for her."

"I never caught sight of her during my captivity either," Jayket said.

Suniko wrapped her arms around herself and closed her eyes, indulging in a dreamy sigh. "Can you imagine? I used to wear the richest of fabrics, trimmed with gold and silver. I wore jewels at my neck and soft slippers on my feet. My skin and hair were soft and perfumed." She opened her eyes and gave a wistful smile.

“It all seems so long ago now, a veritable eternity that I’ve been garbed in sackcloth with only stray twigs, leaves and clinging insects as my jewels. Now I am more akin to a rough old hag.” This time Suniko’s sigh bordered on melancholy.

“Don’t speak such foolishness, Suniko,” Jayket said, brushing a kiss at her temple. “Whether dressed in silks or sackcloth you are a desirable and most entrancing woman.”

D’Akola took her hand and kissed it, rubbing his thumb back and forth along the parched skin of her arm. He’d known many a soft, sweet-smelling handmaiden in his day and could imagine Suniko’s sorrow at the current state of her prison-abused body.

“Oh, listen to me whine.” She took in a deep breath and smiled. “Forgive me. I have no excuse for wretched thinking. I am alive! I am a survivor of Tordanuk’s evildoers and that is far more important than silks or gems or downy skin or smelling of flowers.”

“Upon arrival in Zalvanus you’ll soak up milk baths and be massaged with warm, perfumed oils,” D’Akola assured her, cupping her small face and planting a row of kisses along her jaw. “Until that time, I have no doubt I’ll find your inner channel to be soft, silky and utterly feminine as I fuck your sweet cunt.”

“It’s true,” Jayket said. “Our Suniko feels as soft as a baby bird inside. But take heed, D’Akola, for she’s as wild as a tigress.”

“A tigress and a dragon, hmm?” D’Akola mused. “It sounds like a worthy match. Get on your knees, little handmaiden.” She did so, angling her pelvis in silent invitation as she presented her backside to him. Kneeling behind her, D’Akola clapped Suniko’s ass cheeks, studying the rosy imprint of his hands a moment before digging his fingertips into her flesh and enjoying the feel of the plump tissue beneath his fingers.

“Look here, Jayket.” D’Akola glided his fingers up Suniko’s inner thighs, holding the wet digits aloft for the other man to observe. “See how her juices run for me?”

With a lustful groan, Jayket grabbed D’Akola’s hand, licking his fingers clean. “There is no finer wine or ale,” Jayket noted, skimming the tip of his tongue across his lips. “And what a glorious sight you two offer for me to behold. One ass soft and white

as alabaster. And the other," he raked D'Akola's ass cheeks with his fingers, "firm-fleshed and muscled...and begging to be filled with my cock."

"And such a fine, big cock it is," D'Akola said, turning back to fist Jayket's cock. The weighty feel of the man's rigid flesh in his palm further hardened D'Akola's own shaft. "Moist with droplets of your desire for me." He bent close and licked Jayket's erection once around the cock head, savoring his salty essence.

Both men groaned at the sheer pleasure of it all. Meeting Jayket's gaze, D'Akola said, "I get hard just looking at you. Both of you." Returning his attention to Suniko, D'Akola leaned down and, growling, nipped Suniko's ass cheek with his teeth.

The next sound reverberating off the cave walls was that of Suniko crying out as D'Akola pierced her cunt.

"Yes...fill me to my womb," she said, panting already. "Let me feel the power of your dragon deep in my channel, D'Akola."

At her words, D'Akola thrust savagely, then stiffened, feeling the warning twinge of transformation just beneath the surface. "I caution you, Suniko, be wary, for you truly don't want me shifting to my dragon form right now." Control. He needed to be in total command of his body right now, to remain focused and human, lest he shift and tear poor, sweet Suniko clear in two from his dragon's size and its carnal ferocity.

"I'm here to fuck the man, not the dragon," Jayket announced, sliding his thumb up D'Akola's anus. "I want to hear the man cry out when I ram into him so deep he begs me for mercy."

Jayket's thumb was replaced by his oiled cock. Blood screamed in D'Akola's veins as his channel was invaded.

"I'll never beg for mercy. Whatever you've got to give I can take," he assured Jayket. "And I'm ravenous. The question is, can you give me all I need?" he challenged.

"And more," Jayket promised, ramming his cock so far and hard into D'Akola's ass that D'Akola shouted and broke into a sweat.

Clenching his fists against Suniko's ass cheeks, he steeled himself. His pace inside Suniko's cunt quickened and grew brutal, mirroring Jayket's wild thrusts.

"I feel you, D'Akola," Suniko said, her breath harsh and raspy as he pummeled her. "I feel your heavy balls slapping against me, your generous cock connecting with my womb. And through your body I can feel Jayket's every thrust as he shoves into your ass."

"And I feel your creamy walls sucking me, milking me," D'Akola told her.

"Can you feel this?" she asked.

"Gods, yes," D'Akola answered, certain he was on the verge of shattering from the intensity of pained pleasure as he felt her rubbing herself with her fingers.

His cock withdrew partially from the oil of her arousal and slammed forward again even harder into her depths. "I like that, Suniko. But I have a better idea." He reached beneath her, searching for her clit and replacing her hand with his, gliding his fingertips back and forth over the slick nub once he found it.

She whimpered and then her long, shuddering moan nearly did him in.

"Heat centers in my balls," Jayket said, his tone gruff as he plunged into D'Akola again. "It ignites my spine."

D'Akola shivered at the man's earthy growl, at the sound of a man's heated rapture mere seconds before it spewed free and hot and deep. The sounds of flesh slapping against flesh, fast and furious, bounced off the walls. The scent of musk, of hard sex and of good fucking, perfumed the air as the three of them humped in synchronized harmony. They moved together like one wild animal, each adding their own unique measure of pleasure to the encounter.

Jayket stiffened almost the same moment as Suniko went rigid. Twin cries of ecstasy rent the night air and then D'Akola could wait no more. His muscles tensed and constricted as his raging cock cream burst like liquid fire deep into Suniko's convulsing cunt. His shuddering climax soothed the last of the tension from D'Akola's body and he joined them in bliss.

The rest of their waking hours were spent pleasuring each other in all manner of threesome positions. Several times D'Akola surprised himself as he nearly gave in to openly weeping with joy and gratitude. He couldn't help it. His soul sang at the elation of being alive, of sharing in the sweet, intense happiness with his two companions. His beloved friends. His ardent lovers.

As Suniko and Jayket drifted to sleep, D'Akola reluctantly moved to the other side of the cave in the event the three were still huddled together at dawn when he shifted from human to dragon. Inadvertently crushing his lovers with his green-scaled bulk would be most unsociable, indeed.

He watched as the two slept, making dreamy little moans, their arms draped around each other, their legs intertwined. And gods how he yearned to be in their warm midst again, a part of their sleeping embrace of flesh against flesh instead of being off by himself, feeling cold and alone.

