

ELLORA'S CAVE **AEON**



PUNISHING  
*Tabitha*

EVANGELINE  
ANDERSON

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Punishing Tabitha

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# ***PUNISHING TABITHA***

**Evangeline Anderson**

## **Prologue**

“Next up to the block, this fine piece of female flesh from Old Earth. Look at those tits, gentlemen—firm and plump, those rosy red nipples just ripe for sucking. And the cunt on her—I’ll swear on whatever god you like that I’ve never felt a tighter one in all my years as a slaver. And this sweet little mouth—just perfect for sucking cock...” The slaver had to snatch his hand away quickly before a set of even white teeth snapped off several of his fingers.

*Damn, missed!* Sergeant Tabitha Bryce glared at her captor as he jerked his chubby digits out of reach. His fingers weren’t the only thing she’d like to bite off, but with her wrists chained to the high stone arch above her, she was limited as to her options. She was kneeling naked on a hard wooden stage and by the stains on the planks beneath her she was guessing that it had seen plenty of blood, sweat and tears, not to mention other body fluids over the years.

“As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, gentlemen, this little Earth female has a lot to offer.” Lightly, the slaver touched her nipples with his long, thin wand and Tabitha felt coolness immediately followed by growing warmth as a pale pink gel was brushed over her captive peaks. *Not again!* She gritted her teeth, knowing what was to follow.

The Drusinian love knots she wore around her nipples responded to the gel and tightened convulsively, pulling taut the slender silver cord that led down to her spread pussy. Tabitha gasped and bit her lip against the alien sensation as the knot that surrounded her swollen clit tightened as well. She swore aloud as her back arched in involuntary and unwanted pleasure and glared at the slaver, hatred burning hot in her pale blue eyes.

"She's got a temper!" one of the prospective buyers yelled from the crowd and there were murmurs of agreement from the men around him.

"The more fun to tame her, gentlemen!" the slaver assured them. "After all, who wants a wilting flower when you can have a she devil instead?"

"A wilting flower ain't likely to bite off yer dick," shouted another man. His words raised a general shout of laughter in the hot, dry air of the Orthana market place. Tabitha threw back her long mane of silvery blonde hair and bared her teeth. Maybe if she could make herself unattractive enough, V wouldn't be able to sell her.

Seeing what she was doing, the slaver leaned down and whispered in her ear, "Ruin this sale for me, girl, and I swear I'll give you for free to the lowest, most disease-ridden brothel on the planet before sundown."

Tabitha started to bare her teeth again and then thought better of it. V hadn't gotten the reputation of being the most ruthless slaver in the galaxy by playing nice. If he said he'd give her to the worst place possible, she believed him. But damn it, she didn't want to get sold or given away at all, especially not to one of the characters standing below the wooden stage and ogling her naked body. Some of them were obviously just casual shoppers, the idle rich of Orthana Six interested in seeing a free show. But some of the men in the crowd had the hard-bitten look of career criminals. If she was bought by one of them, Tabitha was pretty certain she'd have a miserable life until her crew came to find her. *If* they came to find her, that was. It wasn't like she'd told anyone where she was going or what her plan was.

*Stupid, stupid, stupid!* She berated herself for the hundredth time. Stupid to leave her ship and her crew with no knowledge of her whereabouts. Stupid to think she could catch an intergalactically known slaver like V on her own. And most of all, stupid to let a man like her commanding officer, Captain Keer, goad her into doing so. Not that he'd actually taunted her or even even remotely suggested she should go off on her own and try something so foolish. No, that had been all Tabitha's idea. She'd had the crazy notion that she could somehow impress him and win his approval, although why his

approval should mean so much to her, she really couldn't say. After all, Captain Keer was Zentorian, and everyone knew that Zentorians didn't even have emotions. Or if they did, they certainly didn't show them.

*Why should I care what he thinks? she asked herself. Why should I give a damn? And more importantly, why should I care so much that I go and pull a stupid prank like this and get myself sold at an illegal slave auction?*

She had asked herself that question many times but the answer still didn't come. As the Drusinian love knots tightened around her nipples and clit once more, giving her another surge of unwanted pleasure, she scanned the crowd and thought about how she'd gotten into this mess in the first place.

## Chapter One

It had all started almost from the moment she'd come aboard her new assignment, an intergalactic police cruiser called *Pride of Justice*. She was young for such an assignment, young to be promoted to sergeant, but Tabitha had started her career in criminal justice with a bang. Still wet behind the ears from the academy, she had offered herself as bait in a vice sting in her home precinct on Mars. Her captain had been reluctant to let her do it but in the end he had agreed. Despite the danger, Tabitha had considered the results well worth the risk. The sting had brought down several well-known racketeers, proving her value as an undercover agent and an officer.

All at once the offers from other law enforcement agencies began pouring in but Tabitha knew what she wanted to do and it wasn't to stay planet-bound her whole life. She wanted to soar and what better way than on an Intergal cruiser? The intergalactic crime fighting agency kept records on all of the galaxy's most heinous criminals and tracked them down from planet to planet, dealing with the worst of the worst. That was where Tabitha wanted to be—in the thick of the action. So it was with anticipation and excitement that she stepped on board her new ship and accepted her new commission.

*Pride of Justice* was a multi-decked, deep-range cruiser that staffed around twenty officers and ten support crew. As the youngest and the lowest ranked officer on board, Tabitha knew she would have to prove herself. She just didn't know how hard it would be.

Her troubles started almost immediately when her guide, an older officer with graying red hair named Sergeant Lindy Seamus, had shown her to the small, Spartan quarters with dull gray metal walls that was to be her home for the next five years.

"Bunk there and you can stow your stuff in the fold-out wall unit," she said, nodding at a narrow cot with a thin foam mattress and a folded olive green blanket.

"You'll find your new uniform in the wall unit too. Bathroom's in there." She nodded at the narrow sliding door adjacent to the bed. "You can take an actual water shower since we're in port right now but be sure you change the setting to sono once we leave planet-side. We have water restrictions in deep space and the captain takes 'em pretty seriously."

"Okay." Tabitha nodded, making a mental note. The room was so bare, nearly a cell, but she could brighten it up with the few personal decorations she'd brought. And as for the bunk and the shower, well, she hadn't signed onto Intergal for lavish accommodations—she was here to catch the bad guys and make a name for herself at the same time.

Sergeant Seamus must have read the thoughts passing over Tabitha's face because she smirked slightly and put one hand on her hip. "Ain't exactly the lap of luxury, is it, rookie?"

Tabitha lifted her chin and gave her fellow officer a slight smile. "I'm not here for luxury, Sergeant Seamus. I just want to do my job and keep my nose clean."

Seamus had made a slightly sour face, as though she'd hoped for a different reaction. "Huh. Maybe you'll think differently when you've been with Intergal as long as I have. But as to keeping your nose clean, you can start by freshening up before you meet Captain Keer."

"Uh, Captain Keer?" Tabitha frowned. She was almost certain the name of *Pride of Justice's* commander had looked different on her transfer papers. In fact, it had been a long string of hard consonants and strange vowel sounds that she had worked hard to learn to pronounce. *Keerklovshionovitch*. She's said it over in her mind so often she was sure it would come right out the moment she saw her new commanding officer.

Seamus shrugged. "You can't say his real name—it's Zentorian, you know, so he goes by Keer, which is as close as most of us can get."

*We'll see about that.* Tabitha smiled to herself as she listened to the senior officer drone on. She had an idea that she already knew how to impress her new captain. So no



one on board could say his name? She would show them. The minute she introduced herself to the captain she would call him by his true and proper Zentorian name. She knew a little about the race, which came from a distant system with a red sun. They were a stern, severe people who supposedly showed no emotion but nonetheless took a fierce pride in their heritage. Pronouncing the captain's name correctly was a sure way to make a good first impression and make him remember hers as well when it came time to hand out assignments and promotions.

"Captain Keer will want to see you in the next thirty minutes before we take off," Seamus said, breaking her train of thought. "And you'd better be in uniform and ready to salute."

"All right." Tabitha nodded again and dropped her one small suitcase at the foot of her narrow cot. But before she could ask the senior officer where exactly the captain's quarters were or how to get to them so she could present herself properly, Seamus had gone, slipping out the sliding door with a loud *whoosh*, as if she wanted nothing more to do with a wet-behind-the-ears rookie like Tabitha.

*Well, I guess I'll just have to find it myself. The ship's not that big and surely there will be someone a little more friendly who can point me in the right direction. In the meantime, I guess I should freshen up and change into the new uniform.*

The Intergal uniform, a tight fitting, navy one-piece jumpsuit with a black belt and trim and black boots, was known the galaxy over. Tabitha was proud when she pulled hers out of the wall unit Seamus had indicated. But it wouldn't take long to slip into and she still had almost thirty minutes to kill, even after hanging a few pictures and decorations on the metal walls. Remembering Sergeant Seamus' words about water restrictions, Tabitha decided to take a quick water shower while she still could. After all, who knew how long they'd be in deep space after they took off? Sono showers got you clean but there was nothing like good old steaming H<sub>2</sub>O to make you feel really refreshed.

So thinking, Tabitha stripped quickly and stepped into the tiny bathroom with its three-by-three-foot shower unit. She intended to just take a five-minute shower but the hot water rushing over her back and shoulders felt so good she lost track of time. The five-minute shower somehow stretched out to ten and then to fifteen minutes. Humming to herself, Tabitha soaped her entire body with a lavender gel wash she'd brought from home and daydreamed about her new career. She was careful to keep her pale blonde hair out of the stream of water, knowing there was no time to dry it.

Just as she was beginning to rinse the sweet-smelling suds from her body, she heard the unmistakable *whoosh* of her quarters' main entrance. *Seamus*, she thought at once, trying to rinse more quickly. *Must have remembered she had forgotten to tell me where the captain's quarters is. I better get out there before she leaves again.*

With foam still clinging to her bare skin, Tabitha turned off the shower and grabbed the first towel she could find. It was barely adequate, just a hand towel left on the thin metal bar beside the utilitarian sink but she didn't think the older woman would care what she looked like as long as Tabitha didn't inconvenience her by making her wait.

"Coming!" she called and hurried out into her new quarters, clutching the hand towel to her bare breasts. But instead of Seamus' thin, wiry frame and graying red hair, an entirely different person met her eyes.

Tabitha gasped in dismay when she saw the huge man with broad shoulders and stern features standing beside her narrow cot. He had dark hair that looked black at first glance but was actually very dark blue and it was cut with military precision. His eyes were dark blue also and a ring of gold around each iris made his gaze piercing. But his eyes and hair weren't what startled Tabitha the most—it was his size. He was so big he seemed to fill the entire quarters with his presence, leaving little room for anyone else, especially a nearly-naked rookie dripping lavender bubbles on the gray metal floor.

Recovering quickly, she glared at the intruder. "Who the hell are you and what are you doing in my quarters?" she demanded, refusing to be intimidated by his size or her own state of near total undress.

"Who am I?" the giant rumbled. "I'm your captain, Sergeant Bryce, and you'd better have a damn good reason for appearing for inspection dressed, or rather undressed, like this." He gave a curt nod at the sodden hand towel that was barely covering her, his dark eyes flashing.

"My...my captain?" No wonder he was so big! Zentorians came from a planet where the gravity was about twenty percent higher than Earth standard. As a result they tended to be bigger and stronger than other humanoid species. And even without the size, the dark blue hair and ringed irises should have been a dead giveaway, they were also Zentorian traits.

Tabitha felt her mouth go suddenly dry as she realized what had happened. Sergeant Seamus hadn't given her directions to the captain's quarters because she wasn't supposed to go there. She was *supposed* to have changed into her new uniform and been waiting to stand at attention and snap a salute the moment the captain came to see *her*.

*Salute! I'm supposed to salute!* Forgetting that she was already mostly nude, Tabitha snapped to attention, dropped the hand towel, and offered her best parade salute.

"Captain Keernacopia. I mean, Captain Kekaclovilish. I mean, Captain Keernivashit," she stuttered, realizing she was digging herself in deeper with each mispronunciation. What the hell was wrong with her? She had practiced the stupid Zentorian name over and over until she could say it backward in her sleep and now she was tongue tied. Well, possibly it had to do with the fact that she was standing naked and dripping in front of him instead of just saying his name over and over to herself. *Shit, she was naked!*

Tabitha was torn between reaching for the dropped hand towel and remaining at attention. In the end she held her pose even as she felt her cheeks growing hot with a

miserable, embarrassed blush. Dark blue eyes ringed in gold raked over her naked body but the captain's face never changed expression.

"I think you'd better stick with Captain Keer, like the rest of the crew, Sergeant Bryce," he rumbled at last. "I came to welcome you aboard, but I see you've already made yourself at home."

"Yes, Sir, I'm sorry, Sir," Tabitha babbled. "But you see, I thought I was supposed to go see *you* instead of *you* coming to see *me*. So I thought I had enough time and I wanted to look my best and show you my assets...I mean, show you what assets I bring to your crew...I mean—"

"Your assets are well and truly on display at the moment, Sergeant, but I have to tell you this isn't the kind of display I'm looking for aboard *Pride of Justice*." Captain Keer frowned and Tabitha's cheeks got so hot she thought her hair was about to catch fire. "I know your reputation—that you happened to be in the right place at the right time in that well-publicized vice sting on Mars."

"Right place at the right time?" Tabitha stuttered, forgetting to be embarrassed. "I'll have you know, Sir, that I put myself on the line for that sting and I—"

"*Don't* interrupt when I'm speaking." The gold-ringed eyes flashed and Tabitha bit her tongue. He took a step forward, glaring down at her, and his scent suddenly filled her nostrils—something dark and spicy and completely masculine that easily overpowered the ghost of her own lavender bubbles. "I want you to further know that your assignment here is a direct result of my own commanding officer and I don't agree with it in the least," he said.

"What? Why not...Sir?" Tabitha remembered to add just in time. The rich masculine scent in the air was making her dizzy somehow and he was so close she could feel the heat from his big body against her naked skin. For a moment she wondered if he was going to touch her, maybe reach out and cup one of her breasts or even part the vulnerable lips of her pussy with his fingers and stroke her clit. Her

breath caught in her throat at the thought and she wondered what she would do if he did. Submit, she supposed, even though she wasn't sure she wanted to.

It was not unheard of for a commanding officer in Intergal to make an intimate inspection of his or her subordinates. It was a fact that some of the rules that applied to other agencies were relaxed in their case. The Intergal officers were in deep space for long periods of time and relationships that might normally have been frowned on weren't forbidden. Tabitha had known when she signed on that she might have to service her captain in ways that went beyond her normal duties and her current state of nudity was practically inviting him to help himself. So she lifted her chin and thrust out her breasts, ready to take whatever was coming to her.

But despite her nervous thoughts, her new captain seemed content to give her a withering stare and kept his hands to himself. *Oh right, Zentorians – no emotions*, Tabitha reminded herself. Probably her nudity didn't affect him in the least.

"I'm of the opinion that you're too young and immature for the work we're doing here," Captain Keer said, drawing her thoughts back to their conversation. "And from what I've seen so far, I find my opinion to be completely justified." His eyes raked over her nudity again and Tabitha felt a wave of heat encompass her entire body. Her bare nipples were so stiff they ached and her thighs trembled with the desire to cross her legs and hide the slit of her pussy. God, what must he think of her? Oh wait, she knew what he thought of her—he'd already told her.

"I'm sorry to disappoint, Sir," she said stiffly, trying to keep her dignity intact under his burning gaze. "I hope in the future I can demonstrate that I belong here and prove my worth to you as a crew member and an Intergal officer."

"I hope so too, Sergeant. Although I doubt it. Dismissed." Captain Keer shook his head and turned to go. "Dinner at nineteen hundred," he said, looking over his shoulder as he spoke. "And I trust I don't need to tell you that we enforce a strict dress code—that means the standard uniform, not a damp hand towel and bubbles, Sergeant."

“Yes, Sir.” Tabitha scrambled for her fallen towel, her cheeks flaming. As the door to her quarters *whooshed* shut, she mentally catalogued every embarrassing thing that had happened. First she was woefully unprepared for her new captain’s visit, then she had butchered his name, then flashed him for a good five minutes while she dripped on the floor and stammered like a brain-dead fool. Well, so much for impressing her new commanding officer. Tabitha had a bad feeling that from now on no matter how hard she tried to redeem herself, he would always see her standing there nude and stuttering like an idiot.

God, could it possibly get any worse?

Keer shook his head as he left his newest sergeant’s quarters. She was everything he’d thought she would be—too young, mostly inexperienced despite her one successful sting, and entirely too impetuous. Keer was used to working with officers who knew exactly what they were doing at all times—his unit ran like a well-oiled machine. And he suspected Sergeant Tabitha Bryce was going to throw a wrench in the operations.

But there was something about her, he admitted to himself as he walked down the long metal corridor. A vulnerability that her brash words and cocky attitude couldn’t hide. It touched him somehow and he wasn’t used to being touched. Contrary to popular belief, Zentorians had as many emotions as the next sentient species. But they were so strong, so violent, that they had to be suppressed at all costs to avoid a loss of control. Keer kept his emotions chained down, as strictly restrained as any wild animal that might break loose and bite. The fact that this young woman could provoke feelings of any kind in him was a warning—a clear sign that he should stay away and be on his guard against her.

He promised himself to keep her at arm’s length at all times, but even as he did, the image of her standing there, with lavender bubbles dripping from the tips of her rosy, ripe nipples and sliding down to the tender cleft of her pussy rose before his eyes. Keer

had never before been tempted to take what some called “the captain’s privilege”, but suddenly he could imagine taking it with Tabitha. He saw himself laying her down on his bed and spreading her legs so that he could finger her sweet pussy. He wanted to part that tender slit and stroke her hot little cunt. Wanted to see what she tasted like, hear what she sounded like when she moaned and begged for more...

Keer shook his head, driving away the fantasies that threatened to swamp him. He realized that his cock was rock hard in his uniform pants and lust was rushing over him in a red tide. Taking a deep breath, he forced it back down, refusing to give in to the primitive emotion that wanted to steal his control. Oh yes, he was definitely going to have to watch out for Sergeant Tabitha Bryce, he told himself. Watch out for her and stay as far away from her as he possibly could.

## Chapter Two

Despite her belief that things couldn't get worse, they did and in very short order. Tabitha had been right—her first meeting with the captain had screwed up her entire career aboard *Pride of Justice*.

During staff meetings, which every officer was required to attend, none of her suggestions or ideas were given the slightest notice. When assignments were handed out, hers were always the simplest and when the crew went planet-side for a sting, or even a routine search, she was never one of the officers included in the landing party. When she tried to speak to Captain Keer about it personally, he just nodded and looked right through her.

The strange thing was that while he ignored her whenever she tried to get his attention, every once in a while Tabitha would feel an itching sensation between her shoulder blades as though someone was watching her. She would turn to see those dark, gold-ringed eyes fixed on her for the barest instant before Captain Keer looked away, apparently interested in something much more important than a rookie in disgrace.

