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Chains of Desire

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CHAINS OF DESIRE

Natasha Moore

Chapter One

Hanna's morning started out the same as every other boring day in the palace. She quickly completed her housekeeping chores and then searched for a way to spend the rest of her time. She wandered around in the garden, trying to ease her restlessness with fresh air and sunshine. The other ladies seemed happy to spend their idle time stitching and reading until the princess needed them.

Hanna wanted more.

She was sitting on a bench, daydreaming amid the colorful flower beds, when Princess Serena came and sat down beside her. They sat for a moment in an easy silence before the princess spoke.

"Are you unhappy, Hanna?"

"Of course not, Your Highness." Hanna turned to look at her princess, forced a smile and swiftly changed the subject. "Done with your royal obligations for today?"

"Yes, I thought I'd never get away." She tilted her head as she looked at Hanna. "Why do you look so sad then? Please tell me."

Her princess was stubborn and smart. Not one to be distracted by a feeble attempt to change the subject. Hanna sighed and tried to make it sound thoughtful instead of melancholy. "Who could be sad in this wonderful place?" she asked. "Beautiful sunshine, lovely flowers, good friends." She made her smile even wider. "I'm fine."

"Hmm." Serena didn't appear convinced. "I'd like to go down to the lake with you and the other ladies. Would you dance for us?"

Hanna's mood lifted at the thought. "Of course, Princess."

"Good. Let's change our robes and get the others."

The lake was a far distance from the castle. Hanna was quiet, listening to the other women's chatter as they walked along the worn pathway. Once they'd reached the sunny meadow at the edge of the tranquil lake, only the tips of the spires were visible. Hanna breathed a little easier.

"Hanna will dance for us today," Serena announced.

The six women sat in a circle around Hanna on the soft verdant grass. The sun beat down warmly on her cheeks as she raised her face to the sky. Arms outstretched, she closed her eyes and began to move her hips in lazy circles. The silky fabric of the skirt caressed her legs as she swayed. Sensual music played in her head, nothing like the dark, plodding songs preferred by the royal family of Vanya. She moved her body to rich notes that slid sensuously from one to another. It was a melody only she could hear, running through her mind, leading her body in the dance.

As her muscles warmed, Hanna moved more freely. Her limbs loosened as she swayed to the music in her head. She combed her fingers through her heavy hair and lifted it off her damp skin. She arched her back when she dropped her hair and the curls brushed against her bottom.

Hanna had been yearning for more lately. So much more. Did she dare hope for a life of her own, a life apart from serving the princess? Would she ever have the chance to see other countries? Other worlds, even? Other people than the small circle of women and men in the palace?

Would she ever have a chance to know love? To experience the touch of a man's hand along her skin? She poured out all her restless energy into the dance. When a bead of sweat rolled down her chest, she could almost imagine a masculine finger tracing the line between her breasts.

She'd never known a man's touch. Oh certainly a hug from her father years ago. A pat on the shoulder by the king in passing. But nothing to match the imaginary finger along her skin. She was past the age of consent, but when would she ever have the opportunity to meet a man? She'd been trained since her early years to serve Princess Serena. She would have no chance for a life of her own.

The music and the man continued to play in her mind. She crossed her arms in front of her. Her hands became a lover's hands, stroking the damp skin on her upper arms. Her breasts seemed fuller and her sensitive nipples brushed against the silky fabric that swayed with her body. She continued to roll her hips in a rhythm that increased her restlessness. Her woman's spot between her legs ached with a longing she'd been experiencing more often in the past few months. Her sex grew damp as the man in her imagination continued to sweep his hands along her body. What would it feel like for him to slide his hands between her legs?

Her breath caught in her throat at the thought and she almost moaned out loud.

Suddenly the music in her head was replaced by terrified screams.

Hanna's eyes flew open and she froze. At least a dozen tall men, clad in heavy black body armor, surrounded them. Where had they come from? They held weapons as large and powerful as the warriors themselves.

The women tried to scatter, but the men grabbed them before they could get far. A compact man with icy blue eyes stepped up to Hanna as her heart beat frantically against her ribs. The weapon he pointed at her looked huge and lethal. "Princess Serena. Control your women." He glanced at the mayhem around them. "Otherwise I cannot guarantee what my men will do to subdue them."

She straightened her shoulders and forced herself not to look at her princess. Hanna's entire body trembled. Was this truly happening? She'd been raised to wear the red that signified Vanyan royalty and to serve as a royal decoy, but she never thought she'd truly be called upon to serve in this way. Hanna glanced around at the terrified women struggling in the warriors' grasps. When she finally looked at the princess, her eyes were wide with fear as she met Hanna's gaze.

"What is the meaning of this?" Hanna demanded, doing her best to sound royal. And royally upset.

The soldier grabbed her arm, his fingers easily spanning her flesh, and yanked her to his side. His body was hard and unyielding. He rubbed the barrel of his weapon across her breasts and she shivered with dread. "My men won't hesitate to use their weapons. Wouldn't you rather be a live slave than a dead princess?"

Terrified screams rose around her. *Slave?* No one on Vanya really believed the stories of slave ships that took away bad little girls and boys.

"Captain. We must go before the screams bring their guards." Another soldier stepped up, taller, broader, with a deep, warm voice that sent a different kind of shiver along her skin. She'd never seen anyone with skin as dark as his. She looked into his eyes but saw no compassion there.

The captain rubbed the tip of his weapon against Hanna's cheek and she shuddered. "What do you say, Princess? Do we leave dead bodies behind or will you and your women come quietly?"

Hanna had no idea if the stories she'd heard of sex slaves were true. If they were, maybe she'd rather be dead. But as long as she was alive, as long as all of them were alive, there was still hope. She nodded and the women quieted. They had been trained to obey her as they would the princess.

The princess! Hanna gasped as the men herded them all into a small circle. She hadn't protected the princess, after all. As she frantically searched the crowd for Serena, a burst of bright light engulfed them and a surge of pain turned everything black.

* * * * *

Jarrold stood guard outside the cell that held Princess Serena. While the rest of the women they captured were held together in a large cell below decks, the princess had been secured in an empty stateroom not far from the captain's own room. She was important, that much Jarrold knew. She was bringing them all a great deal of money.

He didn't know much about the planet they'd teleported to in order to snatch the new slaves. Knew even less about princesses. But he knew plenty about having money and not having it. His share of her price would go a long way toward getting him off this ship and back on one of his own.

The image of the princess dancing as they surrounded the women was burned into Jarrold's brain. He'd not seen many women as sensual as this one. His cock had instantly hardened, which had not been comfortable inside the form-fitting body armor. He hadn't been able to drag his eyes away from her supple body, her hips swaying, her breasts gently bouncing. Her arms had been raised to the heavens as if asking for her heart's desire.

Her eyes had been closed, a serene expression on her face until the screams started. He'd hated seeing the fear in her wide, green eyes. Pain lanced his chest as he recalled

his part in the capture, then he pushed his guilt away. Slavery was the way of the universe. He knew better than most that it was true. Slaves served a purpose in every society he'd ever encountered.

A cookboy appeared with a plate of food. "For the prisoner," he said.

"I'll take it to her." Jarrod reached for the plate, the savory aroma reminding him he'd not had supper yet.

"Be careful," the boy said. "She pitched the food at the last guard who brought her a meal."

"Then she should be hungry," Jarrod replied with a shrug.

"She tried to brain him with the plate," the boy went on, obviously excited to be passing on the juicy tale. "Crock said he chained her up good."

Jarrod nodded, trying to imagine the slender woman attacking the mammoth Crock. Jarrod opened the door with his handprint. After he stepped into the room, the solid door slid closed behind him.

This was the first time he'd seen her since they'd returned to the ship. She must have really angered Crock. He'd stripped her naked before he chained her to the far wall of the room. Jarrod froze as he took in the naked beauty, chained and helpless before him. The beast he kept locked inside him struggled to break free. His cock turned to iron and lunged against the front of his trousers.

Her eyes flashed as she watched him stand and stare at her. Thick metal cuffs encircled her wrists and ankles. Chains attached the cuffs to the wall behind her, her arms and legs spread wide. Her heavy breaths made her full breasts rise and fall. His gaze dropped to the golden curls that didn't quite hide the pink lips between her legs.

He had to swallow before he could speak. Had to ignore the dark needs roiling within him.

"You've been a bad girl, Princess." He set the plate on the table beside the door and then lifted the strap of his weapon over his head, propping it up against the wall. More than one guard had been killed by his own gun. He slowly crossed the room until he was close enough to touch her. Close enough to smell her spicy scent. He noticed the red marks on her wrists and shook his head. "If you're not careful, you'll break that soft skin."

The chains rattled as she lunged toward him. The harsh jangle called up desires he'd worked hard to bury deep inside. He winced as she pulled against her unyielding restraints and the metal rubbed against her tender skin. He admired her spirit, though he knew that would only make things tougher for her in the long run.

"Go to hell!" she shouted, rattling the chains again.

"I've no doubt I will," he replied dryly. "But not today." He ran a finger across the red skin on her wrist. "Today you and I get to spend some time together."

His body hardened further at the thought of spending his shift in this room with this willful woman, bending her to his command. Her breasts were full and round.

They would be heavy in his hand and firm beneath his fingers. Her legs were long and his eyes were drawn again to the soft curls between her thighs. His cock throbbed as he imagined burying himself in her wet heat.

But she was not here for his pleasure. He had to remember that. He dragged his attention from her body.

When he met her fearful gaze, she looked away. He cupped her chin in his hand and forced her to look at him. "You are a slave now. You must accept that. Your life will never be the same again. You are a slave."

"No!" Her voice was soft now, barely a whisper.

He dropped his hand. "Have they told you anything?" She shook her head. Of course not. As a slave, she didn't have the right to know a damn thing.

Her expression was still wary as she stared at him. After all, why should she expect him to tell her the truth? Jarrod understood that. Understood that she'd never trust again. But she deserved to know her fate.

"We are headed to the planet Noria. Have you heard of it?"

She shook her head slowly.

There was no good way to say it, so Jarrod stated it as plainly as possible. "You are to be the personal sex slave of King Barrus of Noria." She gasped and backed away from him. The damn chains clattered again and he fought for self-control. "The other women will be sold to private buyers or to public brothels. There is a great market for sex slaves on Noria. Your women will bring a healthy price." And he'd get a share of that money too.

She lunged toward him again. "You had no right to take us from our home. We are not property to be bought and sold. Not animals to be chained—" Her voice broke, but she jerked her chin up and glared at him. Unshed tears glittered in her eyes.

He let his gaze lazily sweep across her body, so she wouldn't see how her words affected him. He'd stopped feeling guilty long ago for what he'd had to do to survive. He couldn't help her escape her fate, even if he wanted to. All he could do was help her to survive.

"I hear you attacked the last guard. That's why you're chained up like an animal." He shook his head. "Not a good idea, Princess." No point in telling her now that most sex slaves wore cuffs and collars and chains for the rest of their days.

He crossed the room to get the food. As he turned back to her, he saw her quickly lick her lips. "Hungry?"

She lifted her chin. "I don't want your food."

He set the plate down on a table just out of her reach. "I understand pride. But not when it's foolish. You won't be able to do anything if you don't eat." She glanced quickly to the plate of food and then pressed her lips together. "Believe me, Princess, if you are too weak to perform your duties, your Master will be very angry." Jarrod slid

his hand across her throat and let it rest there. "And it would be a bad idea to anger the man who holds your life in his hands."

Hanna swallowed and felt the pressure of the guard's hand on her throat. A chill ran through her body. She fought the panic that scrambled inside her. She had to think. Had to stay calm.

It went against everything inside her to accept any part of this situation. Her mind told her to keep fighting, but instinct told her to back off at this moment. She had to keep up her strength. Later she might have a chance to escape. Get out of here and find the princess and the other women.

And then do what? Despair washed over her. They were on a spaceship. Surrounded by guards with guns. How would they ever get back home even if they did escape?

She stared into the guard's dark eyes. His hand was still at her throat but he didn't have to squeeze. He'd made his point. She nodded and he dropped his hand and stepped away.

"All right," she said. "Unchain me and I'll eat." Whatever was on that plate smelled delicious and her stomach was growling with hunger. Her wrists were sore and her shoulders and hips ached from the humiliating position she'd been put in. She couldn't wait to get those heavy cuffs off and her arms down.

He raised one eyebrow and she wasn't surprised by his skepticism. He crossed his muscled arms over his sculpted chest.

"I promise not to attack you," she added.

He laughed, surprising her. It was a delicious laugh, deep and full, and Hanna couldn't help but wish they'd met some other place and time. "It's too late for that, Princess."

"I can't eat?" Now that she'd made up her mind to eat, she was starving.

He took a step toward her. He was so tall and broad and dark it felt as if his body cast a shadow over her. "You can eat. You will eat. But only because I *want* you to eat." She shivered at his words. "I'm going to feed you."

What? That was ridiculous. "I don't want you to feed me."

"It doesn't matter what you want," he said smoothly. "You have to get that through that gorgeous head of yours." He ran a calloused finger down her cheek. "You'll do what you're told to do for the rest of your life."

A chill ran over her skin. This couldn't be happening. She stared at his handsome face and tried to reconcile the matter-of-fact tone of his voice with his horrifying words.

He turned from her and speared something on the end of a fork. Her stomach rolled. She'd lost her appetite. "I don't want to eat anything."

A slow smile spread across his face. "Oh you're going to eat. I want you to, remember?"

She shook her head slowly as he stepped in front of her. Her heartbeat kicked up again when she saw the strong set of his jaw. He reached out with his free hand and she jerked back, but he just brushed her wayward curls out of her face.

"Being stubborn won't help you," he said.

Still, she refused to open her mouth when he raised the fork holding some sort of fruit she didn't recognize.

He leaned close and grabbed the back of her head, so she couldn't turn her face away. He rubbed the bite-sized piece of red fruit across her closed lips. The sweet scent made her mouth water. Juice dribbled down her chin and caught the tip of her breast. And regardless of her best intentions, some of the succulent juice slid through her lips. The sweet flavor burst on her tongue and her lips parted slightly when she gasped.

And the guard shoved the fruit into her mouth.

She should have spit it back into his face. She thought about it for a split second. But her rumbling stomach and her needy tongue overrode her brain. She bit into the morsel and almost sighed with delight as the sugar hit her system.

"Another piece?"

Hanna gave him credit for not sporting a look of triumph. Shame for giving in so quickly made her blush, but she knew she had to eat or she'd be too weak to take advantage of any opportunity to escape that might present itself. She nodded.

He released his grip on her hair and brought another piece of fruit to her lips. She opened her mouth, but he paused before he placed it on her tongue. Instead, he rubbed it along her lips again. More juice ran down her chin and across her breasts before he slipped it past her lips. She barely chewed that piece before she swallowed. "More." His eyes flashed from her demand and she quickly looked away. "Please."

"Your stomach is empty. You must eat slowly. I don't want you getting sick on my watch." He stepped a little closer to her as he speared a piece of meat. As he turned, his chest brushed against the inside of the arm that was stretched out in front of him. The heat from his body warmed her more than the cooked meat that he fed her next. It was a little chewy, but the sauce was tangy and delicious. Its sharp scent prickled her nostrils. She ran her tongue along her lips to lick off some of the sauce that lingered there. The guard quickly turned away and speared another piece of meat.

As he stood before her, she had a good chance to study him as she chewed the food he slid past her lips. She could tell he was strong and well-trained. His well-sculpted muscles bulged beneath his tight black shirt as he moved. His skin was as dark and shiny as the hortnuts on Vanya. His eyes were nearly black and while she studied them for warmth, she never saw any signs.

His hand were wide, his fingers long and strong. Rough and calloused. He wore a wide leather cuff on his left wrist. She knew he could strangle her if he wanted, but he was almost gentle as he fed her. His musky scent grew stronger than that of the food remaining on the plate.

Finally she was full and told him so. He must have been pleased with the amount of food she'd eaten because he didn't try to force her to eat any more. He nodded and set the plate aside. He reached for the weapon he'd propped by the door. Hanna realized she didn't want him to leave. She didn't want to be all alone in this sterile room, even if her only choice for company was a surly guard.

"How long will it take to get to Noria?" she asked. How long would she be locked up in this room? How soon before she would be delivered to the king of Noria?

Jarrold reluctantly turned around. "Another day and night." He'd hoped to get away where her scent wouldn't call to him. Where her chained body didn't tempt him with dark desires he tried to forget. But one look at her and he knew he couldn't leave yet.

He'd never fed a woman in chains before and didn't realize what a mess he'd make.

Trails of sunberry juice ran across her luscious breasts. Her nipples were nearly the same deep shade of pink as the juice. He knew he should get a wet cloth to clean her, but his mouth watered with the need to taste her. To find out if she was as sweet as his favorite fruit.

How would she react if he simply lowered her head and swept his tongue along those full breasts? Hell, she was chained. A slave. He could do anything he wanted and she couldn't stop him. Arousal surged through him at the thought. He'd lick the juice from her succulent skin. Pop that nipple into his mouth and suck until he had his fill.

But she wasn't *his* slave. King Barrus had offered a small fortune to have her snatched and brought to him. No one would be allowed to enjoy this slave without the king's permission. She wasn't worth getting his throat slit.

He had to get out of here before he started thinking she was. He'd be safer back on the other side of that solid door where he wouldn't be tempted by dark pink nipples, long, firm thighs and wide green eyes. His cock wasn't happy with the thought, aching with its displeasure, but for now his brain had the final say.

He wet a cloth at the sink and slowly approached her. He knew he should release her from her chains and let her take care of the cleanup herself, but selfishly, he knew this might be his only chance to touch her.

"Stand still."

Her breasts were as firm as he thought they would be. He rubbed the cloth gently across her skin, wiping away the streaks of juice from her pale skin. Stroke after stroke, he traced the contours of her flesh with the soft cloth. Her nipples beaded beneath his touch and he couldn't resist roughly brushing over them with the edge of the cloth.

Her soft gasp made his already hard cock twitch. Her parted lips were wet and shiny from the fruit he'd rubbed on them. What would they taste like? What would those lips feel like rubbed against his skin? Going down on his throbbing cock?

Her eyes were closed, her head dropped back, her back arched so she pressed her breasts into his hand.

He kneaded the firm flesh of her breasts, not even pretending any longer to be washing her. The cloth may still have been between his skin and hers, but the fruit juice had long since disappeared. He was close to dropping the cloth altogether. Why pretend? His cock was straining against his trousers, beginning to talk louder than the voice in his brain telling him to back off.

Back off? Why would he do that when he had access to this perfect body, spread out for his enjoyment? And hell, she was enjoying it too. If she was this responsive, she'd make a great sex slave. Why did the thought make his stomach clench?

He tossed the cloth into the sink and turned back to her. His cock urged him on.

Just then the door slid open and Leoh strode in. "Shift change, Jarrod." The brawny bald guard stopped and openly raked his gaze over the princess. "She give you any trouble?"

"No trouble." Jarrod ground his teeth and he glared at the temptress strung out before him. What had he almost done? He'd almost forgotten his plan. Almost messed up big time. "She just ate, so we can leave her alone for a while. Contemplate her future."

He grabbed his weapon and opened the door. Leoh went out into the hallway ahead of him.

"Jarrod?" Her soft voice caught him at the door.

Shit, why didn't Leoh keep his mouth shut? Now she knew his name. Would he never get out of here?

He whirled around, pointing his weapon at her. "What?"

Her eyes grew wide, but it didn't stop her from putting a little pleading tone in her voice. "Can't you let me down? My shoulders are aching."

"Get used to it," he growled before he stepped out and let the door close behind him.

Chapter Two

When Hanna watched that solid black door slide closed, the breath left her lungs with a whoosh. He'd left her. Alone. Still chained. And aroused. She nearly screamed in frustration.

How could her body have betrayed her this way? She was in a nightmare. Kidnapped. Chained to a wall on her way to a distant planet to become some king's sex slave. And yet the gaze, the scent, the touch of her gruff captor had made her body come alive.

She wryly remembered her wishes as she'd danced on Vanya yesterday. Or was it the day before? She'd lost track. Hadn't she wished to see other worlds, other people? Hadn't she yearned to experience the touch of a man, the arousal that his touch could ignite?

It appeared she'd gotten her wish. Only not in the way she'd imagined.

But her imagination still ran wild as she leaned back against the cold, hard wall. She'd never realized how exhilarating a man's touch would truly be. Jarrod's touch. When he'd kneaded her breasts they seemed to swell beneath his fingers, to fill his hands, to beg for him to squeeze them harder, squeeze them more. And when he rubbed the cloth across her sensitive nipples, she couldn't help but respond. Sharp tingles of desire had shot straight to the spot between her legs. Had she really arched her back, offering herself to him? Had she really begged for more?

Her sex still throbbed between her thighs. Her legs were stretched too far apart to be able to give herself any relief from the need that didn't go away, even when the man did. Now that his touch had awakened her body, it refused to go back to sleep.

Hanna tried to wipe the man and his touch from her mind by thinking of other matters. What had King Lars done when he found his daughter and the rest of them missing? Would he have any idea what happened to them? What of the princess and the other women? Were they nearby, perhaps held prisoner in other rooms around her? Was what Jarrod told her true? Did some planets really deal in sex?

Hanna had never felt so out of touch with the rest of the universe as she did right now. She knew nothing of the cosmos, of the people on distant planets and the things they did. The palace had been such an isolated world, nothing should surprise her.

Even her erotic response to a guard on a slave ship.

* * * * *

Jarrold made himself stop at the food hall after he left the princess's room. He'd suffered too many hungry days and nights to ever pass up a free meal. Not in the mood

to be sociable, he sat over in a corner by himself. The meat tasted like rancid yak leather and wasn't much more tender. It sank like a rock into the pit of his stomach, but he ate every bite before going back to his room.

When he slammed open the door, his roommate, Micah, shot up out of his bunk, his long blond hair sticking out at odd angles. "What the hell?"

"Sorry." Jarrod flipped on the bright overheads, even though he knew his best friend had been sleeping. He propped up his weapon at the end of his bunk and stripped off his shirt. He'd hit the shower before he went to bed.

"Hey, I have to take the early shift," Micah grumbled, sinking back down onto the thin mattress. He rested his head in his hands. "I could use a couple more hours."

Jarrod paced the small room, images of the past days bombarding him. Images of the princess in chains haunting him. "We should have never signed on to a fucking slave ship."

Micah looked up. "In case you forgot, we were only half a step ahead of Gaylock. Better a guard on a slave ship than to have our own asses chained in the hold."

Jarrod shuddered at the thought of being captured again by Gaylock. He'd die before he went back in the mines.

"And cheer up," Micah went on. "With the payoff we'll get from this cargo, we can get the *Galaxy* out of the repair shop. We'll be setting up our trading post on Ceylon 7 before you know it."

Jarrod scowled. "Looking over our shoulders for the rest of our lives."

Micah stretched back out on his bunk. "Nah. Gaylock's lazy. He'd never bother to look for us that far."

"You hope."

"I know."

Jarrod sank down onto the bunk he hadn't bothered to make since they took off from Noria over a week ago. "Fucking slave ship."

"Hey, if not them, it could have been us."

Maybe it would have been better that way. "They have no idea what's in store for them."

Micah frowned and stared at him for a moment. "Since when did you get a conscience?"

Since a slender princess with wide green eyes looked to him for help.