Yet again the cold spot in his chest seemed to glow warm as D'Akola's heart swelled and tears threatened to spill. He found the sensation most bewildering. After all, a trained guardian is in control, in command of his emotions and not one to weep like a babe. Sucking in a deep breath, he wondered at the strange, repeated urge to spill tears.

And then his soul spoke to him.

This, it told him, this is what happens when you find love.

Chapter Five

Suniko stirred as the veil of sleep ebbed leisurely from her mind and body. Her dreams had been agreeable, some even pleurably erotic, so she wondered at the muffled litany of moans, shrieks and curses upon waking. The last vestiges of an unremembered nightmare, she decided.

The utterances reached her ears once more and a burst of panic threatened to stop the breath in Suniko's lungs as she realized the sounds were no mere dream. Her eyes fully open now, she glanced at Jayket, who still slept, his face relaxed and free of tension, worry or fear. Reaching out, she almost roused him but a quick movement at the cave's entrance stalled her hand.

It was then she remembered.

D'Akola. It was dawn and he was shifting.

Suniko rose and stepped cautiously toward the mouth of the cave. A stifling sensation of pained sympathy and suspense choked her as she watched her beautiful D'Akola clasp his hand over his mouth in a clear attempt to stifle the raw, wild cries of a creature in pain.

"Oh, D'Akola," she cried, running to his side and cosseting the bent and curled man in her arms. He uncoiled so abruptly at her touch that he startled her into backing away.

D'Akola extended his arm, holding up his hand as a signal for her to stay back. "Keep your distance, little bird," he said, his voice gruff and guttural as great beads of sweat rolled from his forehead and dripped from his jaw. "I am the victim of feral and increasing irritability as I shift. If I become depraved by pain I may lash out at you without realizing."

Staring in helpless bewilderment as his shape seemed to flicker from human to dragon and back again, Suniko bit the inside of her cheek, fearing that once she started to cry she'd never be able to stop.

"Isn't there some way I can offer comfort to you?" she asked, acutely aware of the excruciating torture of flesh and soul before her. There was no need to ask if he suffered, for it was far too clear by the heartbreaking depth of pain she saw in his eyes. "Something I can do to ease your hurting, dear D'Akola?"

Endeavoring to smile away his torment for her benefit, D'Akola shook his head. "No, sweet Suniko. But my heart thanks you. Now let me be, little one. Shape-shifting is a chore best left to the changing being alone." He grimaced and a great growl tore from his throat. "Take her away, Jayket!"

Suniko whipped her head around to see Jayket standing close by, a fearsome mix of raw fury and compassion twisting his features as he stared at the disconcerting abnormality his friend suffered.

"Come, Suniko," Jayket said, his hands closing over her shoulders, dragging her back into the bowels of the cave. "There is nothing we can do to ease D'Akola as Shivrane's nefarious, malevolent curse seizes him."

Tears burned Suniko's eyes. She squeezed them shut, but not before rivulets of tears broke free, sliding hotly down her face.

"What an utterly vile and detestable spirit Shivrane must possess," she said. "I have never embraced violence but, by the gods, Jayket, if the opportunity should present itself I would surely run a sword clear through the stone-cold heart of the sorceress. And I would erupt in a glad smile as I sent her wicked spirit to the fiery depths of hell." She absently wiped a hot tear away as it streaked down her cheek.

"There are many who would happily aid you in the task," Jayket said. "I among them."

As the final stages of transformation gripped D'Akola, Jayket cupped the back of Suniko's head, urging her to his chest to shield her vision. She allowed herself to be led

into the comfort of Jayket's arms although a part of her yearned to watch the entire transformation. But the clenching ache in her heart prevented her from gazing upon her poor D'Akola another moment.

"What an ineffective coward I am," she sobbed against Jayket's chest. "How foolish of me to think I could bring poor D'Akola any degree of comfort when I can barely witness his anguish without succumbing to self-absorbed wailing."

"Shhh, Suniko," Jayket comforted, stroking his fingers through her hair. "You are too hard on yourself. Witnessing the cruel transformation of someone we care for is not without great distress. The sight of D'Akola's agony makes me feel powerless too. Just as helpless and ineffective as you feel. But he knows that we care, that our hearts are sympathetic toward his plight."

Jayket turned Suniko around to face D'Akola again. The shape-shifting was complete and the dragon now stood where D'Akola had just moments before.

"He knows that we love him," Jayket finished.

Suniko smiled, crossing her arm over her waist and rubbing Jayket's hand. "That we do," she said, leaning against him as she eyed the dragon. "Do you hear that, D'Akola?" she asked, her voice raised and catching the dragon's attention. "We love you."

Suniko felt certain she saw something glitter in the dragon's eye. Comprehension. Understanding. "Just as I love you, dear Jayket," she said more softly. "How it is possible to be so certain of such a thing in so short a time, I don't know, but it's true. I love you both so much it makes my heart leap with joy at having found you." A cold shiver came upon her. "And it makes me tremble clear to my soul at the fear of losing you."

"You have echoed the words in my own heart," Jayket told her, wrapping his arms around her and nuzzling her neck as she stood there with her back against him. "As well as those in D'Akola's heart, I feel sure. While the fates have set us in repeated peril, the gods have been good to us, blessing us with finding each other."

Jayket's admission of love warmed Suniko's heart. The fates had twisted and turned her life a thousand ways since being captured by the Pushgans, but never before had she felt so blessed. She had dreamed so often of finding the right man, one who truly loved her and treated her with genuine care and affection. Little did she imagine she would find two such perfect men, handsome, brave and strong and so expertly gifted in the erotic arts.

Suniko sent up a silent prayer of thanks to the gods, vowing to herself that she would remember to do so each and every day. At the same time, her heart uttered a solemn plea, imploring the gods to keep her lovers alive and safe.

"Last night while you slept, D'Akola and I spoke of the journey ahead," Jayket said. "It won't be an easy one, Suniko. The Pushgans will do everything they can to keep us from reaching Zalvanus."

"I know. But together we will triumph, Jayket. Of that I am sure. I am prepared to face Pushgan attack and I will do my best to defend myself and you."

"Don't worry about me, sweet one." He kissed the top of her head. "Just protect yourself."

"What do you think happens to D'Akola's memory of us while he is a dragon? Do you think he still recognizes us? Will he know to head for Zalvanus?"

"D'Akola spoke to me of that. His animal side wars with his human side, sometimes making rational thought difficult. With our help and the help of Danior, his brother, all should proceed well. D'Akola must maintain his focus so he recalls who we are and the mission we seek to accomplish. And," Jayket chuckled, "so he remembers not to munch on us when his belly growls with hunger."

"I will speak to him throughout the day and remind him of who we are," Suniko promised. "And we must keep alert for goats and other animals to keep his belly satisfied." An unsavory thought rippled along her mind. "I only hope D'Akola won't forget he holds us in his talons as he flies. It would be deadly for us indeed if he dropped us from his clutches."

“True,” Jayket agreed. “But at least it would be a swift death.”