*Why does he stare at me if he hates me so much? And if he wants me, why doesn't he order me to his quarters one night?* In fact, no one was ordered to the captain's quarters at any time of the night or day, an unusual circumstance considering how long they stayed in deep space with no planet-side relief. Relationships between the other crew members flourished, but as far as she could tell, Captain Keer was above all of it, walking a solitary, emotionless path even as he ruled his ship with an iron fist. Tabitha couldn't figure it out but it soon became the least of her worries. Her career at Intergal was in the toilet before she'd even gotten started—her bright, promising future and her plans to



rise to the top, all spoiled because of one awkward encounter with too much soap and not enough clothes.

Things came to a head when *Pride of Justice* got a special assignment to head for Ortha Six in search of the famous intergalactic slave trader, V. Known to be ruthless and extremely cunning, V had been at large for so long that most of the galaxy had given up hope of catching him. But the rumor was that he was going to be at the annual black market to sell some exceptional slaves to the rich and famous of the Ortha system.

V wasn't going to be the only career criminal there, but apparently to Captain Keer, he was the only one who counted. For years, different law enforcement agencies had tried to pin something on him but even though slavery was illegal and V was known to have traded slaves for years, he had never been caught. No matter how dirty his business, his hands were always clean, a fact that seemed to rub the straight-laced Zentorian captain the wrong way.

A staff meeting was called and a plan put together. To no one's surprise, least of all her own, Tabitha's name wasn't included in the landing crew, or even the planning crew. In fact, Keer didn't mention her at all. Apparently she was now invisible as well as inconsequential, Tabitha thought bitterly. And that was when she decided she'd had enough. If Captain Keer wouldn't let her in on the sting, she would stage her own sting. On her own, with no one else's help. And Tabitha thought she knew just how to do it.

Her head filled with visions of bringing down the galaxy-famous criminal on her own and single-handedly earning both her captain's respect and a full promotion in rank, Tabitha began to lay her plans.

It had seemed like a good idea at the time. All they really needed to bring V to justice was proof that he was actually a slaver, instead of a rich merchant dealing in oddities like he pretended to be. Tabitha slipped out of *Pride of Justice* just as dusk was gathering over the dusty, dry Ortha marketplace with a vid-surveillance device hidden on her collar, certain she could catch him in the act.

She was dressed in civilian clothes, the better to remain inconspicuous, with her badge concealed in one pocket. The plan was to get the evidence then slap her immobilizer cuffs on the wily slaver and lead him back to the ship before he knew what was happening. In her mind's eye, Tabitha could just picture the look of shock and respect spreading over Captain Keer's granite-like features when she presented him with the criminal he had been hunting for so long.

Soon enough she found the forbidden zone, dodging down dusty alleys and hiding in the shadows of the dull beige buildings made from chemically hardened sand. Ortha Six was an arid planet whose main wealth came from the many mineral deposits beneath its sandy surface. That and the illegal trading that went on constantly.

At last Tabitha spotted him. A tall, heavy-set man with dark skin and a black beard that forked at the end like a snake's tongue, V was hard to miss. He wore the traditional long purple robes of an Orthan merchant and his white teeth flashed in his dark face as he talked and laughed. Tabitha held her breath when she saw what he was doing and made sure her vid device was catching everything.

"This lot ought to bring a good amount at the market tomorrow," he was telling two large, swarthy men leading a group of half-naked men and women who were chained together. They were obviously slaves, their heads drooping in dejection as they shuffled barefoot in the dusty street. Not to mention the fact that they were naked—well, not entirely naked, Tabitha saw, squinting to see more clearly in the dim light. They were all wearing some kind of silvery cords that crossed over their shoulders and ran over their torsos in intricate loops and knots.

The cords the male slaves wore ran over their flat chests and wrapped several times around both cock and balls. Tabitha saw that most of them were erect and she wondered if the slaves' state of sexual readiness had to do with the silvery cords they wore. She couldn't think of any other explanation for the male slaves, who looked downtrodden and defeated, to be walking around with hard-ons.

The thin silver ropes the female slaves wore seemed to be even more intricate. After crossing over the shoulders, they framed the breasts and encircled the nipples, which were obviously being held erect just like the male slaves' cocks. Looking lower, Tabitha could see that the silver cord split into three separate strands at the pubis, two to hold the pussy lips apart and one that appeared to encircle the clit before it continued down between the women's thighs and out of sight.

*What the hell?* she wondered uneasily, unable to take her eyes from the torturous silver cords that wrapped the slaves in silent bondage as surely as the chains that encircled their wrists. Every once in a while one of them would groan slightly and shift as though in pain or pleasure. Were the cords moving? Were they electrically charged? It must be something like that because they almost looked alive in some way. They appeared to be tightening or loosening the right amount to keep each slave in the perfect state of painful arousal while never letting them reach release.

Tabitha shook her head at her own crazy ideas. Who ever heard of such a thing? More likely the silver cords that bound each slave were just there for erotic decoration, to entice prospective owners to buy them by showing off their best assets.

She got so caught up in looking at the silver cords and wondering about their purpose that the large hand that covered her mouth came as a complete surprise. She started fighting at once and even landed several good kicks to her captor's knees, but whoever had her wasn't about to let go.

"Look here, boss, looks like we have another one for tomorrow's auction," a rough voice said in her ear as she was dragged forward. Tabitha cursed herself for not looking behind her, for allowing herself to get distracted. But as yet another swarthy, muscular man dragged her kicking and fighting and threw her at the slaver's feet, she knew it was too late.

She was trapped.

\* \* \* \* \*

"She's gone where?"

"Off on her own somewhere, Captain." Sergeant Seamus nodded respectfully but there was a malicious glint in her eyes. Clearly she very much enjoyed telling on the most junior officer aboard *Pride of Justice*.

"Damn," Keer swore softly and clenched one large hand into a fist. "Do we have any idea where she's gone or why?"

"The ships sensors tracked her to the forbidden zone before we lost her. I think..." Seamus stifled a laugh against her fist, turning it into a cough, and then continued. "I think she may have decided to go after V herself."

"The little fool!" Keer jumped to his feet, leaving the reading desk he'd been sitting at in his quarters to pace the floor. "V won't be taken by one officer acting alone—he's a wily bastard and he'll see right through her. Now she'll be killed or captured—or worse—unless I get to her in time."

Seamus stared at him, plainly surprised by his emotional outburst. Keer was surprised himself. Surprised and displeased that despite his attempts to distance himself from the irritating blonde sergeant, she still retained the ability to make him lose control. He suppressed his irritation at once and began to think of what to do.

"Should I send a patrol out after her?" Seamus' voice interrupted his planning. Keer waved a hand in negation.

"No, I'll take care of this myself. Dismissed, Sergeant."

"Sir." Seamus made a formal salute and left the room, the air-lock door sealing itself behind her with a whooshing sound.

A low growl building in his throat, Captain Keer paced the same narrow strip of floor and wondered what would be the best way to get his wayward officer out of trouble.

## **Chapter Three**

She'd hoped for a while, when V had searched her clothes and found her Intergal ID, that he would get scared and release her. But the slaver only laughed in her face, a sound that echoed through the drafty underground halls where his slaves were kept, waiting to be sold.

"Come now, girl, do you really think your little police force scares me?" he demanded as two of his men stripped her to the skin. "I've sold princesses, priestesses and presidents in my time, so why should I care about selling an Intergal agent? Remember when the Sultana of Centauri Prime disappeared a few years back?"

"You...you were behind that?" Tabitha could scarcely believe it. The case had been well publicized throughout the galaxy since the Sultana was the rightful ruler of one of the largest planets in the Alpha Centauri system. But she had vanished without a trace and no amount of police or private detective work could find her.

"I was." V grinned, his white teeth flashing in his dark face. "You see, girl, it seems she had a very determined suitor who wanted her for his own but she turned him down. He let it be known he'd pay a king's ransom to have her, with or without the throne of Centauri Prime. I was more than happy to collect the fee and now, instead of governing her people, the haughty Sultana is learning the fine art of submission to her new lord and master." He gave a sharp bark of laughter. "It's probably a relief for her — sucking cock is so much easier than making state policy, or so I'm told."

Tabitha had been about to reply indignantly when she realized that V's two helpers were fitting her with one of the silver cord harnesses she had seen on the other slaves. Gritting her teeth, she tried to fight but to add insult to injury, V had secured her with her own set of immobilizer cuffs and all she could do was watch helplessly as his assistants adjusted the cords. The cords themselves adhered to her skin immediately as

they were coiled around her bare breasts and tender nipples. Tabitha squirmed angrily but ineffectively as rough fingers spread her pussy lips wide and secured a loop of the silver line around her sensitive clit.

“What...what is this?” she asked, looking down with distaste at the strange silver strands that encircled her nipples and clit. They didn’t seem too tight at the moment but she could feel the tension in the knots beneath her nipples and her clit, as though they were just waiting for some signal, something to activate them. She shivered at the thought and the goose bumps that marched along her bare flesh had nothing to do with the chilly, damp air of the dungeon she was in.

“These, my dear, are Drusinian love knots. You have heard of the Drusinians, have you not?” V asked. “An entire race devoted to the pleasures of the flesh. Their planet died years before interstellar space travel made it accessible, but they had taken care to archive their achievements so their knowledge was happily not lost to us. Observe.” Withdrawing a long wooden wand from one billowing sleeve, he stroked the tip of it over Tabitha’s nipples. The wand released a pale pink gel that was cool at first and then began to warm as it made contact with the silver cords that encircled her pink buds.

Tabitha gasped as the cord suddenly came alive, contracting rhythmically, squeezing her nipples into a state of sexual readiness as if a pair of knowledgeable hands were teasing her breasts.

“Do you like that?” V grinned at her as he continued to trail the tip of the wand over her body, thoroughly coating the cords that bound her. He even inserted the wand into her pussy and squirted a load of gel deep inside her despite Tabitha’s squirming protests. “The love knots are woven from the fibers of a plant native to Drusinia and they react to this solution—we call it love honey—which is made from the sap of that same plant. A natural biological reaction makes them contract and loosen, which as you can see is very useful for keeping slaves in advanced state of readiness.” The wand traced over the loop around her clit next, making Tabitha bite back a curse as unwanted pleasure shot through her at the sudden stimulation. The cords were a strange mixture

of rough and smooth, sawing between her legs like the harshest vibrator one moment and stroking her engorged clit and nipples like the gentle hand of a lover the next.

"Take this damn thing off me!" she demanded, when she could speak without gasping.

"Oh, I'm afraid that's quite impossible, my dear." V laughed as he traced the cord that led between her pussy lips and down over the small rosebud of her anus, coating it with the pale pink gel. Tabitha felt herself tighten there involuntarily and wasn't able to help moaning. *Not there too!* she thought as the slender wand slid inward, slicking the interior of her ass with more of the hateful gel.

"Why...why not?" she gasped, doing her best not to writhe against the unwanted pleasure.

"Why, because, the Drusinian love knots won't stop reacting until all the love honey is dissolved."

"The what...?" Tabitha was almost beyond thought at this point, maddened as she was by the expanding and contracting loops that encircled her clit and pussy and teased her anus. "Well then let me take a shower and wash off the damn gel. In fact, show me to the nearest bathing facility right now. Or you're going to be very, *very* sorry when Intergal finds out."

"Oh, didn't I mention that water is completely ineffective when it comes to removing the love honey that activates the knots?" V laughed again, completely ignoring her ineffectual threats. "No, my dear, the only person who can dissolve the solution and free you from the Drusinian cords is your master, whoever he is—we won't know, of course, until after the auction tomorrow. And until the honey is completely gone, the knots will never relinquish their hold upon your body."

"But how?" Tabitha demanded. "How does he dissolve it? Do you have some kind of solvent you sell along with the slaves?"

“Oh, my dear, I couldn’t possibly tell you a trade secret like that. I’m afraid you’ll have to find out for yourself. And I think it will be your very great pleasure to do so. When the time is right, of course.”

Still laughing, he left her to shiver and twist in the grip of the thin, torturous silver cords that crisscrossed her body and curse herself over and over for being stupid enough to get caught in the first place.

\* \* \* \* \*

And that was how she’d wound up bound and naked in front of a lot of jeering men looking to buy a sex slave on the Orthan Six black market. Tabitha reflected to herself as she knelt on the hard wooden boards of the raised stage that it was pretty much what she deserved for leaving alone and going into a dangerous situation with no back-up. But damn it, she’d wanted to prove herself to Captain Keer! She’d wanted to see respect in his gold-ringed eyes instead of dismissal. She’d wanted to force some emotion from behind his cool façade, to make him acknowledge her. It seemed to her that despite his Zentorian stoicism, there must be something, some fire blazing behind the wall of ice he always maintained and she wanted to see it, she admitted to herself.

Well, she could forget about that now. And if Captain Keer could see her in her present condition, she was certain his reaction would be the exact opposite of what she wanted. He would think even less of her for getting herself into such a stupid predicament.

“Come now, only serious buyers need apply,” V’s voice rang out above the babble of the crowd who had gathered to watch her sold. “This is prime Old Earth female flesh we’re talking about. Your cock will think it’s gone to heaven the minute you thrust yourself balls deep in her tight little cunt. Is anyone interested? Do I hear a thousand credits to start?”

“I’ll go a thousand, though I wager she’s more likely to kick you in the nuts than spread her legs willingly,” one of the men in the front row said.



"Two thousand. I like a girl with fight in her." This from one of the criminal-looking types near the back of the crowd.

"That's two, gentlemen – do I hear three? Come now, three's not much to pay for prime flesh like this."

"It's too much to pay for a hospital visit though to get your dick sewn back on," someone yelled, and all the men laughed.

V frowned, clearly unhappy with the way the sale was going. Tabitha wondered exactly how much a young, fit woman like herself would normally bring. Probably at least three if not four thousand credits, she guessed. As much as you might pay for a new one-man space cruiser if it didn't have too many luxury features. Well, she vowed to herself grimly, she would certainly make sure that whoever bought her would have a rougher ride than if they'd used their money to buy a cruiser.

"Come now, gentlemen, do I hear three?" V repeated. Whipping out his long, hollow wooden wand, he once more coated the silver cord that bound her with the pale pink gel. "Just look at those plump nipples, that ripe clit!" he chanted. Tabitha groaned helplessly with painful pleasure as the love knots contracted around her sensitive flesh. "Imagine what fun you'll have getting her broken in."

"You're not gonna get more than two so stop trying!" the man who'd offered two thousand credits shouted. "And before I pay, I want to be sure her pussy's as tight as you say."

"Certainly, sir," V said sourly and Tabitha could tell it was killing him to sell her for what amounted to half price. "Just as soon as you give me half the credits you can stick anything you want into her tight little cunt, be it fingers, tongue or cock. I'll take the other half when you're fully satisfied." He glared at Tabitha and then nodded at the prospective buyer. "Two thousand going once...going twice..."

"Ten thousand," a deep voice from the back of the crowd shouted.

Tabitha looked up, scanning the sea of faces to see who had spoken. To her mingled horror and relief, she saw a familiar figure making his way through to the foot of the

stage. Broad shouldered and standing a head higher than any other man, he was dressed in the flowing purple robes of a merchant, as though he were just here for a day of trade before traveling home. His hair was true black instead of dark blue and his gold-ringed irises had been disguised somehow but Tabitha would know him anywhere, no matter what he wore.

*Oh God*, she thought. *Not him, not now, seeing me like this...* But all thoughts were swept from her mind as his eyes met hers. There was a grim determination in his face and she suddenly knew he was going to get her out of the slave market or die trying. But even the thought of getting away from V and a life of slavery wasn't enough to keep Tabitha from feeling horribly embarrassed.

Captain Keer was here to rescue her and once again he was seeing her at her worst.

Keer adjusted the pin-sized hidden recording device carefully concealed in his purple merchant robes as he observed the slave auction. Once they got out of here, he was going to use the vid evidence he collected to bring V to justice—even if he had to share the collar with another Intergal ship. But before he did that, he had to concentrate on rescuing his strong-willed sergeant.

Satisfied that he was recording everything, he allowed himself to look at her—really look at her—as he had not during her disastrous first inspection aboard the ship. She was beautiful, he admitted to himself, with her long blonde hair flung around her shoulders like a shawl and her full, perfect breasts pulled up by the position the slaver had her in. With her legs spread as she knelt upon the stained boards of the auction block, he could finally see the slippery pink inner folds of her cunt, although they were slightly obscured by the thin, silvery cord that encircled the ripe bud of her clit. What the hell was that anyway? He eyed the way it had been knotted across her body and tied around her nipples with some interest. *Is it some kind of erotic prop, used to display slaves more effectively?* he wondered. If that was the case it certainly was working. The

silvery cord made a beautiful contrast against her pale skin and the deep pink of her pussy and nipples.

Despite the fact that the way she had been strung up and was being auctioned off was sick and wrong and against every principle Keer fought for and believed in, he could still feel his cock surging in his pants. Thankfully that part of his anatomy was hidden by the robe he wore. He was just another merchant here, out to buy a piece of prime female flesh, and Sergeant Tabitha Bryce certainly fell into that category.

He looked into her eyes briefly and saw the flash of recognition and shame in her face as she stared back at him, but thankfully she didn't say a word. Good, he had come alone and the last thing he needed was for V to suspect he was anything but a merchant. Keer felt a certain reluctant admiration for the obvious presence of mind that kept her from crying out the moment he came into view. The girl had courage—even if she didn't always display common sense. He had been watching her defiant display for some time before she saw him and the way she'd attempted to bite V's fat fingers off even in her helpless position impressed him.

Not that courage would do her any good once he got her back to the ship. Some discipline was definitely in order. Bryce had endangered the entire mission with her arrogance and pride. Several very provocative images rose to his mind's eye at the thought of disciplining his wayward sergeant and he banished them forcefully. He had to get her back to the ship before he could consider how to punish her.

Keer squared his shoulders and waded through the crowd to claim his new slave.

## **Chapter Four**

“What was that? A new bid?” V scanned the crowd eagerly, his eyes coming to rest on Captain Keer’s granite features. “Did you make a bid, sir?”

“I said ten thousand credits—take it or leave it.” Keer folded his muscular arms over his massive chest and frowned. “I don’t have all day, slaver, but I do have a fancy for Old Earth flesh. Of course, I could buy it anywhere in the market but this is the only one I’ve seen with hair like golden silk.” He stepped forward casually and reached out to stroke Tabitha’s wild mane.

Tabitha trembled under his large, warm hand and tried not to look too eager to be sold. It was the first time he had touched her, she realized, even though he had had ample opportunity on the ship. His touch was gentle but impersonal, as though he didn’t want the slaver to realize that he had more than a passing interest in buying her.