He couldn't stop thinking about her standing there for hours, naked and alone, her skin rubbed raw from the metal cuffs. He hadn't even gotten her anything to drink. She was probably thirsty.

"Fuck." He climbed off the bunk instead of getting some sleep like he should have. He grabbed a tube of Marvel Cream from his locker and shut off the lights. "Get some sleep," he called over his shoulder before he shut the door behind him.

Leoh was dozing in front of the princess's door, leaned up against the doorjamb, his big bald head nearly resting on his shoulder. Jarrod kicked Leoh's boot with his own and the big guy jumped to attack mode before he opened his eyes and saw Jarrod standing there.

"Hey! Shift change?" He rubbed his eyes with his stubby fingers.

"Yeah. Go get some sleep." Jarrod watched Leoh shuffle off down the hall. He'd probably fall into his bunk and not even realize he got a few extra hours of sleep tonight.

Jarrod wouldn't get any sleep. He paced in front of the door for a moment, the tube of cream in his hands. He didn't have to go back through that door. He'd be doing more than his job just standing guard outside. Yeah, that's what he'd do. Just stand out here until morning.

He turned and slapped his palm on the reader. The door slid silently open. Jarrod stood in the doorway so the light from the hallway illuminated the female body across the room. Somehow she'd managed to fall asleep. She was leaning back against the wall, her chin resting on her chest, her arms hanging heavily against the hard metal cuffs.

Good. He didn't have to be here. He'd leave her to her dreams. Her nightmare would start soon enough.

But before he could step back through the doorway, the princess raised her head and opened her eyes. "Jarrod?" She stood up straight and stepped away from the wall.

Resigned, he entered the room and the door slid shut behind him. He set the cream down and turned on the overheads. She blinked against the bright light. He crossed to the sink and filled a small glass with water. She followed him with her gaze, then cocked her head when he stopped in front of her with the glass.

"You came back to bring me water?" Amusement infiltrated her sleepy tone.

He glared at her. "You want it or not?"

She stared at him for a long moment and his heartbeat kicked up. She slowly nodded. He brought the glass to her lips and she drank eagerly, not stopping until the water was gone.

"Thank you," she said softly.

Her lips were wet and shiny again and Jarrod strode back over to the sink, refilled the glass and drank, trying to slake his thirst. But when the glass was empty and he turned around to face her, he was just as thirsty as before he drank. Her spicy scent filled the room. His cock hardened and he slowly walked back over in front of her. She appeared wide awake now, her eyes clear, her naked breasts rising and falling with each deep breath.

"Where are the other women?" she asked. "Are they chained up like this?"

He hardened himself against the worry in her voice. "They're no longer your concern."

She leaned toward him, so close he could see the long lashes that framed those eyes he would see in his sleep. "Are they all right? You can tell me that."

He took a step away when all he wanted was to move closer. "I don't have to tell you anything. Your only concern is to please your Master." He knew how she could please him. On her knees before him. Her hands cuffed behind her back. Her mouth taking his cock deep. He shuddered as he imagined plunging between her wet lips, holding her head steady to make sure she took him all the way down her throat.

"Why me?"

Her words jarred him away from his forbidden thoughts. "What?"

"Why does the king of Noria want me?"

Jarrold shrugged. "I don't know, but if I had to guess, I'd say your daddy the king got this other king angry and this was how he decided to fight back."

He could see a little spark of hope light up her eyes. He knew he had to stomp that down right away. "Even if your father knows Barrus is behind your disappearance, he'll never be able to get you back."

She lifted her chin in that stubborn way he couldn't help but admire. "Why not?"

"Think, Princess." The crew had discussed this very thing during their briefing before the mission. "Vanya doesn't have the technology to travel to Noria. We teleported in and out in seconds and were light-years away a few minutes later. It would take Vanyan ships longer than your lifetime to reach Noria." Somehow he was within arm's reach of her again. He brushed the backs of his knuckles across her cheek. "Your father should have tried to keep up with technology inside of hiding from it."

"The king...my father wanted to keep Vanya safe by isolating it. He thought we would avoid trouble that way."

"It didn't work, did it? Your father is helpless. As helpless as you are." And damn if her helplessness didn't call to the dark need within him. He shouldn't be so aroused by the sight of her this way. He shouldn't crave for her to call *him* Master.

She shook her head sharply and swung against the chains. Her hair fell into her face. "My father will come for me."

"He has no way to rescue you. By cutting off Vanya from the rest of the worlds, your father has ensured he has no allies to call upon who might have faster ships or trained warriors." Jarrod brushed her heavy curls away from her face. "You must accept your fate. It is the only way to survive."

Her eyes were shadowed now. His words had burned out the hope that had started to kindle. He refused to feel guilty. She needed to know the truth.

But perhaps he could give her another kind of hope.

Before he could talk himself out of it, he reached out to test the weight of one of her fine breasts. She stared at him as it rested heavy in his palm. He swept his thumb across the sunberry-red nipple and it beaded tightly from his touch. "It is not a bad life, Princess. You will surely receive your share of pleasure."

"It will be no pleasure if I am chained and at my Master's mercy."

"No?" There was no cloth as a barrier this time as Jarrod kneaded the firm flesh of her breast. No excuse to touch her but his own raging need. He told himself that he wasn't really enjoying this slave without permission. He wouldn't take any pleasure from it. He was simply instructing her. The king would thank him if he knew.

He pinched her nipple and rolled it with his fingers. She gasped and arched into his grasp. She had a responsive body. That would help. "This is not a pleasure? Or this?" He slid his other hand across her stomach and down to the patch of curls between her thighs. The folds of her sex were not too slick, but as he played with the sensitive flesh, her moisture flowed. "Ah, but your body recognizes pleasure. In this life, Princess, you must learn to take your pleasure where you can find it."

"I can't!" she cried, but she gasped when he plunged a finger deep into her core.

"Yes, you can." The chains rattled as he slid between her and the wall. "I'll show you." He wrapped his arms around her, nestling her ass against his throbbing cock. He reminded himself that this time was not for his pleasure. All he wanted to do was give this new slave some hope for tomorrow.

She struggled briefly, but stilled as he began to stroke her soft skin. He wrapped one arm around her waist and with the other he began to explore her body. Her skin was softer than any he'd ever touched. The women he'd taken pleasure with had lived lives as hard as he had. He'd never held a soft, pampered, innocent woman in his arms before.

"You have a body made for pleasure," he whispered, brushing his face against her silky hair. He slid his hand along her abdomen, heading again for that soft patch of curls. She moaned and leaned back, draping her body over his. Her head dropped back, her long hair flowing over his shoulder and brushing against his bare back. He'd never felt anything like it.

Hanna had never felt anything like Jarrod's rough hands caressing her skin. She knew she shouldn't like what he was doing. Shouldn't be aching for more of this incredible friction that was sending waves of sensations over her skin. She shouldn't be wanting more.

But as soon as she awoke and saw him standing there in the doorway, staring at her, she'd wanted him to touch her again. He wasn't wearing a shirt and she couldn't help but admire his sculpted muscles.

The tattoo surprised her. It was all black and covered the entire left side of his chest. It followed the curves of his chest, from his broad shoulder down past his tight nipple. Thick black lines radiated out from a center sunburst design to a circular border, with intricate designs between.

Some people on Vanya decorated their bodies in this way, but Hanna had never seen a tattoo that actually enhanced someone's body as this one did. It made him look

even stronger and sexier. If she ever got out of these cuffs and chains, she hoped she'd get a chance to touch it.

But for now he stood behind her, where she couldn't see him. He held her tightly around the waist so she didn't swing helplessly from her chains. Her bare back pressed into his naked chest. His hard strong body held her somewhat steady. And even though his fingers were calloused, he was gentle as he swept his other hand across her abdomen. Hanna didn't realize how hungry she'd been to be touched. She hadn't seen her family in years. She had her chores around the palace and her duties to the princess. But no touching was ever involved.

She couldn't stop what the guard was doing to her, even if she wanted to, so she gave herself up to the sensations. Her sex was throbbing again between her legs. Unable to do anything else, she wriggled her hips, felt his hardness pressing into her. He must have known what she wanted, for he slid his hand between her legs and finally brushed his fingers along that most sensitive flesh.

Hanna sucked in her breath as jolts of desire shot through her body. Her body jerked and she swung from the chains, even with his arm around her. "Oh yes," she whispered. "More."

His slow laughter sounded deep and dark as his hot breath brushed against her ear. He removed his hand from between her legs. "It's not for you to say. Not for you to demand."

She barely restrained the cry of frustration that wanted to burst from her mouth. Yes. She was the slave. He was the Master. It was up to him, wasn't it? How much pleasure she received. If she received any pleasure at all. It was what he wanted. Not what she wanted. She had to remember that now.

But he'd said he wanted to show her pleasure, so she tried her best to relax and not let him see how frustrated she was feeling. She hung limply from the shackles, her wrists and ankles burning from rubbing on the hard edges of the metal cuffs.

"Good," he murmured. He brushed his lips against her neck, the softest touch yet from him. "You're learning."

"I just need...I need..." Hanna had no words for what she needed, but her body was on fire.

"Your Master will know what you need. He will let you know when you can come," he told her. "I'm only a teacher tonight, but you will think of me as your Master for now." He stroked her hair, her shoulder, then rested his hand against her throat once again. "Do you understand?"

She nodded. "Yes." He pressed slightly harder. She swallowed. "Yes, Master."

Hanna thought she felt him tremble before he let up on his hold. "There will be trainers at the slave station, but if you remember what I've told you, you'll have an easier time of it. Do you understand?"

No, but she nodded anyway. She didn't want to think about Noria or slave stations or what kind of "training" she would be getting there. She didn't want to think past right now and Jarrod's hands on her and her body coming alive beneath them.

"Sex isn't always sweet and gentle. Especially on Noria." Jarrod grabbed her nipple and twisted. She gasped, but it wasn't as painful as she thought it would be. In fact, it sent her sex throbbing even more intensely. She instinctively pressed her breast into his hand, silently begging for more. "Ah, you like it a little rough. That will help."

Shivers skittered against her skin. He pulled and twisted her nipple some more and she cried out, but only partly from the pain. She was becoming overwhelmed by all the sensations bombarding her body.

Her heart pounded in her chest, the pulsing of her blood echoing in her ears. He pulled her more tightly against him, almost lifting her off her feet. He repeatedly pinched her skin as he roamed his other hand over her body, the sharp stings simply sending her senses reeling even higher.

When he slipped his fingers between her legs, she was so wet, the caresses were mere teases. He pulled and tugged on the folds of slick flesh, but avoided the one spot that was becoming the only thing she cared about. The pressure was building inside of her, swirling and pulsing and growing stronger. But not strong enough. She whimpered and tried to push against his hand, but between the chains holding her legs apart and his grasp on her waist, there wasn't anything she could do.

"Have you ever come, Princess?" he whispered, his voice rough in her ear. "Ever shattered around a man's hand? Or tongue? Or cock?"

She was panting so hard, she couldn't speak. She shook her head from side to side, her body searching for something just out of reach. *I need...I need...*

"Come. Come now." He scraped that rough finger across the throbbing spot and she came apart in his arms. She had no control over the spasms that rocked her body. Her limbs pulled against the chains, but the pain the cuffs were causing wasn't enough to override the pleasure dancing through her body. He continued to rub that secret spot even as she jerked against his hard body over and over again.

Finally she couldn't move any more, her energy spent. He released her and she sagged against the cuffs. And cried out in pain as the metal rubbed her skin raw.

Jarrod cursed. "Sorry." He'd been so aroused by seeing her come, feeling her come in his arms that he hadn't been thinking about anything else. He should have been thinking about her comfort first. It was a Master's responsibility.

He pressed his thumb to the small print pad on one of the wrist cuffs. It opened and her arm fell limply to her side. He released her other wrist. She swayed slightly, leaning against him, but quickly regained her balance. She moaned as she rolled her shoulders.

"Hold on," he said, then knelt down to release the ankle cuffs. Then he stood and put his arm around her and led her over to the bunk attached to the wall. "Sit here."

She nodded and sank onto the mattress. He grabbed her hand and studied the red, raw skin. "You broke the skin." He almost pressed his lips to the raw spot, but caught himself in time and dropped her arm as though it had burned him.

He turned away so he didn't see her looking up at him with something like hope shining in her eyes. He grabbed the tube he'd brought with him and took a deep breath before he turned back around. He sat down beside her on the bunk and picked up her slender arm again. He brushed his fingers over the reddened skin and she hissed.

"This is one of Noria's greatest developments. They call it Marvel Cream." He squeezed out a small amount from the tube. Her body tensed when he began to smooth the cream onto her damaged skin. She cried out when it first touched her, but he felt her begin to relax as he continued to rub her skin with the soothing cream.

"They've become one of the richest planets in the Six Systems by exporting it. Have you ever heard of it?"

She shook her head. She looked up from her arm, where she'd been watching him rub the cream. "It doesn't hurt anymore."

"Yeah. It can't mend broken bones or repair internal injuries, but for damage to the skin or muscles, it has become a miracle cure."

She lifted her arm and stared at her wrist. "The redness is gone? That quickly?"

Jarrold reached across her body to take her other wrist in his hand. He brushed against her tempting breasts and couldn't even lie to himself and pretend it was accidental. He spread the healing cream on her other wrist.

"These are very minor injuries. More severe cuts and bruises take longer to heal."

He knelt in front of her and ran his hand down her silky calf until he reached her ankle. As he rubbed the cream into the reddened skin, he tried to ignore her soft, damp pussy. The scent of her arousal fed his desire and his cock throbbed painfully in his pants.

"So this sex planet developed a healing cream like this?"

He circled her slender ankle with his fingers and looked up at her. "Cuffs and chains and whips and clamps leave their marks on a slave's skin. With this cream, the slave is as good as new for the next person to enjoy." She shuddered beneath his fingers and he felt no guilt for scaring her. "You need to know this."

Fear flickered in her eyes. "I can't do it."

"You can. And you will." He slid his hand up her leg until it brushed her soft pussy. Why did he continue to play with fire? It was time to finish this game. He clutched her firm thigh and stared her down. "You don't have any say, remember? It doesn't matter what you want anymore."

"Have you always been so cruel?"

He laughed bitterly. "You have no idea." He pushed her down onto the bunk and stood up. "I'll leave you unchained for now, but if you cause any more trouble I can't help you again."

"Where are you going?"

The sight of her sprawled on the bed, her naked skin glistening, her breasts plump, her pussy wet and shiny, was almost more than he could handle. He wanted nothing more than to rip open his trousers and plunge his cock into her wet core. The worried expression on her face was what stopped him. He had to get out of here. She couldn't think she could depend on him for help.

"To do my job. Guard this room. Outside. Get some sleep."

* * * * *

Hanna couldn't sleep, even now that she was finally lying on a mattress instead of hanging from chains. She couldn't stop thinking about the uncertain future ahead of her. And of the man who had just left her.

Jarrold could pretend to be hard-hearted but his touch had been gentle as he healed her injuries. She'd felt him tremble when he touched her. Felt the tender way he'd held her as he pleased her. The whisper-soft brush of his lips on her skin. He was nothing like the frightening guard who'd brandished a knife and cut her robes off when she tried to escape, even if Jarrold wanted her to think he was.

Jarrold had meant to scare her though, and Hanna knew it was because he was trying to harden her to the realities of the life she was facing. Had he been forced to accept the life he now led?

She wondered what he'd had to do to survive.

She must have fallen asleep for a little while. Her dream of kneeling naked in front of the sexy guard had left her both confused and aroused. The idea of submitting sexually shouldn't be exciting. She shouldn't be aroused by the idea of being a sex slave, even in her sleep. What was wrong with her?

She tried to hide her disappointment when it wasn't Jarrold who came into her room carrying her breakfast. She'd thought Jarrold was big, but this giant with thick blond hair flowing past his shoulders was huge. His sculpted muscles were massive and the bowl holding her breakfast was practically dwarfed in his large hand.

Piercing blue eyes pinned her to the mattress. She wished there was a blanket she could use to cover her nakedness. Since there wasn't, she sat up and met his stare, lifting her chin to show him she wasn't terrified, and hoped her lips didn't tremble.

He silently handed her the bowl. "Thank you," she said, good manners instilled in her from an early age. She took the bowl, which held some sort of gruel. "Are my women well?" She tried to make the question sound off-hand and then took a large spoonful of the porridge to show she was going to cooperate in exchange for information.

She glanced up to see him nod. "They are fine." His voice was deep, an unfamiliar accent colored his tones. She wondered which planet he was from. "They are in a

holding cell below." He paused and studied her for a moment. "One of them looks a lot like you. Same long wavy hair of gold. Same tiny body. Your sister?"

Hanna shook her head. "I am an only child."

The guard shrugged. "She's bossy. Pleasing to the eye, but has a mouth on her. She will be fun for some Master to train."

Hanna remembered Jarrod's words about Masters and training and a slave station waiting at the end of their journey. This guard must be talking about Princess Serena. Hanna had failed in her duty to keep the princess safe. Though she had no appetite, she ate to keep her strength.

"Some of the women are not taking the news of their future as well as others," the guard said.

Hanna threw the spoon into the bowl. "What do you expect? They've been taken from their home and told they are going to be sold as slaves. How would you react?"

He narrowed his eyes and straightened his shoulders even more than they already were. "With pride and dignity. Not cowering in a corner, weeping,"

She set the bowl aside, her stomach twisting, her heart squeezing as she pictured the women she'd grown up with and most likely would never see again.

"I would have behaved as you have, Princess Serena," the guard said, surprising her. "Fight at first. Then accept and go on. Find a way to make the situation work for you."

"How can any part of this situation work for me? For any of us?"

"Believe me when I say that most of the sex slaves on Noria enjoy their positions."

"Enjoy being bound and chained? Enjoy being told what to do for the rest of my life?" But even as the words came out of her mouth, Hanna remembered the pleasure she'd experienced under Jarrod's hands. She'd been chained then. Yet her body had come alive with the pleasure he brought her.

"Many women, slave or not, find pleasure in the bondage. Find safety and security in the chains and collars and cuffs." He spoke softly, slowly, seductively. "When the Master takes care of their needs, they have nothing to worry about. Except pleasure."

Her heart pounded. She remembered Jarrod's words. "Except pleasing the Master."

His eyes danced over her naked body. "And by pleasing the Master, you will receive pleasure in return."

The idea was unthinkable, but Hanna let the guard's words sink in. Was there truth in what he said? She couldn't deny the way her body had reacted to Jarrod. The way *she* had reacted.

"I thought being a slave would be frightening. That Masters are cruel."

"Did Jarrod tell you that?"

She nodded and then silently cursed the thrill that ran through her from the mere mention of his name.

"Some people are cruel, Master or not. But most Masters are not cruel. They simply have a need to dominate their sexual partners."

"Like you?" Hanna wasn't sure where the courage came to question this guard, but beneath his powerful exterior, she sensed his words were meant to reassure her, not frighten her.

"Unlike my friend, I refuse to apologize for my dominant needs."

"Jarrod is your friend?" She shouldn't be surprised. They worked here, catching slaves together.

"We've known each other a long time."

Longer than they'd worked on this ship? But she didn't ask that question. "What's your name?"

He stared at her for a moment as if deciding whether to answer her or not. As if knowing his name would make a difference somehow. "Micah."

"So, Micah, have you been any slave's Master?"

"On many occasions." His gaze swept over her, but even though she could read his appreciation of her body, it didn't feel as if his fingers were tracing the path of his gaze along her skin, as it had with Jarrod. Still, her body reacted. Her breasts tingled beneath his gaze. Her sex moistened. Her heart pounded a little faster. "But I assure you," Micah went on, "that any slave whose body I enjoy receives much pleasure in return."

"That's supposed to make me feel better about my future? I'm still a slave. A slave has no freedom to go where she wants. Do what she wants."

Micah shook his head. "Who of us is free in the universe? I can't go wherever I want. I have to stay on this ship. I have to guard frightened women and believe me when I say I take no pleasure in that."

But it was more than that. "A sex slave doesn't have the freedom to decide who will be her Master."

A sly grin spread across his face. "Perhaps not at first. But an intelligent—and beautiful—slave like you will soon find a way to benefit from the situation."

She wished she could believe him. "You think the king of Noria will give me a choice as to who can enjoy my body?"

He took a step closer to her. Appreciation flashed in his eyes. "I think you will be the one to captivate the captor. Being the submissive doesn't mean you are powerless."

"Being a slave does."

"That depends on you."

"So I should accept my fate? Please my Master and make no complaint?"

"Sometimes you have to make the best of a bad situation and find a way to make it work for you."

He'd said that before. And Jarrod had said something similar too. But how could she do that?

She studied the huge man before her, noticed the bulge of his arousal. Physically, she was no match for him, but as she shifted on the mattress, watched his gaze snap to her parted thighs, she realized she might hold some power after all.

The need to test that power brought her to her feet. She slowly crossed the room, her hands clasped behind her back, essentially offering her breasts to this man. She held back a grin as he backed up as she approached.

"I see desire in your eyes, Micah. Would you like to touch me?"

His hands clenched and unclenched. He swallowed before he spoke. "You have a desirable body, it is true. I am certain I would find much pleasure with you." His expression shut down and she no longer saw desire there, but determination. "But you are the king's slave. To enjoy your body without his permission would be to suffer great consequences."

So Jarrod had broken the rules when he touched her. When he pleased her. What did that mean? She couldn't think about it right now.

She gathered up a little more courage and took another step forward. "The king wouldn't know," she said smoothly, softly. "No one would know." She backed him up against the wall and brushed the tips of her breasts across his muscular chest. The rough fabric of his tight shirt scraped her nipples. "If you want to touch my soft skin, I won't tell. If you want to feel the weight of my breasts, I won't breathe a word." She grabbed one of the chains dangling from the wall beside the guard. "Maybe you'd like to chain me." She swallowed hard, then continued. "Take me. Dominate me."

She knew she was taking a big chance and her heart raced. If the guard called her bluff, she'd have to accept it. Let him do what he would with her. She'd have to consider it the beginning of her training.

As she'd hoped, Micah shook his head and stepped around her. "You learn quickly, Princess Serena." She dropped the chain and it clattered against the wall. He nodded toward the bowl still sitting on the mattress. "Are you done with that?"

She nodded.

Without another glance her way, he scooped the bowl into his big hand and disappeared through the door to her prison, just as Jarrod had done. Quickly. Desperately. As if trying to avoid temptation.

Chapter Three

"They sure grow beautiful women on Vanya." Micah tossed back half a glass of moonbeer in one long swallow. The weak substitute for the real thing was the only drink allowed while in flight. Jarrod and Micah sat in a dark corner of the tavern bay, well away from the other guards who were relaxing after their shifts were over. "That princess is going to be fun to train. Wish I was the one doing it."

Jarrod nearly growled, surprising himself. What was wrong with him? He and Micah had shared women often in the past. So why did the thought of his friend touching the princess kick him in the gut? She was dangerous. To his peace of mind. To his aching cock.

"There's something about her." Micah signaled for another rounds of drinks. "She gets under your skin."

Jarrod glared at Micah over the top of his glass. How had she gotten under Micah's skin? Had he touched her during his guard shift? Had she touched him? Jarrod knew he shouldn't care. She'd be out of his reach and in a royal bed soon enough.