Vexed by his statement, Suniko noted, “If that was meant as a comforting word, dear Jayket, I’m afraid it failed.”

“I’m sorry.” He chuckled again. “In fact, D’Akola and I fashioned a harness of sorts last night. That way we won’t have to ride in the grip of his talons as he flies.”

“You mean we can ride atop his back the way I’ve seen Pushgans do with their dragons?”

“Not exactly,” Jayket clarified. “They have well-constructed saddles while all we have is this.”

Her gaze followed Jayket’s hand as he gestured to a long rope fashioned of knots and braids on the cave floor. Sturdy-looking branches were secured at either end.

“We’ll tie it around his neck,” Jayket explained. “And we’ll clutch the branches to steady ourselves as he flies.”

The images Suniko’s mind conjured were most precarious. The task of maintaining balance while atop a flying dragon’s scaly back seemed doubtful. She walked to the rope and grasped a portion of it, examining the fabric strips from which it was constructed. Surveying the inside of the cave and noting the lack of clothing, Suniko frowned. “You used our garments to fashion this?”

Shrugging, Jayket answered, “We had nothing else, save for the few lengths of rope we were able to create and add from the young green twigs D’Akola had at the back of the cave.”

New images of the two of them wobbling naked atop D’Akola assaulted her mind. “But that means we’ll be fully exposed, flying through the air flaunting our nakedness for all to see.”

“Only until we are able to find dead Pushgans or the corpses of others whose garments we can take.”

Suniko shuddered at Jayket’s grisly suggestion.

“Hopefully, Suniko, the enemy will be so transfixed by your bare beauty they will forget to sling arrows or hurl spears.”

Before Suniko could respond, the dragon snorted, emitting a somewhat muted roar. Suniko glanced D’Akola’s way in time to catch tendrils of smoke curling from his nostrils.

“He cautions that it is time for us to go,” Jayket said, looping his hand through the arm Suniko braced at her hip. “Ko’Loran, almighty god of sun and sky, has been benevolent this morning. See?” Jayket motioned toward the misty gray outside the cave. “The sky is blind with fog, providing us with some protection, but it will disperse soon. We’d best be on our way.” He gave her a tug.

Suniko stood statuelike, taking it all in, trying to fully grasp their odd predicament. It wasn’t that she was ashamed of her body, she’d never been overly shy or modest. But to perch naked atop a dragon, boldly forging a trail through the sky while—

“Suniko!” Jayket pinned her with an intense glare. “Tell me that you are not about to grumble and whine about traveling unclothed. The most important thing for us to focus on is survival. You can’t do that if you are consumed with angst about your bare tits.”

Jayket’s rational but pointed words snapped her out of her reverie. Damn, the man was right. “On the contrary,” she quipped, fisting a length of rope and yanking Jayket toward D’Akola, “I was just thinking of how best to dazzle those three-eyed sons of vermin with my magnificent breasts. Come, it is time to travel, my beloved.”

* * * * *

The day was nearly over, thank the gods. Exhausted from dodging Pushgans and random dragon hunters, the trio now found itself embroiled in a fearsome conflict.

Under attack from a quartet of Pushgans securely saddled atop a dragon’s back, D’Akola swooped through the air, roaring out a growl as a pair of arrows pierced his hide.

Suniko's blood ran cold at his pained cry. She held on for dear life as her dragon faltered and sank through the clouds before regaining his stability. Whether dragon or human, D'Akola's stamina and endurance were amazing.

The Pushgans followed their descent, screaming obscenities and vowing to send them to their deaths. Suniko wondered how it was possible to defend themselves against the savage but well-equipped warriors when all she and Jayket had were twin sacks of fist-sized rocks hanging from a rope slung over D'Akola's neck.

Maintaining a white-knuckled grip with one hand on the branch woven into the rope around D'Akola's neck, she carefully reached into the cloth sack, fisted a rock and hurled it with all her might at the Pushgans. Jayket did the same.

Elation flooded her as both rocks met their marks and one of the vile three-eyed beasts clasped his face while the other clutched his arm, wailing in pain. But her jubilation was short-lived when the sound of her beloved Jayket crying out in agony thundered through her ears.

"Oh, Jayket, your leg!" Suniko cried in horror as she eyed the Pushgan arrow that had pierced his thigh. She reached for his leg, feeling helpless as her fingers connected with the warm blood oozing from his wound.

"No, Suniko!" Jayket shouted from behind her. "I'll be fine. Hold on lest you fall."

"You tempt me with your tits, wench," the Pushgan who'd clasped his face bellowed. Once he removed his hand, the profusion of blood oozing next to the eye in his forehead told Suniko where the rock had connected. "And I'll take the greatest pleasure ripping them off with my teeth as I fuck your cunt!"

With that chilling vow they were met with a barrage of arrows. While the wounded D'Akola did his best to evade their attack, he was no match for the arsenal of weapons the Pushgans seemed to have at their disposal.

Suniko noted that D'Akola was pierced twice more and struggled to keep steady as he made his descent toward the ground below. Warring to keep her balance, she

suddenly shrieked as blinding pain infused her shoulder. Striving not to give in to the blackness that threatened to envelop her, Suniko gripped the branch tight.

The sound of Jayket's concerned shouts and the feel of his arm reaching around and cosseting her waist were most welcome indeed. But they weren't enough.

As they flew high above the treetops, both D'Akola and Jayket were pierced again. To Suniko's horror the dragon plummeted and both she and Jayket fell from his back.

That such a profusion of thoughts could race through her mind in so short a time amazed Suniko as she fell. She thought of her beloveds and the immense joy they'd brought into her life these past few days, and she also thought of her impending death, briefly wondering what it would be like to dwell among the shades in Niranjan, the spirit world. Would she meet D'Akola and Jayket there...or would she forever wander alone?

Her wonderings were halted when she landed harshly in the midst of a bush. Suniko remained still, assessing her circumstance. With the blue skies and bright sun above, she doubted that she'd landed in Niranjan. Aside from that she was in pain. And pain meant that she was still alive!

Struggling to separate herself from the shrub, Suniko met with thorny branches that nipped at her tender flesh. Finally she had righted herself, only to gasp when she realized she wasn't on the ground at all, but high on a cliff, with no apparent means of climbing down. Just past the bush was...nothingness. If she'd fallen just a measure this way or that, Suniko would have plunged to her death instead of merely being scratched by a prickly bush.

She looked all around, hoping to spot Jayket and D'Akola, praying they were still alive.

"Suniko!" she heard Jayket call just when she'd all but given up hope. "Suniko, are you well?"

For the first time her gaze fell to the arrow piercing her shoulder. During the fall the long stem of the arrow had broken and now just half of it protruded from just inside her shoulder. While the pain was agonizing, it was also bearable.

“Yes. I’m all right,” she called. “I can’t see you. Where are you, Jayket?”

“Here, in the tree,” he shouted and with a quick scan of the area she finally spotted him, perched precariously atop a tall tree.

“What of D’Akola?” Suniko asked.