“Ten thousand is a great deal, sir.” V smiled at him craftily. “And I will be happy to sell this fine female to you for such a sum. But do you not wish to verify her tightness before you pay?”

“I can verify that after I have her back home alone,” Keer said shortly. His large hand dropped from Tabitha’s hair to the side of her neck and then trailed slowly down to cup her right breast. “I can see already that her nipples are ripe and ready for sucking,” he continued as his large, blunt fingertips traced Tabitha’s tortured buds.

At his touch, the Drusinian love knots tightened, making her nipples even harder and Tabitha gasped and closed her eyes in humiliated pleasure. God, how could he do this to her? Of course, she realized that he was simply acting like a merchant about to buy a piece of goods, but still, to have him touching her after all this time, to actually have his hands on her, was almost too much. Had she secretly been wanting this all along? She didn’t know, but she did know that she didn’t want it like this. Not in

public, with a crowd of strangers staring at them. But she was bound and helpless—there was nothing she could do but try to endure her captain's touch and go along with the illusion he was building.

"Her nipples are perfect," Keer continued, still stroking Tabitha's aching buds. "But, what is this silver rope? Can you take it off her once I pay?"

"Ah, sir, only you can take it off and I promise you it will be the greatest pleasure you have ever had." V flourished his wooden wand mysteriously. "In fact, I will tell you how as soon as the sale is final—the means of her escape from the rope is part of the package. But first, I must insist that you verify this female slave's tightness. All sales, as I'm sure you are aware, are final and I want to be sure we agree before credit changes hands."

"Very well." Tabitha heard his deep voice rumble. She willed herself to keep her eyes shut tight but somehow she couldn't help opening them just a bit to see what he would do.

Her arms were numb from being chained above her head and her throat was parched from the dry, dusty air of the marketplace. The twin suns of Ortha Six beat down on her head like a golden hammer and the murmur of the crowd gathered around the stage buzzed in her ears. But somehow all of that faded away when Tabitha saw that Keer's eyes were fixed on hers as one large hand stroked slowly down the trembling skin of her abdomen to cup the tender, spread lips of her sex.

*Watch me, he seemed to be saying with his eyes. Keep your eyes on me and don't think about it – you'll be out of here soon if you just relax and let this happen, I promise.*

Tabitha locked eyes with him, mesmerized, and wondered if she was imagining the intense connection between them. Maybe the heat was getting to her, making her think she had some kind of weird link to her stoic captain. And yet, his eyes never left hers even as he stroked along her exposed cunt, tracing the silver cords that encircled her swollen clit and making her gasp before dipping lower to enter her vulnerable pussy.

She moaned helplessly as he entered her with two long, thick fingers, pressing the silver Drusinian cord to one side as well as he was able to penetrate her deeply. To her shame, Tabitha realized that she was dripping wet all of a sudden, that her spread and helpless pussy was reacting to Keer's touch as it hadn't even reacted to the love knots.

*God, I'm so wet! What will he think of me getting wet for him like this?* She felt her cheeks burn with embarrassment even as her inner walls tightened around him. Yet Keer showed no emotion at all as he finger-fucked her slippery cunt, and his eyes never left her face with each slow, inward stroke.

"Yes," he said at last, withdrawing his fingers from her quivering pussy after what felt like an eternity. "She's tight." What he did next shocked Tabitha more than she could say. Instead of wiping his glistening fingers on his long robes, he slid them into his mouth and sucked them clean. "And before you ask, she's delicious too. So I'm ready to pay—I don't have all week to spend on this one sale," he added gruffly, pulling his eyes from Tabitha at last and looking at V.

"Very well then, sir, if you're satisfied, I'm more than happy to conclude." V smiled ingratiatingly and nodded for one of the swarthy helpers who was standing to one side of the stage. "Unchain this slave and get her ready for sale," he snapped.

As Tabitha was unchained and led to one side of the stage to await her new master, she felt the love knots throbbing and watched the credits change hands from Keer to V. The slaver presented her captain with a bill of sale and something else—a small vial with some blue liquid in it. He spoke a few words she couldn't catch, waving the vial until the blue liquid sloshed and then he produced a small knife. Tabitha tensed, wondering if V had suddenly recognized her captain, but no, he only made a small pinprick in the pad of Keer's index finger and unstopped the vial. Carefully, he guided Keer's finger over the lip of the long, slender container and watched as three drops of blood fell, staining the blue liquid purple. Then he recorked it and handed it over to Keer, who tucked it into an inner pocket of his robes and nodded gravely.

Tabitha wondered what that was all about—could it be the solvent for these damn love knots? But then why had V had the captain add some of his blood to the mixture? The whole thing was very mysterious but she was so anxious to get out of the slave market she almost didn't care. Of a more immediate concern to her was where her captain had gotten such a massive amount of credit to free her and how much trouble she was in.

Lifting her chin defiantly, she decided she didn't care. Captain Keer would doubtless bring her up on charges once they got off this hell hole. She might even be assigned to the brig for the rest of their mission. But she was damned if she would hang her head in shame for him or anyone. She might have been foolish to go after V alone but at least she had shown some initiative and that was more than could be said for the other Intergal drones who followed their tall captain blindly.

So to hell with Captain Keer and all the idiots standing around eyeing her naked body. Tabitha stared back at them, daring them to say anything. V might have stripped her of her clothing but she still had her pride and it would carry her through this sticky situation until they reached the ship.

Keer's first instinct was to cover her with his cloak and hide her nakedness and shame as they passed through the crowds. He had a strangely proprietary feeling toward his wayward sergeant—as though the bill of sale he held in his hand was for real instead of an elaborate prop in this dance of deception they were engaged in. She was his now, bought and paid for and he didn't want anyone else to see her beautiful body.

But a real slave owner would never have taken the trouble to cover his slave's nakedness. She was property—no more important than an animal he might have purchased—and he had to treat her accordingly so no one suspected what was really going on. It was bad enough that Tabitha held her head high and refused to cower in fear or embarrassment at the many looks she drew as they made their way through the

crowd. Keer tried to banish the irritation that was building inside him. He just hoped the other merchants and buyers would assume she was an exceptionally intractable slave and think nothing of her defiant attitude. If someone suspected otherwise, they were going to be in trouble.

As though reading his thoughts, several of the purple robed merchants at the edge of the auction crowd drew together, whispering and eyeing Keer and his new acquisition suspiciously as they passed. Tabitha glared back at them, as though daring them to think whatever they wanted. Keer felt his irritation flare into anger. That was it—she'd left without orders, gotten herself captured and endangered the mission, and now, as he was attempting to rescue her, she was going to get them killed before they got back to the ship.

His anger began to rise—a dangerous anger he kept a chokehold on at all times. In his time as an Intergal captain he had been through altercations that would have had other men in a murderous rage and he had not so much as raised an eyebrow. But now he was itching to deliver some much needed punishment to his blonde sergeant.

"Slave, come here!" He yanked on the leash attached to her collar and she stumbled forward, giving him an angry look.

"Yes, *Master*," she spat sarcastically. "How may I serve you?"

Seeing her defiance, the merchants muttered angrily and one of them began to speak discreetly into a wrist communicator. Keer felt another surge of fury. In another moment the market guards would be summoned and they would *both* be up on the auction block. He had taken a calculated risk coming to get Tabitha on his own—betting his own life and freedom that he could get her out without backup. If he didn't do something soon it was a bet he was about to lose.

Up ahead was a whipping post—two sturdy wooden poles with a long crosspiece between them—used to punish thieves, of which there were many in the crowded, dusty marketplace. It was empty at the moment but several sets of manacles hung from



its well-worn crosspiece—a convenient place to chain those who needed punishment. And Sergeant Tabitha Bryce certainly needed some now.

Without a word, Keer pulled her forward, veering from his original path and heading for the whipping post. She saw their new destination and her eyes widened, first in surprise and then in anger.

“Hey!” she protested as Keer bound her slender wrists above her head to the crosspiece. “What the hell are you doing?”

Keer frowned at her grimly. “Punishing you, slave. Your defiance has no place here.”

“What? No!” She struggled against the manacles. They were a bit too high for her and she was forced to stand on tiptoes, the long, slender lines of her body crisscrossed by the strange Drusinian love rope pulled taut. Keer felt his cock rise again as he reached beneath the voluminous purple robes and unbuckled his thick black leather belt. It would serve her right if he fucked her here in public, to prove that he owned her beyond the shadow of a doubt, but he wasn’t about to do something like that in front of all the avidly watching eyes. Instead he would teach her some proper respect before they returned to the *Pride of Justice*. Maybe she would think twice about sneaking off the ship next time to try to fulfill a mission by herself.

## Chapter Five

Tabitha twisted and turned angrily, fighting the manacles that held her arms above her head. Her movements caused her naked breasts to jiggle and her position pulled the Drusinian love knots even tighter against her nipples and pussy, pinching her mercilessly. She was well aware that her twisting and struggling were drawing attention to her plight—all eyes were on her now and a crowd was gathering to see what the commotion was about. But she would go to hell before she'd stand still and take whatever Captain Keer was about to dish out. What the hell was he thinking, anyway, treating her like this? If he was trying to make their parts as merchant and newly acquired slave more realistic she could think of better ways to do it. Ways that didn't involve putting her on display for the second time that day.

"Stop it!" she demanded, trying to turn to see exactly what her commanding officer was up to. "You can't do this to me!"

"I can and I will." Suddenly Keer was right behind her, his broad, muscular chest pressed against her bare back. "You little fool—thanks to your defiant attitude, every merchant here is beginning to wonder if you're really a slave. So now I have to prove you are," he breathed in her ear. "I ought to fuck you right here and now so nobody has any doubt I own you."

"You...you ought to what?" Tabitha could scarcely believe her ears. She had never heard her stoic Zentorian captain sound so upset, no, so *angry* before and it frightened her as the threat of being sold as a slave had not. His big body was pressed against hers so hard she could feel him trembling—with rage, she realized suddenly. He was so angry with her he was having to hold on to his temper with both hands. *Zentorians don't have emotions!* she thought wildly. Could she be mistaken about what he was feeling? Tabitha had imagined what it would be like to be called to his quarters many times if he

decided to exercise his captain's privilege with her but she'd never dreamed it might take place in a dusty, open-air marketplace in front of a crowd of curious merchants and buyers.

"I said I ought to *fuck* you," Keer growled, his big body still crowding hers. "It would be well within my rights and you've caused enough trouble to deserve it. Be thankful all you're getting is a taste of my belt."

"What? But you can't—" Before she could finish her sentence he had stepped back and the first stinging blow connected with her naked backside with a flat smacking sound. Tabitha howled in surprise and pain. She had been prepared to face a board of inquisition and maybe even lose her commission for her stupidity in trying to capture V on her own, but never in her wildest imagination had she thought her captain would tie her naked to a whipping post and beat her with his belt.

"That's right, whip her! Beat the insolence out of her!" yelled one onlooker, earning a glare from Tabitha as she continued to struggle. She managed to twist partway around, the rusty manacles digging into her wrists, and saw the next blow coming. Nimbly, she dodged to one side and the belt hit only empty air where her ass had been a minute before. *Take that, you bastard!* Tabitha felt a surge of triumph but it was short lived. Black leather belt gripped tightly in one hand, Keer strode forward and grabbed her around the waist.

"Have you gotten it through your thick head yet that you're supposed to be a slave?" he snarled in her ear. "You deserve this whipping more than I can say but we also need to convince this crowd we're the genuine article if we want to get out of here with our skins intact."

Blinking tears of pain out of her eyes, Tabitha glared up at him. She was so angry that his threats failed to frighten her now. Had she really wanted to gain her captain's attention? Well, she had it now, had his arms around her and his hard body pressed against hers. The only problem was that they were in public and he was intent on reddening her ass to try to teach her some kind of stupid lesson.

"There's no way in hell I can just hold still while you beat the living daylights out of me," she spat.

He frowned, one corner of his mouth curving down violently. "If you had any idea how much I'm holding back right now you'd realize this beating amounts to nothing more than a love pat. But I'll be damned if I stand here reasoning with you while those merchants call the guards. If you won't hold still for your whipping, I'll hold you still myself."

Tabitha opened her mouth to protest again and was shocked to feel his big, warm hand traveling down her abdomen to her spread cunt. The silvery Drusinian cords were still holding the lips of her pussy open so he had no trouble at all cupping her mound and thrusting two long, thick fingers inside her just as he had at the auction. Only this time he was doing it with a purpose – to hold her in place.

Tabitha was seething. This was intolerable! She was up on her tiptoes, her arms stretched helplessly above her head and her legs spread wide with his fingers lodged firmly in her cunt as he prepared to beat her.

Before she could think of what to say or do to make him stop, there was another flat slap as the belt landed on her naked ass again and a stinging pain radiated through her offended flesh.

*Son of a bitch!* Tabitha writhed in anger but only succeeded in pressing his fingers deeper into her pussy. His calloused palm rubbed hard against her sensitive clit, already enflamed by the encircling cords. To her shame and rage, Tabitha felt herself beginning to heat up in a way that had nothing to do with the light of the twin suns of Ortha Six beating down on her head. How dare he do this to her. How dare he beat her and finger-fuck her at the same time, and in public! Captain's privilege or no captain's privilege, this was taking things too far!

*Smack! Smack! Smack!* Tabitha moaned in mingled anger, pain and pleasure as the beating continued. Despite the pain in her ass, or maybe because of it, she could feel her cunt juicing around his invading fingers, making it easier for them to slide inside her.

Soon he was pressing against the end of her channel and rubbing her clit with every stroke of his belt, driving Tabitha closer and closer to an unwanted orgasm.

“Damn you, stop it!” she screamed, fighting him harder. “Stop it before I...”

“Before you what?” He wasn’t even out of breath but he did pause between strokes to hear what she had to say.

“Before I...before I come.” She tried to speak with dignity but it was difficult when she could feel her face heating with embarrassment.

He looked down at her, obviously surprised. “You’re about to come? From being whipped?”

“No, not from being whipped,” Tabitha hissed, even though in the back of her mind she thought that having her aloof captain punish her might have something to do with her arousal. Still, she couldn’t tell Keer that—she had to have some other excuse for her body’s sudden betrayal. “It’s...it’s these damn Drusinian love knots,” she explained, nodding down at the cords that crisscrossed her body. “Not to mention the way you’re...touching me.”

“You do seem to be extremely wet.” Captain Keer pulled his fingers out of her cunt and thrust them back in experimentally, making her groan in pleasure. God, much more of that and she was going to come all over his hand whether she wanted to or not!

“Please!” Tabitha tugged uselessly against her manacles, trying not to rub her open cunt against his hard palm in the process. Suddenly all the anger and defiance she had been feeling leaked away, leaving only shame to take their place. “Please, Captain,” she begged in a low voice, looking up into his stern face. “Please don’t make me come in front of all these people. I can’t *bear* it.” To her horror she could feel hot tears pressing against her eyelids, and try as she might, she couldn’t hold them back.

A flash of what might have been compassion passed through his eyes and he raised the hand holding his belt to her face. Tabitha flinched but he only brushed gently at the tears that were sliding down her cheeks.

“Very well. I’m going to let you down. If you behave like a proper slave I won’t subject you to any more punishment—here anyway.” He frowned, his thick eyebrows drawing low, letting her know that her ordeal wasn’t over yet. But Tabitha was so grateful not to have to endure any more public humiliation that she readily agreed.

“All right, I promise,” she whispered.

Keer nodded and slowly withdrew his fingers. As before he sucked them into his mouth and licked them clean, his gaze never leaving Tabitha’s as he did so. Despite her lingering anger at him and the throbbing in her backside, she couldn’t help catching her breath at the erotic sight.

“You...you don’t have to do that, you know,” she murmured. “I’m sure not all slave owners enjoy the taste of their slaves quite so publicly, so you can stop putting on an act.”

“Who says I’m acting?” He frowned at her again and reached up to unfasten the manacles. “You know, Sergeant Bryce, it occurs to me that if I would have done this or something similar to it a long time ago we might not be in this predicament,” he continued in a low voice.

Forgetting her promise to play the part of an obedient slave, Tabitha lifted her chin angrily. “Maybe if you’d listened to a few of my ideas I wouldn’t have had to try to prove myself this way.”

“Yes, maybe.” Now that he was no longer angry—or what passed for angry in a Zentorian—Captain Keer’s voice was once again maddeningly cool. “You’ve been trying to get my attention for months in one way or another but I ignored you. *Maybe* I should have put you in your place sooner.”

“Put me in my place?” Tabitha was really angry now. “I’ll have you know that my place is aboard the *Pride of Justice* as a valued member of the crew and I don’t care what you think about my inexperience, if you’d just give me a chance instead of looking right through me all the time—”

"Give you a chance to do what?" he growled in a low voice. "To go sneaking off on your own and jeopardize the mission? Exactly what kind of attention are you looking for here, Bryce? Should I have called you to my quarters and exercised my privilege with you—is that what you wanted? Did you want my attention professionally...or sexually?"

Tabitha lost her head. Forgetting she was supposed to be a slave or that Captain Keer was her commanding officer, she faced him, rubbing her wrists. "You arrogant bastard! I—"

"Looks like you didn't beat her long enough, son." The mild voice interrupted their heated argument and Tabitha and Keer both looked up to see an elderly man with a worn leather pack on his back looking at them with great interest. And he wasn't the only one. The crowd who had gathered to see Tabitha beaten had started to dissipate when Keer unlocked her manacles. But now the merchants and buyers were beginning to drift back, obviously hoping for an encore performance. Tabitha glared at them belligerently and refrained from rubbing her sore backside even though she very much wanted to.

Taking in her expression, Captain Keer's eyes hardened. "I think you may be right, friend," he said to the old man, nodding formally. "But my business is far from here and I don't have any more time to spend on a rebellious slave."

"But surely you don't mean to take her on a long journey without salving her wounds." The old man gave him a disapproving look and nodded at Tabitha's ass.

*Wounds? What wounds?* She let one hand creep around to explore her stinging flesh but there was no blood on her fingertips when she looked. The old man was making a big deal out of nothing, she decided. As much as the whipping had hurt, she doubted it would leave any permanent scars. What did he want anyway? And why didn't Keer just put him off and take her back to the damn ship?

"I do have a long journey ahead of me," he was saying to the old man when she turned her attention back to them. "What do you suggest?"

"Some of this." The elderly man drew a tiny earthenware pot from his worn leather sack with a flourish and presented it to Keer. "It's a compound of my own invention. Keeps scars and marks from forming and makes the skin smooth and supple between beatings." He nodded at Tabitha. "A lovely little slave like that, you don't want to mar her beauty with belt and lash marks. Take some of my salve—just one credit a pot—and smooth it over that pretty skin before any permanent damage can occur. There's a bench over there if you chose to use it. Many slave owners do, you know." He smiled winningly and pointed to a crude wooden bench not far from the whipping post.

"Well, maybe I *will* take some." To her horror, Keer gave Tabitha a speculative look.