"Those eyes," Micah went on. Jarrod groaned. Micah's talk about women had never bothered him before. "So big and green. And her skin looks so soft and pale." He rubbed his giant hands together. "I'd love to see my handprint on her ass."

Jarrod nodded. He'd spent the last few hours fantasizing about spanking that ass until it glowed red. And then soothing it as he smoothed on the Marvel Cream in long strokes. He grabbed his new drink from the serving boy and downed half the glass.

"And those breasts. I could bind them tight and play with them for hours."

"Shut up."

Micah took a sip of his new drink. Green foam clung to his upper lip. "What? I envy King Barrus. She's going to make an excellent sex slave."

The thought kept Jarrod's stomach in knots. "You need to buy a few hours with a sex slave when we get to Noria."

"Too bad she's not going to public auction. I'd bid on her."

"With what?" Jarrod's pulse jumped at the thought of the princess, naked and in chains, displayed on the auction block, hundreds of eyes on her. Hundreds of hands on her. Going to the highest bidder, not the best Master. He tossed back the rest of his drink. He should be glad the Norian king had a reputation of being responsible with his slaves, at least before he traded them in on a new one.

"We could pool our money. We could share her."

"She's already been bought. By a fucking king. Stop talking about it."

"Sorry." Micah said. He tipped back in his chair, resting his head on the wall behind him and his big boots on the empty chair on his other side. "Anyway, our money has to go toward the ship. Get off Noria and out to Ceylon 7 before Gaylock homes in on us."

"I hope to hell he's not still on Noria," Jarrod said, forcing himself to stop picturing the princess naked and bound for his pleasure and think about what was important.

"Gaylock will be long gone," Micah said, always so sure of himself. Jarrod wasn't sure at all.

He pushed back his glass and stood up. Damn moonbeer, couldn't even get a good buzz. Nowhere near strong enough to wipe out the thoughts of wide green eyes, soft royal skin and the shine of cold, hard metal. "I'm getting some sleep." He left Micah and went back to their room where he knew he had no chance of falling asleep.

* * * * *

Hanna had been left alone for too long with only her thoughts running through her mind. The things she'd learned about Masters and slaves should have surprised her, but instead they made a strange kind of sense. They seemed to speak to a need inside her, as Micah had talked about a need within him. Within Jarrod as well.

If Jarrod was her Master, Hanna knew she could be happy as a sex slave, but the thought that she would have no control over who touched her was more than she could stand.

She ran the cold metal chains across the palm of her hand and shivered. Jarrod was a Master, a dominant sexual male who knew how to make her body come alive with only his hands. She had to be a fool to think she could seduce a man like that. What could an inexperienced woman like her do to convince him that she was worthy of helping? Not just helping her, but breaking the universal laws of Master and slave. Her Master was a king, a powerful man. How could she even think about trying to talk Jarrod into helping her?

She had to try.

As she remembered the scrape of the cuffs against her skin, Hanna knew there was only one way to do it. She would have to play the perfect submissive for Jarrod. Let him take her any way he wanted, let him do anything to her he wanted to do. And hope it would be enough to make him want to help her.

There was no way she would be able to use force against him. The only power she held was her mind and her body.

* * * * *

When he'd had enough tossing and turning, when he'd had enough complaining from his troubled mind and his throbbing cock, Jarrod climbed off the bunk, pulled on a pair of pants and left his airless room. He told himself he was just going to walk off

some stress, but he wasn't surprised when he found himself turning toward the princess's room.

He knew all the reasons he should stay away from her. When the ship landed, she was going to the slave station and he was flying to an outpost on the edge of the galaxy. No good could come of him entering her room tonight. But remembering the way she shattered beneath his hands as she hung from the chains kept him constantly hard. He yearned to be her Master.

But he wasn't. And he never would be.

Crock was standing guard outside the door. He frowned when Jarrod approached. "What are you doing here?"

He shook his head. "Can't sleep. Might as well work as listen to Micah's snoring. I'll take the rest of your shift."

Crock laughed. "You're crazy, but I won't turn down a few extra hours sleep."

Jarrod watched until the hallway was clear, then slapped his palm on the scanner. As the door slid open, it revealed her standing with her back to him, her hands stroking the length of chain hanging from the wall. She must have behaved herself since none of the other guards had put her back in chains. Yet she fondled the links. He couldn't help but wonder why.

She must have heard the door open because an instant later she dropped the chain and whirled around. Her eyes widened when she saw him.

"Jarrod."

He couldn't say a word. Her beauty took his breath away. He'd forgotten how tiny she was. So pale and delicate. He wanted his hands on her so much it hurt. He wanted to stroke that smooth skin. Squeeze those round breasts. Slap that tempting ass.

As he stood frozen in place, she approached slowly, her hips swaying, her breasts gently bouncing with each step. She circled around him, close enough that he could feel the heat of her body, catch the scent of her skin. When she stopped in front of him, she was so near, her nipples almost touched his chest. He had to force himself not to reach out and pull her against him.

"I didn't know I'd see you tonight," she said softly.

He shrugged. He wasn't going to tell her that he wasn't supposed to be here. That thoughts of her were driving him crazy. That the last thing she needed was him to be in here, causing trouble for both of them.

"You're not supposed to touch me, are you?" she asked, her voice strangely smooth, almost seductive.

He swallowed and shook his head. Leave it to her to get to the heart of the matter in an instant.

"But you want to touch me, don't you?" A small smile lifted her lips. He found he liked to see her smile. "You want to put your hands on me. Your mouth on me."

He didn't bother to reply.

She ran her finger along the edge of his tattoo and he jerked in surprise. "You're not allowed to touch me because I belong to someone else." She took a deep breath and her hard, beaded nipples brushed his bare chest. He nearly groaned, simply from the small contact. "Because I'm the king's property."

"Yes, you are."

"But you touched me last night. Even though you knew it was forbidden."

Jarrold frowned. What did she want him to say? Was she going to report him? Sign his death warrant?

"What? Do you want me to apologize?" he asked with a sneer.

She looked up at him through lowered lashes. "No. But when you touched me last night, you gave me pleasure, but didn't take any for yourself."

"Don't be so sure about that."

"I hope it gave you pleasure." She took a step back and lifted her arms gracefully to the sides. The position she took was the same as when she'd been chained. "Are you going to touch me now?"

He let his gaze run hungrily over her body. Her rosy nipples were pebbled and he longed to know their taste. The curls between her legs glistened slightly. Was the princess as aroused as he was? His cock lunged against his pants, straining to get to the hot wet center of her. "No," he said, his voice rough. "I'm not going to touch you again."

"Why not? You did it before."

Because if he touched her again, he wouldn't want to stop. Because if he touched her again, he wouldn't want to let her go. "Because you belong to the King of Noria. You are *his* sex slave."

She nodded slowly and lowered her arms. "What if I was yours?"

His lust must be affecting his brain. Her words confused him, tempted him more than her luscious body. "What?"

She ran her tongue over her lips, leaving them shiny. "How would you touch me?" She ran her hands down the sides of her body. "What would you do to me?"

"Princess, I don't know what you are talking about."

Her wide eyes sparkled. "Of course you do. If I was your sex slave, what would you do to this body?"

He stood there like a fool, frozen in place. His heart pounded. His cock ached. His mind raced with all the things he'd like to do to that delectable body. Dark desires rose to the surface. He'd tie her up with Norian rope, soft but extremely strong. Gag her so she couldn't use the power of her seductive words to tempt him. Enjoy her body until he was emptied of this irrational need for her.

But he couldn't force any words through his dry mouth.

The princess gathered her breasts into her hands and lifted them up like a gift to him. "Would you take these, Master? Squeeze them with your strong fingers until I cry out beneath you?" She rolled her tight nipples between her fingers. "Would you suckle these? Roll them with your tongue? Scrape them with your teeth?"

The growl that came from deep in his throat surprised them both. Instead of closing the distance between them, Jarrod backed away. He should have stayed in his room.

She slid her fingers between her legs and they disappeared within her core. He could scent her arousal in the air. He watched as she plunged into her center again and again. His cock throbbed with the need to thrust deep within her. She drew her fingers from her body and reached her cream-covered fingers toward him. "If you were my Master, would you take control of this body?"

He grabbed her wrist and jerked her forward. He sucked her fingers into his mouth and tasted her for the first time. He nearly moaned with pleasure and licked them clean. Now that he'd had a taste, he wouldn't rest until he'd feasted.

"Yes," he replied when he was through. He dropped her wrist. "Your body would be mine to do with as I pleased."

She raised her arms, lifted her hair up off her neck and then let it fall. Who knew the princess would be a temptress? "What would you do? If you were my Master? Tell me what you would do."

She'd pushed him too far. He couldn't hold the darkness in any longer. His words came out in a rush. "I'd bind your hands so you would have no control over what I want to do to you. I'd push you to your knees and plunge my cock between your lips."

"Do it."

She was a damn temptress. "No."

"Do it." He couldn't resist the pleading in her voice. "Let me give myself freely one time before I will have no choice." She pressed her wrists together and held them out to him. It was the most beautiful sight he'd ever seen. "Take me, Master. Use me. Show me what it can be like to be a sex slave to my Master."

With a cry, Jarrod tore the woven belt from his pant loops and grabbed her wrists. He wrapped one end of the belt around her slender wrists, binding them together. Then he pulled her arms down straight in front of her. As he wound the belt up her forearms and pulled them tightly together, he trapped her breasts between her upper arms. He tied off the belt at her elbows and stepped back to look at the pretty package she made.

Her plump breasts were squeezed together, a ripe offering to her Master. His cock jerked as he took pleasure in the sight. Her golden curls swirled around her shoulders. She stared up at him, her green eyes dreamy, seductive.

"Go ahead," she whispered. "Touch me."

He grabbed a handful of hair at the back of her neck and she gasped. He pulled her head back, bending her backward and off balance. "Your Master will decide what he will do with his slave's body. If you can't be quiet, you will be gagged."

She shivered beneath him, but she didn't look afraid. She looked excited. Aroused. "I'm sorry, Master."

"Don't speak again unless I tell you to," he growled and released her hair. She nearly lost her balance, but he was pleased to see she caught herself and stood up straight before him. She would be a fine sex slave. Damn, he wished she was his.

No point in thinking about that. Jarrod knew life rarely gave you what you wished for. If tonight was all he'd have with her, he'd make it count.

He walked around her, determined to put off touching her for as long as possible, since that seemed to be what she craved. Unfortunately, he yearned to touch her just as much. When he stood behind her, the pale globes of her ass called to him. He reached out with a flat hand and slapped her hard on the cheek of her ass.

She yelped and jumped, twisting around to look at him. He grasped her shoulders and turned her back around, facing away from him. "Stand still. Keep your shoulders straight." He slapped the other cheek. "And no talking."

He got into a rhythm then, using his hand to spank her over and over again. If he'd had rope to tie her arms, he could have used the belt on her ass. As it was, his hand began to sting, but that was just as well. It was a reminder to him that this was her first time and he didn't want to hurt her. Not too much.

He alternated soft strokes and hard strikes, keeping her off balance, so she never knew which would be next. Her whimpers gradually changed to soft moans, but when she pushed her ass into his hand, he knew she was enjoying this as much as he was. Her skin turned an attractive red and the sight inflamed his desire even more.

As soon as both cheeks were glowing and warm to the touch, he stopped spanking. He stepped back and enjoyed the sight. Her moan of disappointment made him grin. When he noticed her squirming beneath his gaze, he quickly kicked her bare feet apart.

"No. You are not allowed to pleasure yourself in any way. That is your Master's responsibility. If he wants to allow it. If you deserve to receive pleasure." He circled around to face her again. "Remember, your only responsibility is to please your Master."

He could tell she was aching to speak, but kept her tongue. A deep breath, which made her breasts pop out even further, was all that betrayed her frustration. He was glad he didn't have to gag her. He had plans for that mouth.

He released his cock from his pants and began to stroke the throbbing flesh. Her gaze zeroed in on his fist as he slid his hand up and down the rigid shaft. Her eyes widened. He wondered if she'd even seen a cock before. A sharp twinge of guilt for taking her innocence twisted in his chest. He reminded himself that he was a trainer, not really her Master. He'd merely be the first of many. She'd be servicing cocks for the rest of her life.

The painful twist didn't go away, but the rising pressure from his hand on his cock finally overrode it. He let the princess watch a little longer, to get the idea of what she'd

be required to do. Spikes of need shot through him and he abruptly released his cock. Enough of this.

Jarrold roughly pressed down on her shoulders with both hands. "On your knees, slave."

The princess dropped to her knees. Her shoulders were hunched forward, her arms still tightly pulled together from elbow to wrist, pointing straight down. He couldn't wait to get his hands on those overflowing breasts, but he was going to put her mouth to work first.

"Open, slave," he growled and tapped her cheek with his rigid cock. She parted her lips wide and he slid into her hot mouth. Incredible. He plunged in as far as he could go, until he touched the back of her throat and she gagged. He let up a little, but kept himself firmly set in her mouth.

"Look at me." She raised her eyes to him and the sight she made, on her knees with her mouth full of his cock, nearly made him come right then and there. "Have you ever done this before, slave?"

She shook her head slightly and Jarrold felt the pull on his cock. "Your Master will want you to take him as deep as you can. You'll get used to it. For now do your best."

She nodded and began to move over his cock, sliding her wet lips over his skin. Gods, it was amazing, the sensations that swept across his body. He threaded his fingers through her silky hair and held onto her head, guiding her rhythm, plunging a little deeper with each thrust.

The pressure started building too fast. Jarrold pulled all the way out before he was too close to stop. He wasn't ready to come yet. He planned to enjoy this slave in many other ways before he was done.

Hanna looked up from where she knelt before Jarrold. He was breathing heavily, but then so was she. His dark skin glistened with sweat and his handsome cock was even darker. This was the closest she'd ever been to a naked cock before. She was fascinated by it, by the bulging veins and rounded head and the slit in the tip oozing a creamy fluid.

She wasn't sure why he wanted her to stop what she was doing. She thought she'd been pleasuring him well, but she'd learned quickly not to question what her Master wanted.

When Jarrold had entered the room tonight, she'd been nervous and excited, certain she'd be able to seduce him and convince him to help her escape. But it didn't take long for the situation to be reversed. Here she was, bound and on her knees. Her arms and shoulders were beginning to hurt. The position they were pulled into was straining her muscles and her breasts were beginning to ache from being squeezed between her arms. But her entire body felt alive, her blood rushing through her veins, her skin dancing with desire.

She realized she wasn't playing at being a submissive. She was one.

Jarrold leaned over and grasped her nipples with his fingers. He rolled them, as she had before, but with much more pressure. Sharp tingles shot straight between her legs and made her want to squirm again. Then he tightened his grip on her nipples and pulled up on them. "On your feet, slave."

She struggled to her feet as he continued to pinch and pull her nipples. She bit her bottom lip to stop from crying out in pain. It would help if she had the use of her arms to balance herself as she rose and she almost blurted out that fact. But she held her tongue and worked to rise as smoothly as possible. She was determined to appear graceful for her Master, to show him she was proud to be his slave.

Her behind still stung from the slaps she'd endured. Enjoyed. She'd never imagined that pain could turn to pleasure so quickly. Or that it would become pleasure at all. It appeared she had much to learn.

Once she stood still before him, Jarrold released her nipples. He nodded. "Good." He stroked her head and then brushed her hair back behind her shoulders. "You have beautiful breasts. Your Master will surely want to enjoy them often." He took one in each hand and squeezed, digging his fingers into her swollen globes.

Hanna gasped but didn't cry out and didn't pull away. In fact, she found herself arching her back as much as she was able, pressing her breasts farther into his large hands. As he continued to roughly knead her flesh, the ache spread through her body, heating her, making moisture flow from her woman's spot. There was a delightful, maddening throb there and she wanted to rub her thighs together but remembered that he had told her not to.

A groan escaped her lips, a combination of pain and pleasure and overwhelming need. Her body began to tremble and she couldn't seem to stop.

Jarrold must have sensed her distress, for he stopped his assault on her breasts and pulled her into his arms. She cried out this time when her shoulders and arms and breasts screamed in protest as he crushed her against him.

"I'm sorry, Princess," he said. He unwound the belt from her arms and dropped it to the floor. "Are you all right?"

Hanna nodded although her body hurt. She stretched her shoulders and looked down to see the red marks made from the belt digging into her arms. Jarrold pulled her back against him and gently rubbed her shoulders for a moment. His rigid shaft rubbed against her burning buttocks and she couldn't stop herself from pressing against it.

"Do you need the Marvel Cream now or can you wait until I am finished with you?" he asked. He spoke the words softly into her ear as he continued to massage her shoulders. The question was asked in a very even tone, but Hanna felt that the answer would be a very important one. She didn't even have to think about it.

"Please, Master, enjoy this body now as you wish." She trembled as she said the words. The need to please him, the need to feel his hands on her, was so much stronger than a bit of discomfort.

He turned her around to face him. "You are a good slave. Your Master will be proud of you."

In her heart, *he* was her Master. She reached for his hand and placed it on her left breast. "How can I please you?"

His eyes darkened and his grip tightened on her breast. He led her over to the bunk and sat down, settling her in between his thighs. His cock pressed against her leg. Her breasts were now even with his mouth.

"Put your hands behind your back," he ordered. Her shoulder muscles cried out in protest, but she pulled her arms behind her. He ran his rough hands down her arms and reached behind her to have her grasp one wrist to keep her arms where he wanted them to be.

"Your Master will undoubtedly have many ways to control your body." His arms were still around her, holding her wrists. His close gaze bore into hers. He pushed her feet apart with his boot. "Ropes and chains and clamps and cuffs are regularly used on sex slaves. Bondage is to be expected."

Hanna nodded. A thrilling chill ran through her body. She didn't understand it but she was beginning to accept it. Embrace it.

"Keep your hands behind you." He released his hold on her wrists, but she kept them pressed against her bottom and her shoulders as straight as she could make them. He just stared at her breasts for what seemed like forever and her knees began to tremble with anticipation.

When he finally touched her, he began with a soft brush of his fingers against the outside of her breasts. Light shivers ran along her skin. And when he leaned forward and swept his tongue across one of her sensitive nipples, she gasped.

"You taste as sweet as a sunberry," he murmured and then sucked the nipple deep into his mouth.

Waves of incredible sensations rolled through her body and concentrated at her core. Overwhelmed, she swayed on her feet. Before she even realized it, she'd reached out her hands and grabbed his shoulders to steady herself.

Jarrold yanked her hands off his body and bit brutally into her nipple. Hanna cried out, but he continued to grip her wrists and grind her aching nipple between his teeth.

Tears ran down her cheeks. "I'm sorry, Master. I'm sorry!" How quickly she had displeased her Master. How quickly he made that displeasure known.

He released her nipple then and lightly laved it with his tongue. His disappointment in her was evident on his face. When he dropped her hands, she hurriedly put them back behind her.

"Too late now, slave." He pushed her away from him and stood up. "When you disobey you should expect to be punished."

"I'm sorry, Master." She didn't know what else to say and she was sure excuses wouldn't be accepted anyway.

He bent over and picked his belt up off the floor. She shivered. He folded it in half and slapped it on the palm of his hand.

"I'll give you another chance," he said. "If you'll accept your punishment without complaint, if you keep your hands where you are told, I will still pleasure you tonight. If you still can't obey, I will chain you up to the wall again. I will take my own pleasure from you and leave you aching with need."

"I won't disappoint you, Master." She was grateful for another chance. "I accept my punishment. I deserve it." She turned to offer her bottom to him.

"I didn't tell you to turn around, slave," he growled.

Hanna frowned and turned back to face him. "I'm sorry, Master. I thought..."

"I don't want you to think. I want you to do what you're told. And nothing else." He strode over to the sink in the corner and picked up a cloth from the shelf above it. "I've had enough of your mouth tonight. Open up."

"What?"

When she opened her mouth to speak that one word, he stuffed the cloth into her mouth. She was so shocked, she opened wider with her gasp and he pushed down on her tongue and filled her mouth with the cloth. "A Master only wants to hear his slave when he commands it. I thought I'd already gone over that."

Tears sprung to her eyes again, but this time not from pain. She was angry and embarrassed and, damn it, incredibly aroused. And a bit worried about the punishment he had in mind.

Jarrold stepped back and slapped the belt on his palm again. "Since it was your breasts that got you in trouble, they will take the beating tonight."

Hanna had to fight the almost overwhelming instinct to cover her breasts with her arms. She pressed her hands tightly into her back and winced, closing her eyes against the strikes that hadn't happened yet.

"Open your eyes!" he ordered. Her eyes flew open. "I want you to watch this, slave. I want you to anticipate every strike. I want you to think about what it means to disobey your Master. I want you to remember what a slave is supposed to do."

Please her Master.

The first strike was light, more like a caress across the flesh of her breast, than a beating. "I know what happened, slave," he said, striking the other breast with the same light pressure. "You were thinking of your own pleasure when I had your nipple in my mouth." The next couple strikes were harder but still didn't really hurt. "Your pleasure was more important than your Master's commands." The next strike stung. A lot. "You can't let that happen. You must always put your Master's pleasure first."

The next strike hurt so much she could barely catch her breath. Her arms were aching from holding them so tightly behind her back. She didn't dare close her eyes and watched him wield the belt again and again. Soon she was crying out in pain, but the screams were silenced by the cloth in her mouth.

"Only by pleasing your Master can you receive pleasure." He repeated that line over and over with each hit of the belt, beating it into her brain.

Hanna didn't know exactly when the punishment changed, but as her breasts heated with the strikes of the belt, she began to yearn for each new smack. As it had with the spanking, pleasure began to flood her system. Her cries turned to moans. She began to lean into each strike, but she was careful to keep her hands behind her back.

She was panting heavily, sweat streaming down her back. Gradually, the strikes lessened, until Jarrod dropped the belt to the floor. He took the cloth out of her mouth and gathered her into his arms. She snuggled gratefully into the hardness of his chest.

"Good slave." He swept her up into his arms and carried her over to the bunk, laying her down gently onto the mattress. "I realize you've been through a lot tonight, but I want you to be prepared for what you will have in store once you reach Noria."

Hanna nodded. She wished she could cry out that she didn't want a training session. All she wanted was to experience sex with Jarrod tonight. But he was the Master and she would do whatever he wanted.

He stood beside the bed looking down on her, so strong and handsome. What lesson was he going to give her now? Didn't he want to be pleased? She made a show of stretching, spreading her legs and lifting her arms above her head.

"On Noria, all beds come with four sturdy posts, complete with rings and hooks to secure the ropes and chains," Jarrod said. "If we were there, I could tie you spread-eagle and you wouldn't have to worry about your body betraying your pleasure."

The words popped out of her mouth before she could stop them. "But if we were there, I would be taken to the slave station and you would be off to capture some other slaves."

He was so still, so quiet, Hanna was afraid she was going to be punished again for speaking. But after a moment, he stroked her face and said, "No, I will be leaving the ship after this mission."

She wanted to know why, but at that moment Jarrod grabbed her hips and slid her around so she was lying sideways on the bunk, with her legs hanging off the side. He picked up the belt again and handed it to her.

"Hold onto this with both hands." She grasped the belt tightly. He pulled her arms over her head and pushed them down onto the mattress. Her knuckles brushed the wall on the other side of the bed. His hard body pressed onto hers for a brief moment before he straightened. "Leave them there." The sternness in his voice let her know he expected to be obeyed.