“Below, slumped lifeless on the ground,” Jayket answered. “I don’t know if he’s still alive.”

Suniko’s heart sank, but then she remembered it was under similar circumstances that she first met D’Akola. He’d fallen from the sky with a thunderous thud – and he’d survived!

“D’Akola’s going to be just fine, Jayket, I feel it. But what of you and your wounds?”

“He’s going to die just like you, pretty wench,” a Pushgan voice, threatening and formidable, answered her.

Frightened like a child in the dark, fear held Suniko stone still.

“But perhaps before he’s slaughtered like the hog that he is, he’ll get to watch you writhe with pleasure as you feel a Pushgan cock filling your cunt.”

Dread and apprehension gripping her, Suniko slowly turned toward the Pushgan. She’d been raped more than once by the despicable creatures and the thought of repeating the horrific experience had her recoiling in terror.

She watched him look skyward and her gaze followed.

“Prepare to spy a worthy bit of entertainment,” he said to the Pushgans still dragon-back, hovering above them.

“Save a tit for me to suck,” one of them called and Suniko shuddered.

“Her ass is mine,” another cried.

“Suniko!” Jayket cried out.

Poor Jayket...she could hear the agony of powerlessness in his voice. Cruel that she would meet her end at the hands of Pushgans. Even crueler that Jayket would be forced to watch her gruesome demise.

“Her cunt juice flows for me, Jayket,” the Pushgan taunted, stepping closer to Suniko. “Can you smell her musk? It perfumes the air.”

Suniko stepped back only to be met with the thorny bush. She was trapped with nowhere to go but down. Briefly, for just a fleeting moment, she entertained thoughts of leaping to her death to escape, but Suniko couldn't do it. Fortifying herself, she decided that, rather than give in to cowardice, she'd battle to the end in hopes of ridding the earth of at least one more Pushgan before she died.

Her gaze fell to the Pushgan's breeches where he fumbled to release his cock.

“Tell me, Pushgan,” Suniko said, readying herself for the attack, “how is it that such a huge, bloat-bellied, gray-flesh creature like yourself is hindered with such an excruciatingly tiny cock?”

His expression turning lethal as his friends guffawed and shouted barbs from above, the Pushgan roared and advanced, pinning Suniko against the rock face.

“You'll pay for that,” he swore, fisting the arrow in her shoulder and twisting it, which nearly brought Suniko to her knees.

He bent close, licking her face and whispering of the deplorable acts he and his fellow dragon-riders planned to foist upon her.

Ignoring the stench of his saliva and the warm ooze of blood trickling from her shoulder to her breast, Suniko searched the depths of her being for every measure of rage it held. She smiled into the Pushgan's ugly face as the fury mounted inside until it spewed out in a deafening roar against the Pushgan's ear. Then she bit the vile thing off.

“My ear!” the great bully wailed, clapping the side of his head. “The bitch bit off my ear!”

Suniko spit out the disgusting bit of flesh and laughed. "Why not let me suck your cock and we'll see what I can do to that!"

"Never have I so enjoyed the prospect of butchering a woman," the Pushgan growled through clenched teeth.

Giving forth another battle cry, she reached between them and grappled for his cock, yanking it as hard as she could.

The giant heathen's hand flew at her from the side, connecting hard with her head, effortlessly sending Suniko over the cliff's edge. But just before she fell she found the presence of mind to grab on to him, clutching with all her might.

"You're coming with me, Pushgan," she screamed, sailing off the cliff to certain death.

They dropped through the trees, the ground fast approaching when, at the last possible moment, D'Akola swooped in and snatched her with his talons.

The Pushgan latched on to her ankle, clinging to his last chance for life. But D'Akola clearly had other ideas. With his other talon he clasped the Pushgan's waist and squeezed, effectively severing his body so that all that was left clinging to Suniko was the Pushgan's head, arms and torso.

A look of shocked horror on his revolting face, the Pushgan finally let loose of Suniko's leg and plummeted to the ground.

With Suniko safely in his grip, D'Akola glided to the earth, gently depositing Suniko at the base of the tree where Jayket was trapped. Giving her a soulful look, his tongue darted out and he licked her, paying special attention to her shoulder. Miraculously, the arrow fell from the wound and the bloodied piercing began to heal before Suniko's eyes.

Before she could say anything, D'Akola soared into the air, returning with Jayket a moment later and setting him at Suniko's feet. She gasped at the sight of him, unconscious and deadly pale from loss of blood due to multiple arrow piercings.

“Oh, Jayket,” she whispered, kneeling at his side. Try as she might, Suniko could detect no breath, no beat of his heart. His skin took on a faint bluish tinge, the same ashen color she’d seen too many times before when souls had been claimed by Shorana, goddess of the spirit world. A single fat tear coursed down her cheek, the sorrow of loss like a stab in her heart.

Suniko’s breath caught as D’Akola’s tongue came close to Jayket’s wounds. She prayed her dear dragon would be able to save Jayket, to restore his life.

“There! On the ground by that tree,” a Pushgan voice sounded before D’Akola could lick Jayket.

Suniko looked up to see the Pushgans and their ugly gray-brown dragon approaching. Her gaze turned to D’Akola and she noticed a bold violet glow developing around him. With a quick, remorseful glance at Jayket, the dragon took to the air again, heading straight for the enemy’s dragon.

Oh, my son, my son...

The disembodied female voice caught Suniko unawares, sending a jolt of fear winding up her spine. She looked all around her but couldn’t locate the source of the mournful voice.

But there in her arms, something miraculous occurred. Jayket was bathed in a golden light that felt to her like soft, warm rays of sun. A moment later she heard him gasp, his lungs filling with air. The deadly pallor left Jayket and the pink flush of life returned to his skin as, one by one, the arrows slid from the holes in his body and each brutal sore healed.

Jayket’s eyes opened and Suniko sobbed tears of thanks that she was able to glimpse those beautiful sapphire-like orbs once more.

“Oh, my Jayket,” she cried, showering him with kisses. “I thought sure I’d lost you forever.”

“Force the dragon down!” came a Pushgan voice from above. “Slaughter the beast!”

Suniko looked to the heavens to see the sky between the Pushgans and D'Akola darken with a thick spray of arrows.

"D'Akola!" Jayket shouted, struggling to get to his feet.

"There's nothing we can do, Jayket." Suniko held him back. It wasn't too difficult because he hadn't yet fully recovered his strength. "Look...see how D'Akola glows? He is being protected by forces beyond our sight."

As she spoke, D'Akola soared through the barrage without consequence. Bellowing obscenities and depraved curses, the Pushgans hurled spears at D'Akola along with a new batch of arrows. As if his body were made of granite, the weaponry bounced off him like harmless toys.

Even from the ground Suniko could see the rage in D'Akola's countenance. In righteous fury, he breathed a menacing column of fire at the Pushgans who'd tortured his friends. Shrieking a high-pitched cry, the Pushgan dragon retaliated with a scorching blaze of his own.