"No." She shook her head. "No, please..." But her commanding officer had already tossed the old man a cred chip and was holding a pot of ointment in one large hand.

"This way, slave," he said, leading her over to the wooden bench. "I wouldn't want that beating I gave you to leave marks."

"What are you doing?" Tabitha hissed as he seated himself on the bench and pulled her close. She tried to resist but Keer was far too strong for her. With very little effort he had her facedown over his lap with her burning ass high in the air.

"I would think it would be obvious." His deep voice had a warning growl in it. "I'm treating your wounds. I think you need another reminded of who's in charge here, slave."

"Don't you dare touch me!" Tabitha writhed in his lap like a cat until her commanding officer clamped one arm over her lower back and bent his head to whisper in her ear.

"Do you want me to hold you in place again?" he murmured warningly. "Because I will if you don't stop struggling." His large hand traced the burning welts on her bottom and dipped between her legs suggestively, letting Tabitha know exactly what he was threatening.

Feeling so angry she could choke, Tabitha was nevertheless forced to hold still for fear he would fulfill his threat. Taking a deep breath, she let herself go limp in his lap



and pressed her face into the folds of his purple robe so she couldn't see the group of people watching her public humiliation. She felt tears of embarrassment seeping from under her lashes and tried to stop them. God, how much longer was this nightmare going to go on? A month in the brig and a trial in front of the board of inquisition were beginning to seem like heaven compared to what she was enduring at the hands of her infuriating captain.

"That's better," Keer said when she stopped struggling. She felt him shift slightly and then his large hand was back, this time rubbing something onto the skin of her abused ass.

She whimpered slightly as the salve went to work. Whatever it was, it felt wonderful. The burning in her backside was replaced by a cool tingling and she moaned breathlessly as Captain Keer's blunt fingertips worked it into her skin. Slowly, her anger began to melt away with the pain and her tears stopped.

God, that felt good and not just the ointment, but his hands on her as well, she admitted to herself in a moment of weakness. Maybe he was right and she'd been trying to get his attention all this time in order to get him to do something like this. Not to whip her in public, of course, but to touch her, to acknowledge her as a woman and not just a junior officer who had nothing to offer him either professionally or personally.

*Stop thinking like that. You're mad at him, remember?* she scolded herself. But it was hard to argue with the feeling of contentment she got from his suddenly gentle touch, even if he was touching her in front of what felt like hundreds of watching eyes. Little by little Tabitha felt herself relaxing. She was exhausted from all the fear and tension she'd gone through at the slave market and her subsequent rescue and whipping at the hands of her usually stoic captain.

She wondered vaguely where that emotionless stoicism had gone. She'd seen Captain Keer more worked up in the past hour than she had in the previous five months aboard the *Pride of Justice*. What was the reason for the change? Was she really

so horrible that she actually broke through his wall of emotionless calm? No, she was probably giving herself too much credit.

“Good girl.” The large, warm hand moved up from her bottom to stroke her back and shoulders for a moment and then Keer spoke again. “All right, Tabitha. You’re done.” His deep voice broke what had almost become a sleep-like trance and Tabitha realized he was lifting her off his lap.

She blinked her eyes, dazzled all over again by the hot sunlight pouring down on her. With her face pressed against his robes she’d found a comforting darkness to hide in. She looked up, dreading to see all the curious eyes fixed on her again, only to see that the crowd around them had dissipated. Merchants and buyers were going about their business, completely ignoring the master and slave who sat on the wooden bench. The lack of attention after being stared at all morning and afternoon made Tabitha feel almost invisible. Next to being dressed, it was the best feeling she could imagine.

She looked up to see that Keer was eyeing her speculatively. Bracing herself, she waited for his next sarcastic remark but it didn’t come.

“Ready to go?” he asked, his deep voice quiet and cool.

Tabitha sighed and nodded. She was certain it was going to be a long walk back to the ship, especially wearing nothing but belt marks and salve on her bottom, but they had to go sometime.

“All right then.” He stood but, to her surprise, instead of grabbing the leash attached to her collar, he stooped and swung her up into his arms.

“What...?” She looked at him uncertainly and saw the corner of his full mouth twitch.

“You look too tired to walk the rest of the way,” he murmured. “Just relax and pretend you’ve fainted so no one thinks I’m being too easy on my new slave.”

Tabitha doubted anyone would think that after the way he’d whipped her but she felt a grudging gratitude for his willingness to carry her the last leg of their journey. Letting her head rest on his broad shoulder, just at the curve of his neck, she closed her

eyes and pretended to fall into unconsciousness. As it turned out, she didn't have to pretend for long because the tensions of the day overcame her and she fell asleep in his arms with the warm, spicy scent of his skin filling her senses.

Keer held her close as he made his way purposefully through the people still thronging the marketplace. Looking down at the slightly flushed cheeks and the tousled golden hair, he couldn't help the feeling of tenderness that welled up inside him. She was such a fighter—so determined to do exactly what she wanted. In any other subordinate he would see that quality as something to stamp out—after all, she couldn't follow orders if she was constantly going off on her own. But with Sergeant Tabitha Bryce, he saw an independence that won him over despite himself. She moved him to emotions he had never felt before—had never allowed himself to feel. Keer frowned at that thought. That wasn't such a good thing, to be honest. He shouldn't let her affect him this way—shouldn't let her bring his chained and hidden feelings to the surface where they could pose a threat to himself and others.

He honestly didn't know what had gotten into him that afternoon. Certainly the whipping had been out of line. True, she had been about to blow their cover and she'd probably deserved every lick of the belt he'd given her, but he should have given those licks coolly and unemotionally. Instead she'd gotten him so red hot with anger it had been all he could do to temper the blows so he didn't hurt her too badly. And then when he'd held her in place by forcing his fingers into her pussy...

*Shouldn't have done that*, he told himself angrily. *Shouldn't have wanted to do that*. And yet he had and he'd enjoyed it. The feel of her slick inner walls gripping his fingers as he held her and the way her cunt had gotten so wet as the whipping progressed...damn, just the thought of it had him hard all over again. He had to stop, had to get control of himself where this particular junior officer was concerned. Once they got back to the *Pride of Justice*, he was going to have to resume their former impersonal relationship. He was Zentorian, after all, and if he couldn't control his

emotions around one small female, he might as well hang up his uniform and quit Intergal completely.

He wouldn't touch her again, he promised himself. Wouldn't call her to his room and take his captain's privilege with her beautiful body no matter how badly he wanted to. Things would just go back to normal and he would ignore her as he had before. Except for a formal reprimand on her record, of course, she deserved at least that much for her rash and reckless actions.

Just as he was resolving to put more distance than ever between them, Tabitha stirred in his arms and the silvery cords around her ripe nipples tightened, causing her to moan in her sleep. Keer stared at the erotic sight and shook his head. There was only one problem with his plan, he realized as he reached the end of the forbidden zone and began the trek back toward the interstellar ship docks.

She still wore the Drusinian love knots and he was the only man in the galaxy who could remove them.

## Chapter Six

"Sergeant Tabitha Bryce to the captain's quarters. Sergeant Bryce to the captain's quarters at once."

Tabitha heard the announcement from inside her tiny shower stall where she was currently trying for the umpteenth time to remove the cord that was looped around her body.

"Ouch! Damn it—ouch, ouch, ouch!" she growled as she tried to peel even a little piece of it away from her right breast. But it was useless—she'd been trying for three days, ever since they'd gotten back to the ship. The damn Drusinian cord was still firmly in place even after hours of scrubbing, first in a sonic shower and then in a forbidden water shower. She fully expected to get in trouble for breaking water restrictions since they were currently in deep space but she didn't care. If only she could get the maddening cords off her body it would be worth any punishment the captain could think up. Well, *almost* any punishment, she reminded herself, thinking of the whipping he'd given her in the marketplace.

Once they'd gotten back to the *Pride of Justice*, she had fully expected a more formal punishment than the one he had given her while they were planet-side but to her surprise, it didn't come—not even in the form of public humiliation. To her great relief, Captain Keer had wrapped her in his purple merchant robes before carrying her aboard the ship. He'd walked down the main hallway, ignoring curious glances from the other crew members, and simply put her down on the bunk in her own quarters. He hadn't said another word as he turned and left.

It had been three days since then and though the other crew had been giving her sidelong looks ever since, Captain Keer hadn't said a word to her. It was as if he was determined to go back to their former stilted relationship—or maybe she should call it a

non-relationship, Tabitha thought grimly. As though none of the heat that had passed between them at the slave auction or his anger at her defiance and the subsequent whipping he had given her had ever happened.

Tabitha rubbed at the cord that looped over her left shoulder. Was it her imagination or could it be just a little looser than the rest? She thought that if she could just get one part off, the rest would follow—like ripping off an old-fashioned adhesive bandage. Then she remembered where this particular “bandage” was placed and shuddered. Her nipples and clit were some pretty sensitive places to be ripping anything off of so maybe she should take it easy.

Anyway, she admitted to herself with a sigh, if the cord on her shoulder was loose, it probably didn’t have anything to do with her constant scrubbing—it was just that V hadn’t applied as much of that damn gel he called “love honey” there. No, he had concentrated on her breasts and between her legs. Tabitha wondered if there was still any of the damn stuff inside her—he had certainly squirted enough of it into her pussy and anus. How long did it last anyway? And did it really have to be dissolved by a certain person? By the one who bought her?

Thinking of that made her think of the captain and realize she ought to be getting out of the shower and down to his quarters. The last thing she needed now was a repeat of their first meeting. Her cheeks flushed at the memory and from both his treatment of her at the marketplace and his coldness now. But she couldn’t help remembering the gentle way he’d smoothed the salve over her stinging bottom or the way he’d carried her back to the ship afterward. Despite the whipping he’d given her, she distinctly remembered the spicy scent of his skin and the warm feeling of safety that had enveloped her when he held her in his arms.

But apparently Captain Keer didn’t harbor any fond memories of their experiences together since he was now acting like she was invisible again. Tabitha supposed it could have been worse—he could have called her up on charges and thrown her in the brig the moment her feet touched the floor of the ship instead of just ignoring her. Somehow,

though, that was cold comfort, especially when the damn love knots were making it impossible to put the experience behind her.

The silvery cords that bound her body and circled her clit and nipples had started acting strangely shortly after they had returned to the ship. Because she couldn't free herself of the love knots, Tabitha had been forced to wear her uniform over the hateful Drusinian invention and hope that no one could see the telltale lines under her clothes or the way her nipples seemed to be always erect. And for the most part, she thought she was getting away with it. But every time she got anywhere near Captain Keer, the knots did something strange. They began to shift and tighten, squeezing her nipples intolerably and sawing between her legs like an impatient lover.

The sensations they caused were so intense that several times Tabitha had been forced to excuse herself and beat a hasty retreat to her quarters and try to relieve the tension. But once she got to her bunk she discovered another problem—she couldn't come. No matter how hard or how softly she touched herself, she hovered just on the edge of orgasm but was unable to get off. She thought unhappily of the way she had begged Keer not to make her come while he whipped her in the marketplace. Now she wished she had let him do it—at least she would have had some relief to take the edge off before this torture began. Now she was just stuck, constantly on fire with need, especially when the captain was around, and unable to do anything about it.

Once or twice she considered trying to get Keer alone so she could ask him about the mysterious vial of blue liquid she'd seen him get from V. Maybe it was the solvent and he was deliberately withholding it from her, waiting for her to come to him and beg. At this point she gladly would have gone down on bended knee even at the cost of her pride. But the same thing that made her long for the solvent was what also kept her away from the man who had it.

Tabitha was absolutely not going anywhere near her commanding officer when every time she got in his general vicinity the love knots started their maddening dance, making her crazy with desire. Keer had already seen her in some very embarrassing

and compromising positions and she didn't need to add anything to her load of humiliation, thank you very much. Far better to keep away from him and just put up with the torture of the knots.

Since the captain seemed as determined to avoid her as she was to avoid him, Tabitha was surprised to hear her name over the intercom system. And she was being ordered to the captain's quarters, of all places. No one ever went there—no one but Captain Keer, of course. But he certainly never invited or ordered any of his crew to join him in his private area.

As she stepped out of the shower and toweled off, Tabitha felt the lead weight of dread fill her stomach. Was he finally calling her in for her formal punishment? Maybe he had used the three days between when he'd brought her back to the ship and now as a cooling-off period, so he could discipline her again without losing his temper. Remembering his temper and the results of it, she shivered. Well, there was no way to find out what he wanted except to go to him. Like she had a choice in the matter.

Laying her towel on the side of her bunk, she wriggled into her uniform as best she could, trying to hide the rope lines beneath the thin fabric. Then she took a deep breath and glanced in her viewer. It was no good—her nipples were very obviously erect and if anyone looked closely they would be able to see the puffy outline of her cunt lips, which were still being held open by the Drudinian cords. Even worse, the bump of her swollen clit was apparent between them. Tabitha shifted, trying to find a position that both hid her shame and kept the material of her panties from rubbing against the over sensitive bundle of nerves. She wouldn't even be wearing the uncomfortable undergarments if it wasn't for the fact that she was hoping desperately that another layer of fabric would help hide her shame. Finally she gave up. It was too late to worry about what she looked like now—she had to get to the captain's quarters and hope like hell Keer wasn't waiting to punish her again.



Keer paced impatiently, waiting for his most junior officer to arrive. Of course he'd been waiting for her to come to him almost from the minute they'd gotten back to the ship. He knew she couldn't get the damn love knots off without him, even though her conspicuous water consumption proved she was trying. He also knew that she had seen the vial of blue liquid V had given him along with her bill of sale. Tabitha wasn't stupid—she would certainly deduce that the liquid was some kind of solvent. So why hadn't she come to him and demanded that he give it to her?

Of course, that wouldn't have done any good since the solvent by itself wasn't what she needed to get free of the knots. Keer only wished that it was. But at least he could have explained as much to her without having to call her to his quarters.

Once it became evident that she wasn't going to come to him on her own, he had decided to call her. But first he had to deal with the V situation. Thanks to the vid-evidence he'd gathered when he was rescuing Tabitha, the next Intergal ship in their region had been able to arrest the intergalactic slaver and hold him. He was currently being held and awaiting trial—a trial in which the vid of him publicly auctioning off Tabitha to the highest bidder would greatly figure into his conviction. Now that he was taken care of, Keer was ready to deal with his stubborn sergeant—whether she wanted to be dealt with or not.

He could imagine what the rest of the crew was thinking now that she had been ordered to come to him over the intercom. Never before in the time he had been captain of the *Pride of Justice* had he exercised his captain's privilege. *And I'm not going to tonight, either*, he told himself sternly. *Well, not if I can help it, anyway*. But that was surely what every other officer aboard was thinking. What else could they think after he'd brought her back from the forbidden zone, naked in his arms except for his purple robes? He could have gone to her quarters to get her privately and spared himself the humiliation, but Keer wanted to do things officially—to keep things as formal and professional between them as possible. Despite what he was going to be forced to do once she showed up at his door. Maybe in that way he could keep a rein on the troubling

emotions that threatened to overwhelm him every time Sergeant Tabitha Bryce was anywhere near him.

As if in answer to his thoughts, there was a low ringing of chimes outside his quarters—the signal that a visitor was requesting entrance. That would be her, Keer thought. Well, there was no time to lose so he might as well get this over with. He took a deep breath and prepared to do what had to be done as professionally as possible.

“Enter.” As he murmured the command, the revolving doorway at the end of his quarters whooshed open, revealing a frightened and defiant Tabitha.

“Captain, you wanted to see me?” She entered his quarters uncertainly.

Keer nodded. “Yes, I did.” He took a step toward her and, just as quickly, she backed up.

“If this is about my recent water consumption, I, uh, needed a shower...Sir,” she tacked on quickly. “I’m sorry and I promise it won’t happen again. May I go now?”

“You most certainly may not.” Keer stepped toward her again. Again she stepped back. He frowned. Was she trying to keep distance between them? And if so, why? *Maybe because you beat her with your belt the last time you got close enough to touch her?* A dry little voice suggested in his head. *Can’t imagine why that would make the girl shy of you.*

“Please, Sir...” Tabitha was edging slowly away from him, following the perimeter of the large room. She was by his couch now and Keer saw an opportunity.

“Sit down,” he ordered, pointing to the dark blue leather cushion. “I need to talk to you, Sergeant Bryce.”

“What about?” She sat very unwillingly on the edge of the cushion farthest from him and eyed him warily.

“You know what about.” Keer looked at her sternly. “About the cords you’re still wearing wrapped around your body.” He looked pointedly at the faint lines beneath her uniform and the way her nipples were obviously erect. “You know I can help you

with those, Tabitha, but you refuse to come and ask me. You've been avoiding me. Why?"

"I've been avoiding *you*?" She stared at him incredulously. "You're the one who hasn't spoken a word to me since we got back to the ship...Sir. Why is that?"

Keer frowned at her, annoyed. Again she was causing emotions in him he didn't want to acknowledge—the main one being lust. Just looking at the faint outlines of her nipples and pussy slit under the form-fitting uniform was causing his cock to rise. Damn it—why couldn't he control himself around this woman?

"I've been waiting for you to come to me," he said, deciding not to answer her question. "I know you need help getting the Drusinian cords off and unfortunately, I am the only one who can help you."

"Why, because you're my 'Master'?" Tabitha's pale blue eyes narrowed.

"In part, yes. But because the solvent for your love knots is chemically attuned to me—not because I bought you at the auction." Keer refused to let her words make him angry. In point of fact, he had used his own money to buy her from V, knowing that Intergal would never allow him to spend so much petty cash freeing a junior officer. Not that he would ever tell Tabitha Bryce that. Especially when he still wasn't sure himself why he had done it.

"I knew you had the solvent!" She pounced on his words. "Why didn't you give it to me right away? Was letting me live with this damn cord wrapped around my body for the last three days another one of your sadistic punishments? Or do you just like the torture the love knots put me through the minute you get anywhere near me?"

Keer was intrigued. "Are you saying the cord reacts to my presence?" he asked, shifting to get closer to her on the sofa.

"What? I never said that." Tabitha's face went red and then white in the space of a few seconds. She jumped off the couch and started backing away from him again.

"Yes, you did." Keer started to follow her but then he had a better idea. "Sergeant, come here," he directed, crooking a finger at her.

Reluctantly, Tabitha did as he ordered, walking forward slowly until she was almost standing between his thighs.

"Good." Keer nodded. "Now, take off the top half of your uniform."

"What?" Tabitha started to protest but he held up a hand to silence her.

"Sergeant Bryce, that is a direct order. Take off the top half of your uniform."

With trembling fingers she pressed the hidden release button at her throat and the fabric of the navy blue jumpsuit split and parted. Shrugging out of the sleeves, Tabitha let the top half of her uniform trail behind her like a shadow she couldn't dislodge and covered her breasts with her arms.