Jarrod stepped in between her legs and dropped to his knees. He grasped her hips and pulled her closer, then lifted her legs onto his shoulders. Her heart pounded. His breath was warm on her inner thighs. His fingers dug into her hips, holding her in place.

When he swept his tongue along the sensitive flesh between her legs, she cried out with delight. With amazement. She never knew anything could feel so wonderful. Soon

she was overwhelmed with sensations. She was panting, moaning. He licked and sucked at her mercilessly, using his lips and tongue and then even his teeth nipping at her skin. She was barely able to catch her breath. She couldn't even squirm because his hands held her hips in place.

"Good slave," he murmured. "You may come now."

Tension built quickly within her, seeming to swirl from everywhere at once, concentrating on her throbbing sex. When it became too much, she exploded into a starburst of sensations. A cry tore from deep within her and echoed off the walls. Her body jerked on the mattress. Her hands, still gripping his belt, bounced wildly. And his tongue continued to dive deep within her, his lips still sucked the juices flowing from her, his teeth nipped again and again at her most tender spot.

And suddenly she shattered again, her body bucking beneath him. She gasped for breath, her heart pounding so hard she thought it would break her ribs. She pitched her head from side to side and moaned. And still he worked his mouth on her.

When she came a third time, her body was nothing but an uncontrollable mass of thrashing flesh and battered nerve endings. She began to sob. She was wrung out, her energy gone.

Jarrold rose then and her legs fell limply on either side of him. She looked up at him through tear-filled eyes. His face was wet with her juices. He grabbed her hips again and plunged into her with one mighty thrust. He filled her, hot and hard. It took a moment to become accustomed to the way he stretched her flesh and the sensation of him settled so deeply within her. She marveled at the way her body accommodated him. The way her body welcomed him.

He moved slowly at first, dragging his cock in and out of her slick passage. He looked magnificent, like a proud wild animal. She was still so limp she couldn't do anything more than lie there while he took his pleasure from her. He began to move faster, pounding harder into her. Her body rocked on the mattress, her knuckles slammed into the wall, her heels banged against the bunk's platform. She couldn't take her eyes off him. His eyes were closed, his head thrown back. And when he came, he roared like the glorious beast he was.

Hanna's heart filled with something so intense, it took her breath away. She didn't recognize the emotion, couldn't put a name to it, didn't even try. But she knew that this sex they were having, the trust she'd given him, was something special. Something she doubted she'd find with any other Master. And from the intense way he was now staring at her, she was certain he felt the same.

"You are so beautiful." Jarrod reached out and smoothed her hair back from her face. He gently brushed away a tear with his thumb. "I'm sorry I was so rough. But many Masters like hard, heavy sex and I wanted you to know what you could face on Noria."

Slave or no slave, Hanna had had enough. She threw his belt at him and struggled to sit up. "Does it make you feel better to pretend you are training me for my new

Master? To tell yourself this sex was just a training exercise? To pretend you didn't *really* enjoy using my body? That you didn't feel anything at all?"

His expression darkened and he stepped back, his cock slipping from her body.

She wasn't going to be frightened into silence now. "Is sex impersonal to all Masters? Or just to you?"

The princess's words cut deep. Jarrod could admit to himself that before now, sex *had* been impersonal, but tonight had been different. *She* was different. But what good would it do to admit it to her? They would be reaching Noria in a few hours. They would never see each other again.

"Watch your mouth, slave." He turned away from the pleading look in her eye and wet a cloth at the sink. He sank to his knees in front of her and cleaned the stickiness from between her legs.

"Micah said not all Masters are cruel," she said softly.

Her tear-stained face was beautiful to him. The red lash marks across her pale breasts were a stark reminder of the way he had treated her. "Many are."

She touched his shoulder. "But you're not."

How could she say that? "I hurt you. I was too rough."

She smiled, even though the tears had not yet dried on her cheeks. "It appears I like it rough."

He silently cursed his cock as it began to stir at her words. "Then you'll make a fine sex slave."

"So I've been told many times in the past few days."

He reached for the Marvel Cream. "I must heal your skin." If she was his slave, he'd leave the marks. He'd like seeing them there, knowing that he put them there, knowing that it made her wet, knowing that she took her punishment well because it pleased him.

He smoothed the soothing cream on the breasts he hadn't had near enough time to enjoy. He tried not to linger on the firm flesh, but he couldn't rush. When he finished erasing the marks he'd made on her, it would almost be as if this night had never happened.

"May I ask you a question, Master?"

"What is it, slave?"

"If you're not staying on this ship, what are you going to do when you get to Noria?"

"Micah and I own a cargo ship. We'll be leaving in that."

"Don't you get tired of being inside a spaceship all the time? Don't you miss fresh air? Sunshine? There aren't even any windows here. I don't even know if it's day or night. I'd go crazy never seeing outside."

Jarrold froze, his hands still on her breasts. Her words brought back his memories of his years in the mines. No fresh air. No sunshine. Never knowing if it was day or night. He very nearly went crazy back then. He was surprised a princess would understand.

"It's almost morning," he told her, pushing away images of the filthy mine. He swept more cream on her breasts. "The control room and some of the cabins have windows. And we'll be breathing fresh air in a few hours." She shuddered beneath his fingers. Probably thinking about what was in store for her when they arrived.

"Why aren't you on your cargo ship now?"

If she needed to indulge in a little small talk to keep her mind off the future, he couldn't blame her. "It's in a repair shop on Noria. We'll pick it up and head to Ceylon 7 later today."

"What's Ceylon 7?"

"It's a small planet on a major shipping route at the western end of the galaxy. We're opening a trading post there."

"Sounds exciting."

He'd had enough excitement. "I hope it will be profitable."

"I always wanted to travel. To see more of the universe than Vanya. I just didn't think it would be like this."

"I wouldn't think a princess would have much need to travel."

"Yeah." She sounded sad. Probably thinking about her family and her planet that she'd never see again. But she surprised him. "Even a princess can have the desire to see more of the universe than her one small portion."

"I suppose you're right." When he was trapped in the mines he often dreamed of seeing other worlds. Did she feel trapped on Vanya? He didn't need to know.

"How would you like to be stuck in one place for your whole life, never knowing anything about other people? Other worlds?"

"I wouldn't."

"I didn't think so."

He didn't want to think he could have anything in common with a princess. He didn't want to think about anything right now. Her breasts were completely healed, no signs of the whipping she'd endured. He swept his hands over the firm flesh one last time. His dark fingers were such a contrast to her pale skin. He spread a thin coating of cream over her arms and the marks from her binding disappeared completely.

"Turn around and bend over the bed," he said curtly. He was proud of how quickly she obeyed. He pressed her head down onto the mattress and straightened her legs. The king should be damn grateful he was receiving an obedient slave and not some frightened naïve princess.

Her ass was still red, so he smoothed more of the cream over her cheeks to remove any tell-tale signs of the spanking he'd given her. His chest began to ache as he remembered the sassy way she tempted him and the way his hand stung as he spanked

her willing ass. He'd never seen anyone so beautiful as when she leaned into the strikes of the belt. His stroking hand trembled as he remembered the way she came repeatedly beneath him, giving herself more fully to him than any woman ever had before.

"Thank you." Her words were soft, mostly buried into the mattress. "Thank you for showing me how to please my Master. Thank you for showing me —"

Her words cut off as they heard the door slide open. A chill ran over his skin and he froze. How could he have forgotten to lock it from the inside?

"What the fuck are you doing?"

Luckily, it was Micah who caught him with his pants around his ankles and his hands on the bare ass of the Norian king's new sex slave. Jarrod jumped to his feet and pulled up his pants. He helped the princess up and sat her down on the bunk.

"Are you crazy?" Micah cried. "Are you trying to get yourself killed?"

"I have no desire to die," Jarrod replied as calmly as possible. His heart was still racing. But if he was honest with himself, he wouldn't have passed up this night for anything, even a death sentence.

"Jarrod was giving me some slave training," the princess said softly.

"Yeah. Right. Slave training." Micah turned to Jarrod. "We'll be in Norian airspace in a few minutes. We have to get up on deck."

Jarrod nodded. He glanced at the princess, her eyes wide and worried. "Someone will come for you once we've landed." She nodded. He turned and followed Micah out of the princess's room. He didn't look back before the door slid shut. This time he didn't want to see the tears in her eyes.

Hanna stared at the closed door, new nerves tumbling in her stomach. This was it. The start of her new life as a sex slave. A life of serving a Master she didn't know. A Master who couldn't possibly move her the way Jarrod had.

But that wasn't her concern, was it? Her only concern was to please her Master, whoever he was. Jarrod had taught her that well enough. If she pleased her Master, she'd receive pleasure in return. She had to believe that.

She was sorry she'd never see Jarrod again, but she'd survived when she'd been separated from her family at an early age to live in the palace. She'd survive this time too. And no one would know if, when she closed her eyes, she imagined it was Jarrod's body she was pleasing with her hands and mouth and body. Her memories of her first Master would carry her through the days ahead.

Her body felt warm and well used. She realized she liked the feeling. She glanced over to the chains and cuffs hanging from the wall. Her sex tingled as she wondered if she'd be led from the ship in chains.

Hanna rose and began to pace the small room. How long before someone came to get her? Even though she was scared, she was determined to leave the ship with her

shoulders straight and head high, not cowering and crying, as Micah had described some of the other Vanyan women.

She gasped as she realized she hadn't thought of the other women or the princess or escape plans since Jarrod stepped into the room last night. She wished she could have saved them all from the fate they had in store, but she'd finally accepted the fact that the situation was beyond her control. She'd resigned herself to the fact that she was going to leave here and be taken to a slave station on her way to becoming a sex slave for a king.

Essentially, she'd been serving a king since she was a young girl. Her years at the palace had usually been boring but also restrictive. She'd had a few chores, then nothing to do but be ready when the princess needed her. Nowhere to go but where the princess wanted to go. She'd never been allowed to follow her own dreams, her own desires. She'd been told what to do and when and where.

With a start, Hanna realized that although she'd never been called one, she'd been a slave all along.

Chapter Four

Hanna didn't see Jarrod again before she left the slave ship. She didn't even catch a glimpse of the other Vanyan women as she was led away by Crock, the guard who'd chained her up on her first day on the ship. He seemed to take delight in wrapping one end of a heavy chain several times around her neck. Then he wound the rest of the chain around his fist before leading her out of the ship.

She squinted as they stepped out of the ship into the bright sunlight. She paused to look around her, but Crock growled and tugged on the chain. The hard surface of the landing area was hot on her bare feet.

Dozens of ships were spread out over a huge paved area. Hundreds of people milled about going to and from the ships. Crock led her out a guarded gate and toward a group of low buildings not far away. Her heart thudded so loudly it almost drowned out the din of voices coming from everywhere.

She felt so exposed, but no one looked twice at her, naked, being led in chains through the crowded streets. In fact, every woman she saw was naked, in collars and cuffs. Was every woman a sex slave here on Noria?

Hanna noticed in surprise that none of the women had any hair covering the woman's spot between their legs. They had to feel so much more naked and exposed. Or was that normal on Noria? Some of the slaves walked behind well-dressed men without a lead of any kind. Some followed on leads of different lengths and types. None of them had heavy chains coiled around their necks.

Some of the people they passed had skin as dark as Jarrod's. Some as light as hers and many with shades in between. Were they all Norians or a blend of inhabitants from all the planets she was just now becoming aware of? Having never seen any people other than Vanyans, she found the differences fascinating. She had much to learn about the worlds beyond her home planet.

They turned through a gate and into a large courtyard surrounded by whitewashed buildings. Hanna was led down a winding alley until suddenly Crock tugged her inside a doorway. They came to a halt inside a cool, dark room with no windows. The weight of the chains was lifted from around her neck and Crock left her with a tall, slender woman. She was beautiful and graceful, with long straight blonde hair, naked except for a smooth silver collar and silver cuffs at her wrists and ankles. She introduced herself as Fawn.

"This is the slave station," Fawn told her, gesturing around them. Her voice was smooth and rich, almost musical. "Here we will prepare you for your duties before you meet your Master."

The slave station! To hear the words out loud made it seem all the more real. Hanna wished she felt as calm and serene as the lovely woman sounded. She swallowed her nerves as best she could. "Do you know anything about the other women who were taken with me?"

Fawn frowned and immediately Hanna felt chastised. "I can't answer any questions about them. You should be concerned about nothing else but your life as a slave. You should only be concerned with how to please your Master."

Hadn't Jarrod told her the same thing?

"King Barrus is anxious for you to begin your duties," Fawn told her. "We will prepare your body today as the king has directed."

"Prepare my body?" That didn't sound good.

Fawn's brown eyes warmed. "Nothing to worry about. A bath and some other rituals first. Then you'll be fitted with your collar and cuffs. And whatever other specific orders your Master has given us to make you ready for him."

Hanna followed Fawn into a large room in which a deep, round tub was sunk into the middle of the tiled floor. Colored cushions were scattered about the floor. While the sea blue tiles looked like they should be cold, the floor was warm against her bare feet. Fawn motioned for Hanna to walk down the steps into the water.

Her stomach fluttered with nerves, but she discovered the warm water was relaxing. She sat on a narrow bench built into the side, the water up to her shoulders. Hanna looked up to see two more naked women, also collared and cuffed, had entered the room. The three women got into the tub with Hanna.

"We are here to ready you for your Master," a small woman with dark curly hair said. "I am Starr." She picked up a bottle from the edge of the tub and poured some fragrant gel into her hand.

"First we will wash your beautiful hair," the third woman said. "I am Treena." She was as tall as Fawn, with straight hair even darker than Starr's. Treena sat down beside Hanna and put her long arm around Hanna's shoulder. "Lean back into the water."

Hanna was a bit uneasy as she leaned back into the warm water, but lying back in Treena's arms was very pleasant. Her breasts were large and soft and Hanna's cheek brushed against one as Treena supported her in the water.

Starr sat at her head and lathered her hair. Hanna didn't remember anyone ever washing her hair before. It was a delicious sensation. She closed her eyes and let the warm water envelop her.

Once her hair was rinsed clean, Fawn, who had been watching, motioned to Hanna to stand up. "We will wash you now." She picked up a sponge and poured another sweet-smelling lotion onto it. Treena and Starr did as well.

The three women began together to soap Hanna's body. The sponges were soft, the lotion forming creamy suds that were smooth against her skin. They lathered her entire body, an erotic massage that Hanna couldn't help but enjoy. After she'd sank back

under the water to wash off the suds, they led her from the tub and dried her off with soft, warm towels. They combed her hair and dried it. When they were done, Fawn took her hand and led her to a long low cushion spread out on the floor.

"Lie down here."

Hanna did as she was told. "How long will I be here at the station?" She could get used to this pampering.

"You will be tested as soon as we are finished here. If all goes well, you will be serving the king tonight." Fawn turned and walked across the room.

"Tonight?" Hanna's heart beat wildly. "I thought I had to go through some kind of training." And what was this about a test? She started to sit up, but Treena gently, silently, pressed her shoulders back down onto the cushion.

"King Barrus prefers to do his own slave training," Fawn said. She returned with a flat-bottomed basket and knelt down beside Hanna's thigh.

But Hanna couldn't relax. "Should I be frightened of my Master?"

Fawn stroked her thigh. "No. The king expects strict obedience, but he is not a cruel Master."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I was once the king's personal slave, so you can rest assured," Fawn replied.

"I was also," Treena said, kneeling at her head. She began to smooth a rich, fragrant oil on Hanna's face.

"As was I," Starr said, kneeling beside her on the opposite side from Fawn. She placed one of Hanna's arms on her lap and began to smooth on the luxurious oil also. "You needn't fear him."

"All three of you? I don't understand. Does he have a whole group of sex slaves? Do you still belong to him?"

"The king gets bored easily," Starr replied. "But he uses his slaves one at a time."

"He enjoys his personal slave's body for a while, but then wants someone new," Treena added. She'd finished with Hanna's face and began smoothing oil on her neck and shoulders.

"For now you are that someone new." Fawn pushed firmly at Hanna's inner thighs.

Hanna let Fawn part her thighs. She was suddenly too relaxed to resist. "I feel so strange. What's happening to me?"

"The oil has relaxing properties as it is absorbed into your skin," Fawn told her. "It will help you through the preparations."

Starr rubbed her oil-covered hands together. "Mmm. It's nice."

Hanna tried to care about the fact that she was essentially being drugged, but she couldn't summon the energy. She did, however, have more questions. "Do all the king's former slaves end up working here at the station?"

"No." Fawn cupped her hand over Hanna's sex. "The king wants his slaves to be bare here. All Norian slaves are bare here. I will remove the hair now."

"No!" She tried to bring her legs back together, but Fawn held her thighs apart.

"Don't fight us now, slave," Fawn said sharply. "You have no say in the matter."

Hadn't Jarrod warned her of that too?

Resigned, Hanna let her legs fall open. There was nothing else she could do. As Fawn trimmed her intimate hair close to her skin, Hanna tried to relax again and enjoy the soft caresses as Treena and Starr smoothed more oil over her body. Hanna felt a strange sensation as Fawn spread something warm and wet between her legs. Then she pressed something down, covering her entire woman's area.

"This is a combination of Marvel Cream and a chemical that destroys the hair down to the root. The cloth holds the mixture in place to do its work. When we are finished, you will never have to worry about hair here again."

Hanna blinked back tears, grieving the permanent change to her body. Somehow it symbolized the hopelessness of ever escaping her fate. But there was nothing she could do about it. She must endure what could not be changed.

When Treena began to smooth the slippery oil into her breasts, it took her mind off what Fawn was doing. Hanna was reminded of Jarrod's hands on her breasts last night. She closed her eyes and imagined it was Jarrod's hands caressing her body.

If only it was Jarrod's hands running along the firm flesh of her breasts. Jarrod's fingers rolling the nipples into tight little buds. Tingles spread through her body. Longing burrowed deep into her heart.

Soon Fawn removed the cloth from between her legs. "Beautiful," she said. Treena brought over a bowl of water and Fawn cleaned the area, then spread some more Marvel Cream there. Her fingers worked the cream through Hanna's feminine folds and warm quivers ran along her skin.

At the same time, Starr was rubbing oil over her legs and feet, massaging the muscles as she did. "You have incredible hands," Hanna told her.

Starr blushed. "Thank you." Hanna moaned with bliss as Starr rubbed the bottoms of her feet. Her hands were obviously practiced at giving pleasure. Did she still give pleasure to Masters? She didn't feel right asking that, but Hanna thought of another question.

"What happens to the other slaves the king tires of?" she asked. "If they don't come here, what happens to them?" *What will happen to me?*

"He usually gives his slaves away as gifts to visiting dignitaries or powerful Norians," Fawn said. "It is considered a great honor to become a gift from the king."

"Sometimes he sends them to one of the brothels," Treena said softly.

"But those are the slaves that don't please him," Starr replied quickly.

Hanna tensed. What if she didn't please the king?

"Don't worry," Fawn said, still smoothing Marvel Cream over Hanna's newly bared skin. "You have a responsive body. Your Master will surely be pleased with you."

"But you three are still sex slaves, right? Even if you work here at the slave station? Do you still have Masters to please? Do you have any choice?"

"None of us have any choice but to please our Masters. Whoever they are at the time," Fawn said.

"So no slave stays with the same Master forever?" Hanna asked.

"Some do," Starr said softly. "Rarely, but it happens."

"But never fall in love with a Master. It's not permitted," Fawn said sharply. Her fingers dug into Hanna's skin. "And never make the mistake of thinking a Master loves you. A Master can be attentive, even seem fond of a slave. But Masters don't fall in love with sex slaves." She rose abruptly and crossed the room.

"I think she must have fallen in love with one of her Masters," Treena whispered.

"Poor Fawn," Starr whispered back.

That would explain her harshness. If a sex slave never remained with the same Master, no wonder falling in love would be forbidden.

Fawn returned with more oil. "Turn over." Her voice was soft and musical again.

Hanna rolled over onto her stomach and three pairs of hands smoothed oil onto her skin. Calmness flowed through her system and she relaxed into the cushion. She closed her eyes and an image of Jarrod, his dark skin, his sexy tattoo, appeared to her. His hands on her body hadn't relaxed her, but made her come alive. Would any other Master do the same? She suddenly felt restless again, even with the treated oil covering her entire body. She shifted beneath their hands.

Fawn must have sensed her unease. "We are almost done with the oil," she said softly. "The preparations are tedious, but necessary." She helped Hanna to her feet. For the first time she noticed the erotic brush of air against her bare woman's flesh. "Now for the collars and cuffs. And some additional work ordered by the king."

* * * * *

"Marcko says Gaylock left the planet three days ago," Micah said as he entered the cockpit of the *Galaxy*.

Jarrold looked up at Micah as he dropped into the pilot's seat. They'd just gotten the *Galaxy* out of the repair shop and Jarrod had gone inside to program the coordinates to Ceylon 7. "Hope he goes back to the mines and chokes to death on tranium dust." He turned back to the nav system. He was almost done. Micah was a gifted pilot, but a little sloppy when it came to navigating. He'd be on his own for this trip, so Jarrod wanted to get the trip mapped out right.

"So what's the plan?" Micah asked.

Jarrold froze, his fingers on the keyboard. He took a deep breath. "What plan?"

"To rescue the princess."

"What are you talking about?"

"My friend, I know you too well. She got under your skin and you and I both know it."

"Nah. She was just..." But when it came down to it, he couldn't deny she was more than just a sex slave. The princess had been on Jarrod's mind constantly since the moment he left her behind. Somehow in a couple nights, she'd become much more.

"Then why are you programming the navigation system now?"

Jarrold shrugged. "Just getting it out of the way."

Micah leaned back in his seat and crossed his thick arms over his chest. "I'm not taking off for Ceylon 7 without you and you're going to need me to break her out of the slave station."

There was no reason to deny it. Micah was going to find out sooner or later that he'd be leaving without his navigator. Jarrod sighed and turned away from the control panel. "I don't want you involved."

"We're partners. I have to be involved."

"I'll do it myself and get to Ceylon 7 as soon as I can."

"How are you going to get her off the planet without the *Galaxy*?"

Jarrold shrugged. "I'll figure something out." He already had his eye on a little speeder with light-speed capabilities. He should be able to kick start it and blast off without causing too much of a fuss.

"You'll need me to break her out of the slave station," Micah insisted.

"You said that before. I can handle it myself." It's not like someone of Micah's size could sneak around undetected.

"Don't you ever talk to the slaves you buy for the night?"

Jarrold narrowed his eyes. "No more than necessary."

"Yeah, that's you. Man of few words." Micah stood up. "The king always sends two men to pick up his new slave from the station. They have to try her out. Enjoy her body. Together. Make sure she's worthy of the king before they leave with her."

Jarrold's stomach twisted in a knot at the thought. But he saw what Micah was getting at. "So we intercept these guys and just walk out with the princess?"

Micah shrugged. "Easier to overpower two men than to fight our way out of the slave station."

"You're right." Jarrod's mind was already running through the possibilities. "Thanks, friend."

"One more thing," Micah said.

"What now?"

"According to my source at the station, they're getting the princess ready now. She's scheduled to be taken to the king tonight."

* * * * *

Fawn led Hanna over to a strange-looking chair. The seat was of normal width, but the back was tall and narrow and had small hooks scattered up and down its length. "Please have a seat and we will fit you with your collar and cuffs."