To Suniko's astonishment, the violet glow around D'Akola grew brighter and the flames exhaled by the Pushgan dragon reversed their path, turning back on the Pushgans in a raging inferno and roasting the lot of them to a crisp.

"What just happened, Jayket?" Suniko asked in wonder. "First I was stolen from certain death, then we were miraculously healed. Finally, our dragon has transformed yet again, this time into an avenging hero, unscathed by enemy weapons."

Looking every bit as bewildered as Suniko felt, Jayket shook his head. "I don't know. One moment I was watching your dire situation with the Pushgan on that cliff, cursing the air that I could do nothing to save you. Then I found myself wavering between the land of the living and the dead, accepting my fate while bemoaning yours. And then—"

Clearly at a loss for words, he stopped, his mouth opening and closing as if to continue, but no other words came forth.

“There is magic going on, Jayket. Just as powerful as Shivrane’s, but this magic is for good.”

“D’Akola said his brother would help us,” Jayket said, “but I never imagined it would be by the use of such compelling magic.”

Alighting gracefully nearby, the dragon’s expression could almost be called serene. In fact, Suniko could have sworn she detected a smile across his features.

“Oh, D’Akola, how I wish you could speak to us right now,” she said. “I burn with unanswered questions.”

“The sun sets soon,” Jayket noted. “Let’s hope the man D’Akola remembers what transpired while in dragon form so he can provide answers. Look, Suniko. I think he wants us to follow.” Jayket got to his feet, bringing Suniko with him and they followed the gestures the dragon made with his snout.

Just beyond the bank of trees they discovered a small lake.

“Water!” Yanking Jayket into an embrace, Suniko nearly squealed with delight. “Oh, Jayket, we can drink. We can bathe!”

“There is more,” Jayket said, turning Suniko in the direction of a cache of chest-high bushes. “Though I can barely believe it...”

As the setting sun cast its last vestiges of orange-gold light, Suniko caught a curious shimmer atop the bushes. She and Jayket stepped closer to investigate. And then Suniko realized what it was catching the sun’s rays.

“Good gods!” she gasped. “Surely I am dreaming!”

“If you are,” Jayket said, his tone one of astonishment, “then we’re sharing the same dream.”

Chapter Six

“Can you believe it, Jayket?” Suniko blurted with excitement as she fingered the rich folded fabric neatly positioned on the bushes. “Garments as fine and delicate as those I wore in Princess Aladee’s court.” She and Jayket examined each outfit, marveling at the lack of harshness so prevalent with the abrasive sackcloth they’d worn for so long.

“Clothing and soft leather shoes for me, for you and for D’Akola,” she went on. “Ooh, and what is that I smell?” Suniko sniffed the air and hugged herself, almost bubbling with gladness. “Food, Jayket, food!”

She and Jayket followed their noses to the small flat rocks hidden amid the bushes. There sat woven baskets of foodstuffs of the sort Suniko had all but forgotten during her imprisonment.

“Look at it all, Jayket. Why, it’s a veritable feast for us to enjoy.”

“But how?” Jayket wondered. “It doesn’t seem possible. Wait!” he commanded, stilling Suniko’s hand as she reached for a lush, ripe fig. “It could be poisoned. A foul trap set by the Pushgans.”

“Eat of it freely, my friends,” D’Akola said from behind them. In their excitement, neither Suniko nor Jayket had been aware of his shift from dragon to human.

“This sustenance, as well as a night free of the fear of Pushgan attack, is provided us by the gods,” he explained. “My brother told me of it. He and Jia-Nian, Queen of Zalvanus, petitioned the gods to provide us with food, clothing and safety for the last part of our journey.”

“Are we that close to Zalvanus?” Suniko asked, noticing that they were suddenly surrounded by the flickering glow of lighted torches rising from the ground.

"We'll arrive early tomorrow," D'Akola replied. "Danior assured me I'll have nothing to fear from dragon hunters. The Zalvaneans will be expecting us and know that I will be in dragon form."

"And do we have your brother and the queen to thank for our miraculous healings?" Jayket asked.

"Suniko and I have the queen to thank for our healings," D'Akola answered. "But before Jia-Nian could perform your healing through me, Jayket, I took to the air, battling the Pushgans." He placed his hand on Jayket's shoulder and smiled. "You were saved from the grip of death by the greatest of all deities. It is by Ko'Loran's power and grace, the almighty god of sun and sky, that you are still alive."

"Ko'Loran?" Jayket wondered aloud. "I don't understand. Why would he bother with the fate of a mere mortal?"

D'Akola's smile turned wry. "It seems you're only half mortal after all, Jayket. The rumors of your godly parentage were not exaggerated. The sight of Ko'Loran was wondrous. Majestic." His eyes gleamed as he spoke. "While engaged in battle I glanced down and saw him for myself. Didn't you see him, Jayket?"

"No. I saw nothing but approaching death."

"I heard a woman's voice calling for her son," Suniko offered. "But I didn't see anyone."

"It was Jayket's mother," D'Akola said. "My brother put the knowledge in my mind as I wondered upon seeing the image of Ko'Loran, along with a woman as fair-headed and blue-eyed as Jayket, shimmer into view."

"I can't believe it," Jayket breathed, plowing his fingers through his hair.

"Danior said to tell you," D'Akola went on, "that in answer to your mother's wishes, your father took mercy on you and restored you to life."

"My *father*...so it truly was more than just my grandmother weaving fanciful tales," Jayket said, his jaw dropping. His features took on such a curious look of shock and wonder, Suniko nearly laughed.

"So that means one of my lovers is half god and one is half dragon," she noted, grabbing the men into a three-way hug, clinging hard. Half crying and half laughing, she told them, "I am overcome with joy, so very thankful we're still alive and well. I can't imagine my life without the two of you. I thought surely today would be our last among the living. I love you, Jayket and D'Akola. Oh how I love you both."

"I echo your sentiments, little bird," D'Akola said, kissing the top of Suniko's head. "I've come to feel as though we three are parts of a whole. My soul tells me that I need the two of you to be complete."

"Then let me make this a declaration of love all around," Jayket said, "for I feel the same. This evening I am filled with wonder, humility, gratitude and love."

"And hunger," Suniko quipped, drooling at the savory aroma of cheese and roasted meat and fish. "Great, gnawing hunger. I for one plan to eat until my belly swells as big and fat as a Pushgan's!"

"The food awaits." A grin firmly in place, D'Akola clapped his hand against Suniko's flat belly and rib cage. "What say we get to work fattening our delicate little bird, Jayket?"

"As long as we don't fill her too much," Jayket cautioned. "We need to leave plenty of room for double penetration."

"Mmmm, what a fine dessert that will make," Suniko said, feeling the lusty warmth of passion returning to her body after the day's grueling events. "And then we'll bathe and play in the water together." The crystal waters called to her so that she was sorely tempted to hop into the lake then and there, before soothing her empty belly. But hunger won out.

"We'll fuck and float," D'Akola suggested with a laugh.