Keer frowned at her. "Drop your arms, Sergeant. I don't recall you being this shy when we were planet-side."

"I don't recall having a choice in the matter, *Sir*," she spat.

"Well you don't have a choice here either." Keer made his voice harsh and commanding, letting her know he was serious. "Now *drop your arms*."

Cheeks flushing red with embarrassment, Tabitha did as she was ordered.

Keer had to force himself not to react, or at least to keep the reaction he was feeling off his face. But the sight of her full, high breasts encircled in the silvery cord was almost more than he could take. Ever since he'd left her on her bunk and gone back to his duties as captain of the *Pride of Justice*, he had been trying not to think of how she'd looked, nude except for the Drusinian cord. He'd suppressed his feelings of lust and denied himself the release of jerking off while he fantasized about her. Now he wished he had given in to himself, at least once. Maybe if he had, he would have been able to control the raging erection he felt pressing against his uniform pants.

"Are you happy now?" Tabitha demanded, still blushing miserably.

"Not yet." Keer motioned to her. "Step toward me."

Tabitha opened her mouth to protest again and then apparently decided it wasn't worth it. Pressing her lips into a thin, tight line, she stepped closer, insinuating herself

right between his thighs. As she moved, Keer was surprised to see the cords encircling her nipples contract sharply. It was almost as though an invisible hand had pulled them tight the moment she approached him. But it had to be the cords themselves doing it. He had done some research in the restricted section of the ship's library, which was closed to all but himself and the two most senior officers under him, and had found out quite a lot about the cords that bound Tabitha. He hadn't believed all that he had read—that the cords were capable of movement on their own—but now he was beginning to wonder.

"Well? Do you see why I haven't been anxious to get too near you since we got back from the slave auction, Sir?" Tabitha's voice cut through his train of thought and Keer looked up to see an expression of mingled pain and pleasure stamped on her lovely face. "Every time I get anywhere near you, this happens," she continued, gesturing at the cords around her breasts.

"I see." Keer frowned. "And does the same thing happen...down below as well?"

"You want to see?" Angrily she slipped off her boots and stripped away the rest of her uniform and underwear, leaving it in a puddle of navy blue fabric on the floor at her feet. She kicked it away and stood with her legs spread, letting him look his fill.

Despite his resolve to be professional, Keer couldn't help catching his breath at the amazingly erotic sight before him. He had seen her naked and bound before, of course—had even held her in his arms that way. But three days in the cords had changed her. The pouting pink lips of her pussy were swollen with need and her cunt was slippery with her juices. Directly in the center of a loop of silver cord, her clit was throbbing with the obvious need for release, like a beautiful, rare pearl. Keer longed to lean forward and suck the tender little bud into his mouth so that he could lave it with his tongue, but he forced himself not to. Not yet.

"It's like this all the time and worse whenever I'm near you. And no matter what I do, I can't help myself—I can't come," Tabitha continued, the words pouring out. "And now you tell me you've had the solvent all this time and you've been withholding it,

you sick son of a bitch, and...and..." Her voice trailed off into choked sobs and she hid her face in her hands.

"Tabitha, you're wrong. That's not what I've been doing at all." Keer put a hand on her slender shoulder and pulled her down into his lap. She was shaking with the force of her sobs and he wanted to comfort her but he didn't know how. She leaned against him for a moment, utterly consumed by her misery, and he stroked the bare skin of her back. She felt soft and yielding in his arms and her head fit just under his chin. The scent of lavender was coming from her freshly scrubbed skin and he realized she must have been in the shower just before he called her.

Again he had that surge of possessiveness he'd felt at the auction. *Mine*, whispered a voice inside him as he held her and stroked her waterfall of long blonde hair. *Mine*. Even though he knew it was wrong and foolish to give in to such emotions, he couldn't help indulging himself for just a moment and pretending that she really did belong to him.

Finally she sniffed and wiped her eyes. With some effort, she pushed away from him and crossed her arms over her chest again. "Look," she said in a low voice, not meeting his eyes. "Just...just give me the solvent, please, Sir. I'll resign my Intergal commission without a fight if you'll just end this awful punishment."

"Tabitha." He raised her chin with one finger and looked down into her pale blue eyes, still swimming with tears. God, she was beautiful and she moved him so deeply. He had the sudden urge to bend down and kiss her tears away but suppressed it fiercely. What was wrong with him? Why did she make him feel so much? "I didn't withhold the solvent to be cruel or to punish you," he said, trying to keep his tone professional and aloof and failing completely.

She blinked away tears. "Then why did you do it?"

"I..." He frowned, trying to think how to continue. "I didn't know how to tell you what...exactly what was required to get the love knots off your body. Did V give you any idea at all while he was holding you?"

She shook her head. "He said that my master was the only one who could remove the cords. But he didn't tell me why or how. I thought he meant that only the man who bought me would have access to the solvent."

Keer sighed. "I only wish it was that easy." Reaching into the pocket of his uniform, he withdrew the small stoppered vial filled with the now purple liquid.

Tabitha looked at it hungrily. "I see the problem – there isn't much," she said. "But if I'm very careful and just rub it in to the most sensitive parts until they come loose, I think I can stand having the rest of the cord pulled off."

Keer shook his head. "The amount of liquid isn't the problem at all."

Pale blue eyes blazed up at him. "Well then, what is?"

There was no other way than to just tell her, Keer decided. "The problem is that it isn't a solvent at all. It's a serum and it's meant to be taken internally."

"Fine." Tabitha held out her hand. "Give it to me. I'll drink it no matter what it tastes like. Hell, I'll drink it even if it's poison. Anything is better than living with these damn love knots the rest of my life."

"It's not poison – I had a very small amount analyzed by the lab," Keer assured her. "But it's not for you to drink, either. It's for me."

"For you?" She looked at him blankly. "What good will it do for you to drink it?"

Keer sighed again. "According to V, and all the research I've done, this is a serum that allows a person's body – my body – to make a solvent. The moment I drink it, it will start reacting to my body chemistry. It will collect in my bodily fluids and allow me to free you from the cords."

Tabitha had gone pale.

He cleared his throat and tried to sound professional. "The solvent will develop in my saliva and semen. Primarily in the semen, actually. Although I think it would be better to try to avoid using that unless as a last resort."

She was frowning at him now. "Are you saying what I think you're saying...Sir?"

Keer nodded. "I'm afraid so. And once the serum is in my system, we only have twenty-four hours to act. After that, the love knots will be permanently attached to your body."

"Isn't...isn't there any other way?" Tabitha stood and began backing slowly away from him again. "I mean there must be, right? I can't just let you...I mean we shouldn't..."

Keer frowned. "What's the matter, Sergeant? Do you find my touch distasteful? You didn't seem to mind so much earlier."

Tabitha's full mouth trembled. "Yes, Sir. But that was before."

"Before what?" Keer demanded but she was already headed for the door, still completely naked. With a low curse he ran forward and caught her before she could get away. "Before what?" he asked again but Tabitha wouldn't answer.

"Let me go!" she gasped, writhing in his hands. "Can't...can't you see you're making it that much worse?"

Looking down at her naked body, Keer could see what she was talking about. The love knots were tightening and loosening rhythmically, systematically pinching and squeezing her nipples and clit in unison until she moaned and gasped for breath. She looked like a woman who was just about to come...but she never did, at least as far as Keer could see. The agonized expression of pleasure and pain never left her face and it was clear she wasn't reaching any kind of a release.

Well, maybe he could help her with that while he released her from the cords, he told himself. In the meantime, getting the love knots off had to be his first priority.

Lifting her carefully, he carried her to his large bed and placed her in the middle. Then, before she could protest, he tied her wrists and ankles to opposite corners with the black silk scarves he had placed there earlier for this contingency. Something had told him that Sergeant Tabitha Bryce wouldn't give in easily. She was just stubborn enough to deal with wearing the love knots the rest of her life before letting him do



what needed to be done. But Keer couldn't let that happen. She was his junior officer and her well-being had to be uppermost in his mind.

"Stop it! Stop it right now and untie me!" Tabitha struggled uselessly against her bonds. Her eyes were filled with fire as she glared up at him. "What do you think you're doing?" she demanded.

Keer gave her a forbidding scowl. "I'm exercising my captain's privilege, Tabitha," he said, knowing it was the only explanation she would accept. "I'm going to do whatever it takes to get you out of those knots and it may very possibly take a lot more than you'd be willing to do voluntarily. So we'll do it this way." He chuckled grimly. "You're the only woman I know who's so stubborn she has to be tied down in order to be untied."

"Why you —"

He held up a hand. "Careful, Sergeant Bryce. Remember it's your captain you're speaking to. If you can't say anything that won't land you in the brig, I'd advise you not to say anything at all."

She closed her mouth and glared at him, her hands knotted into fists and every muscle in her slender body tight with outrage. It was clear what she thought of him, but since he had invoked the captain's privilege, there was nothing she could do or say. As long as he didn't physically harm her, she had to endure whatever he wanted to do. What he had to do to set her free, Keer reminded himself.

He knew Tabitha would probably hate him for what he was about to do and that made him unhappy — no, it tore his heart out, he admitted to himself. In fact, it made him so upset he almost let her go at once and sent her back to her quarters. But that would accomplish nothing except to leave her in bondage to the insidious Drusinian sexual device the rest of her life. No, he had to do this for her own good, he told himself. Once again the messy emotions she alone was able to evoke in him were affecting his better judgment but it was his duty to ignore them and go on. No matter how much he loved her.

*Wait a minute – who said I love her?*

Keer shook his head to clear it of all irrelevant thoughts. Love didn't have anything to do with it and neither did desire, even though the sight of her naked and helpless on his bed made his cock snarl for release in the tight confines of his uniform pants. No, the only emotion he ought to be feeling here was duty.

Taking a deep breath, he popped open the vial of purple serum. As Tabitha watched, he swallowed the contents in a single gulp and then turned to face his naked junior officer, lying bound to his bed.

## Chapter Seven

Tabitha was tied helpless and spread-eagle to the captain's bed, her thoughts running in circles. *God, can't believe he's really going to do this. What is he going to do anyway? Lick me? Suck me?* The thought brought a vivid mental image to mind that was both tantalizing and incredibly embarrassing. Surely Captain Keer wouldn't go so far...would he? But he had invoked the captain's privilege, meaning he intended to do anything he wanted with her. Before the incident at the slave auction Tabitha had secretly fantasized about him doing something like this. But that had been before...

*Before I realized I loved him,* she thought, keeping an eye on the huge form looming over her in the dim lighting of his quarters. It was something she had realized the moment she walked into his quarters and saw him alone for the first time since he'd carried her back to the ship. The knowledge had hit her like a sledge hammer to the brain, and with it, a sense of despair. Because everyone knew Zentorians didn't marry outside their own race. It was worse than ridiculous to have this stupid crush on her captain—it was hopeless as well. He was never going to act on any kind of feelings he had for her—if he had any feelings at all.

As if to remind her of the hopelessness of her situation, he was back to his Zentorian self, his dark blue hair that was almost black neatly in place and his blue, gold-ringed eyes cutting through her naked body like knives.

God, if only she knew the reason he was doing this. Was it from some misplaced sense of duty—his determination to take care of his crew no matter how intimate that task became? Or did he actually feel something for her in that cold Zentorian heart of his? He had seemed to have emotions when they were in the marketplace together—emotions so strong they were scary. And just now he'd tried to comfort her when she cried. But did any of that add up to actual caring or affection for her? Tabitha didn't

know. And now she had to go through the excruciatingly embarrassing ordeal of having him free her from the love knots without knowing if he really wanted to or if he was just doing what he thought was his duty.

Looking up at him, she pleaded with her eyes, begging for something she couldn't ask for out loud. The assurance that she was more to him than just a junior officer who had screwed up.

He seemed to understand her plea because as he kneeled on the bed beside her, his gold-ringed eyes softened their laser-like stare.

"You're very beautiful, you know, Tabitha," he murmured, reaching down to brush one of her hot cheeks with the back of his large hand. "I've never been remotely tempted to take my captain's privilege before. Not until you came on board, anyway."

Tabitha wished he had gagged her as well so that she could have stopped herself from asking embarrassing questions. But since he hadn't, she heard her voice asking, "So you were tempted...even before the love knots?"

He nodded. "Mm-hmm. More than you know. Although I have to admit, they highlight your assets beautifully." He ran one large hand down her naked body and Tabitha gasped as the cords tightened at his touch. Her nipples felt as if they were on fire with desire and her clit was thrumming with the need to come.

"Please," she whispered. "Please, just get them off me."

"I will," he promised, looking into her eyes.

Tabitha gathered her courage in both hands to ask the next question. "How...how are you going to do it?"

He frowned and looked over her naked body speculatively, as though she was a problem he needed to solve. "I'll try licking first. The idea is to dissolve the love honey. It's bonded to the cords and until every last trace of it on and around the cord is gone, the knots won't come off." He cleared his throat. "We'll save...other measures for a last resort."

"You mean you won't fuck me unless you have to." Once again Tabitha's mouth got away from her and she reflected that it seemed to do that a lot around her tall, grim captain. But instead of getting angry, he just nodded gravely.

"I don't know about fucking you but I may have to come on you or possibly *in* you to make this work, Tabitha. But I won't if I can help it. I want you to know that."

She wasn't sure what to say. "Thanks...I guess," she whispered at last.

"You're welcome." He got on the bed with her and she felt even more naked since he was still fully clothed. Still, she guessed she ought to be grateful for that. If he had to take off his clothes, it probably meant that "last resort" measures were called for.

"I'm going to start at the top and work down," Keer told her. "You don't have to watch if you feel embarrassed."

"Okay." Tabitha could barely get the word past her numb lips. He was so big he made her feel tiny—as if she wasn't already feeling vulnerable enough. She squeezed her eyes closed as he lowered himself toward her. The heat of his big body warmed her shivering, naked form and his warm, masculine musk that always seemed to make her dizzy filled her senses. And then she felt his tongue.

Warm and wet, he lapped gently over the part of the cord that snaked over her shoulder. She bit her lip as she felt him bathe the tender area where her neck met her shoulder, sending chills down her spine. It felt so good and his closeness meant the knots around her nipples and clit were working overtime. Tabitha wished she could come and get some relief and at the same time, she hoped she wouldn't. It would be so horribly embarrassing to have Captain Keer see her lose control when all he was doing was licking her shoulder.

"Look." His deep voice interrupted her thoughts and she opened her eyes to see a warm expression in his eyes. "It's working," he explained, pointing to the shoulder he'd been licking.

Craning her neck, Tabitha saw that the silver cord had come loose from her right shoulder and was now hanging down along the outside of her breast like a dead snake. The sight affected her deeply.

"Oh my God, you did it—you really did it!" Tears sprang into her eyes and she blinked them back with some difficulty. After almost a week in the hateful Drusinian love knots she had almost resigned herself to living in sexual bondage the rest of her life. But Keer had just proven that she didn't have to—that this nightmare might actually come to an end.

"It's a start, anyway," he murmured, reaching up to brush the tears from her cheeks.

"It's wonderful," Tabitha whispered, smiling at him for the first time since she'd entered his quarters. "Please—don't stop."

"I won't." He was already hard at work on the other shoulder, licking carefully along the edge of the cord where it adhered to her flesh. To Tabitha's delight, she felt that one come loose in no time as well. *Incredible*, she thought. *This is actually going to be easy. It might be a little embarrassing when he reaches my—*

Her thoughts were cut off by the feel of his hot tongue lapping softly around the curve of her right breast. Tabitha moaned as he reached her nipple and began to lick his way around the cord that encircled it. She waited for the liberating feeling of the love knots coming free from her skin but it didn't happen no matter how hard or thoroughly he licked. Finally he looked up.

"I'm sorry but I think the best way to do this is to saturate the cord. I'm going to have to suck your nipples, Tabitha. And I may have to suck them hard. All right?"

"S-sure," she whispered, trying to stay calm. After all, it was obvious he was just doing this to help her get free of the knots. It wasn't like they were making love for real. But it certainly felt real when Keer wrapped his arms around her waist and pulled her to him like a man in love, or at least in lust.

He sucked her right nipple into his mouth, taking as much of her breast between his lips as he could to envelope both her nipple and the Drusinian cord. Tabitha moaned and arched her back, giving him easier access to her body. She couldn't help herself. Even though Keer's touch was loosening the knot around her nipple little by little, the silvery cord obviously wasn't giving up without a fight. It contracted around her nipple even as Keer licked and sucked her, sending sparks of pleasure from her breast straight down to the heated cleft of her pussy.

Tabitha could feel herself reacting, could feel her pussy juices coating the cord that ran around her clit and down over her entrance and slicking her inner thighs. God, what would Captain Keer think when he saw how hot he'd made her by sucking her nipples? She didn't know and almost didn't care. She wondered if she could come just from having her nipples sucked and had a feeling she was about to find out.

Just when she was right on the brink of orgasm, she felt the knot around her nipple give way and the silvery cord unwound itself from around her breast. Looking down she could see that her right nipple was puffy and swollen from being pinched by the cord and sucked by Keer but it was otherwise no worse for the wear. Except the fact that it was incredibly sensitive, of course.

"God," he murmured softly, and Tabitha saw that he was looking at her newly freed breast almost as intently as she was.

"Um, one down and one to go I guess," she said, trying to make light of the situation. But there was no way to do that, not when he still had to suck and lick her other nipple until the cord came free. Not when he was doubtlessly going to have to do the same to her pussy. Just the thought made her shiver with lust and blush with embarrassment. She remembered the way he'd licked his fingers clean after putting them inside her, the way he'd seemed to love the taste of her.

"You have the most beautiful breasts." His deep voice was hoarse as he cupped her newly freed mound. Without warning, he leaned down and dragged his hot tongue over her hypersensitive nipple.

"What...what are you doing?" Tabitha gasped. "The uh, other one is over there." She nodded with her chin at her other breast, still wrapped in the silvery cord.

"I know." Keer looked up at her. "I just want to feel your breast in my mouth without anything between us. I want to suck your nipple and feel it between my lips with none of this..." He motioned to the now loosened Drusinian cord. "In the way."

"You...you do?" Tabitha couldn't believe what he was saying. Was he trying to tell her that this was a pleasure for him, not just a duty? That he wanted to touch her and taste her, wanted to make her crazy for him? "Why?" she couldn't help asking.

"I bought and paid for you, Tabitha. You're mine now." The low, possessive growl in his voice and the gleam in his eyes made her bite her lip. "Do I need a reason to touch and taste what's mine?"

"No, Sir," she whispered softly. "I just...I guess I just thought you were doing this out of a sense of duty."

"A sense of duty, hmm?" He bent his head and sucked her free nipple into his hot mouth, making her moan as he nipped her gently. Finally he released her and looked up. "Tell yourself anything you want to make this easier, Tabitha, but don't fight me. I may have to do more than suck and lick you to get you free of this cord in the end."