Treena carried over what looked like several lengths of smoothly rolled silver rope. Hanna would have thought it was the shiny metal that the women were wearing except that it was limp, not rigid like their collars and cuffs.

Fawn lifted Hanna's heavy hair off her neck and clipped it on top of her head, then took the first length of silver and placed it around Hanna's neck. Fawn circled behind Hanna and pulled back on the silver rope until it lay snug atop her collarbone. "Our cuffs and collars are made out of a special metal called tranium. Have you heard of it?"

"No."

Starr handed Fawn a pair of scissors. "Tranium is flexible until it is finished with a sealing device. I can cut the ends to the right length." She pulled a little tighter and Hanna heard her snip the collar to length. Fawn traded the scissors for a long-handled device with a clamp on the end. "Then I clamp the sealer over the ends. Warning. It will get hot for a moment."

Hanna could feel the metal begin to warm, starting at the back of her neck and working around both sides until it met in a brief flash of unbelievable heat against her throat. But just as quickly the heat was gone and the collar was solid where it rested around her neck.

Hanna reached up to touch the collar. The metal was smooth and already cooling. When she traced the collar around to the back, she felt a ring attached to the collar.

"The sealing device also forges a ring into the tranium as it finishes it," Fawn said. "Rings, of course, are an essential part of the collar and cuffs. They can be hooked on all manner of devices and are also designed to attach to each other, so, for instance, your wrist cuffs can be hooked to each other to bind your arms behind your back. Do you understand?"

Hanna swallowed and nodded. Excitement rained over her skin, but it was dampened by the wish that it was Jarrod she was being prepared for. Where was he now? Had he already left Noria for his little trading post in a faraway galaxy?

With the help of Treena and Starr, Fawn quickly measured and secured cuffs to Hanna's wrists and ankles. They were made loose enough to not scrape against her skin, but tight enough that there was no possibility of them ever slipping off a hand or foot.

"Tranium is an amazing substance. The strongest material known in the universe. Nothing has been developed so far that is able to cut through tranium once it has been

hardened." Fawn reached up and fingered her own collar. "We all will wear the collar and cuffs for the rest of our days."

"Oh." Hanna's breath whooshed from her body. She would forever be marked as a slave. She wasn't sure how that made her feel. Jarrod had told her she would have to get used to the idea of being a slave for the rest of her life. Perhaps he was right.

Hanna moved her arms and legs, testing the feel of the cuffs. This metal was so much gentler to her skin than the rough metal cuffs aboard the slave ship. They felt like jewelry. Jewelry with a wicked purpose.

"Let's test them out," Fawn said. Before Hanna had time to react, Fawn grabbed Hanna's wrists and pulled her arms behind her, around the narrow chair back. She hooked the cuff's rings onto the back of the chair. While she was doing that, Treena and Starr each took an ankle and pulled Hanna's legs apart and hooked the ankle cuffs to the outside of the chair legs. Then Fawn took hold of the ring in Hanna's collar and pulled her head back, attaching it to a hook on the front of the chair back.

Hanna's heart pounded as she tested her bonds. Her arms and legs were securely fastened, her head held firmly in place. Bound in this fashion, she would surely be at her Master's mercy. The thought made her sex pulse and grow moist.

Starr smiled and glanced over at Fawn. She stepped forward and brushed her hands over Hanna's breasts. "She is beautiful. Her skin is so soft and shiny." Then she began to pull at Hanna's nipples, rolling them between her thumb and fingers and then stretching them. While Hanna knew she should be uncomfortable to have a woman playing with her breasts, the erotic sensations, combined with the treated oil, left her relaxed and more than a little aroused.

"Now for the final touch." Fawn stepped in front of Hanna and held out her open palm at eye level. Two short lengths of tranium in a slightly smaller diameter than what had been used for the collar and cuffs lay in her hand. One end of each piece had been narrowed to a sharp point.

"The king had ordered that your nipples be pierced with tranium rings."

Hanna shook her head and tried to pull away, but of course, it was useless. The reality of being truly helpless hit her hard. "But none of you have rings through your nipples."

Fawn shrugged. "It is not our place to question the king's orders."

Starr continued to pull and stretch her nipples, evidently getting them ready for the piercing. Hanna no longer received any pleasure from it. She stared at Fawn's hand and whimpered. The metal seemed nearly as thick as her nipples.

"Don't disappoint me," Fawn snapped. "Act like a slave worthy of a king."

Starr released Hanna's nipples and leaned close enough to whisper in her ear. "Trust us as you will trust your Master."

Fawn grasped one of Hanna's nipples and pressed the sharp point of the first ring against the sensitive flesh. "I'm afraid I can do nothing to stop the initial pain of the

piercing. The tranium will not harden if it comes in contact with Marvel Cream while it is still flexible. Treena will have the healing cream ready when I'm finished."

Then Fawn began to slowly push the point of the ring into Hanna's nipple. Fiery pain tore through her. She screamed and stiffened her body. "Don't move," Fawn said smoothly as she slowly increased the pressure. "I don't want to make a mistake and have to start over."

It felt as if her nipple was being torn off. Starr stepped behind Hanna to gently rub her shoulders. Tears streamed down her face. "Breathe. Breathe," Starr chanted. "Breathe through the pain."

Hanna hadn't realized she'd been holding her breath. She let it out on a ragged sigh and screamed again. The sharp point finally broke through the other side of her nipple with a pop. Fawn continued to draw the metal through her torn flesh until there was an equal amount hanging down from either side of her nipple. Hanna panted, trying to block out the pain.

"You will look so beautiful in these," Treena said, watching from behind Fawn. Hanna was glad to see she had a large jar of Marvel Cream in her hands. "A slave with thick, heavy nipple rings will be pleasing for any Master."

"I'm going to pierce the other nipple," Fawn said. Hanna wanted to scream at her to harden the first one and get her the Marvel Cream, but she just nodded and winced. Knowing what to expect didn't help the pain any, but the piercing seemed to go faster this time. Fawn clamped the sealer on one, then the other of the rings, the burning heat barely registering above the raw pain Hanna already suffered.

Finally Fawn turned to Treena and scooped some Marvel Cream from the jar. She coated the rings with the cream and began to slowly pull them around and around through the nipples, adding more cream as needed. The pain soon subsided and suddenly was gone.

Hanna relaxed and blinked away the tears.

"Better?" Fawn asked gently.

"Yes." Hanna looked down as far as she was able with her collar still hooked to the chair. The silver rings looked huge, but shiny and pretty. They had considerable weight to them but weren't uncomfortable. The pain was already a faint memory. She couldn't help but wonder what Jarrod would think about her decorated nipples. Would he think she looked beautiful in them?

She knew she would forever measure any Master against Jarrod. Even a king.

* * * * *

It was easier than Jarrod thought for him and Micah to overpower the two royal guards as they left a tavern they'd stopped at before going to the slave station. Probably celebrating their good fortune at getting to enjoy the king's slave even before he got her.

Soon the Norian guards were naked and unconscious and locked in a storage compartment on an outgoing cargo ship. Micah and Jarrod barely fit into their black uniforms with the royal insignias, but they arrived at the slave station properly attired and holding the data disc necessary to get the princess out.

They were led to the testing room, and while Micah handed over the confirmation disc to the weasly little Station Master, Jarrod was frozen by the vision before him.

They stood just inside a large room. It was mostly dark except for the spotlight shining on a naked figure in the center of the room. Jarrod swallowed. This was how he'd always dreamed of seeing the princess.

She was kneeling on the hard floor, her hands cuffed behind her back. Her silver collar shone brightly around her slender neck and the thick, heavy nipple rings... Jarrod swallowed again. They were the most erotic things he'd ever seen. A long chain hung between them, the center link attached to a hook in the floor in front of her.

His body hardened immediately, his cock tenting the tight trousers. But even as he imagined plunging his aching erection into her wet heat, an unexpected wave of tenderness swept over him. He wanted to gather her into his arms and rain kisses on her skin. He wanted to hear his name on her lips and then capture those lips with his own.

He took a couple steps toward her. She didn't react as he'd feared she might once she recognized them, and now he saw why. Blindness patches had been placed over her eyes. Jarrod had heard about them but had never seen them in action. Similar to a two-way mirror, the Master could see the slave's eyes, her reactions, her expressions, but the slave was completely blinded. She couldn't see anything through the patches.

He knew he should be paying attention to Micah's discussion with the Station Master. Everything had to go perfectly for them to get the princess, and themselves, out of the station safely.

Micah walked up to Jarrod. "The Station Master watches the whole thing," he said softly. "To make sure we put the slave through her paces and that she satisfies us both."

Jarrod frowned and glanced over to the man, now sitting behind a large desk in the corner of the room and grinning eagerly. He probably opened his pants and pleased himself while he watched.

"She'll satisfy us."

"If not, he keeps her here for punishment and training."

"So we're putting on a show? I don't like this."

"He won't release her unless he's certain she won't break down," Micah said. "That she can take whatever the king might want to do to her."

"She'll take it," Jarrod said. He couldn't wait to prove it. "Let's go."

Jarrod approached the lovely slave. His hands were shaking, he wanted to touch her so badly. The princess's head was bowed, her eyes closed behind the patches. She

was breathing rapidly, a sign of her nerves. Jarrod worried that she might give them away in her surprise when she discovered who had come for her.

He knelt down and unhooked the chain from the floor. He shouldn't have been surprised when the hook automatically retracted into the floor. The Norians thought of everything when it came to sex. He stood and lifted the chain until it tugged on her nipples.

"On your feet, slave."

Her eyes flew open, wide and surprised, yet sightless. He slapped his hand over her mouth before she could make a sound. "You are not to say a word unless commanded. Understand?"

She nodded slowly. He felt her lips lift slightly beneath his palm.

He tugged harder on the chain, the nipple rings lifting her breasts. He raised his voice. "I said on your feet."

She struggled to stand. How long had she been kneeling there? Her muscles had to be stiff. He resisted the urge to help her up, that wouldn't look good to the Station Master. She didn't have the use of her arms either, but she made it to her feet. She held her head high, her shoulders back. A proud, beautiful slave.

Now that she stood, he saw that her pussy was bare. He swallowed the moan that rose from deep within him. Her puffy flesh peeked from between her legs and his cock jerked.

Jarrod dropped the chain from above her head. The weight pulled at her nipples and made her breasts bounce. He ached with the need to put his hands on her. To bury himself deep within her.

Micah had circled around behind her and was clearly admiring her ass. A stab of jealousy pierced Jarrod's chest. He knew he had to get over it this time. If this didn't work, he'd spend the rest of his life haunted by the images of hundreds of men enjoying her body. The thought burned his stomach like acid.

Her golden curls hung over her shoulders and down her back. He reached out and swept an eager hand across her tempting breasts. She moaned and arched her back, pushing her firm flesh into his hand.

Micah slapped her ass and she jerked. "Stand straight, slave," he growled. He spanked her again, a sharp, noisy slap. And then again. "Show us what you're made of."

She nodded and pulled her shoulders back. Her eyes stared straight ahead and Jarrod could read her desperation in them. He felt the absurd need to comfort her, to tell her everything would be all right, but he couldn't promise her that. He yearned to spend hours exploring her body, but he knew they had to put on a good show so the Station Master would let them walk out with her.

Jarrold grabbed her hair tightly at the back of her neck and bent her head back. He loomed over her menacingly, hoping it looked good to the Station Master. "Sorry, Princess," he whispered. "We're going to have to treat you rough."

She appeared to be staring at him, her wide eyes soft and searching, even though he knew she couldn't see him. Couldn't see anything. "I like it rough. Remember?"

He released her with a yank and she stumbled but righted herself quickly. A surge of emotion he didn't understand burst in his chest. Admiration. It had to be admiration.

Jarrold gathered her chain in one hand, pulling the links together so that the nipple rings tugged her breasts together. "Keep your legs straight, slave, and bend over at the waist."

He yanked down on the chain, just in case she didn't respond as fast as he wanted her to.

But she gracefully bent over, until her back was straight and perpendicular with the floor. He released the chain and it rattled as it hit the floor. Her arms rested in the small of her back. Her ass faced Micah and her mouth was even with Jarrold's throbbing cock. He lowered the zipper on the uniform. The sound was loud, even over her ragged panting. His cock sprang free, lunging toward those parted lips.

He met Micah's heated gaze and nodded sharply. "Now we enjoy this slave."

Hanna struggled to keep her shaking knees straight as she stood bent at the waist, waiting for her instructions. So many questions were whirling through her brain. Fawn had warned her that a man named Prax would watch her pleasure two of the king's men. But what was Jarrold doing here? And she recognized Micah's distinctive accent. Why was he here?

She wished she could see through these damn patches. She wished she could speak. She wished they'd get on with it, so she didn't have to hold this position forever.

Jarrold cupped her face in his large hands. She breathed in his unique scent and her sex moistened. He brushed her hair away from her face.

"Open for me."

His hard cock pushed past her lips. She opened her mouth to him and he thrust his shaft over her tongue until he rammed into the back of her throat. The force rocked her backward. Without the use of her arms, she lost her balance again and stumbled.

Strong hands grasped her hips and steadied her. Micah.

Strong hands cupped her chin and the back of her head. Jarrold.

"Take me deep, slave," Jarrold said as if nothing had happened. His voice was smooth but commanding. He kept a tight grasp on her head. She tried to keep her jaws open and loose as he pumped in and out of her mouth. She liked his taste on her tongue. She liked the weight of his hand on her head. She felt safe, secure. He was her Master and she trusted him to take care of her.

She was just getting accustomed to the rhythm of Jarrod's thrusts when Micah kicked her legs apart. His hands were holding her hips so tightly, she barely stumbled this time. He rubbed his cock along the slick lips of her sex and she shivered with the tingles of arousal that ran along her skin. But he was so much taller than her that his cock didn't reach her woman's spot as he ran it between her legs.

The delicious slide of his hot shaft, slippery with her juices, tickled her sensitive flesh. Hanna ached for him to rub it across her throbbing nub. She lifted up on her toes to rock her hips back to meet his heavy cock again. Micah smacked her on the hip at the same time Jarrod grabbed her hair and pulled hard.

Her cry was lost in the cock still buried in her mouth.

"Don't move unless we tell you to," Micah growled loudly. He slapped her bottom again, the sting sending jolts of desire between her legs.

"Let us use you." Jarrod spoke so softly that Prax wouldn't have been able to hear him. "Let us take pleasure from your body. We'll show him what a good slave you are."

Hanna relaxed her body and gave herself over to the two Masters. In the position she was in, she had to give up control. If she'd had the use of her arms, she'd have been able to support herself, she'd have had some control over how fast, how deep Jarrod plunged between her lips. As it was, she could do nothing but keep her mouth open and let him use her.

Just then Micah pulled open the lips of her sex with his thumbs. The air felt cool on her wet flesh. He lifted her hips with his big hands and her feet actually left the floor. Then, with one mighty thrust, he plunged into her.

Her gasp must have opened her throat a little more. Jarrod took advantage and thrust even deeper until her nose touched the coarse hair of his abdomen. He held it there, held *her* there, as Micah pounded into her from behind. Her lungs burned as Jarrod's cock cut off her air. She fought the panic that threatened to overwhelm her, but forced herself to remain still, to trust her Master.

After what seemed like ages and was most likely not much more than a few seconds, he let go of her head, grasped her shoulders to hold her up and pulled his cock out of her mouth.

She gasped for air, tears welling up in her eyes. "Good slave," Jarrod murmured.

Micah stopped moving, leaving her filled her with his cock but letting her recover for a moment. Then he began to move slowly, in and out of her passage, and Jarrod rubbed his slick cock back over her lips.

She opened her mouth again before he could say a word.

When they'd filled her again, they began to find a rhythm, plunging into her from front and rear. The heavy chain swung from her nipple rings. Her body flopped limply between their bodies. She had no control as they used her for their pleasure.

And she received pleasure herself, for when she heard their breathing grow ragged, when she felt their thrusts become more frantic, she knew it was because of her. Jarrod was right. By pleasing her Master, she received pleasure in return.

Just when she thought they must be ready to spill their seed, Jarrod pulled out of her mouth. "Switch."

Micah grunted. He pulled slowly out and left her body feeling strangely empty. He lowered her so that her bare feet could touch the floor again. He released her hips and she suddenly felt alone. Her blood pounded in her ears, almost as loud as her shaky panting.

She didn't know what to do, so she maintained her position, feeling their gazes burning into her, until Jarrod said, "Kneel, slave."

Hanna lowered herself to her knees as gracefully as possible. The chain attached to her nipples rattled as it hit the floor. She wished she could see. Wished she could feast her eyes on Jarrod, with his dark, sculpted muscles and handsome face.

She knew she was foolish for feeling such fondness for this man she had no future with. But now...maybe she did have the hope of a future with him. Why was he here if not to help her escape?

Unless he'd lied to her and he really worked for the king.

She didn't have time to worry about things like love and the future and especially not forever. Jarrod unlinked the cuffs holding her wrists together. Her shoulders cried out as her arms fell to her sides.

"On your hands and knees, slave," he ordered. But as he slid his hands over her back to push her forward, they lingered on her shoulders for a moment to caress the tight muscles there. He must have been kneeling behind her because she felt his hard cock slide along her sensitive female folds. Her muscles there clenched, as if trying to pull him in. But just as quickly, that delicious weight was gone. He skimmed his hands back down her spine and pulled her legs back and apart.

Micah was kneeling also, for she felt his huge hand on the back of her head and his slick cock rubbing her face. The thick shaft was coated with her juices and he rubbed the wetness over her face. Jarrod's cock rubbed her other cheeks. She shivered with arousal.

She almost opened her mouth again, almost tilted her hips back, eager to pleasure her Masters some more, but she hadn't been told to, so she remained still and ready. She shivered with anticipation.

She heard the clatter of the chain before she felt the sharp tug on her nipples. Micah must have grabbed the chain with his other hand and pulled on them. At the same instant that he yanked hard on the chain, he plunged his cock into her mouth, not even commanding her to open her lips first. Her body must have known what he was going to do, because she'd already parted her lips and relaxed her jaw without even realizing it. Or perhaps it had been because of her gasp of pain, which was immediately silenced by his cock.

His cock had a different shape than Jarrod's. A different taste. But as Micah's wider cock stretched her mouth, Hanna realized that she was tasting her own juices on his hard cock. His huge hand held her head in place.

While Micah pleased himself with her mouth, Jarrod plunged his long fingers deep into her core, moving them in and out and coating them with her cream. He pulled them out and slid his slick fingers through her slippery folds, brushing them over her most sensitive spot, until the swirls of sensations built within her, until she couldn't stop herself from rocking against his hand.

He stopped touching her then and it took all her willpower not to groan in frustration. He rubbed his cock once, twice, through her wetness and then settled the head of his cock at her entrance. Hanna forced herself to remain still.

When he finally slid slowly inside, her body welcomed him. His thick cock pressed through her flesh, gradually stretching her, filling her. Pleasing her. His slow thrusts rubbed erotically against her inner core, each stroke building the buzz of sensations flying through her.

Jarrold and Micah picked up their pace, pounding her from both ends. It should have been easier now that she could rest on her hands and knees, but this time, Micah kept yanking on the chains, pulling her breasts forward as he drove his cock down her throat. He didn't hold his thick cock there like Jarrod did, cutting off her breath to prove a point. Micah just kept pushing farther down her throat with each powerful thrust, groaning with his pleasure.

Then Jarrod added even more sensations, sliding one cream-slicked finger into her rear passage. Her tight muscles protested, burning with the intrusion. She tensed up from the unfamiliar pressure, but he didn't stop plunging and twisting. Then he added another finger, stretching her further. But as he mimicked the thrusts of his cock with his fingers, she began to get caught up in the sensations. Her body was filled in every way possible.

Sensations began to overwhelm her. The sharp pain in her nipples alternated with the spears of pleasure shooting between her legs. She had to remember to breathe when Micah pulled back from her throat, before he thrust again. His moans gave her pleasure. Jarrod's fingers and cock continued to slide in and out of her body, making her nearly spiral out of control. His groans of pleasure sang to her. Her body rocked wildly between them.

Jarrold had been gripping one of her hips with his free hand. When his breathing became nothing more than ragged gasps, he slid his hand around her hip and teased the flesh near her throbbing woman's spot. She groaned.

"Do you want to come, slave?"

She couldn't speak with her mouth full, but she nodded as best as she could. The tingles of need were building within her and she didn't know how long she could hold it off. But she knew she couldn't come until she had permission from her Master. He continued to tease the slick lips around her nub and Hanna whimpered in frustration.

Jarrold pushed harder into her rear channel with his fingers, stretching her flesh, rubbing against the side of the narrow passage. He slammed his cock harder into her. Micah tightened his grip on the back of her head and plunged even deeper down her throat. He yanked hard on her nipple rings at the same time that Jarrold brushed his calloused fingers across her nub of pleasure.

"Come, slave!"

She shattered beneath her Masters, her body jerking, her cries smothered by Micah's cock. But she had no relief from the sensations. Jarrold continued to stroke her relentlessly, bringing her higher again, as he still plunged into her from behind. She groaned. Her body couldn't take much more. Her sight had been taken from her. Micah's cock stretched her mouth and throat. Chains tugged on her nipples to the point of pain. Jarrold's cock thrust forcefully into her core. His fingers roughly probed her rear passage. How much more could a slave take at one time?

Jarrold took her sensitive nub between his thumb and finger and pinched. "Come again."

She screamed as the orgasm slammed into her, harder than anything she'd felt before. Her body shook uncontrollably and this time, Jarrold gentled his strokes between her legs.

Just as her spasms began to lessen, Micah roared. He pulled his cock out of her mouth and dropped it on her shoulder. Warmth ran down her back. She was confused for a moment, until she realized he spilled his seed for the Station Master to see. Proof that she had satisfied him.

She'd been so caught up in the amazing sex between the three of them, caught up in the sensations and the emotions, that she'd forgotten all about the man watching them. Forgot for a moment that she was a slave with an uncertain future.

Micah let go of the chain and pulled her head against his hard stomach, stroking her hair. He murmured softly in a language she didn't understand.

The strokes of Jarrold's cock became stronger, faster, until he too pulled out of her body and emptied himself across the small of her back. Her heart was still racing, her breathing faster than it should be. Micah's fingers slipped through her hair and she felt him move back and stand. Then Jarrold slipped his fingers out of her last hole and he moved away from her as well. She was suddenly empty. On her hands and knees. Alone. Seed of both Masters slid down her back.

She heard footsteps walking away, quiet talking across the room. She was concentrating so hard on those sounds, she was startled when strong hands grasped her shoulders. Jarrold's scent wrapped around her like a blanket.

"Rise, slave," he said softly. He helped her to her feet and then washed her back with a soft cloth. "You are an excellent slave," he said, his voice louder now. "The king will be pleased with his new purchase."

Chapter Five

Hanna was afraid to move, to speak. Afraid he was really taking her to the king. Afraid she'd never see him again.

She'd been blinded before she'd been brought to this building. The darkness was so disconcerting. She wanted to see Jarrod. See the expression on his face. Maybe then she'd be able to tell if he'd lied to her. But she couldn't do anything but stand there, her shoulders straight, her hands trembling behind her back. The chain attached to her nipple rings swayed against her legs.