Enveloped in the sheer joy of good health, delicious food and wine and the miracle of enjoying it all together, the threesome weren't able to wait until they'd finished eating before they began dabbling in passionate pursuits. Jayket started the carnal fun by slathering crumbled goat milk cheese, olive oil and fragrant cured olives over Suniko's breasts.

"D'Akola, I invite you to join me in sampling this most tantalizing first course. No bread is needed, I assure you," Jayket said before trailing his tongue through the salty mixture. Jayket came up from his carnal appetizer with a distinct smile on his face and a chin dripping with oil and bits of cheese. Swabbing his tongue across Jayket's chin, D'Akola offered a satisfied groan.

"Delicious. I gladly accepting the invitation," D'Akola said. He took his time tasting Suniko's food-adorned breasts. "Never have I enjoyed this savory combination more," he said, giving Suniko a heated look that warmed her down to her belly.

Luxuriating in the warm, wet feel of their tongues and mouths on her, she recalled how, in the midst of terror, carnage and desperation, the lovers had gratefully snagged every opportunity they could to be together.

Oh, but lovemaking took on an entirely different pace and mood now when the fearsome threat of attack was absent.

Each time they had made love before, they knew it might be the last, which had heightened the sense of passion. While the ever-present sense of apprehension meant sometimes hurried but always rapturous fucking, there was something incredibly rich, rewarding and appealing about sex without fear.

As her lovers' mouths traveled her body, Suniko allowed herself to fully submerge in the bliss of their actions. Eliminating the menace of possible attack, she'd been able to enjoy and digest her food well and imbibe liberally of the good wine. The wine had gently blanketed her awareness and she indulged in the hazy fog of bliss that cosseted her.

She became so tranquil that Suniko didn't even know whose mouth it was trailing toward her channel. The only awareness as fingers parted her nether lips and a hot tongue speared her, was that she yearned for the exotic pleasure of being tongue-fucked.

A lazy glance told her that her beloved D'Akola was the one feasting at her opening, while dearest Jayket worshipped her breasts, sucking, licking, biting and tugging.

The night air came alive with the sound of crackling torch flames mingled with slurping, male groans and the melody of Suniko's impassioned moans. How delicious to be able to moan aloud, to indulge in the enthralled sounds of sweet ecstasy without fear of attracting the enemy and battling to stay alive.

Jayket's tongue traveled from her breast, licking a hot circular trail around her lips. As his deft fingers pinched her nipple, he took his time tasting her jaw, her chin, her throat before his mouth captured hers in a deep, drugging kiss. Spellbound, her breath hitched and her heart pounded as their tongues danced together with the unbridled joy of true love.

Oh, what wondrous pleasure surged through her at the sensations of Jayket paying homage to her breasts and mouth while D'Akola's carnal ministrations at her channel had her edging toward the precipice of orgasm.

"I am greedy and selfish," D'Akola said a moment later, and Suniko immediately missed his mouth at her chamber opening. "It is unkind of me, Jayket, to deny you the sweetness of her musk after enjoying our cheese and olive fare. Come. Eat of Suniko."

Jayket's mouth left hers. The smile he gave them spoke of his eagerness to sup of her juices. But before he could, D'Akola cupped the back of his head, hauling Jayket close.

"A preview of her sweet flavor," D'Akola said, kissing Jayket deeply. Watching the men share a passionate kiss and hearing the air fill with their groans pushed Suniko ever closer to climax. Soon the men had changed places and now Jayket ate at her

channel while D'Akola's tongue fucked her mouth with resolve as his fingers plucked her nipples.

Suniko struggled to hold off her climax as long as possible. She longed for this ecstasy to last, to go on and on until she dissolved into a sated pool of pleased bliss. The wine's heady influence, however, had clouded her strength of resolve to the point that when she felt Jayket's finger nudge into her anus, Suniko gave up all hope of delaying the inevitable.

Spiraling sensations uncoiled deep in her belly and soon the zing of heated blood coursed through her veins. Just when she feared the pleasure would be too much to bear, her lovers transported her to that mystical world between life and death where passion reigned.

Jayket's moistened finger forced past the ring of muscle, fully piercing her dark passage at the same time he took her clit between his teeth, nibbling and sucking without mercy.

Both of her nipples were raw with pleasure-pain as D'Akola rolled, pinched and tugged, all the while his skilled tongue fucked her mouth.

With a zealous cry, Suniko's body stiffened. Her lovers' names spilled from her lips as she succumbed to the powerful quaking of a most extraordinary orgasm.

Suniko's sated moans and the perfume of her sex mingled with the sounds of the night, crickets chirping, owls hooting and the occasional sound of a stalking cat bringing down its prey. She lay there, replete in a happy, sweaty slump between them, for a long while.

"I want to taste you. Together. As soon as we finish our dinner," she announced a short while later, reaching for a roast leg of fowl and tearing into its flesh with her teeth. Its skin was crisp, its meat moist and tender and it was faultlessly seasoned with olive oil, herbs and sea salt. She couldn't help moaning with pleasure at its culinary perfection.

The delighted moans and groans they offered as they ate closely matched the satisfied sounds of lovemaking. The enjoyment of great food was, indeed, an ideal accompaniment to the enjoyment of great sex.

Once they'd finished the main course, Suniko stilled their hands as Jayket and D'Akola reached for the basket filled with fruits, nuts and sweetmeats.

"Allow me to prepare a satisfying dessert all three of us can enjoy," she suggested. Before long she had concocted a thin paste of raw honey, mashed dates, ground almonds and rosewater. Scooping up a dab with each index finger, she brought the mixture to her lovers' lips.

"Food for the gods," D'Akola murmured, licking her finger clean.

"I can't remember when I've enjoyed such a delicious sweet," Jayket agreed. "Other than your sweet cunt cream, of course." He punctuated his remark with an impassioned gaze.

"Naturally, nothing is as sweet and delicious as the juice of my love channel," Suniko quipped. "But this sweetmeat comes close. Now stretch out on the ground, next to each other."

The muscle-bound duo complied. Once they were positioned she carefully painted each cock with the mixture until their erect, frosted shafts looked like twin columns of sweetmeats rising from the curly thatches of hair between their thighs. The tempting sight made her smile.

"Now hold up your arms, not the ones next to each other, your outer arms." She slathered some of the paste on the insides of their wrists, spreading it almost to their elbows. "You'll lick this honeyed mixture from one another while I enjoy eating it from your cocks."

Suniko loved the way their eyes flashed with interest and clearly identifiable lust.

"Oh, I'm going to so thoroughly enjoy this," she breathed, eyeing the luscious treats.

“Not as much as we will,” D’Akola said. “I assure you.”

“Roll onto your sides,” she instructed, “facing each other.”

“Have you noticed that she’s quite fond of issuing orders?” Jayket asked D’Akola with a teasing smile as he rolled to his side.

“Indeed. What do you suggest we do about it?” D’Akola asked, facing him.