*Fucking me. He's talking about fucking me.* She shivered at the thought and wasn't sure if her reaction was caused by fear or desire. Maybe a combination of the two.

"I-I'll try to hold still," she whispered. But then he started on her other breast and she moaned and arched her back all over again. God, but it felt so good to have him sucking her, licking her. His mouth was so hot and wet and perfect on her swollen nipple.

After what felt like an eternity, he managed to release her other breast as well and only a little lapping and sucking of the skin on her abdomen and pelvis was needed to loosen the Drusinian love knots there. Soon the only place the cord was still attached was the elaborate design around her clit and pussy and the single line across her anus. Tabitha knew what was coming next and was profoundly grateful when Keer stopped



to go to the kitchen area of his quarters and get a drink of water. All the licking and sucking he'd been doing was thirsty work and his momentary absence gave her time to think.

*He said the solvent was good for twenty-four hours. Maybe he'll let me leave and say we can finish tomorrow. That would give me one last chance to work on these knots so he wouldn't have to...to...* Tabitha blushed just thinking about what her captain was going to have to do to her in order to get the last of the love knots off. Would he try licking first or would he decide there was no choice but to fuck her? The thought made her pussy even wetter, if possible, and she wished she could press her thighs together protectively. But she was still tied to the four corners of his bed with the black silk scarves and there was no getting loose.

"I've been thinking." Captain Keer's voice startled her out of her reverie and Tabitha's head jerked up. She saw that he was looking at her with a speculative expression in his blue and gold eyes and wondered what could possibly be next.

"Yes, Sir?" she asked respectfully, hoping he'd decided to let her go until the next day sometime.

"I'm going to try licking you first to get that off." He gestured to the silvery cord still holding her pussy lips open and encircling her clit. "And it would be much easier to do with you at the edge of the bed. That way I could kneel on the floor in front of you and if I needed to put my tongue inside you, I could."

Tabitha's mouth went dry and at the same time, her pussy got even wetter. "I-I guess that's a good idea," she whispered.

Keer frowned. "The question is, if I untie you, are you going to behave or will you try to run again? Can you submit to me and open your pussy for me to lick you, Tabitha. Or do I have to keep you tied up?"

A heated blush was climbing up her throat and into her face, but somehow Tabitha forced herself to answer. "I-I can submit," she murmured. "I won't...I promise not to try to run."

“That’s good, Tabitha. Very good.” He reached down to stroke her blonde hair away from her forehead and cupped her cheek in his large, warm hand. “I need you to hold still while I go down on you to be sure we get every piece of the Drusinian cord saturated. Because until the very last trace of the love honey is gone, it’s not coming off. So you’re sure you can relax and let me eat your pussy?”

Tabitha knew he was only doing this out of a sense of duty in order to get his most junior officer out of a jam, but she could still feel herself getting hot and wet all over again. Even in his matter-of-fact tone of voice, the dirty things he was saying were making her so aroused she could barely breathe. Somehow she managed to nod and murmur assent and he untied her at last.

Scooting to the edge of the bed where he was pointing, Tabitha reflected that she’d never expected to be in this particular position with her stoic captain. And in all probability, he had never expected to be in this position with her, either. She wondered what he really thought about it—did he hate her for causing him trouble? Or did the notorious Zentorian lack of emotions prevent him from caring? When she was where he wanted her, he knelt on the soft blue carpet in front of her and positioned himself between her thighs.

“All right now, Tabitha,” he said softly, looking into her eyes. “I’m going to lick you now and I want you to relax and let me do it. Don’t tense up or try to pull away—just open your pussy for me and let me taste you. Do you understand?”

“I...yes,” Tabitha murmured. “But...but what if you can’t...can’t get it off that way?” she couldn’t help asking.

He frowned slightly. “Let’s take things one step at a time. But I’m going to try using my mouth on you first—all right?”

“All right.” Tabitha nodded.

“Good.” He gave her a stern smile. “Now lie back on the bed and relax, Tabitha. I’m about to start.”

It was possibly one of the hardest things she'd ever had to do but Tabitha forced herself to lie back on the bed and let her captain open her legs. His massive shoulders spread her wide and his breath was hot on her inner thighs as he bent to his task. She thought she could feel her heart pounding in every part of her body at once.

*God, oh God, oh God, oh God. Can't believe he's actually going to do this. Can't believe I'm going to let him...*

Large hands spread her legs even wider and she knew he was studying her, probably deciding the best place to begin. The idea that he was seeing her so open, so vulnerable, with her pink inner folds of her cunt on display, was almost unbearable. Tabitha was expecting to feel his mouth on her at any second but instead he spoke.

"Beautiful." His deep voice was little more than a growl and she shivered at the desire she heard in his tone. Could it be that this hot situation was thawing her cold captain's heart? She could never be sure with him. After all, Zentorians weren't supposed to have emotions at all but he certainly seemed to be displaying some now, just as he had in the slave market.

"Thank you," she whispered, wishing she knew for sure if he felt anything for her. Unable to withstand lying there feeling so helpless, she propped herself up on her elbows so she could see what he was doing.

He looked up at her. "You're wet. Is that from the knots?" He traced one finger over her inner thigh, which was slick with her juices, and licked it thoughtfully.

Tabitha felt her cheeks grow hot and knew her entire face must be red with embarrassment. "No, Sir," she murmured. "That is...the knots contract when you're near but most of it is because...because of the way it felt when you were...were trying to get the cord off my breasts." She couldn't believe she was admitting this embarrassing fact but Keer only nodded and rumbled approval.

"I'm glad to hear you don't find my touch completely distasteful."

"Distasteful? Sir, I—" Tabitha stopped abruptly. What had she been about to say, that having him touch and lick her was the most erotic experience of her life? She had to

keep a handle on this situation. After all, she still had to work under the man when this was all over and admitting to having feelings for him wasn't going to help in the least. If only she could get over her embarrassing and ridiculous obsession with her captain, but considering the position they were in, she was afraid that wasn't going to happen any time soon. She loved him—there was no way around it. But that didn't mean she had to blurt it out.

"You what?" He was watching her, his eyes narrowed in concentration.

Tabitha shook her head. "I just...I appreciate you helping me out, Sir. I know I was...was reluctant to let you but I-I guess I ought to be thanking you instead of fighting you. It's just...it's so hard."

His eyes softened somewhat. "I know it is, Tabitha. It's hard to open yourself like this and let yourself be vulnerable. But I want you to know I want nothing but the best for you. And I'm not just doing this from a sense of duty. I'm doing it because I—" He broke off and looked away, a muscle in his square jaw clenching.

"Sir?" Tabitha looked at him uncertainly. What had he been about to say?

But Keer shook his head, his eyes shadowed. "Never mind. Just lie back and let me do what I can to help you."

Shivering, Tabitha lowered herself again and closed her eyes. How long was this going to take? And could she get through it without coming? She felt like she could stand to spread her legs and let her captain lick and suck her pussy but if she came while he was doing it she would probably die of mortification.

Keer didn't waste any more time on words. Instead he leaned forward and began licking her. But not her pussy—not yet. Instead he lapped at her inner thighs first, cleaning her juices from the sensitive skin and making Tabitha bite back a gasp. Was he trying to make a point? Or did he really like the taste of her so much that he didn't want to waste a drop of her pussy juice? Either way, the maddeningly slow approach he was taking was about to drive her crazy. If it hadn't been a perfectly ridiculous idea she would have thought that her captain was trying to prolong this for some reason.

And then he put his mouth on her cunt and all coherent thought became completely impossible.

Keer looked at the impossibly erotic sight before him and tried to tell himself that he was only doing this to get the Drusinian love knots off her. There was no way he should desire her so much, no way he should want to do this. No way he should love her...

There it was again. Love. Did he really love Sergeant Tabitha Bryce? Had she really broken down his emotional control so much that he couldn't help what he felt for her? Because if that was the case, he was in trouble. As a Zentorian, he was expected to mate within his species. Choosing a human woman over a cool, collected Zentorian one would guarantee him a life of turmoil and stress. *And passion*, he reminded himself.

Never had he felt so much as he had since Tabitha Bryce walked into his life. Exasperation, desire, tenderness, lust...there was no end to the feelings she set loose inside him. And now, watching her quiver with fear on the bed in front of him with her long, shapely legs spread and her soft, pink pussy on display, he felt an overwhelming need to make this good for her. He wanted to do more than just get the love knots off, he admitted to himself. He wanted to make her come. Come hard and long so that she would never forget this night.

Bending his head, he placed a hot, open-mouthed kiss on the pink pearl of her clit. She moaned softly and he could feel her trembling under him as he licked gently, tracing with his tongue the silver-gray cord that encircled the throbbing bud, trying to remove all traces of the faintly sweet love honey in order to release her.

He let his tongue play over her clit for a while, building her pleasure, and then lapped gently at the rest of her cunt. The sweet taste of the love honey mixed with her own salty juices was delicious, but no matter how much he licked and sucked, the Drusinian cord showed no signs of letting go. If anything it clung tighter, spasming

rhythmically around Tabitha's tender clit, making her moan and gasp as it tortured her with pleasure.

Keer stopped for a moment to look up at her face. God but she was beautiful. Tousled blonde hair was strewn like golden silk across his dark green coverlet and her cheeks were flushed pink with need. Her eyes were closed tight and her full pink bottom lip was caught between her even white teeth in a look of intense, almost painful pleasure. Her chest heaved rapidly and her nipples were tight and pink, standing erect with desire. Was he responsible for any of that or was it all the work of the Drusinian cord?

He bent to kiss and lick some more and then he heard her.

"Keer...oh god...please."

Had she really said his name? His cock, already throbbing for release in his pants, surged angrily as her soft voice calling for him roused his passion even more. Keer clenched his hands and gritted his teeth, forcing himself to keep control. Every instinct inside him roared that he needed to take her, to claim her, to shove his cock deep in the sweet, wet pussy he was licking so tenderly and fill her full of his cum. It was his Zentorian blood filling him with an almost animalistic lust so strong he had to fight to control it.

*God, can't do this. Have to keep control...*

Tabitha was moaning openly now, gasping for breath as he lowered his head and lapped her slippery cunt. She bucked up to meet him, losing herself in the pleasure he was giving her and then Keer felt something else. Her small, soft hands had somehow come unclenched from the green coverlet and found their way to his head. As Tabitha wound her fingers into his thick hair, he heard her moan his name again.

"Keer...please...oh, feels so good. Can't help it...going to come!" she gasped, her fingers tightening in his hair as she tilted her pelvis forward, offering herself to him completely.

Something seemed to snap inside him. Before, he'd been trying to lick and suck at the cords that were binding her, concentrating on releasing her. But now Keer's focus shifted completely to making her come. Sucking her tender, throbbing clit into his mouth, he traced it again and again with the tip of his tongue. At the same time, he pushed the silvery cord to one side and pressed two thick fingers into her hot cunt just as he had when she was on the auction block. His only thought was to make her lose control—to make her come as hard as she could so that he could fuck her and feel her inner walls spasming around the rigid shaft of his cock.

His fingers deep in her tight channel seemed to push her over the edge. Shaking and crying, gasping his name and pulling his hair, Tabitha finally came. Keer could feel her inner walls grasping greedily at his fingers as the orgasm rocked her to her core and she was moaning and begging, chanting his name almost like a prayer.

"Keer...Keer...fuck me! God, please just fuck me."

Staring at the silvery cords that still clung to her tender, pink flesh, Keer knew without a doubt that was exactly what he would have to do. Licking and sucking had failed to dissolve and remove all of the love honey that held the cords in place. He had no choice but to try something else.

Tabitha came back to herself slowly as the haze of need and pleasure that had saturated her brain ebbed. Without a doubt it had been the most intense orgasm of her life—enhanced by the fact that it was her own stoic, unattainable captain who had licked and sucked her to it. The thought made her feel suddenly tense. God, what had she been saying while he licked her? What had she been begging him to do?

"Tabitha." His deep voice made her sit up at once and look at him.

Keer was still kneeling between her thighs. He was contemplating her spread pussy where the Drusinian cord was still in place. Though Tabitha tried, the look on his chiseled features was hard to read.

"Yes, Sir?" She would have liked to close her legs but there was no way to do that with his broad shoulders still holding her open.

"I'm afraid..." He sighed. "I'm afraid licking and sucking your pussy isn't working – the love honey isn't dissolving. We're going to have to try semen instead."

Tabitha felt her mouth go dry. "Y-yes, Sir," she stammered. "Are...are you going to...to fuck me?" *Do you want to fuck me?* She wished she could ask him but of course it was out of the question.

"I said we'd try to dissolve the love honey with semen. I didn't say I'd actually have to fuck you. I promised you I'd try not to." His voice was dry even though his gold and blue eyes were blazing. "I'm going to try coming *on* you before I resort to coming *in* you. All right?"

"Yes, Sir." Tabitha bit her lip in frustration. By now all she wanted was to feel the thick shaft she could see under his tight uniform trousers plunging deep into her pussy but he seemed determined to try everything possible to avoid that eventuality. She looked down at the love knots still binding her and bit back a frustrated sigh. Didn't he want to fuck her? Or did he want to so much it made him afraid? Afraid of what he was feeling? *Yeah, right, Tabitha. You wish.* She did wish it, actually, because that might mean that he somehow felt about her the same way she felt about him. If he could feel at all, that was.

"Are you ready, Tabitha?" His voice broke her train of thought and Tabitha looked up to see that while she'd been thinking, her superior officer had been undressing.

*Wow.* The sight of Captain Keer naked took her breath away. His massive, broad shoulders led to muscular arms and a chest that looked like it had been carved from smooth, tan stone. Rippling abdominals led down to narrow hips and well-muscled legs but somehow Tabitha's eyes didn't quite make it down that far. They stuttered to a stop at the long, thick cock that was already hard and ready between his thighs. It looked almost obscenely huge to her and for a moment she was glad he was determined not to put it inside her because how could it possibly fit? The broad, plum-shaped head



that capped his shaft was already beaded with precum and as she watched, he took himself in hand and leaned toward her.

“Hold still and spread your legs,” he commanded, his deep voice tight with tension. “I’m going to come on your pussy.”

His hand was already moving, stroking slowly along the length of his massive shaft, making her bite her lip as her cunt surged with desire. Apparently he was going to touch himself until he came all over her inner folds and the silver cords that bound her. But Tabitha wanted to do more than lie there passively and wait to have her pussy coated by his cum – she wanted to help.

Wondering where she was getting the nerve to do this, she sat up on the bed and reached for him. When her small, slender fingers wrapped around his thick shaft, Keer made a low, hoarse noise in the back of his throat that might have been a gasp.

“What do you think you’re doing?” he rasped but made no move to stop her as Tabitha leaned toward him.

“Helping you...Sir,” she added belatedly. “I didn’t think you’d mind if I just...” She didn’t finish the sentence with words. Instead she leaned forward and lapped gently at the broad head of his cock. The salty, delicious flavor of his precum spread over her tongue at once, making her want more. Boldly she sucked the entire head into her mouth, licking and kissing as she stroked his thick shaft with her hands.

Keer groaned softly, his eyes fixed on the sight of Tabitha sucking and lapping his cock. Large hands found their way to her head and his fingers slipped into her silky hair, guiding her gently as he mouth-fucked her.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he murmured as he stroked between her lips. “Why do you have to be so beautiful?”

Tabitha felt a thrill of pleasure at the sound of his groan and his soft words. Could it be that he was feeling something for her? Or was it just his pleasure in having his cock sucked that caused him to talk so? She hoped for the former but didn’t really care at this point. She was already as hot as if she hadn’t had an orgasm at all and she wished

Captain Keer would hurry up and come so she could feel his hot seed coating her inner folds.

Her wish wasn't long in being granted. His shaft seemed to grow thicker and even harder in her hand and she could feel the head pulsing against her tongue. Then Keer pulled her gently off him.

"Lie back on the bed again, Tabitha," he ordered in a hoarse voice. "I'm going to come on you now."

She moaned softly as she obeyed his command. More than anything she wanted to feel him inside her, pumping her full of his hot seed but it didn't seem like that was going to happen. Instead he was going to come *on* her, which she was sure wasn't going to be nearly as nice as having him come *in* her.

Keer lay on top of her, supporting his weight with one muscular arm as he fisted himself tightly. Looking down between them, Tabitha could see the head of his cock tracing the silvery cord that bound her pussy as he stroked his length. She had a moment to reflect on how incredibly good it felt when he rubbed against her swollen clit – and then he was coming.

Tabitha bit her lip and watched in fascination as jet after jet of thick, pearly white cum spurted from the head of his cock and bathed her open cunt. His cum was hot, coating her pussy like warm cream and dripping down to the mouth of her open cunt. The amazingly erotic sight made her breath come short as she watched him.

At last Keer was done. He let himself collapse beside her for a moment, the flat planes of his muscular chest heaving as he caught his breath after the intense and prolonged orgasm. For a moment, Tabitha found herself eye-to-eye with him and she couldn't help looking into the blue-gold depths with wonder.

Keer looked back, a softer expression than she had yet seen on his hard features lighting his face. "You didn't have to do that, you know," he rumbled softly, lifting a hand to trace the curve of her cheek with one gentle finger. "Suck me, I mean. I could have managed."

"I...I wanted to." Tabitha stared back defiantly. Let him make what he wanted out of that. "Wanted to taste you the way you tasted me," she almost whispered, still caught in his gold and blue gaze.

"Tabitha," he murmured, still stroking her cheek.

She shivered under his touch. "Yes...Keer?"

The moment seemed to stretch between them like a warm thread of honey and for a moment Tabitha thought he might actually kiss her. But then he seemed to realize what he was doing—that he was allowing things between them to become too personal. Shaking his head slightly, he withdrew his hand and sat up.

"Let's see if it worked." His speech was terse and clipped as though he was mad at himself for betraying too much. But Tabitha couldn't help but feel her heart surge. For a moment she'd been sure he felt something for her, even if he was Zentorian.

Trying to keep a businesslike air, Keer leaned over her to examine her pussy. He nearly groaned at the erotic sight of his seed coating her inner folds and the silvery cords that bound her. But somehow he restrained himself. He needed to be careful, he reminded himself. Needed to keep his emotions in check. A moment ago when they had been lying on the bed, looking into each other's eyes, he'd almost told her he loved her. He'd only held himself back by a tremendous effort of will.

A muscle clenched in his jaw. What was wrong with him? He was acting like a lovesick cadet with his first romance in full bloom instead of a seasoned captain trying to help a subordinate. A *stubborn* subordinate, he reminded himself. One who was almost as irritating as she was beautiful. Until he took her in hand, that was.

It was true, he admitted to himself, that Tabitha had been a lot more tractable after he tied her to his bed. Just as she'd settled down after the spanking he'd given her in the slave market. Could it be that all his beautiful, aggravating junior officer needed was the right kind of attention? Maybe she could be made into a useful part of the crew after all if he just...