She could sense Jarrod was close to her. She could detect his scent, hear his soft breathing. But since he'd finished wiping off her back, he hadn't touched her. Hadn't said a word. She could hear Micah's low voice somewhere behind her, but she couldn't make out the words. Was he talking to Prax? Was the Station Master going to let her go? What would happen to her if he did? What would happen if he didn't?

The questions were driving her crazy, especially since she could only stand perfectly still, not pace restlessly as she desperately wanted to do. Only keep her mouth closed and not demand to know what was going to happen to her. Although, in the end, it didn't matter what the answers were. What would happen, would happen. She would go where she was taken. She didn't have any say in the matter.

"We are ready." Micah was back. Relief was evident in his voice. "The Station Master has released the slave. We must leave the blindness patches on until we arrive at the palace. The king demands he be the one to remove them, so the first thing she sees is her Master."

"Let's get out of here," Jarrod replied, his voice strained. The chains rattled and Hanna felt the tug on her nipples. "Follow me, slave."

He pulled on the chain and she tried to keep up with the rapid pace he set while she couldn't see where she was going. Her heart pounded against her ribs. He was taking her to the king. After having her hope raised and her heart filled, they'd both been dashed to pieces.

She heard the door close behind them. The men's heavy boots echoed through the hallway. Terrified of stumbling and falling, Hanna tried to concentrate on the simple act of walking, not on where they were walking *to*.

They were silent as they left the building. Hanna felt the sunshine on her face again, but this time it didn't make her smile. She could hear people talking around them. Smell unfamiliar scents. The walkway was hot against her bare feet.

Hanna stumbled briefly on something in her path but kept walking. Jarrod didn't even pause. She choked back a sob. If only Jarrod hadn't been the one sent to test her, to

collect her for the king. Earlier, when her body was being prepared for the king, she had resigned herself to living her life without him. Why did he have to tease her with another taste of his touch? Now she could never be happy with another Master.

They continued a little farther, then turned a corner and stopped. Had they reached the palace already? She drew a long, shaky breath. Then large hands, Jarrod's hands, gently peeled away the blindness patches.

"Such a good slave. So strong," he whispered, his voice ragged.

Hanna squinted for a moment, blinking as she adjusted her eyes. Jarrod stood before her. The man she'd always think of as her Master. She feasted her eyes on his handsome form, she'd been so afraid she'd never see him again. But what good did it do to be tempted by his presence? He should have brought her to the king with the patches still on her eyes.

She tried for a regal sneer, but her trembling lip most likely gave her away. "So you two work for King Barrus."

"Ssh. Keep your voice down," Micah whispered.

"No, Princess," Jarrod replied. "We don't."

She stepped away, not knowing what to think. "No? So were you lying to me when you said you and Micah owned a cargo ship? Or when you said you were training me for the king?"

"We intercepted the king's men and took their place," Micah said.

"What? I don't understand."

Jarrold surprised her by gathering her into his arms. She rested her head on his chest and he gently stroked her hair. "I couldn't leave you to the king."

Hanna pulled back to stare at him. "You're not taking me to the king? I'm not going to be his personal sex slave?"

"Not if we can get you to that ship we own without getting caught," he told her wryly.

Hanna let herself sink into Jarrod's embrace once more. Did she dare hope that meant he wanted to take her with him? Why else would he have rescued her? She would be so happy with him as her Master.

She was just realizing what he and Micah had risked to rescue her. She gazed up into his warm gaze. "I have no words worthy of what you have done. Thank you."

"We shouldn't linger." Micah's deep voice broke through her pleasure. Jarrod released her abruptly as if he'd suddenly realized he'd shown some emotion. Hanna didn't let that dampen her joy. They'd saved her and she was with Jarrod. That was all that mattered.

She turned to Micah. How could she have forgotten him and his role in her escape? She threw her arms around his waist. "Thank you too." He wrapped his arms around her for a moment, then stepped away.

"Come, Princess," Micah said. He picked up two weapons, long, black and lethal, that were propped up in the shadows of the alley and handed one to Jarrod. "We have to get out of here before the palace starts wondering where you are."

"I'll lead you by the chains and no one will suspect a thing," Jarrod said. He gathered them in his hands again. Her woman's spot tingled again, just from the sight of him holding her chains. "We do have a ship and it's ready to take you back to Vanya."

"Vanya?" They were taking her back to Vanya? Back to her boring life? Jarrod wasn't going to be her Master? She refused to move, even though he'd turned to leave the alley. His yanking on the chain hurt her nipples. But they didn't hurt as much as her heart. "Why can't I go with you?"

Jarrod stared at her and for a moment she almost thought she saw his expression soften. But then his face froze in that mask she recognized all too well. "You're a princess. You'd be of no use to me at the trading post."

He might as well have slapped her in the face. Hanna refused to let tears spring to her eyes. How foolish she'd been. She'd thought if he'd risked his life to rescue her he must have cared about her. Why else would he have done it?

So all he cared about was her use to him? Hadn't she been of use to him on her knees with his cock in her mouth? But he obviously didn't even want her as his slave. Then she remembered what Fawn told her. Just because a Master seemed fond of a slave didn't mean he wanted to keep her.

Fine. She didn't need him. She'd find another Master. A better one. But one thing was for certain, she wasn't going back to being the princess' slave on Vanya.

Hanna gasped in horror. How could she have forgotten the real princess and the other women? Shame poured over her like hot oil. "We have to rescue the others! I can't go back to Vanya without them."

Jarrod glared at the princess, both annoyed at her and admiring her loyalty to her subjects. He knew he wouldn't have done any differently if it had been Micah or other men he'd worked with who were imprisoned. But that didn't mean he liked it. They didn't have much time.

"I don't know where they are and we don't have the time to search for them."

"I know where to find them," Micah said dryly.

"How—? Never mind." Micah had sources everywhere. Jarrod slung his weapon over his shoulder and handed Micah the princess's chain. "Tell me where and then you get the princess to the ship. I'll bring them out."

"No," the princess said stubbornly. "I'm going with you."

Didn't he just risk his ass to get her out of there? "You are not going with me. You'll be no help at all."

Her face grew red and she yanked her chain right out of Micah's strong fingers. Jarrod wanted to take her over his knee and spank her, but they didn't have time for that right now.

Micah actually handed her his weapon. "You take this, Princess. The holding cells are in the last building straight ahead. It shouldn't be too heavily guarded, but I can't say for sure."

"Are you crazy? Don't give her your weapon. She doesn't even know how to use it." She'd probably shoot him in the back.

"The trigger is right here, Princess," Micah said, pointing it out. "The safety is on the top. Here. When it is solid red, the safety is on. When it is blinking green, you can fire the weapon."

Jarrold rolled his eyes. "We could be on the ship by now." She looked ridiculous, so tiny and fragile, holding that huge TX-95. He grabbed the weapon out of her hands. "You can't handle this. It's too heavy for you."

She rose up on her toes, obviously trying to get into his face. Her hands were balled into tight fists. "Didn't you just say I was strong? Didn't I prove myself to you?"

He tore his gaze away from her and faced Micah. "I don't want her to go with me." He steeled himself against the hurt he saw on her face. If she got herself killed now, after all she'd been through, he didn't know if he could live.

The princess lifted her regal chin. Damn, were those tears in her eyes? "The women won't trust you. I have to go with you."

"Give her the weapon, Jarrod," Micah said wearily. "We don't have time to argue."

The princess reached for the weapon. Then stopped. "Will it look strange for a slave to be carrying a weapon?"

"No," Micah said. "Slaves carry all kinds of things for their Masters." He glanced out into the courtyard. "Listen. I'll get the *Galaxy* airborne. You just need to get the women out of the building. I'll teleport all of you to the ship on your signal." Micah took off, striding purposefully away from them.

Jarrold paused and caught the princess's gaze, the weapon between them. "Don't ever pick up a weapon unless you're prepared to use it. If you hesitate and are overpowered, it could be used against you."

The princess nodded solemnly and held out her hand. He handed her the weapon and grabbed the nipple chain. How in the name of the Gods was he going to liberate all those women and keep the princess safe and not get caught himself, when all he could think about was how her soft, pale skin felt beneath his hands and the sounds of her passionate cries as she came beneath him? He didn't need the distraction. He tugged a little harder than he needed to. "Let's go."

He walked as fast as he could without looking like he was hurrying. If the princess had to trot along to keep up, that wasn't his concern. He couldn't resist glancing back over his shoulder, though, to admire the way her breasts bounced. Her silver bondage

wear sparkled in the sunlight. Her hair floated around her shoulders, turning her into an angel.

Much too good for someone like him.

No one in the courtyard bothered them. In fact, most of the people gave them a wide berth. When they reached the long, low building Micah had pointed out, there were two guards standing in the open doorway, armed with TX-64s. Smaller than his weapon, but just as deadly. So much for light security.

Jarrold looked over his shoulder at the princess. "Stay behind me," he said under his breath. "And don't say a word."

The guards looked so young and innocent or was he just feeling old and jaded lately? Their expressions were suspicious, but Jarrold could tell the moment they spied the royal insignia on the front of his uniform.

They jumped to attention, their weapons at their sides. The taller one, with skin the color of copper, stepped forward. "We don't get royal representatives here often. What can I do for you?"

Jarrold had no qualms about lying. "The king has ordered me to bring the other Vanyan women to the palace. Bring them out to me now."

The other guard, even younger, with light hair and freckled spots on his face stepped forward. "But they haven't been prepared yet."

Jarrold stared him down. "I don't question the king's orders. Do you?"

"No...no...but..."

"But we don't have any orders," the other guard finished.

Jarrold's finger twitched on the trigger of his weapon. If they wouldn't give up the women without orders from the king, he would have to use force. Damn, he hated using force.

Then the princess stepped out from behind him. She remained a step in back of him, as was proper for a slave. Her hands, holding the weapon, were behind her back. In that position, her breasts, decorated with the thick, shiny nipple rings, were prominent, making the young guards' eyes practically bug out of their heads. Jarrold also noted his smart little slave stood with her legs slightly parted, so that her pretty pink flesh was easily visible from her bared pussy.

"Please, Sirs. My Master has need of these women. Surely you will not refuse him."

The guards stared at her for a moment longer before they looked at each other and nodded.

"Go get them," the older one said.

"Could you please remind them that, as slaves, they should not speak unless commanded?"

The princess continued to impress him, once again proving there was an intelligent mind inside that delectable body. If the women did not remain silent, they might give them away if they recognized him as a guard from the slave ship.

The three of them stood in the afternoon sunshine, not moving, not speaking. The guard was taking in his fill of the princess, his eyes wide, his mouth hanging slightly open. Perhaps she would play in his fantasies tonight.

Jarrold wouldn't blame him. She'd be playing in his fantasies for the rest of his life.

He had to return the princess to her home. She had people to rule. A daddy who was king. She was mistaking sex and submission for something more.

Besides, what princess would want an escapee from a tranium mine as her prince? She deserved better than that.

The sun beat down on them, making him sweat. Jarrod was beginning to get a little worried that they'd been found out. Why was it taking so long? Finally the guard appeared, leading the six women chained together between heavy metal collars. They were naked, their long hair mussed, their faces drawn. Their eyes grew wide, however, when they saw the princess. Or was it when they saw him? A few of them gasped, but the guard yelled out at them to be quiet.

The guard handed Jarrod a manual key for the collars. Jarrod took it and then reached for the lead chain. "The king thanks you for your service," he told the guards. Then, trying to appear casual, he turned, leading the princess and her women away from the building. He hoped they could make it out of the compound before he had to signal Micah to transport them. For that matter, he hoped Micah had the *Galaxy* off the ground. As long as the ship was in the air and they no longer had a roof over their heads, the transporter would have them off this planet in a second. But it wouldn't take much to make everything go wrong.

Jarrold heard voices growing louder behind them. Was someone questioning the release of the women? He didn't look back, just began to move a little faster. They cleared the gate and he brought them all behind a small storage building just outside the compound.

"Hold hands," he ordered. "We must all be connected to be transported together." The women circled around him, whimpering. The princess took his hand with her small, soft one and murmured softly to the other women, gathering them around.

He pushed the signal button on the leather cuff on his wrist. And hoped Micah was there to get the signal. Jarrod turned to look at the princess, who was gazing up at him with her wide green eyes.

"I didn't know you could lie so convincingly."

She frowned. "I haven't lied."

"Sure you did. When you mentioned *your Master* needed the women."

She just shook her head and looked away from him, putting her arm around one of the other women.

Before Jarrod had time to think about her reaction, the jolt of energy from the transporter knocked into him. "Hang on!" he called out. He grasped tighter to the

princess's hand and rode out the brief wave of pain that always accompanied a transport.

When they materialized on the *Galaxy*, the Vanyan women began shrieking and crying, gathering around the princess. Their chains rattled loudly as they moved as much as their bonds would allow them. One of the women, also small and blonde, placed her hands on the princess's cheeks, tears streaming down her face.

"Hanna, what have they done to you?"

"I am fine, Your Highness," the princess said, bowing before the other woman, confusing Jarrod. "Don't worry about me. Are you all right?"

Jarrold stared at the two women. What was going on? Micah stepped into the transport room and threw a puzzled glance his way. Jarrod frowned.

"We are fine, thanks to you," the other woman said.

"Thanks to these men." The woman he thought was the princess, the woman whose body he enjoyed, whose flesh had turned red under his hand, turned to him. There was no smile on her face, no sense of the joy she'd shown him not so long ago. "Princess Serena of Vanya, these are your heroes, Jarrod and Micah. They risked their lives to rescue us from Noria."

Princess Serena smiled at Micah and then Jarrod. "We will forever be in your debt."

He looked at...Hanna, was it? "You're not the princess?"

She lifted her chin again and stared at him. "No."

"I don't understand."

She shrugged, but he could see the hurt in her eyes. "It doesn't matter."

"Yes, it matters." He unhooked the heavy chain from her nipple rings and tossed it away, the clatter loud as it slid across the floor. If she wasn't royalty, maybe they had a future after all.

"No. It makes no difference at all." Her voice was so cold, she sounded like someone else.

"Sorry to interrupt the reunion," Micah said, "but Jarrod, I need your help until we reach light speed. I think we should take a little detour in case someone tries to intercept us."

"Do you think they'll come after us?" she asked. Some of the women cried out in fear.

"It's a possibility." Jarrod handed Hanna the key. "Here, unlock the collars and then go into the lounge." He pointed to the short hallway. "That way. Strap into the chairs and hang on. It could be a rough ride."

She nodded and turned away from him without a second glance.

If she'd never been his, why did he feel like he'd lost her?

* * * * *

If the Norians sent anyone after them, Jarrod and Micah never caught sight of them. Jarrod took them light-years out of their way before charting a roundabout course for Vanya. Their journey would take an extra day, but would be well worth it.

After they decided they could relax, Micah leaned back in his pilot's chair. "So our little slave isn't a princess after all." Jarrod didn't like the leering smile on his face. "Interesting."

"She's not our slave," he growled. "She's *my* slave."

Micah shrugged. And there was that smile again. "She might have something to say about that. She didn't sound too happy with you."

No, she didn't. "She'll get over it." Wouldn't she?

Micah stared at him. "That's it? You're just going to sit there and hope she gets over the fact that you told her you didn't want her around?"

Damn, had he actually said that? "You gave her a weapon! I was trying to protect her."

"Maybe you should tell her that."

"Tell her?" That thought sent a nauseous panic through his system. He'd never been good with words. His actions should speak for themselves. Didn't he rescue her from the slave station? Didn't he get the other women out because she asked him to? That should tell her how he felt about her.

Hell, *he* didn't even know how he felt about her.

"But if she's not that special to you," Micah went on, "maybe I'll go talk to her."

Jarrod lunged out of his chair and loomed over his best friend and partner. Micah just laughed.

"Yeah, she's got a body worth enjoying," Micah went on, his voice smooth and annoying. "So tight and hot. And with all that slave jewelry, she'll please a Master even more."

Jarrod pictured his hands strangling the jerk until he stopped smiling. "I can fly this ship too, you know. I could kill you now."

Micah sighed. "Talk to her. Tell her how you feel. Tell her she's not useless."

Damn, had he said that too?

"I know there's something special between the two of you," Micah went on. "I felt it, even when we were both enjoying her."

"You know, you're never touching her again."

"I know." Micah propped his feet up on the seat Jarrod had just vacated. "Go talk to her."

* * * * *

After the initial burst of speed when the ship left Norian airspace, the ride smoothed out. Hanna grew restless and began checking out the doors leading from the

lounge area. The large room seemed to be the hub of the ship, furnished with chairs and retractable tables.

Hanna found a closet with a shelf stacked with black shirts. She slipped one over her head. They were huge and the hem fell past her knees. She passed one out to each of the women and they were happy to finally cover their nakedness. Hanna had become so used to it, that even though the fabric was soft, it felt restricting.

The soft blue on the walls was soothing and the women seemed to relax after their ordeal, most of them curling up and falling asleep. Hanna couldn't relax that much. She explored a little further, trying to keep her mind off Jarrod and the hurt and the anger and the need she felt.

Princess Serena joined her in a long hallway. "Hanna. You should rest. You look exhausted."

Hanna shook her head. "I'm fine. I was looking for a kitchen. The women will be hungry."

Serena placed her hand on Hanna's shoulder. "It's not for you to serve us. Sit."

"But I've always served you, Princess. Haven't I?"

"I suppose you have. But I never thought of it that way. You were my best friend."

"You were mine."

"I'm so sorry for all you went through in my stead." The princess ran a finger over the cuff circling Hanna's wrist. "We'll have these removed when we get back to Vanya."

Hanna shook her head. "They can't be removed. Ever." And strangely, she was glad for that. Or would be if she had the right Master to utilize them. A Master she would be proud to serve. Her heart broke a little more.

"Tell me about the dark one," the princess said. "He looks dangerous."

Dangerous to her heart. "Jarrod. I suppose he could be dangerous. But I think he is brave and strong. He risked everything to rescue us."

"There's something in your voice when you speak of him. He is special to you?"

Hanna paused. He *had* been special to her. He'd been her Master, the one who showed her what her body craved, who taught her how to please and receive pleasure in return. But she obviously wasn't special to him. And she refused to ache over someone who didn't want her. "No."

"Hmm." Serena led Hanna back into the lounge, brought her over to a short sofa and they both sat down. "What about the blond giant? He is very handsome."

"Micah. Yes, he is handsome. And nice. He and Jarrod are friends. Partners. He is just as strong and brave as Jarrod."

"But he doesn't hold a special place in your heart." It wasn't a question.

"Of course, he does," Hanna was quick to say. "Micah always will for what he risked to rescue us."

Serena placed a hand over Hanna's. "But not like Jarrod?"

She couldn't lie to her princess. "No. Not like Jarrod."

Serena grinned. "Good. Because I think I'd like to get to know this Micah a little better."

"Really?" Had the princess also been yearning for the touch of a man, as Hanna had been just a short time ago? Hanna wondered if she should warn the princess about Micah's dominating side, but decided Serena should learn that for herself. Who knows, maybe Serena would learn to appreciate it as Hanna had.

Hanna closed her eyes, suddenly tired. She remembered the way Jarrod's touch had made her body come alive. How beautiful and strong he made her feel. Would she feel that with any other man? Would she find another Master who could challenge her? Who could take her to that place where pain and pleasure combined to create ecstasy? Who she could please and receive pleasure in return?

Even with her eyes closed, Hanna could sense the moment Jarrod entered the lounge. The very air in the room changed, became thicker and full of energy. She found it hard to breathe. She opened her eyes.

How did he get more handsome, harder, larger every time she saw him? His gaze was focused on hers, his expression as blank as always. No, not always. Not when she was his slave. Hanna fought the sudden urge to drop to her knees before him.

He stepped into the room. Serena stood and held out her hand. "Jarrod. I'd like to formally thank you for rescuing me and my women. My father will reward you richly."

"We don't want a reward, Princess. I'm glad you are all safe." He nodded at Serena, then shifted his glance to Hanna. She hadn't moved. She couldn't without betraying her need. His dark eyes burned into her. If not for his words earlier, she'd think he wanted her. Cared for her. Finally, he released her gaze and looked over at the women sleeping in the chairs nearby. "There are bedrooms down that hall. You are welcome to any of them."

"Thank you," Serena said. She gathered the women and herded them down the hall and out of sight.

Hanna still hadn't moved. Hadn't taken her eyes off the man she would always think of as her Master.

"May I speak with you? Hanna?"

Stupid tears sprang to her eyes when he spoke her name for the first time. After all they'd done together over the past few days, why would that simple thing tug at her heart? She shrugged and looked away before he could see the glittering on her lashes.

He cleared his throat and sat down beside her. He was close enough that she could feel the heat of his body but he didn't touch her. She resisted the urge to lean into him.

"Tell me how you came to be mistaken for the princess."

Hanna swung her gaze back around to Jarrod. "It was my duty."

"So you were some sort of royal decoy?"

Why did he sound so angry? "Exactly."

"You could have said something before things went too far." He traced his finger along the cuff on her wrist. "You didn't have to go through this."

"Of course I did. Besides, would I have been any better off being one of the many sold at auction?"

He dropped his hand into his lap. "Probably not. Still your bravery amazes me. Most would not have gone through what you did for someone else."

His praise warmed her. Softened her heart, even when she wanted to keep it hardened. They sat side by side in silence for a moment, then Jarrod breathed a deep sigh.

"Where I'm going is considered a new frontier. There aren't a lot of settlers there yet. It's liable to be lonely. But we're hoping to change that. We're hoping to make Ceylon 7 a good place to stop off for supplies. Perhaps a good place to settle down as the established planets get too crowded."

Why did her dominant Master look so unsure, so nervous? It sounded as if he had his new life all planned out.

"It will be a hard life," he went on. "Nothing like what you're used to."

"What does it matter what I'm used to?"

"I just wanted you to have all the facts."

"Why?"

"I want you to come with us."

Oh, how she'd wanted him to say that earlier. But now she didn't trust his words. "Us? You mean you and Micah?"

"Well...yes."

"Why? So I can be your personal sex slave? So you and Micah can continue to enjoy my body together? Maybe you'll want to share me with all the other lonely men there too?"

"No!" Jarrod shot to his feet. "Why would you think that?"

Hanna grabbed her collar with both hands. The cuffs danced on her wrists. "Because I'm a sex slave. My body is for men to enjoy. I have no other use, right? Why else would you want me?"

"I knew I'd say this wrong," Jarrod muttered. He grabbed her by the shoulders and pulled her to her feet. "Because I want you with me, slave. Yes, I hope to enjoy your body often. But I will not be sharing it with anyone else. Not even Micah."

Her heart ached as the pieces began to knit back together. Did she dare to hope? "You want me to come with you? To the trading post?" Did he finally realize she could help him, work beside him? That she could be useful for other things beside sex? "What about all the things you said before?"

"I was trying to protect you. I wanted to get you off Noria fast. We didn't have time to argue."

She could understand that, but it all came down to one thing. "But you didn't want me to come with you when I asked."

He stroked her hair so gently she almost thought she was imagining it. "I didn't think I deserved you. Hell, I still don't."

She pulled away and stepped back so she could look him in the eye. "How can you say that? You risked your life to save me." She reached for his hand and led him back over to the sofa. "I haven't even thanked you properly yet." She pushed him down on to the seat cushion and climbed up onto his lap. When she straddled his hips, she felt his cock grow beneath her. She cupped his face with her hands. "Thank you," she whispered and pressed her lips to his.