“You both look so tantalizing like that,” Suniko noted. “Eye to eye, chest to chest and cock to cock. With your beautifully muscled forms, handsome faces and magnificent cocks, you could easily be mistaken for a pair of gods. Ah, my loves, how sweetly my channel aches at the thought of eating you.”

Amid dual rasping utterances, both men’s cocks visibly lengthened at her expressive words. Suniko had to bite the inside of her cheek to keep from engaging in a triumphant chuckle.

Jayket cleared his throat. “I say we let her have her way for the moment,” he answered D’Akola. “We can tame the wench later.”

“I look forward to it,” D’Akola said. “We’ll start by turning her over our knees until her naked, alabaster ass is positioned high and round, just right for striking.” He waved a hand through the air in demonstration.

“Alas, my godly twosome have become jesters,” Suniko grumbled good-naturedly. In reality, D’Akola’s words had her juices running warm and wet between her thighs.

Kneeling along Jayket’s backside, she brought their bobbing cocks together with her fingers, Jayket’s cock head resting at D’Akola’s curls and vice versa. Clasping them together and eyeing her bounty of masculine flesh, Suniko took her sweet time sliding her tongue across her lips.

The slow, anticipatory lick reaffirmed her intent as she leaned forward, bringing the tip of her tongue closer to its destination. Their husky, expectant groans were like lustful notes of music. After nuzzling her nose in their curls, breathing in their musky scents, Suniko licked the twin cocks.

Plainly enjoying the visual of her tongue gliding back and forth from caps to bases, the men watched her work. Their attention rapt, Jayket's and D'Akola's impassioned, heavy-lidded expressions had her nipples beading, her clit throbbing.

"You're supposed to be eating from each other," she reminded them, pausing from her appetizing carnal task long enough to watch their tongues dart out, sliding across each other's arms.

With a purposeful lick of D'Akola's inner wrist, Jayket turned his attention to the watchful Suniko. "Don't you have some important work to get back to, little bird?" he encouraged with a lazy smile. "My cock grows impatient."

"I'm glad, because your impatience fuels my desire." Suniko offered a low, throaty laugh. "Mmmm," she cooed a moment later, her own tongue busy again at their firm yet supple flesh. "While you taste wonderful separately, there's definitely something to be said for enjoying a double cock treat, especially when it's a succulent combination of man-meat and sweetmeat."

Suniko busied her hands at their cocks, alternately cradling their balls in her palms and massaging the sensitive area between cock and anus. They didn't have to tell her how much they enjoyed her ministrations, for it was exquisitely evident.

She sucked them and scraped gently with her teeth until she'd finally licked off every last morsel of honeyed paste from their cocks. Flushed with a delicious sense of power due to her ability to elicit one pleased groan after another from the men, she smiled. Their freshly tongued cocks jerked in her fisted grasp and when she looked up from their groins, D'Akola and Jayket were united in a raw, greedy kiss.

The appealing sight had her breath catching and her blood heating to a spicy potion coursing through her veins.

"I need you to shift just a bit so I can take both cock heads into my mouth at once," she told them as their lips parted. Before long they'd found the perfect position. "Yes, that's it." She swirled a fingertip around each swollen cap, lowered her head and tongued the pearly drops of fluid trickling from the tiny slits at the tips.

“That’s what I wanted,” Suniko said, wrapping her fingers around each erect shaft. “A double-fisted handful of lust-hardened cock to suck and lick and nibble.”

Taking the dual cock heads into her mouth, she used every technique she knew to ensure the experience was one of ultimate rapture for them. While it was impossible to fit their entire lengths in her mouth, she was still able to manage some skillful tongue and teeth work.

Their bodies bucking beneath her with each swipe of her tongue, Suniko’s lovers groaned their bliss. Each man reached down to spear his fingers through her long hair, holding her head closer to their groins. It fulfilled her to no end to give back some of the pleasure they’d given her. Just knowing she could bring them to a state of ecstasy thrilled Suniko beyond measure.

“Such striking men,” she whispered, glancing up from her task, working their cock skins back and forth over their glans. “And such magnificent cocks.” She clutched their balls and gave a gentle squeeze.

“Gods, I’m going to come,” D’Akola growled.

“At the same time,” Suniko instructed. “I want to drink your seed and Jayket’s at the same instant. You can do that, can’t you, my beloveds? You can come for me together, spray the cavern of my throat with twin streams of your hot male essence.”

She returned to sucking them and nearly cried out in gladness as she felt their bodies stiffen at once. Her lovers tensed and shuddered, raw, primal growls rising in their chests and exploding from their throats.

The sound of her name rent the night air in a harsh masculine chorus as D’Akola and Jayket came in pulsing, fiery bursts, their cream sliding down her throat in a hot, silky wash.

Oh, it was all so sublimely satisfying.

The three collapsed together into a contented heap of pleased flesh. Before long, using her body as pillows, the two men were snoring. Suniko smiled at the satisfying

sound of sated males in restful, worry-free sleep. Gazing skyward at the deep purple night and flickering stars, she sent up a silent prayer of thanks for her good fortune.

The only thing that could make her world any more perfect was the assurance that it could be like this forevermore. Suniko and her beloveds building a life together, raising a houseful of babes, some blond like Jayket, some with D'Akola's rich brown hair and perhaps one or two with her raven locks.

Threading her fingers through their hair, Suniko watched her relaxing lovers. Her mouth curved up in a bittersweet grin and she sighed. Alas, there were no such guarantees. Once they reached Zalvanus and became caught up in duty and responsibility they may never see each other again.

At least she had this one last night with them.

And Suniko intended to make the most of it.

She allowed them to sleep a while longer and then began playing with their limp cocks, gliding their cock skins up and down over the purple caps. Every so often she'd lean down and kiss the sensitive slits at the tips, loving the way their cocks responded with persistent growth. Their snores were replaced with sleepy groans as the bits of manflesh in her hands came alive, swelling little by little, until she soon had two nearly erect cocks at her disposal.

"Enough sleeping, lazy ones" she chastised, shaking them until they roused. "I do believe something about double penetration was mentioned earlier. I pray you don't intend to keep me waiting much longer."

At her continued prodding, Jayket and D'Akola fully awoke. They dragged themselves up until they sat on either side of Suniko, their cocks rigid like mighty spears jutting from their groins. She wasted no time in fisting their flesh.

"Yes...that's better," she cooed. "I'm wet and ready for you, my loves. Do with me what you will."

D'Akola offered a meager smile that soon developed into a broad grin. "See, Jayket? What did I tell you about her being insatiable?" In one swift movement, he lifted Suniko until she straddled him, then he impaled her eager opening with his cock.

Wiggling back and forth, she moaned, grabbing double handfuls of his chest, digging her fingers into the strapping muscles there. "Oh, so good...you feel amazing, D'Akola."

D'Akola grasped her waist and raised them both until he sat on the edge of a flat rock, giving Jayket better access to Suniko's ass. "Her fine white ass awaits you, Jayket."