*If what, Keer? If you just tie her up and whip her and fuck her on a regular basis? If you just take your captain's privileges with her every night?* Because that was all that would satisfy him, he knew. He couldn't just fuck her once and let her go. He wanted Sergeant Tabitha Bryce under him every night, wanted to claim her completely, show her how he felt...

Feelings again, damn it—she was making him lose control of his emotions. Making him love her and that was a dangerous state of affairs. *Have to keep control*, he told himself sternly. But he didn't know how he was going to do that if his latest effort to free her from the love knots didn't work and he actually had to fuck her. He just hoped it wouldn't be necessary. V had told him that semen dissolved the love honey without fail—surely now he would be able to free her without further difficulty. Then he could send her back to her quarters and get on with his well-ordered life.

"Let me try to get this off," he murmured, forcing his mind back to the task at hand.

Tabitha moaned breathlessly as he tugged gently at the Drusinian cord that still stuck stubbornly to her flesh. "Please..." She shook her head, her long blonde hair moving restlessly over his dark green coverlet. "I don't think...don't think it's working."

Keer frowned. "I don't understand. V told me that once all the love honey was eradicated the love knots would come free. Unless—" He broke off, a sudden suspicion blooming in his mind. "Tabitha," he said, giving her a stern look. "Did he squirt some of the honey inside you too?"

Miserably, she nodded as she sat up and scooted to sit beside him on the edge of the bed. "I didn't think about that but yes, he did. But you, uh, saturated the cord. Shouldn't that be enough?"

"Apparently not. If I remember what he said correctly, every trace of the honey has to be gone from your body in order for the cord to relax and free you. Which means..."

"You're going to have to fuck me after all." Tabitha's beautiful face was flushed as she spoke and there was a frightened look in her eyes. Despite her moans in the heat of

passion, it was obvious she didn't want him to do this. But Keer didn't think he had a choice—there was no other way to free her. She would have to put her dislike of him aside and he would have to control his own fierce and possessive lusts at least long enough to do this.

“Yes,” he said heavily. “I’m sorry, Tabitha, but I’m going to have to fuck you.”

## **Chapter Eight**

*I'm sorry, Tabitha, but I'm going to have to fuck you.*

His words sent a stab of pleasure and fear straight to the tender cleft of her cunt. Tabitha had been longing for this all night and yet, he was so *huge*.

"I-I guess we'll have to wait until you're hard again," she said softly, thinking that at least it would give her time to prepare herself mentally.

"No need." He gestured between them and she looked down, surprised to see that he was as hard and thick as ever.

"But...but how...?"

"A Zentorian trait. Our matings are usually extensive and prolonged. I can fuck you all night if I have to."

The intense look in his eyes when he said it made Tabitha shiver. Surely that wouldn't be necessary – would it? "Oh," she managed to gasp faintly.

"You look frightened." His deep voice got softer and he cupped her cheek, looking into her eyes. "Don't be. I know I'm bigger than what you're probably used to but I won't hurt you. In fact..." He lay down in the middle of the bed and beckoned for her to join him. "I'll even let you lead."

"Sir?" Tabitha looked at him uncertainly. He was a scrumptious sight with all that tan, muscular skin laid out before her like a buffet. Not to mention the hard shaft of his cock still jutting up from between his thick thighs.

"I want you to be on top," Keer explained patiently. "That way you can control how fast I enter you."

His consideration, especially considering all the trouble she'd caused him, froze Tabitha in place for a moment. She couldn't think of a single other man who would be

so patient with her, so gentle and kind. She only wished she knew if Keer was doing this because she was part of his crew and his responsibility, or if he was doing it because he cared for her. Would he do the same, for example, for Sergeant Seamus? The thought caused a stab of jealousy in her chest. If only he would say something, would tell her that she meant more to him than just a junior officer who was always getting into trouble...

"I know you're reluctant to do this, Tabitha, but there is no other way." His words broke the paralysis that seemed to have taken hold of her and Tabitha shook her head.

"Oh no, Sir. I—" She stopped herself abruptly. What was she going to say—that she wanted him to fuck her? That she was dying to feel his massive shaft stretch her, filling her completely? Just the thought made her cheeks hot with embarrassment. If only he wasn't so stoic, so practical. If only he would tell her just once how much he wanted to be inside her.

"Tabitha, come here. *Now.*" Keer's words were tense and a muscle was jumping in his square jaw. She could almost see the impatience in his blue-gold eyes. Did he want to get this over with? Or did he need to be inside her as badly as she needed to have him there?

"Yes, Sir." She almost saluted and then stopped when she considered how ridiculous that would be. Instead she scrambled to the center of the bed where he was waiting and straddled his muscular hips.

"Good." Captain Keer seemed somewhat mollified but the intense look still blazed in his eyes. "Now I want you to try to relax as you lower yourself onto me," he instructed. "I think the cord has been loosened enough that it shouldn't be a problem. So as long as you can relax enough to take me, we should be able to do this."

Tabitha bit her lower lip. "Yes, Sir," she whispered. She could feel his large, warm hands on her hips, guiding her down. Grasping his thick shaft in one hand, she lowered herself until the head of his cock was positioned just inside the mouth of her cunt.

"That's right." His deep voice was almost soothing. "Now let yourself down, Tabitha. Just let yourself down and let my cock fill your pussy."

Moaning softly, Tabitha obeyed. He was so big she could feel her inner walls stretching with each thick inch that filled her but there was pleasure as well as pain in the sensation. And the erotic sight of her captain's shaft thrusting slowly into her pussy made her so hot she thought she might explode.

*God, can't believe he's actually doing this. Can't believe he's actually going to fuck me!*

For his part, Keer kept the look of intense concentration on his face as he entered her. The muscle in his jaw was still jumping too, as if he was holding himself back in some way. Tabitha appreciated his consideration as she'd certainly never had anything nearly as big as his cock inside her before. She kept expecting to come to the end of him but he was so long it didn't happen for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, though, she felt him bottom out inside her and breathed a sigh of relief.

"All right?" Keer's voice was hoarse.

Tabitha nodded. "Yes, Sir." She moved up an inch and then settled back down on him experimentally, drawing a ragged moan from both of them.

"God!" Keer took a deep breath. "Then I'm going to fuck you now, Tabitha. I'll try to be gentle but I have to warn you — my people are...very aggressive while mating. It's all I can do right now not to roll you over on the bed and fuck you into the mattress."

There was more than a little growl in his voice and Tabitha felt a shiver of mingled fear and excitement as she watched the gold rings around his deep blue irises contract with lust. But she had him in her now and there was no going back — no stopping until he filled her with his cum and eradicated the love honey completely. And besides, she'd been dying to get a reaction from him. Something to prove that this situation was affecting him as much as it was her. Suddenly she felt reckless.

"Fuck me then, Keer," she said, lifting her chin defiantly. She arched her back and swiveled her hips, making a little circular motion around his shaft with her cunt. "Fuck me and come in me. I want you to. I've wanted you to all night."



“Don’t tempt me, Tabitha.” His voice was all growl now – animalistic and hot. His eyes filled with a fiery lust she never would have suspected when he was entering her so slowly and patiently. Tabitha had a feeling he was right on the edge of some chasm and if she pushed him off, she might regret it. But she was past caring. Placing her hands on his hard thighs for leverage, she began to raise and lower herself in earnest, fucking herself on the thick shaft impaling her.

“I’m not afraid of you, *Sir*,” she taunted, giving him a superior little smile. “No matter how many times you spank me or how hard you fuck me, you’ll never break me.”

“That’s it!” His eyes flashed fire at her and the tense muscles in the big body beneath hers snapped into action. With one quick move, Keer flipped them so their positions were reversed. “I warned you,” he growled, pinning her arms over her head so she was helpless under him. “Warned you but you wouldn’t listen. Now you’ll have to take it all while I fuck you.”

Pulling back until he was almost all the way out of her, he surged forward, thrusting the thick length of his cock deep into her pussy and making her cry out with mingled pain and pleasure.

“God! Keer!” She writhed under him, not sure if she was trying to get free or trying to draw him closer but it didn’t matter – she was trapped. Arms pinned over her head, legs spread wide with his thick shaft skewering her wet, open pussy, Tabitha had no choice but to let herself be fucked. But still she fought.

The pleasure-pain of each thrust as he battered her channel with his cock was too much, too intense – she couldn’t just hold still. It occurred to her that it was a good thing he was holding her down. Otherwise she surely would have been pulling his hair as she had when he was going down on her. Pulling his hair and scratching his back, unable to stop herself from reacting to his extreme passion. But Keer held her in place with maddening force, grinding into her, filling her cunt with thrust after savage thrust, making her come with the sheer intensity of his fucking.

Because she *was* coming again—sharp spikes of pleasure stabbed her where they were joined as Keer pounded into her. Tabitha moaned as she felt her inner walls spasm around his invading thickness and then Keer was coming too, filling her in a hot gush, flooding her cunt with his cum as she begged and cried and bucked under him.

*Oh god, so good, so incredibly good*, her mind chanted. She could feel the thick, heated cum overflowing her cunt and running down her inner thighs and she knew this had to be it. There was no way a single trace of the love honey could remain now—surely she would be free.

The thought came with a confusing wash of emotions—relief to finally get the Drusinian love knots off, embarrassment that she had acted so shamelessly and regret that her captain would probably never touch her again after tonight. But then he lifted himself slightly off her and Tabitha looked between her legs to see that all her feelings were premature.

The silvery cord was still there.

*God, how could I let myself go like that?* Keer was ashamed of himself—completely mortified that he'd allowed his animalistic lust to overcome his sense of decency. He'd tried to warn her he was on the brink—why did she insist on pushing him over? And was she hurt?

He studied Tabitha's face anxiously, looking for signs of tears or pain. She was breathing hard, her cheeks flushed and her bare breasts heaving enticingly, but when she opened her eyes and returned his stare, he saw only mingled regret and sated lust in their beautiful depths.

"They're still there," she said, before he could ask if she was all right. "Still on me. I don't...don't understand."

"I don't either." Keer pulled out of her, feeling another stab of shame as he watched her wince with pain at his withdrawal. "I didn't mean to hurt you," he said gruffly. "I'm sorry, Tabitha. I wanted to be gentle, I just—"

"You don't have to explain." She gave him a ghost of her mocking grin. "I'm glad — glad to see there's something under that stoic practicality." Then she shut her mouth and looked down, a blush rising on her face. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that — especially when you're trying to help me."

Keer shook his head. "It doesn't matter. If you only knew —" *If you only knew how I really feel. How hard it's going to be to let you go now that I've had you. How I want to keep you here with me forever.* He locked his jaw, keeping the words inside.

"Knew what?" She looked at him intently but Keer shook his head.

"Never mind." He pulled gently at the slivery cord of the love knots, which were still firmly attached around her clit and at the sides of her pussy. "I just don't understand why these haven't come off."

Tabitha moaned softly. "I...I don't know why either. I don't see how there could be a single bit of the love honey left inside me after...after you filled me up like that." She blushed as she indicated the cum that was still leaking out of her freshly fucked cunt.

The sight was so erotic that it had Keer standing at attention all over again. She was his now — he'd marked her, filled her. If he was back on his home planet no other male would dare come within a hundred meters of her.

*Mine.* The word rose unbidden in his mind and he had to fight to push it aside. He wasn't supposed to be claiming her as his mate — he was supposed to be trying to get the damn Drusinian cord off her.

*Think, Keer, why is it not coming off? V said as soon as all traces of the love honey were eradicated... Wait a minute. All traces. As in every single bit. As in, not just in her pussy but everywhere. And since I've licked and sucked every inch of her skin where the cord was and came in and on her pussy, that means...*

"Tabitha," he said, looking into her eyes and making his voice stern. "Did V put the love honey anywhere else? Inside you, I mean?"

He saw her eyes widen in comprehension and then flicker down to where his cock was hard against his belly once again.

"Uh, do you mean...?"

"Your ass. Did he squirt any of the honey inside you there?" Keer let one finger travel down from her pussy to the tight rosebud entrance below. To his surprise, Tabitha nearly jumped out of her skin.

"Well, I...I mean...no." She sat up suddenly and began to scoot off the bed. "No, he didn't. Well, this obviously isn't going to work so I guess I'd better go now. Thanks for trying, Sir."

"Wait a minute." Keer caught her arm and dragged her back just as she was about to bolt. "You're lying to me," he accused, studying the guilty look on her beautiful face. "He *did* put the love honey in you there, didn't he?"

"So what if he did?" Her old defiance was back, coupled with a flash of fear. "That doesn't mean you have to...to do anything about it."

Keer blew out a breath impatiently. "Of course I do. If we don't get the knots off you now, you'll have to live with them the rest of your life."

"Well, that's too bad, isn't it?" She tugged on the arm he was holding, trying to break free. "I guess I'll manage somehow."

"No, you won't." Keer drew her back and made her sit on the bed beside him. "I'm sorry, Tabitha but I'm going to have to fuck you one more time."

"No, please!" Her eyes widened with full-blown terror. "Look, I've never been able to take a normal-sized man there. I know because I tried once—it *hurts*. And that was with a guy who wasn't even half your size."

Keer felt his heart contract but he knew he had to be firm. "I'll be gentle."

Her eyes narrowed in disbelief. "You said that before and look what happened. I've never been fucked like that—*ever*. It was a rough ride and I'm sorry, I just don't think I'm up to it again. Especially not...not *there*."

*She's afraid of me. Afraid I'll break my word. And who could blame her after the way I've treated her? After I whipped her in the slave market and fucked her so brutally? Part of him*

wanted to let her go at once, to apologize and beg her to understand how he felt—how she made him feel too much. So much it was hard to control himself. But Keer knew he couldn't do that. If he let her go he'd be doing her a grave disservice—condemning her to a life of sexual bondage to the knots. And if he tried to explain that she drove him over the edge because he loved her, he would only make her more uncomfortable—would only make a bad situation worse. He could only do what she was begging him not to—he had to put his thick cock deep in her ass and come one more time. Whether she wanted him to or not.

“I'm sorry, Tabitha,” he said, turning her over and pushing a pillow under her stomach to elevate her. “But I can't let your fear keep you in bondage. I have to do this. Have to fuck you.”

Tabitha watched the thoughts race across his face and she knew the exact moment when he decided to ignore her pleas and fuck her in the ass anyway. God, what was she going to do? How could she stop him?

When he flipped her over onto her stomach and shoved a pillow under her to raise her up, she realized that there was no stopping him. She wasn't going to be able to keep him from fucking her ass any more than she'd been able to stop him from fucking her pussy. She was stuck—trapped.

Fear rose in her throat as she remembered the one time she'd tried this. The stretching pain had been so immediate, so intense, that she'd called a halt to it before the man she'd been making love with had even gotten the head of his shaft inside her. And now Captain Keer was proposing to put his entire thick length into her? God, this was going to be torture!

Suddenly her nerve snapped. She had to at least *try* to get away. He was already in position between her legs but he was no longer holding her down. Scrambling out from under him, Tabitha tried to run. If she could just get out of his quarters, she was sure he

wouldn't follow her. She didn't even care if the other crewmembers saw her naked — she just wanted to get out of there.

She didn't even make it off the bed.

"I told you, this is for your own good," Keer growled in her ear as he dragged her back into position. "Will you hold still or do I have to tie you up again?"

"Let me go!" Tabitha was in full fight-or-flight mode now. She bucked against him, trying to get free of his punishing grip. She didn't care if she had to wear the damn love knots the rest of her life — she didn't want to take them off this way.

"Fine. You're making me do this." Pushing her face down on the mattress, he grabbed one of the black silk scarves he'd bound her with earlier and tied her hands behind her back. Then he pushed the pillow in place once more and parted her legs by force.

"No — *no!*" Tabitha tried to wiggle away again but he held her down.

"Don't make me tie your legs too," he grated, his deep voice filled with emotion. "Hold still, damn it! I said I'd be gentle."

"You said that before!" Tabitha was panting, almost exhausted from the intense panic overwhelming her. "Please, Keer, I'm afraid!"

"I don't want you to fear me." He sounded torn — a man who hated what he was doing but was determined to do it anyway. "But I have to do this, Tabitha — for your own good. The sooner you hold still and stop struggling, the sooner it will be over."

"Please..." She was crying now, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I'm sorry." His deep voice was choked with emotion and for a moment she wondered if he might have tears in those brilliant blue-gold eyes of his too. The thought so distracted her that she forgot to struggle. Could it be that Captain Keer felt something for her? Something more than lust and irritation? Was he really sorry about what he was doing? She really wished she could see his face but that was impossible from the position she was in.

"I swear I'll be gentle," he whispered in a low, broken tone. "Please, Tabitha, can't you trust me?"

The thought that he cared enough to sound so upset seemed to melt the cold knot of panic in her stomach. "I...I'll try, I guess," she whispered back. "But can you even...I mean before the cord was stuck right over my...my opening. There's a little room there but not enough for your...for your cock. At least, I don't think so."

"There's more play in the ropes than there was earlier," he assured her. "I think at least some of the honey dissolved. It shouldn't be a problem." Large hands stroked her lower back and trembling buttocks soothingly as he spoke. "Can you let me in, Tabitha? Can you let me try to free you? Just trust me to try, please."

Squeezing her eyes closed, Tabitha nodded. "Yes," she whispered, so low she could barely hear her own voice. "Yes, Keer, I...I trust you."

"Thank you," he murmured. "You have no idea what that means to me."

Warm fingers found the cleft of her buttocks and something soothing was spread over her tight entrance. Despite her moans of protest, Keer entered her slowly, finger-fucking her rosebud, scissoring to stretch her, to get her ready.

The gentle, intimate touch reminded Tabitha of the way he'd put the salve on her after whipping her in the slave market. Was he really going to take this slow? After all, she'd pushed him until he'd snapped last time, trying to get a reaction from him. Was he able to be tender and careful even with his Zentorian instincts urging him to take her? Despite her fear, her heart rate began to slow. Maybe it wouldn't be that bad.

And then the broad head of his cock pressed against her rosebud and slowly but inexorably, entered her. Tabitha gasped and couldn't help trying to squirm away without success. It wasn't that the invasion hurt—it did sting a little, although not nearly as much as she'd feared. It felt wrong somehow, frighteningly intimate in a way she wasn't prepared to accept. Though she'd promised to trust him, she didn't feel ready to give him this yet, not when she still wasn't sure if he gave a damn about her or not.

Another thick inch pierced her, stretching her tender nether mouth until she gasped in mingled pain and pleasure. "Please!" She hated the pleading tone of her voice but she couldn't seem to help it. Couldn't seem to help writhing under him, trying to get away from the thick invader. If it had only hurt she might have been able to stand it—but it felt good too, felt good to be opened like this, owned by a man strong enough to hold her down and take her.