She wasn't an expert at kissing. This was her first kiss. She hoped her inexperience wouldn't be obvious as she slid her closed lips across his. The friction tickled and she pressed her lips harder against his.

Jarrold moaned and wrapped his arms around her, gathering her closer. Then he ran his hot tongue across her lips. Hanna had never felt anything like it. Well, not since he'd done that between her legs. Her flesh there throbbed with the memory. He probed her lips with his tongue and she parted them hesitantly. He thrust his tongue inside her mouth, filling her with his dark, dangerous taste.

Acting on instinct, she began to suck on his tongue, pulling it farther into her mouth, drinking him in. He moaned and slid his hand under her shirt, running his fingers lightly across her bare back. She shifted on his lap to give him better access, rubbing herself against his hard cock. He ran his hands in front of her and cupped her breasts, stroking them softly, squeezing them lightly. After a few moments of gentle touches, she pressed them harder into his hands, craving more pressure. He brushed his thumbs over the tips of her nipples, barely touching them. The tickles he brought about were mere teases. She whimpered in frustration.

Then he grabbed onto her nipple rings and twisted roughly.

She sucked harder on his tongue to muffle her cries. Finally. The pleasure that the pain brought shot right between her legs. The throbbing there grew even stronger.

He twisted again, even harder, and she released his tongue and groaned.

"Do you like that, slave?"

She decided to risk some words instead of just nodding. "Yes, Master. More please."

But he pushed her off his lap. She probably should have kept her mouth closed. He stood up and set her on her feet in front of him. Her shirt was bunched up above her breasts and still hung down behind her.

"Hands behind your back." He waited until she complied, then hooked a finger through one of the nipple rings and tugged. "This way."

He led her down the hallway and turned the corner where the hall dead-ended. He opened the door there and pulled her into the dark room. She heard the door slam shut. Then Jarrod whirled her around and he roughly crushed his lips to hers so hard she couldn't breathe. She threw her arms around him and pulled him tighter against her. Finally he released her abruptly. She stumbled backward and gasped for breath.

"I tried to be gentle," he said, his voice strained, "but you bring out the beast in me."

"I'm glad," Hanna said because the words wouldn't stay silent. She pulled the shirt over her head and let it drop to the floor. "I need you to be the Master."

He turned on the overheads. Hanna saw they were in a small gray room. A bunk was recessed into one of the walls. A chair and desk sat in another corner. When she turned her attention back to Jarrod, she saw he was staring at her. His eyes were shadowed, his hands curled into fists at his side.

She wanted to go to him, to run her hands over his body, to taste him once more. But she thought better of it. She drew her arms behind her back, grasping her wrist with her other hand. Shoulders back, legs slightly apart, she waited for her Master's command.

"Good slave," he said. "No more speaking unless I command it." He circled her, stroking her collar and cuffs and nipple rings, his rough fingers touching her skin in the process, teasing her again. "I should thank the Norians for decorating my slave." He laid his hand over the collar at her throat. "This jewelry will come in very handy."

She swallowed. The pressure on her throat reminded Hanna of the first time she saw Jarrod. He'd frightened her then. Now he aroused her. She wanted to ask him what he had in mind, but she knew better than to speak now.

He continued to circle her, reaching out now and then to run a finger sensuously down her back or sharply smack her bottom or wickedly flick her nipple. Hanna struggled to stand still, to not jerk or wince from his surprise touches. Suddenly he grabbed a handful of hair and pulled her head back, but then his lips were gentle as he nibbled slowly down her throat and back up again. She sighed. He murmured her name and then nipped her ear.

"Oh your knees, slave," he growled, releasing her hair and nudging her down. "Hands behind your back. Spread your knees wider."

Hanna did everything as he demanded, making sure the grin that threatened to pop out didn't make it to her lips. She loved to watch him like this. So strong and decisive. Her body tingled in anticipation.

"Don't move."

He turned around and left the room. Hanna watched the door close behind him. Where was he going? How long would he be gone? The longer she waited for him, watching that closed door, the more Hanna knew that she couldn't bear to see him walk out of her life forever. She understood why he'd wanted to protect her today. She didn't

understand why he didn't think he deserved her as his slave. She was going to have to prove to him that he did.

That meant obeying him. Giving him pleasure. Agreeing to go with him to Ceylon 7. Of course, she would go with him. There had never been any doubt. Why hadn't she told him that right away?

And now she couldn't speak unless commanded. So she'd have to show him. And she would, if he ever got back here.

Finally, he strode back into the room. He was carrying a handful of stretchy cords with hooks attached to each ends, all different lengths.

"This is a cargo ship," Jarrod said with a wicked grin. "We have tons of these on board." He circled her, studied her, as if he was getting ideas. Her heart pounded wildly. She forced herself to remain still. "We're going to have some fun."

He hooked the ends of one cord through each of her nipple rings. Hanna glanced down. It hung like a colorful chain between her nipples, but was much lighter than the heavy chain she wore earlier. This wasn't bad.

Jarrod caught her chin in his hand. "Look straight ahead." He tugged on the cord, playing with it, watching her breasts bounce up and down with a flick of his wrist. Then he lifted the cord, pulling up on the nipple rings. "Open your mouth." She did as he commanded and he shoved the cord through her teeth like a bit. "Don't let go." She bit down on the cord. There was a definite tug on her nipples now, but still not bad.

He walked behind her then and wished she could turn her head to follow him with her gaze. She felt him hook the end of one of the cords to the ring in the back of her collar. He grabbed the cuffs around her wrists and pulled on the cord to hook the other end into the cuff rings. The cord was so short, it yanked her head back.

She cried out as she felt as if her nipples were being torn off. She bit down so hard on the cord, she was afraid she'd bite right through it. Or maybe she hoped she would. Yet as the pain ripped through her, a blast of pure pleasure shot right between her legs.

The collar was tight against her throat now too. She could barely swallow. If she lifted her arms up a little, it relieved the pressure on her throat but it made her shoulders ache and did nothing for her nipples. Hanna couldn't do anything but look up at the ceiling, bear the pain and wonder what he was going to do next.

"On your feet, slave."

She moaned. He couldn't mean it. She didn't dare move for fear of strangling herself or hurting her nipples further. How could she possibly stand up from this position? A sharp sting landed across her bottom. He'd spanked her with one of the cords. And then he did it again.

"I said on your feet."

Tears streamed from her eyes as she struggled to stand. Every movement of her head sent new pain shooting from her nipples and new pressure bearing down on her throat. Her long hair was caught up in the cord and that tugged painfully as well.

Somehow she made it to her feet, her head yanked back, arms pulled up, nipples stretched tight.

"Good slave." His warm words of praise washed over her. The pleasure that swept through her was indescribable. She knew she'd do anything for her Master.

He caressed her breasts then, smoothing the sensitive undersides with his fingers. The pain in her nipples had settled down to a dull throb. When he brushed his fingers over their tips, she groaned around the wet cord in her mouth. Moisture trickled down her inner thigh. How could so much hurt feel so good?

She was frustrated that she couldn't see him. She might as well have the blindness patches on. Hanna closed her eyes against the bright overheads. He swept his hands all over her body, brushing them over her bottom, her stomach, sending tingles dancing along her skin. He knelt down to rub his hands over her legs, to play briefly with the rings at her ankles. He tugged on the cuffs, spreading her legs farther apart.

Then she felt his warm breath on her bare sex and she trembled.

"Beautiful slave," he murmured. His fingers spread her slick flesh and he blew on her hot, wet core. She trembled again and struggled to keep her balance. He swept his tongue along her sensitive flesh and she shuddered, much closer to the edge than she imagined. "No, you can't come yet," he said. He slapped her bottom. "I want you to concentrate on holding your position. You're getting sloppy." He ran his tongue along her slit again and she moaned. She wanted to squirm with her arousal. Shove her sex harder against his mouth. Gain release any way she could instead of enduring the prickles of need crawling under her skin.

She wanted to come.

He ignored her need, a reminder that it was what he wanted that should matter to her. "You taste as sweet as I remember," he said. His tongue dove deep into her core. She yearned to sink down on him, have him fill her with his cock. He teased the sensitive flesh between his teeth and then sucked it deep into his mouth. Her knees grew weak and she swayed slightly. He slapped her bottom again. "Do I have to punish you, slave?"

She moaned. He knew she couldn't answer. Knew she was bound in an awkward, uncomfortable position. What the hell did he want her to do?

The knowledge rained over her. He wanted her to do what he told her to do. Concentrate on holding her position. Simple as that. It's all he asked of her. She had to give up her needs, let him enjoy her body as he wanted. All she had to do was stand still.

Hanna relaxed and focused on holding her position. He continued to play with the flesh between her legs, alternating long slow licks with short rough sucks and hard quick thrusts of his tongue. Her arousal continued to build, but it was almost as if it was in the background, her center of attention was maintaining the position her Master had put her in.

Then he added his fingers, dragging them through her wet, swollen sex. He plunged two or three deep into her passage, twisting them roughly, all the while sucking at her juices and licking but not touching her nub. She throbbed everywhere, the flesh between her legs, the stretched nipples, the pulse beneath her tight collar.

He slid his cream-covered fingers from her core back to her rear hole. He curled two fingers into the opening and forced them past the tight muscles ringing the hole. At the same time, he scraped his teeth over her sensitive nub. "Come now, slave," he called out. "Come for me." He nipped her nub again and she came with a mighty burst of energy.

Her body jerked with the powerful orgasm and she screamed with a mix of pleasure and pain. Her spasms caused her body to pull at her bonds, tearing again at her ravaged nipples, wrenching her shoulders, nearly choking her as she pulled against the unyielding collar. Tears spilled down her cheeks. But the pleasure from the orgasm was so strong, the rest of it didn't matter. In fact, she realized that it was because of all the rest of it, that she received such unbelievable pleasure.

"That's a good slave," he said. He placed a soft kiss on her stomach before he pulled his fingers from her body. She could hear the rasp of a zipper and the rustle of clothing over her ragged breathing. When he pressed his body against hers, she could tell he was naked. Finally. Now if she could only see him.

Perhaps he could read her thoughts. Perhaps it was simply time. He unhooked the cords from her collar, cuffs and rings, then took the cord soaked with her saliva gently out of her mouth. She rolled her head and shoulders slowly, working out the tension that had built there. She kept her hands behind her back. Her nipples ached, the pain radiating through her breasts into her chest.

Her Master leaned over and gently took one of her breasts into his hand, cupping it as if it was something precious. He laved his hot, wet tongue over the tip, soothing her soreness. Sending arousal anew surging through her system. He spent several minutes ministering to one nipple and then the other. His tongue was better than any Marvel Cream.

With his attention directed to her breasts, Hanna could relax and focus her attention for a short while on him. Enjoy the sight of his smooth, dark skin. His sculpted muscles. His erotic tattoo. Her fingers tingled with the urge to touch him, but she knew that had to come at his bidding.

Her Master smiled at her when he released her nipple and straightened. His long hard cock bobbed before her. "You have a most enjoyable body." He brushed her hair out of her face and wiped lingering tears from her face. "Have you recovered enough to continue?"

She nodded.

He smiled and it took her breath away. "Good. I plan to enjoy you much more. Come over to the bunk and stretch out on the mattress."

She did as he commanded. This bunk was larger than the one on the slave ship, big enough for two people. She hoped he'd be joining her there. But instead of climbing up on the bunk with her, he ran his hands down her leg, from hip to foot. Delightful shivers ran along her skin. Would his mere touch always bring her such pleasure?

"We haven't had a chance to use these lovely ankle cuffs," he said, hooking his finger through the ring. "Time to take care of that." He pulled up on the ankle cuff and she raised her leg. "Your hand, please."

She didn't dare ask why, but she was sure the question shone on her face. She reached out to him, giving him her hand. He pulled her leg up until her ankle met her wrist. In one quick twist, he hooked the wrist cuff to the ankle cuff. Her arm and leg were forced straight out, attached by the cuffs. He grabbed her other hand and slid her body around on the mattress until she was lying across the bunk. Without being asked, Hanna raised her leg and he quickly hooked her other wrist and ankle together.

Now Hanna felt completely exposed. With her legs up in the air and spread apart, her Master had full access to her sex. He stepped back, taking in the view.

"Very nice," he said. "But I think we can make it better." He grabbed a couple long cords. He wrapped one around her linked arm and leg, binding them tightly together from ankle and wrist to elbow and knee. Then he did it to the other side.

As he stood there staring at her, perhaps admiring her, most likely thinking up new things to do to her, Hanna relaxed into the mattress. Who thought there could be such comfort in being tightly tied? How could she feel such freedom in the bondage?

Now she had nothing to worry about. No standing or kneeling position to maintain. No decisions to make, for there was nothing she had control over. That was up to her Master. Her sex gushed at the thought.

What if she had never left Vanya? What if she had lived her whole life never knowing the joy of being her Master's slave?

Chapter Six

Jarrold stepped up to the edge of the mattress between Hanna's outstretched legs. She made an incredible sight, with her body spread out for his enjoyment. His cock throbbed, he was so anxious to be buried in her wet heat. But he didn't want to rush this. He had her for the length of a space voyage, but he still didn't know if she wanted to stay with him after that.

Maybe she didn't.

He didn't blame her if she was frightened. Of a life far away. Of a life with him. She really knew nothing about him except that he carried a weapon and liked to tie her up. He'd have to prove to her that he was what she wanted. What she needed.

He tugged her down to him so that his cock rested on her bare pussy. He swept his hands across her stomach, along her ribs, over the swells of her breasts. She was the softest thing he'd ever touched. Softness had never been a part of his life and if she refused to go with him, that would be one of the things he would deeply miss.

He gently stroked her slender throat and ran his finger along the smooth collar. She looked so beautiful with the silver band around her neck. He hooked his finger under the front of the collar and pulled her off the mattress until he could capture her lips with his. She opened for him and then moaned into his mouth. He plunged his tongue deep within her moist recesses. Her taste was unlike anything he'd ever sampled before. If she didn't want to stay with him, he would forever hunger for it.

After gently lowering her back to the mattress, Jarrod ran his hands along his slave's firm thighs, gently pressing them even farther apart. With her arms and legs spread apart, her body was open for his enjoyment. The cargo cords snaked around her pale flesh, holding her limbs together with a criss-cross pattern. She stared up at him, her big eyes wide. Her lips were slightly parted, she was still panting from her arousal. She was waiting for him. Silently. Willingly.

He wanted to watch her come once more. Hear her sweet cries of release. Her body dancing beneath him was the most beautiful thing he'd ever seen. He spread her puffy pussy lips and teased her clit with the tip of one finger. Her soft ragged gasp was a delight to his ears. Her clit quickly peeked out from its tiny hood, swelling and growing darker with each gentle stroke. Her moisture ran over his fingers. The scent of her arousal filled the air, tempting the beast even more. The dark need roiled within him.

He ran his hands down her thighs and over the curve of her ass. For some reason, the stark contrast of their skin colors thrilled him. He rubbed his palm gently over the cheek of her ass once, twice then slapped it so hard his hand print showed up immediately, bright red on her pale skin. She sucked in her breath and the soft cry that followed sounded almost like an afterthought.

He slapped her again, a little farther up on her thigh. Another hand print appeared. Her moan this time sounded almost like a sigh. He continued the smacks, over and over, watching her ass and thighs turn red. The room filled with the melody of sharp slaps and soft cries.

Jarrold was breathing heavily by the time he stopped and took a step back. His hand was stinging. His little slave's eyes were closed, quick short moans still escaping her lips. Her pussy glistened, the pink lips puffy, the clit dark and swollen.

"I don't want you to come yet. Do you understand?"

Her eyes were still closed, her breathing still no more than panting moans. When she didn't respond to his words, he lightly slapped her pussy. "Open your eyes."

She lifted her lids, but her eyes were glazed and unfocused.

"Look at me."

Finally she focused on his face. A small smile lifted her lips.

"Did you hear me? You can't come again until I want you to."

She nodded and closed her eyes again. He had to get his slave's attention. Quickly.

Her pussy looked hot. All the blood had rushed to the tender tissues. He wished he had some ice cubes to cool her down, but they hadn't taken the time to start things like icemakers before they took off from Noria.

His cock was getting insistent, aching with the need for release. But not yet. He wanted to play with this body some more.

Jarrold feasted his eyes on his pretty slave. Her hair lay in a sexy tangle around her head. Her shoulders and hips were probably getting sore, but he loved the way she looked, spread-eagle and completely available to him. Her pussy was pink and moist. Her breasts were full and lovely, with their sunberry nipples.

Sunberries! Jarrold crossed the room to the food chest he kept powered up and stocked. If he remembered right, the freezer section held...he yanked open the door...frozen sunberries. He pulled out the vacuum bag full of his favorite fruit. After breaking the seal on the bag, he pulled out one large, perfectly round, frozen sunberry.

His slave's breathing had calmed and she was no longer moaning. Her eyes were still closed, so she didn't see him approach. Didn't see him reach out and place the frozen fruit directly on her swollen clit. She yelped and her eyes popped open.

Jarrold chuckled. Yeah. He'd gotten her attention.

He twisted his wrist, rubbing her sensitive clit repeatedly with the icy sunberry. Her moans were back, louder than ever. Then he dragged the fruit through her puffy lips, chilling her flesh and gathering her juices as it started to thaw. Once he'd done that, he couldn't resist lifting the sunberry from her pussy and popping it into his mouth.

What an incredible combination of sunberry and slave. He licked his lips and turned back to the bag of frozen berries, grabbing another one. When he turned back around, he saw her head was raised off the mattress and she was warily watching him.

"Head down," he growled. He knew her head was the only part of her body she could move. The only part of her body over which she had any control. She must have forgotten that she didn't have *any* control. "Don't move unless I tell you to."

She glared at him for a second, then plopped her head back down on the bunk. He just might have to punish her for that look.

But all thoughts of punishment left his head when he ran the new frozen berry through the folds of her pussy. The throaty gasps that escaped her lips nearly made him spill his seed right then. His slave was enjoying this every bit as much as he was.

He slid the fruit down through her slit and rested it on the entrance to her sex. He caught her gaze and never broke it as he twisted the frozen berry against the moist opening. She gasped and shivered. He moved the berry around with his fingers, pressing the icy fruit against her heated flesh. Then he slid the sunberry along her pussy again before lifting it from her body. Continuing to hold her gaze, he reached over and held it to her lips.

"Open," he demanded.

She parted her lips and he pushed the berry, coated with her own cream, into her mouth. He watched her chew and swallow the berry and then lick her lips.

"Did that cool you down, slave?" he asked, his voice rougher than he imagined. Gods, he couldn't wait to bury himself in that body.

She shook her head, a mischievous glint in her eye.

"No? You're still hot?"

She nodded, a twitch of a smile breaking through. He loved her spirit. It would be a challenge to control it, but never break it.

"All right then, let's see what we can do about that." Jarrod grabbed the frozen sunberries and plopped the bag down on her flat naked stomach. He smiled at her rough gasp. He pulled out another berry from deep in the bag. Without any warning, he shoved it deep into her sex, as far as he could reach. She cried out loud with that one. He took another berry and another and continued to push the frozen balls into her heated core. Her whimpers sang through the air.

When he couldn't fit any more icy berries into her cunt, Jarrod looked at her over the freezer bag still sitting on her stomach. "Cooler now?"

She nodded quickly and shivered.

"Good." He picked up the bag, sealed it and put it back in the freezer for another time. Then he turned back to her and sank to his knees beside the bunk. He inhaled her sweet perfume and then buried his face in her luscious pussy. Using lips and tongue and teeth, he licked and sucked and nibbled. That incredible taste combination drove him wild.

His slave's breathless cries told him how much she was enjoying his assault on her sensitive flesh. He licked her clit repeatedly, felt it grow harder under his tongue, then he pulled away just before she got too close to the edge.

She groaned, her frustration clear. So he did it again.

"No," he said, after he'd pulled away the second time. "You can't come yet."

With his tongue, he caught a trail of sunberry juice trickling from her cunt. The berries must have been thawing. He feasted then, on slave and berries, using his tongue and fingers to enjoy every last cream-soaked berry. He sucked greedily on juice and flesh. He poked and prodded to make sure he didn't miss any berries and to make sure his slave was still paying attention. When her cries started rising in pitch and tempo, he drew back once more.

"Not yet." He smiled as he listened to her groan again. "You do taste delicious though. I have to sample some more." He ran his tongue up and down through her sticky, swollen flesh, teasing her clit some more with flicks and licks and a couple quick sucks.

When he felt her trembling, he knew how hard she was struggling to hold back her climax. He was so proud of her. So pleased that she would honor his commands, no matter how difficult. "Good slave," he said. "You can come now."

Her body began jerking from the orgasm before he even touched her again. Her arms and legs, still bound together, rocked back and forth. Her head rolled back and forth on the mattress. Her screams bounced off the walls.

He got to his feet and leaned over her, stroking her face, murmuring soothing sounds he didn't remember ever coming out of his mouth before. In this position, his cock rubbed against her pussy and he was finding it increasingly difficult to ignore its demands. His cock needed attention. Now.

Jarrold grabbed her leg by the bindings and spun her body around until the top of her head faced him. He grasped her long, silky hair with both hands and pulled until her head dropped over the end of the bunk. She stared up at him with wide eyes. Her tongue snaked out and licked her lips.

"Open your mouth," he ground out through clenched teeth. He thrust roughly through her slick lips, nearly coming with his first plunge into her wet warmth. He moaned and plunged into her again. He soon found the perfect angle to thrust again and again down her throat. He closed his eyes and let the overwhelming sensations surge through his body. She held her mouth wide for him, her throat open. If she made the occasional gagging sound, it was practically drowned out by his groans of pleasure.

He was on the brink of release when he finally opened his eyes. As he plunged into his slave, her head knocked into the side of the bunk. Her body shook on the mattress. Her bound arms and legs rocked uncontrollably back and forth.

What was he doing to her? Bondage was one thing, it was clear they both enjoyed that. But to use her in this way...was it the right thing to do? He pulled out of her mouth and looked down at her. She smiled up at him.

That smile was all the answer he needed. He shouldn't try to second-guess himself. He was a Master, she was a slave. They used each other for pleasure, each in their own way. That's the way it should be.

He helped raise her back onto the mattress and then released the cords and cuffs. She moaned softly as she stretched her limbs. But the smile never left her face.

Then he climbed onto the bunk with her, covering her soft body with his. He'd never before stopped to notice the sensual slide of skin against skin. Hadn't taken the time to bury his face in long golden hair and inhale the soft scent. He nibbled tenderly on her earlobe and she wriggled beneath him.

He slipped easily into her, burying his throbbing cock in her slick heat. He moaned with pleasure and sank deeper into her.

She sighed and lifted her arms, then frowned and brought them back down to her side. "Master, may I speak?"

He brushed his lips against hers and slid his cock along the ridges of her inner passage. "Yes, slave."

"May I hold you?"

He gazed down at her beautiful face and forgot to breathe. He didn't deserve her. Cupping her face in his hands, he kissed her deeply. "Yes, slave."

When she wrapped her arms around him, Jarrod sank into her warm embrace. Her breasts pillowed his chest, her fingers danced over his back. He began to move in and out of her, gently, almost leisurely. Slower than he'd ever enjoyed a woman's body before.