D'Akola's words brought a new rush of liquid pleasure to her channel.

"Where are you going?" Suniko asked over her shoulder as Jayket walked back in the direction of the food spread. "Don't tell me you've decided you're hungry again."

"Ah, how I love the impatient greediness in your voice," Jayket answered with a chuckle. "Fear not, my sweet, I'm only getting some oil to grease my cock for easier entry."

Jayket was back in a moment, getting positioned properly. She felt his oiled finger twisting up inside her anus first, curling and stretching. Then a second finger joined the first. Suniko trembled with anticipation until, at last, Jayket slowly thrust part of his cock into her.

"Are you ready for all of me?" he asked her.

A spiral of lust jolted her, hot as the flames D'Akola breathed while in dragon form. Ready? Dear gods, she felt all but consumed by need!

"I've never been more ready for anything. I want to feel the both of you filling me completely. Don't hold back...either of you." She let out a sharp breath as Jayket rammed his cock into her dark passage. At the same time, D'Akola plunged into her channel with spirited thrusts.

She glanced at D'Akola to find his heavy-lidded gaze fastened to his cock as it glided in and out of her depths. With some effort, Suniko managed to turn just enough to catch Jayket's gaze affixed in a similar way.

Each man had clutched one of her breasts, treating her nipples to seemingly endless, merciless pleasure-pain. It felt so good to be fucked like this, to be wedged between two straining fine-chiseled bodies.

The exotic thrill of double penetration tore a lingering cry from her. Being profoundly filled was even better than she'd imagined. As she was hammered from front and back, listening to the sounds of deep male growls and flesh slapping against flesh, Suniko realized she was losing her sense of self. Basking in the bliss of pure sensation, her body signaled her mind that it was time to disengage, time to take to the air where her spirit would soar with orgasm.

Her body stiffened and she shouted, cried out their names. Somewhere in the back of her mind she heard the impassioned roars of her lovers and felt their bodies become rigid before the three of them trembled and quaked with the force of stupendous climaxes.

What a perfect, memorable end to their time together.

"If I had one wish," Suniko said once her senses had returned, snuggling between them and coaxing their heads to rest on her breasts, "it would be that we could be like this always. Together. Forever enjoying each other's bodies, loving each other, eating together, playing together."

She promised herself not to cry. "Parting ways in Zalvanus is the only thing that saddens me about our arrival there," she continued. "I just want you both to know that I shall treasure these magical times we've shared for the rest of my days."

"It's true that you are a princess's handmaiden," Jayket said, tracing Suniko's areola with his fingertip. "And that I am a priest of Gavvina and that D'Akola is a Guardian of Zalvanus. We all have our responsibilities. But the reason we travel to Zalvanus is to

serve because we're needed there. I see no reason why we can't accomplish that service together."

"There was never a time that I saw myself as a family man," D'Akola said, mirroring Jayket's actions on Suniko's other breast. "A guardian must be focused and alert, ready to protect and serve at all times. While I've known other guardians to marry, I could never see it for myself." His finger stopped circling. "Until now," he added with conviction. "You two have become far more than friends and lovers. You are indeed my family and I never want that to change."

Suniko hadn't expected either of them to say what they had. The impact of their affirmative words slammed into her with such force that she dragged herself to a sitting position, buried her head in her hands and sobbed.

Both men bolted up to sitting positions.

"What is it, little bird?" Jayket soothed, smoothing his fingers through her hair.

"Something we said upset her," D'Akola noted, snaking his arms around her and rocking Suniko. "Tell us what we can do to dry your tears, my sweet. It hurts my heart to see you so."

"Mine too," Jayket agreed.

"Oh, my sweet, wonderful beloveds," Suniko cried, finally taking her hands from her face and smiling at her men. "These aren't tears of sadness or anguish. These are tears of joy, of supreme happiness. I never expected that you would share my feelings. I fully believed we would part, only to perhaps see each other for a rare tryst...until one or both of you took a wife, that is."

"I can't imagine a better choice for a wife than Suniko," Jayket said, resting his head against hers and hugging her. "Can you, D'Akola?"

"Better?" D'Akola laughed. "Surely you jest, Jayket. As it is, it takes two of us to satisfy our insatiable little bird. Two of us to keep her company, to eat with her, play with her and give her a houseful of babes. What man in his right senses could ever hope for a better woman than that?"

“You want me to bear your babes?” Suniko said, clasping her breast. As a handmaiden, she never expected to marry and have children of her own. Especially when her virginity was long past. “But my body has been tried...I’m not an innocent.”

“Thank the good god Ko’Loran for that,” Jayket said.

“Suniko, you’re both innocent and worldly enough to be the most fascinating woman I’ve ever met,” D’Akola said.

Suniko’s heart was so full of gladness she feared it would burst within her breast.

“The question is,” D’Akola continued, “do you want to be tethered to a husband who’s half dragon?”

Suniko broke into a full smile. “As long as you promise never to eat me should we quarrel.” That had both D’Akola and Jayket laughing.

“Has your brother addressed your shape-shifting?” Jayket asked. “Isn’t there anything he or the queen can do to break Shivrane’s curse?”

“Alas, no,” D’Akola said, and Suniko could see the twinge of melancholy in his expression. “But with our help Zalvanus will overthrow Pushga and its evil leader, Tordanuk. When that happens, Shivrane will meet her end, thereby bringing an end to every malevolent curse she has ever spewed. On that day,” D’Akola said, his features brightening with a smile, “I will be a man by day as well as night, forevermore.”

“Oh, and what a great day of celebration that will be!” Suniko said, cupping D’Akola’s face in her hands and kissing him. “But for now, my loves,” she rose to her feet and held out her hands to them, “we have precious few hours left to enjoy each other before D’Akola shifts form.”

“Come, let’s head for the water now,” Jayket suggested. “It’s time to bathe away the old fears as well as our old lives.”

“Yes, we’ll cleanse each other and love each other and fuck each other until we’re completely spent,” Suniko said.

“And when we emerge from the lake,” D’Akola added as they walked hand in hand to the water, “we three will be forever as one, pledged as husbands and wife before the moon goddess, Ivarus.”

Forever as one. A sob caught in Suniko’s throat and her heart swelled with happiness as she and her beloveds stepped into the soothing waters.

About the Author

Daisy Dexter Dobbs has a valid reason for lying when she's asked where she gets the ideas for her books. She knows most people wouldn't believe the truth about the madcap mayhem that goes on in her daily life. Case in point: Imagine frantically trying to file your way out of a locked bathroom door with a teeny nail file, dressed in nothing but a too-small towel while you're waiting for a real estate agent and a family with three small kids to arrive for a showing of your house. Okay, now picture the contents of a box of just-delivered sex toys (purely for research purposes, you understand) strewn on the bed just outside that locked bathroom door. Mmm-hmm, it really happened.

Happily married to her soulmate, the award winning artist and writer believes in love, happily-ever-afters and the wondrous, magical escapism of reading and writing.

Daisy welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and email address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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