The thought filled her with confusion. Surely she didn't want this, did she? Didn't want to be held and taken in this intimate way. Maybe it was because it was Keer who was doing it, who was filling her where she'd never allowed any man to fill her before.

"Hold still and try to relax." Warm, soothing hands stroked her back as though he were trying to gentle a wild animal. "Just let me get all the way into you, Tabitha. It's going to be easier once you're used to having me here."

"Never...get used to...this," she panted as he pressed yet more of his thickness inside her. To give him credit, he was obviously trying to be gentle but she could feel herself stretching just the same. Waves of shame and desire washed over her as the pain-pleasure spiked inside her. She was on the ragged edge of having more than she could bear but he was more than halfway into her now. There was no stopping him, she realized. No keeping him from holding her down and fucking her ass until he came deep inside her. Wiggling and trying to get loose weren't going to do her a bit of good. But knowing that didn't help—the sensations as he slid into her were so intense she couldn't help trying to get away from them. She'd never been one to submit in any situation—she was a fighter. And despite promising to trust him and let him do what was necessary, she couldn't help fighting to get him out of her.

"Relax." His voice was ragged as she bucked under him. "Relax and let me in, Tabitha." As he spoke the final fraction of his cock slid home inside her. Tabitha knew because she could feel his trim, muscular hips flush with her buttocks.

*God, can't believe he's all the way in me. In me so deep!* She was stretched tight around him, filled to the limit and beyond and she didn't think she could take another inch. But



just as she was beginning to feel relief, she remembered what had happened when he was filling her pussy. He'd been perfectly slow and gentle until he got all the way in—then he'd fucked her to within an inch of her life. Tabitha's anxiety climbed a notch—she didn't think she could take that again. Not when he was filling her ass instead of her pussy. Could she really trust him to remain gentle? She froze under him, wondering what was coming next.

Keer felt the tension in the slim body under his and heard her muffled moans as he entered her. He knew Tabitha was trying to submit to him, trying to trust him, but each soft sound from her lips tore at his heart. He wished there was any other way to free her from the damn love knots, wished it with his entire being. But there wasn't. And he couldn't let her go through life in bondage. Even if she resented him for this forever, and he was fairly sure she would, he had to do it. Had to get rid of the last of the love honey the only way he could—by coming inside her.

She moaned softly and twisted under him, still trying to get free despite the way he had her tied and pinned, spread and helpless beneath him. It tore at his heart to watch her struggles and know he was the cause of them. There was no chance of winning her heart now, not when he was invading her body. Just because she had agreed to submit to this didn't mean she wanted it. Keer didn't want it himself, would rather have suffered the agony of a thousand horrible deaths than inflict this on the woman he now knew he loved. But what else could he do?

He didn't have time to answer the question because his pleasure was already rising. Her slick inner walls were caressing him like a velvet glove, stimulating him to orgasm almost before he'd stroked into her more than twice.

Keer didn't try to hold back. With relief he let himself go, pressing into her as deeply as he could, trying to be sure his cum would finally erase all traces of the love honey once and for all.

She trembled under him as he flooded her, her slender body shaking, no doubt with fear and anxiety. Keer felt his heart beat painfully in his chest. She would hate him forever now. And he would want her until the end of time.

"I'm sorry," he murmured again as the clenching in his lower body finally ceased. "Did I hurt you?" It seemed like a stupid question but he had to ask, had to know the worst.

Tabitha pressed her face into the pillow, refusing to look at him. "Not as much as I thought. It was scary and embarrassing but I guess I'm still here." Her voice was muffled, her tone still vaguely defiant. But the brokenness under her brave front filled him with shame.

"Tabitha, I'm so sorry," he murmured again. "I'll never be able to tell you how much."

"That's all right, Sir." With an obvious effort she raised her head and looked back at him, her pale blue eyes suspiciously bright. "Are...are you finished?"

"Oh...yes." Keer realized he was still buried to the hilt inside her. He tried to pull out of her gently but she made a small, hurt whimpering sound as he withdrew that tore at his heart. He wanted to gather her to him, to pull her close and hold her and comfort her but he knew it was impossible. She would probably want to get as far away from him as she could as soon as this was over. So instead of pulling her close, he untied her arms, rubbing her wrists where the black scarves had left faint red marks. There was only one more thing he had to do and then he would leave her alone to gather her dignity – what little he had left her.

Reaching between her legs, he found a loop of the silvery Drusinian cord and tugged experimentally. Tabitha cried and jerked under him—but the love knots finally came free.

"Easy," he whispered, pulling it away from her body. They'd had such a hard time getting it off he didn't want to risk it somehow adhering to her again. As he wound it into a neat loop in his hand, Tabitha turned on her side with her face against the green

coverlet. He opened his mouth to ask if she was all right and shut it again. Of course she wasn't all right—not after what he'd just done to her. He finished gathering the cord and got off the bed. He would leave her in peace. It was the only thing he could do for her now.

Looking down at the limp, silvery cord in his hand, Keer wondered why, even though Tabitha was finally free of the damn love knots, it felt like someone had tied one to his heart.

## **Chapter Nine**

Tabitha lay on his bed and felt like crying. God, did he really care so little for her? So little he wanted to leave as soon as he was done?

She knew at the end she'd gotten kind of carried away – all right, a *lot* carried away but she couldn't help it. For almost a week she'd been tortured by the constricting love knots, pushed past the point of endurance and yet not allowed to come. Then Keer had touched her and licked her and fucked her – making her come so hard, so intensely. And before she'd even been able to catch her breath, he'd forced her to hold still while he made her worst fears come true.

Only once he'd gotten into her, she could scarcely remember what she'd been afraid of. Because he was gentle – so gentle that she could scarcely believe he was the same man who'd fucked her pussy so savagely. And with just a few strokes inside her, he made her come again. It was the way he rubbed her clit against the pillow as he pushed into her that did it – that and the fact that he was doing something so forbidden, something she had feared for so long that Tabitha could scarcely believe she was able to stand it. Given all that, how could she help coming again? Especially since she was still in love with him.

Well, it was pretty obvious that he didn't exactly share her feelings, Tabitha thought ruefully, sitting up on the side of the bed to take stock of herself. The Drusinian cords were finally gone – leaving only faint red traces of themselves on her fair skin to remind her of her bondage. She remembered the way he'd sucked and licked her nipple once the first love knot had come free and wanted to cry all over again. There was no point in wishing he would come back and hold her and kiss the red marks left by the cord. Captain Keer was gone and didn't show any signs of coming back.

*Well that's your own fault, isn't it? Crying and begging and barely trusting him even when he promised to be gentle. You scared him off with all your gasping and moaning. An emotional display like that is probably repulsive to a Zentorian. After all, they don't have feelings – or at least, not like the rest of the sentient species in the galaxy.*

But what about the pain she'd heard in his voice? What about how she'd been so sure he felt something for her after all? Tabitha pushed the thought away. Clearly she'd been mistaken about that. It was time to stop wishing and leave his quarters for her own. Doubtless he was waiting for her to go. Once she left he could get back to his rigidly controlled life and forget he'd ever had to help out one of his junior officers in such an embarrassingly intimate way.

Wearily she dragged herself off his bed and went in search of her uniform. She put it on, noticing how good it felt to wear it without the constricting love knots in the way. Everything was going to be much better now. She would get back into the swing of things and try to pretend that none of this had ever happened. She might even ask for a transfer to another Intergal ship so she could put the entire incident behind her forever.

Something warm and wet slipped down her cheek and Tabitha wiped at the tears angrily. There was no point in crying now. No point in doing anything but going back to her quarters and trying to get some sleep. But, god, knowing that he didn't care for her the way she cared for him hurt. It hurt so much.

Sighing, she let herself out of his quarters and trudged back down the corridor, feeling worse than she had since she'd first set foot on the *Pride of Justice*.

She was gone when he finally returned to his quarters and Keer didn't know whether to feel relieved or disappointed. Knowing how she felt about him now made him feel like a fist of iron was squeezing his heart. Well, at least he'd managed to remove the love knots from her body, freeing her from their sexual bondage. He was glad about that. He wished things could have gone differently, that he hadn't had to frighten her at the end, but what else could he have done? He'd tried to be gentle – not

wanting to hurt her—but it was pretty obvious from her reaction after it was over that he hadn't been completely successful. So he'd been forced to leave her curled up on his bed alone, knowing she wouldn't want to be near him again. Not after what he had needed to do.

*God, how did she get under my skin like this? Why can't I stop wanting her? Stop needing her? Stop loving her?*

But he couldn't and Keer knew it was useless to try. Once given, his love couldn't be removed. He thought of summoning her again, once he was calmer, and exercising his captain's privileges but he knew she would hate him for it. And even if she didn't, his people mated for life so a quick fuck would only fan the flames of his desire for her, not quench them. He could accept nothing less than Tabitha's complete surrender, both of her heart and body. And knowing how stubborn and willful she could be, he sincerely doubted she would be willing to give herself to him that fully and unconditionally.

*As if she'd even consider it now after what you did to her,* he told himself angrily. *She hates you.* Yes, of course she did. And why should she not?

He'd dragged her through the slave market naked, chained her to the whipping post and flogged her until she cried. Then he'd forced her to submit to the indignity of being licked and sucked all over in order to get some relief from the love knots that bound her body. As if that wasn't bad enough, he'd fucked her pussy as hard as he could and then taken her ass, though she'd told him how frightening she found that particular act. At the time everything he'd done had seemed necessary and right, but now Keer wondered how much had actually been a compulsory part of his job as her superior officer and how much had been his fierce Zentorian emotions getting out of control.

*I owe her an explanation.* Yes, he did. He also needed to tell her about the vid evidence he'd collected at the slave market. It would have to be shown to the judge trying V's case. Of course, her face would be tastefully blurred out to protect her

identity but he still needed her to sign off on the release before he turned it in to the court.

Reluctantly, Keer decided that he would have to call her to his quarters again. But not this minute—tomorrow would do just as well, he decided. That would give him time to de-stress and relax, to gather his thoughts and decide exactly what to say and how to say it.

And how to let her go, no matter how painful it was.

\* \* \* \* \*

“Sergeant Tabitha Bryce to the captain’s quarters. Sergeant Bryce to the captain’s quarters at once.”

*Not again!* Tabitha wondered if she was hearing things. Was Captain Keer actually summoning her to his quarters again? And if so, why? What could he possibly want with her after he’d made it abundantly clear that he didn’t even want to be near her the night before?

And what must the rest of the crew be thinking? Not even twenty-four hours since she’d last visited him and he was already calling her back. Tabitha sighed. All day long she’d been getting looks from the other officers—envious looks from the women and lustful looks from the men. It was clear they’d all drawn the obvious conclusion when they heard her summoned the night before—that Captain Keer was finally taking his privileges. And now he wanted to fuck her again.

*But does he really? Or is he going to ask me to resign or transfer—maybe offer me a commission on another ship so he won’t have to be reminded of what we did every time he sees me?* Tabitha thought it was likely. But there was nothing she could do but go to his quarters and find out.

Keer let her in the moment she rang and Tabitha stalked swiftly past him into the living area, trying not to think about the activities they’d engaged in the last time she’d been there. Damn the man for making her so hot and damn him for looking so good.

His big body clothed in the Intergal uniform looked twice as delicious now that she knew what lay beneath the crisp fabric. And, as usual, he didn't have a hair out of place. There was an impassive look in his blue-gold eyes that was impossible to read—it might have been desire or censure or just irritation that he had to talk to her again. Tabitha's heart began pounding as he turned and took a step toward her but she forced herself to hold her ground.

"Tabitha..." His deep voice was hesitant for once, surprising her. "I...I needed to talk to you about something," he began haltingly.

Tabitha wanted to spare him and herself both the pain and embarrassment she was afraid was about to follow.

"If this is about last night—"she began.

"No." He held up a hand to stop her. "At least...not yet. First I need to show you something." He gestured toward the blue couch in his living area. "Please, sit down."

Uneasily, Tabitha sat. Why had he called her here if not to talk about the night before? And what could he possibly have to show her? She didn't have to wonder long. With a flick of some hidden remote, Keer brought up a vid projector and started a vid loop. He sat on the couch beside her, much too close for Tabitha's comfort, but by then what she was seeing on the vid screen so engrossed her that she didn't even try to move away from him.

There was the hot, dusty slave market of Ortha Six filled with the purple-robed merchants and human merchandise. And as the crowd parted in front of the camera, there was Tabitha, chained and spread on the auction block with her bare breasts heaving and her pussy wet and open for anyone to see. As she watched, a hand came up and seemed to adjust the view to include V, who was standing right beside her. A familiar hand—Keer's hand. Suddenly she realized that this must be from a hidden vid surveillance device he'd been wearing when he came to rescue her.



"What...why are you showing me this?" she asked numbly, watching as the scene shifted to show him fondling her breasts as he spoke to the slaver. She could almost feel his touch all over again as she watched and a shiver of pure desire rushed over her.

"To let you know that your little foray into undercover work wasn't a complete failure. We'll be able to use this evidence to prove that V is actively selling slaves. Of course, we'll blur out your face and your name won't be mentioned, but I thought you'd like to know."

"Thank you." Tabitha looked down at her hands, trying not to watch the way Keer was touching her in the vid. If only he would touch her like that one more time, but there was no chance of that because there was no reason for him to. The Drusinian love knots had been removed from her body and since he'd never had any motivation other than his sense of duty to make love to her, it was never going to happen again. She might as well go back to her quarters and stop torturing herself with wishes that would never be fulfilled.

"I'd like to explain something to you about last night." Keer scooted closer to her on the couch and Tabitha's caught the warm, masculine scent of his skin. Suddenly her mouth was so dry it was hard to talk.

"Honestly, Sir, no explanation is necessary," she murmured, looking away.

Keer lifted her chin gently with one hand, forcing her to look at him. "It most certainly is, Tabitha," he murmured, searching her eyes with his own. "I put you in a frightening position last night. Don't you want to know why?"

Tabitha took a deep breath as the heat of a blush bloomed in her cheeks. "I know why—because you were determined to get the love knots off me no matter what. And you were right—I admit it. So really, it's not a big deal," she said in a rush, wishing he would let her go. Even the feel of his hand on her chin was maddening—reminding her of what she could never have again.

"Not a big deal? I see." Keer's face was like a thundercloud now. "So now that you're free of the love knots you don't care to know how I feel about you?"

“Wait a minute—how you *feel*?” Tabitha frowned at him. “What do you mean how you feel? Everyone knows Zentorians don’t have feelings.”

“Don’t have feelings? Of all the irritating...exasperating...” He stood abruptly and began pacing the room. “It’s not that we don’t have feelings, Tabitha—it’s that we feel too strongly. Our emotions, when left unchecked, can be dangerous.” He swung around to look at her. “That’s why I’ve tried so hard to put a rein on mine whenever I’m around you. But you...you always manage to get to me. You make me feel no matter how hard I try not to.”

Tabitha could hardly believe what she was hearing. “You do? I mean, I do? I make you feel?” She felt like an entire flock of butterflies had just taken off in her stomach but she tried to control her excitement. After all, he hadn’t said *what* she made him feel and it was just as likely to be irritation and anger as love and desire.

“You do.” Keer looked at her, his gold-ringed eyes blazing with obvious emotion but he held his ground. “Not that it matters now. After they way I’ve treated you—what I’ve done to you.”

“But...but I...” Tabitha shook her head. “Do you think that I...that I hate you?” she asked at last, hardly able to believe it.

“I don’t think—I know.” His deep voice was grim. “Not that I blame you.”

“Well, you’re wrong.” Getting off the couch, Tabitha moved to join him. “You’ve disciplined me and done things I had a hard time accepting but all of it was for my own good. I...I can see that now, Keer.” She looked at him shyly, waiting to see how he would react to her not calling him Captain.

He let out a breath and the tension seemed to leak out of his big frame. “So...you don’t hate me? Even after last night?”

“You helped me.” Tabitha dared to lay a hand on his muscular forearm and he took it at once in both of his. “You only did what you had to do in order to get those damn love knots off me. And...and I wouldn’t have been stuck with them in the first place if I hadn’t decided to try to capture V on my own. That was stupid of me and I’m sorry. I

just..." She bit her lip and looked down for a moment to where her small hand was swallowed by his much larger ones. "I wanted to get your attention," she whispered. "Wanted to prove my worth to you but you were always so busy ignoring me—"

"I ignored you because I didn't trust myself to notice you. I didn't trust that I could get close to you without losing control." Keer's deep voice was hoarse. "The way I lost it last night."

"I pushed you to that," Tabitha admitted. "I wanted to see if I could get a reaction from you. I-I wanted to know if I meant anything to you—anything other than an irritating junior officer who's always getting herself into trouble, that is."

"You're irritating all right." But there was humor in Keer's deep voice when he said it. Smiling at her, he pulled her close. "Irritating, fascinating, stubborn, beautiful...I could go on all night, Tabitha. But all you really need to know is that I want you."

"You..." Her heart was beating so hard it felt like it was shaking her entire body. "You want to...take your captain's privileges with me?" she asked, biting her lip.

"More than that. If we were living on my planet, I'd ask if I could mate you—I think you Earth humanoids call it marriage. Is that right?" He looked down into her eyes, stroking her hair tenderly.

"Yes, that's what we call it." Tabitha felt like she must be dreaming. Could it really be that he felt what she did when they were together—that intense attraction that nearly drove her crazy whenever they were in the same room? She felt warm and tingly all over—almost as if the love knots were still in place, teasing her to arousal.

"If that's what you call it then that's what I want. I want you with me always, and not just as a member of my crew."

Tabitha smiled up at him. "I want that too. I think I've wanted it for a long time, despite the way you disciplined me in the slave market—or maybe...maybe because of it." She blushed as she admitted it—who could have guessed that being disciplined could be a turn-on? She had an idea it wouldn't be with anyone else but him.

As though he was reading her mind, a slow smile spread over his face. “I want you to know, Tabitha, that just because you’re going to be my mate it doesn’t mean you’ll stop being Sergeant Bryce. And if you commit an act that requires punishment, I won’t hesitate to give it.”

Boldly, Tabitha stood on her tiptoes and brushed her mouth against his. “I look forward to it...Sir,” she murmured against his lips.

As Keer groaned softly and crushed her to him, covering her mouth in an insatiable kiss, Tabitha decided that she liked being tied into knots just fine—as long as it was Keer doing the tying.

## **About the Author**

Evangeline Anderson is a registered MRI tech who would rather be writing. And she is nerdy enough to have a bumper sticker that says "I'd rather be writing." Honk if you see her! She is thirty-something and lives in Florida with a husband, a son and two cats. She had been writing erotic fiction for her own gratification for a number of years before it occurred to her to try to get paid for it. To her delight, she found that it was actually possible to get money for having a dirty mind and she has been writing paranormal and sci-fi erotica steadily ever since.

Evangeline welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and e-mail address on her author bio page at [www.ellorascave.com](http://www.ellorascave.com).

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