She buried her face in his neck, her warm breath soft against his skin.

He was mid-stroke when she pressed her lips to his ear and whispered, "I will come with you and be your slave."

He stilled, her heat surrounding him. He rose up on his hands and looked down at her, his heart full. "You're certain?"

She nodded. "I didn't have a chance to tell you before you silenced me."

"It was worth the wait." He picked up his speed, thrusting deep into her welcoming heat. She wrapped her legs around his hips, changing the angle of his thrusts. Her breathing quickened, little cries escaped the back of her throat. He slid one hand between their bodies and teased her clit.

"Oh no, Master, I don't think I can come again."

"You will come again, slave." Pressure built within him and he knew he couldn't last too much longer. He pinched her clit between his thumb and finger. She screamed and bucked beneath him. Her inner muscles pulsed around him and that was enough to trigger his orgasm. A groan he barely recognized as his burst from his throat as his seed burst from his cock. When his cock finally stopped spasming, he collapsed on top of her soft body.

She kissed his neck. "Thank you, Master."

He slipped out of her, slid off her and propped up on his elbow beside her. "Thank you, slave." She smiled up at him. She looked well used. And happy about it. He started to get up and she placed her hand on his chest to stop him.

"Where are you going?"

"To get the Marvel Cream to heal your skin." He loved the way the cord marks snaked up her arms and legs, but it was too early in this new relationship to ask her to wear his mark.

She didn't drop her hand. "I don't need the Marvel Cream."

He caught the cuff on her wrist and lifted her hand to his lips. He softly kissed each fingertip because he didn't know how to express the strong emotions that were overwhelming him at this moment. Emotions he couldn't even name. "But aren't you sore?"

"A little bit, but I don't mind." She stretched her body, arms and legs and shoulders and neck. The graceful way she moved made his cock twitch again. "When I move and I feel that delicious little ache, it reminds me of what we just did together." She held out her arm, with the red cord marks clear on her skin. "When I see these marks, I remember. I remember you're my Master and I remember the pleasure we shared."

Jarrold knew she meant it now, in the afterglow of intense sensations, but would she feel this way later, when she was with her own people? "Aren't you concerned what the other women might think when they see the marks?"

Her eyes flashed. "I'm not ashamed." She pulled his head down and kissed him softly, a mere brush of her lips against his. "You're my Master, I'm your slave."

"I am very pleased you want to keep my marks."

She reached out and began to trace the edges of his tattoo. He stiffened. He hated the memories from these marks. But he didn't stop her. Her touch was almost healing as he concentrated on the pleasures of the moment and not on the horrors of the mines.

"I love your tattoo," she said, smoothing her finger over the dark lines that covered his nipple. "Does the design have some significance?"

He could have lied to her. He could have said no. He could have made up a story and she would have believed him. But instead he found himself spilling a story no one knew, except Micah.

"I was sold to work in the mines on Trania when I was sixteen." She gasped and began to sit up, but Jarrod shushed her and stroked her soft hair. She looked up at him from the pillow, her eyes wary. "My parents couldn't afford to feed all of us. I was the oldest and the money they were paid for me would feed the rest of them for years." He didn't really blame his parents. "It happens all the time."

"Not on Vanya." She sat up then, despite his hand on her shoulder. "How could a parent sell their child?"

"It was only supposed to be for six years." Acid burned in his stomach as he remembered. "In six years my labor would have paid off the debt and I would be free."

"What happened?"

He didn't answer her right away. "You asked about the tattoo." He pulled away from her and sat back, resting his back on the wall. "This is the mark of the mine." He

rubbed his hand over the tattoo, he could remember the pain as if it was yesterday. In fact, he swore it was aching now. "I was strapped down to a table, terrified. I didn't know what they were going to do. Then, as they brutally pounded ink into my skin for hours, they explained."

Hanna scooted across the mattress to sit beside him and took his hand as he talked.

"They started with the thick outer circle that surrounded the entire left side of my chest. To cover my heart because I now belonged to the mine with my heart and soul. In the center they put the sunburst, to stand for the sun I would never see again." He squeezed her hand, only stopping when she winced from the pain. "Sorry." He kissed her knuckles.

"The tranium mines are underground. So are the living quarters. Once you've descended into the mine, you never get out." He shuddered as he remembered the damp stench in the air. Breathing in the thick dust. The cries of the hungry, exhausted workers. The agony of the tattooing process. "Then they added these six thick lines to represent my six years of labor."

Hanna rubbed her hand over the tattoo. "But there is so much else here."

He nodded. "I'd just started my sixth year when Gaylock called me into the office. Gaylock is the mine supervisor. A crude, cruel man who lived off the backs of the men and women who worked there." Jarrod cleared his throat. "He and I had never gotten along because I spoke out against the way he treated the laborers."

She nodded. "You were very brave."

He shrugged. "Anyway, as soon as I walked in the door of the office, he shot me with a dart gun. Drugged me. When I woke up I was strapped to the tattoo table. It was the first jab of the thick needles that brought me back. They added two more lines in between each of the six already there." He took Hanna's hand in his and rubbed her fingers over the slightly thinner lines. Her touch relieved some of the ache the memories brought back. "Gaylock said I didn't work hard enough and I hadn't earned back the money he gave my parents."

"All those lines," Hanna whispered. "All those extra years?"

He nodded, his body rocking with the movement. "I didn't have the best attitude before, but I admit it got a lot worse after that. See all these designs in between the year-lines?" He traced her fingers over the thin diagonal lines drawn between some of the thicker ones. Others were linked by zigzagged lines or other designs. "Gaylock knew how much I hated to be tattooed, so every time I stood up to him, every time I intervened when he was hurting another worker, I got dragged to the table for some more ink."

"Oh Jarrod." Hanna leaned over to kiss his ink-covered nipple. "You didn't let that stop you though, did you? You still fought for what was right. You have a lot of ink between these lines."

"That's how I met Micah. You know how big he is. There were six guards beating him for some small infraction, with Gaylock cheering them on. I couldn't stand back like everyone else and watch him get beat to death."

"Did that happen a lot?" she asked breathlessly. "Did workers get beat to death?"

"Yeah."

She took a deep breath. "What happened?"

"I just jumped into the middle of it. I knew Gaylock would be so angry at me that he'd forget about Micah."

"It must have worked."

"See this section here?" He traced her finger down the section of intricate crosses that ran from the bottom of the sunburst through his nipple until it reached under the curve of his chest muscle. He'd suffered through a full day of inking for that one.

Hanna ran her lips along the route her finger had traced, laving his nipple tenderly with her tongue. "I love it. It's beautiful."

"What?"

"Don't you understand? It's a reminder of how good you are. How strong you are. What you've survived. What you've overcome."

"You know, anyone who recognizes this tattoo will know I was a slave in the mines." Would that affect her decision to remain with him?

She rubbed his fingers over her collar. "Just as I am forever marked as a Norian sex slave."

"We make a good pair, don't we?"

"I'd say we do." She smiled and kissed him. "Now tell me. How did you get away?"

"The only route to the outside was through Gaylock's office, which was usually heavily guarded. Micah and I had become friends. We worked together side by side and talked about what we'd do if we ever got out. We decided we'd try to break out together and to keep looking for an opportunity. After a couple years, there was a huge fire in one of the pits at the far end of the mine. All the guards went to fight the fire, leaving Gaylock alone. Micah and I seized the chance. We stormed his office, catching him off-guard. He couldn't get to his weapon in time and we overpowered him easily. Of course, the dozens of other mine workers who followed us in were happy to finally get their licks in."

"So you escaped."

"Yeah." No need to go into all the details, the months of hiding out, half-starved, until they made friends with an old cargo ship captain who took them on, worked them hard and taught them both how to fly the *Galaxy*. Then sold them the ship when he retired. "We're finally reaching our dream of that trading post on Ceylon 7."

"I want to hear all about it." She yawned and then apologized.

He could talk with Hanna for hours about his plans. Shocked, Jarrod realized he *had* been talking for what seemed like hours. In bed. With a woman. Something he'd never done before.

"We'll talk about it later. You're tired." He stretched out on the bunk and curled her into his embrace. There was nothing like the sweetness of her head on his shoulder, her soft legs wrapped around his. She was soon sleeping in his arms. That's something else that had never happened before.

How quickly she'd changed his life.

* * * * *

The next morning Hanna chatted with the princess and the other women in the lounge, sharing stories of their ordeal. When Jarrod strode into the room carrying his weapon, her heart beat faster. She smiled brightly as she admired his commanding presence. But she noticed the women froze and went silent.

Hanna nodded to Jarrod. "Good morning."

He smiled at her warmly and propped the weapon up against the wall. "Good morning." He glanced around the room. "Micah and I have been discussing the situation and we're not convinced there won't be any more trouble from Noria." He paused when a few gasps ran through the room. "We thought it would be a good idea to teach all of you some basic self-defense."

"Excellent idea," Princess Serena said. Hanna agreed. The other women didn't look so sure. Serena rose and approached Jarrod. "Where do we start?"

Hanna watched as Jarrod demonstrated how to use hands and knees and elbows as weapons. Serena took to the lessons with great relish, even surprising Jarrod once, knocking his feet out from under him. His rich laughter as he was sprawled on the floor washed over Hanna like warm rain.

It was fascinating to watch her gruff Master coax some of the more timid women into participating. Hanna smiled as she saw this patient side of him. And she was glad to see her friends warming up to her Master.

Hanna was the last to go through the lesson. Even knowing Jarrod, his sheer size and strength was intimidating when she tried to chop him in the windpipe or kick out his knees. She couldn't imagine trying these moves on someone attacking her. Her small size was a definite disadvantage.

She'd rather use her wits. Or a TX-95.

Jarrod picked up the weapon and showed it to the women. "There are only two of these weapons on the ship, but if attackers get onboard, I don't want any of you afraid to use them." The women gasped when he handed the weapon to Hanna. "Hanna, show them how to use the TX-95."

Hanna glowed with pride that Jarrod allowed her to demonstrate what she'd learned about the weapon. She showed them the safety button and how it changed

from red to green when it was ready to fire. "Don't pick up the weapon unless you intend to use it," she told them, repeating the words Jarrod had told her before.

"The weapon shoots a concentrated energy beam," Jarrod said. "It is safe to use on the ship as long as you hit your target. The energy ball will engulf the attacker and vaporize him." He took the weapon from Hanna, his warm touch lingering for a moment on her hand. "But you better make sure you hit your target. If you miss and the energy beam hits the outer wall of the ship, the wall will disintegrate and we'll all be killed."

"I don't think I could do it," Hanna said, horrified at the thought of accidentally blowing a hole in the side of the spaceship.

"You could do it." He handed the weapon to the princess. She took it hesitantly, looked at it suspiciously. "I want each of you to hold the weapon so you know what it feels like, how heavy it is. Princess, would you make sure the safety is on, then pass it on to someone else?"

She nodded and, after examining the weapon, handed it off to the next woman in line.

Hanna stood beside Jarrod as each woman took their turn, taking comfort in his quiet strength.

When they were done checking out the weapon, Princess Serena handed it back to Jarrod. "Thank you for showing us how to defend ourselves. I hope the Gods will give us an uneventful journey home." She gestured to the other women. "Minna and Dove have spent a lot of time in the kitchen at the palace. We're going to see what we can do to stretch our meager provisions. Thank you again for taking us with you and sharing what you have with us."

"Of course, Princess. You are very welcome."

Hanna watched them walk out, leaving her with Jarrod. "I'm going to miss them."

"Are you?"

"Yes. I've known them since I was small."

Jarrod took her hand, led her over to the short sofa and sat down beside her. "Were you born in the palace?"

"No. I was brought to the king when I was four years old." She could barely remember her parents, her older brothers and sisters. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "I think I owe you an apology."

He wove their fingers together and lay their hands atop his thigh. "For what?"

"When I said that Vanyan parents would never sell their children as your parents did." She sighed. "I think that must be what my parents did. I was about the same age, size, coloring as the princess. I wouldn't be surprised if my mother and father were well compensated for providing the kingdom with a royal decoy."

He lifted their joined hands to his lips and kissed her fingers lightly. "Were you treated well?"

"Oh yes. And I was happy. Really. I grew up with the princess and all her other ladies. They are like my sisters."

"I had a sister," Jarrod said softly.

"You did?"

"One sister. Four brothers. Layna was the baby in the family. We teased her like all big brothers, but we would do anything for her."

Hanna smiled. "You spoiled her?"

He nodded slowly, then was quiet for a moment. "She's all grown up now. She could have a child of her own."

Hanna reached up and stroked his cheek. He looked so sad suddenly. "You've never seen your family since you escaped from the mines?"

He shook his head.

"I haven't either." She should probably miss them, but it was hard to miss what you didn't remember. "The people in the palace are more like family to me now."

"And I'm taking you away from them. Are you sure you don't want to stay on Vanya?"

"Are you trying to talk me out of coming with you?" She asked the question lightly but held her breath as she waited for the answer.

He gathered her to him and crushed his lips to hers. "I'm trying to be a gentleman and give you an out. But I'm afraid I might keep you tied in my room if you wanted to change your mind now."

A thrill ran through her at the thought that he wanted her that much. "No, I'm not going to change my mind. Please believe me, Jarrod. Sooner or later, we all need to leave home." She'd been languishing there. Her life with Jarrod would be fun and exciting. She couldn't wait to be on the way to her new life.

* * * * *

Jarrod and Micah must have done a good job eluding any Norians who might have come after them because they were never attacked or even approached by another ship. Hanna spent most of the rest of the journey to Vanya tied up in Jarrod's room, even though she hadn't changed her mind. Not always tied up. Sometimes she had to hold her position while she was spanked. Sometimes she had to bend over and grab onto her ankles while he enjoyed her from behind. Sometimes she came out of the room with his marks on her body.

She did get to spend more time with the princess and the other women. They all talked about being home soon. But Vanya didn't mean home to Hanna any longer.

"Home is where Jarrod is," she explained to Serena when they were alone in the lounge. It was the last day of the voyage. Tomorrow they would reach Vanya. "I want

to make a life with him. I'm going to ask your father to release me so I may go with him."

"I worry for you," Serena said. "Yes, he rescued us and for that I will be forever grateful. But he also frightens me."

"I know he's big and has a dominating personality but he's a good man. Don't be afraid of him."

"I'm not afraid of him physically," the princess said. She placed her hand on Hanna's. "I'm afraid he's brainwashed you. Turned you into some kind of slave for him."

Hanna almost laughed out loud. "I've always been a slave, Your Highness." Princess Serena blushed and drew her hand away. "Yes, you and your family treated me well but I had no choice in what I could do with my life. Jarrod has given me a choice."

"It's more than that," Serena said softly. She looked around, as if to make sure they were alone, before she went on. "I hear your cries behind closed doors. I see the marks on your skin. Are you telling me I don't have a reason to worry about you?"

"Oh Princess, I wish I could explain to you the joy I feel when he restrains me. Yes, I am his slave when we have sex, but it is a role I play willingly. There is a freedom there, a sexual freedom I didn't know was possible." She squeezed the princess's hand. "It answers a need in me I didn't know I had."

"But he orders you about. I have seen it myself. Perhaps he is looking for his own personal slave in all parts of his life."

"No." Did he order her about? Of course not. "When we are not having sex, I'm not his slave. He calls me Hanna. I call him Jarrod. We'll be running a trading post together. I will be a partner with him where we are going."

Serena caught her gaze, held it. "Do you love him?"

Tingles danced in Hanna's stomach. She couldn't entertain such thoughts. "No, Princess. Sex slaves cannot love their Masters. I am devoted to him, yes. But love is not possible."

"Oh Hanna, is that what you want? To never know love?"

Hanna tried to ignore the twinge of regret the princess's words caused. If she *were* to love a man, it would be Jarrod who protected the weak and rescued the helpless and gave her pleasure she'd never imagined. But even if they could never love each other, they would be good for each other. She was certain of that.

"We will have a good life together," Hanna said. "If I had never left Vanya, when would I have ever known love? Now I am cared for by a man who thinks I am brave and strong and beautiful. There are worse things, surely."

"Perhaps you are right. I know I have never seen you so happy." Serena hugged her. "I will miss you."

"I'll miss you too," Hanna said. Her life had changed so quickly. She could hardly remember her life from before. Could hardly imagine what it would be like from now on. "I hear you've been bothering Micah."

"I'm not bothering him," Serena said quickly, but Hanna didn't miss the blush that rose to the princess's cheeks. "I'm just curious, that's all. I think this ship is fascinating. Have you looked at that control panel? I would love to learn how to fly a ship like this."

Hanna couldn't imagine the princess at the controls of a complicated spaceship. "Really? It doesn't have anything to do with the sexy pilot, does it?"

Her pale face grew redder. "Of course not." She cleared her throat as Jarrod strode into the room. "Hello."

Jarrold bowed to the princess, then held out his hand to Hanna. "I need you. Come."

Serena's words came back to haunt Hanna. Was he going to want to be the Master in all facets of their life? It was time to assert herself and show him he couldn't order her around all the time. "I'm sorry, Jarrod, but I'm talking with the princess right now."

His eyes flashed darkly, but he only bowed to her. "Forgive me, Hanna." He turned to leave, then stopped and faced them again. "I almost forgot, Princess. Micah said something about showing you the control panel?"

Serena leapt to her feet and was gone in a flash. Jarrod smiled widely at Hanna. "Perhaps you can help me now?"

Hanna narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms in front of her. "I don't want you to think you can just order me about all the time."

He looked as if her words had shocked him. "I don't know what you're talking about. If you came to me and said you needed me, I would jump to your aid."

"You're right. Of course. I'm sorry." She stood up and smiled sheepishly. "What is it that you need?"

He hooked a finger in her collar and tugged. "I have a craving for sunberries and cream."

Chapter Seven

King Lars was overjoyed to have his daughter returned to him. Jarrod stood back and watched as everyone in the palace welcomed the princess home. The portly king ordered a celebration dinner for that night and invited Jarrod and Micah as guests of honor. He barely said anything about Hanna or the other women, but Jarrod had never been a father, so he couldn't say what he would have done under the circumstances.

As soon as all the hugs and the dinner plans were made, the king asked Jarrod and Micah to join him in his private office. His office didn't have the rich tapestries hanging on the wall or ornate sculptures that decorated the rest of the palace. A large desk and shelves filled with books were the focal points of the room.

The king wasn't dressed in resplendent robes, but a rumpled gray one. His face sported a week's worth of growth. He'd obviously suffered while his daughter had been missing. The king took a seat behind his massive desk. Jarrod and Micah stood, as there were no other chairs in the room. "Tell me how this happened," the king said, "and what I can do so it doesn't happen again."

Jarrod and Micah exchanged glances. Micah was the one who was good at explaining things, so Jarrod gratefully gave him the floor.

"Forgive my blunt words, Your Majesty, but you have left Vanya completely vulnerable. There are many powerful, highly technologically advanced worlds in the universe. You have not opened communication lines with any other planet. You don't have any means to defend yourself. You didn't even have guards watching your women."

"It was extremely easy to drop in and snatch them all." Jarrod couldn't resist adding his own frustrated remarks.

The monarch didn't appear to take any offense. He was obviously puzzled. "Vanya has never been attacked before. We have never even been approached by the government of any other world. We saw no need to invest in planetary defense."

"You had no quarrel with Noria?" Micah asked. "No reason for them to abduct your daughter?"

The weary king shook his head. "No. When my daughter went missing, we only searched on Vanya. It never even occurred to us that she'd been taken in a spaceship to a distant planet."

Jarrod had assumed there must have been some bad blood between Vanya and Noria for the Norian king to pay a huge sum of money to kidnap the princess. "So we have no way of knowing if they will try again."

The king jumped from his seat. "I will hire you both as bodyguards for my daughter. I will pay you as well for your expertise so I can keep her safe."

Anger caused Jarrod to curl his hands into fists. Reason stopped him from using them. "Excuse me, Your Majesty, but you are the king of the whole of Vanya, are you not? Don't you want to keep all your people safe? You have many subjects you are responsible for."

King Lars nodded slowly and pierced him with his gaze. "Like Hanna."

"Hanna went through hell in your daughter's stead."

The king's ruddy face reddened even further. "It was her duty as Serena's decoy."

"And did she have any say in the matter?"

"It was her duty!"

The stubborn king had no idea what Hanna had gone through. He obviously didn't care, as long as it hadn't been his daughter. Jarrod turned away before he said something he'd regret.

Finally Micah spoke up again. "Surely you have someone on Vanya who can guard your daughter."

"Not until they know what to watch for. How to protect her. Please help us."

"Fine," Jarrod heard Micah say. "I'll stay until I can train a bodyguard for Princess Serena."

Jarrod whirled around. "What?"

Micah shrugged, as if resigned. "You go on ahead to the settlement, start getting things ready. I'll be right behind you."

"Vanya doesn't have fast enough transport to get you to Ceylon 7."

"Then you can come back and get me."

Jarrod didn't like this at all, but it looked as if the princess had gotten her hooks into Micah. And Jarrod couldn't say a word about it because the most important thing on his mind right now was Hanna.

"Your Majesty, I request that you release Hanna from her duty so she may start a new life with me."

King Lars lifted his bushy eyebrows. "You are willing to pledge your life to hers?"

Pledge? "Sure."

"Very well. We will have the pledging ceremony at the celebration tonight." The king shook his hand. "I will arrange everything."

Jarrod uneasily watched the king leave the room. He turned to Micah. "What did I just agree to?"

"I believe you've just agreed to spend the rest of your life with Hanna."

Jarrod nodded slowly. Why did the thought give him nothing but joy? Most Masters didn't commit to a slave for life, but he'd heard of it happening. And right now he couldn't imagine his life without Hanna in it.

"Could it be that you've fallen in love with your little slave?" Micah asked. His tone was light, but there was a seriousness to the question.

"Love?" A spike of regret stabbed him at the word. "Love isn't possible between Master and slave, you should know that. The domination and submission create powerful emotions, but they shouldn't be confused with love."

Micah frowned. "Did some old Master tell you that? Love happens between two people. Not Master and slave. Not any other title you want to give them. Two people." He clapped Jarrod on the back. "Look into your heart, my friend, before you take your pledge." He walked out, leaving Jarrod alone in the king's private office.

Jarrod sank into the king's chair. What did he feel for his feisty little slave? Was it an affection that went beyond the physical attraction, beyond the fondness of a Dom for his sub? Was it love or merely devotion?

How could he know for sure?

* * * * *

Hanna could hardly believe that Jarrod had agreed to the pledging ceremony. They hadn't known each other very long. They hadn't discussed making that kind of commitment to each other. And she couldn't forget what she was told at the slave station, that Masters rarely kept a slave forever. The fact that he was willing to pledge his life to her was overwhelming. And made her so happy. Serena and the other women were so excited they scurried around to find a dress suitable for such an important occasion.

Serena offered her a pale blue dress of the finest lace. "But it has a plunging neckline and no sleeves. Perhaps I should try to find something to cover your...um...your jewelry."

Hanna shook her head. The dress was so beautiful it took her breath away. "I am not ashamed of the collar and cuffs, Princess. I am pledging myself to Jarrod as I am. I have no need to cover them."

"Very well then. It is my gift to you."

Hanna tearfully hugged Serena. "I'll miss you, Princess."

"I will miss you as well. But since your sexy mate has a fast ship, I'm sure we'll be seeing each other again."

The time for the ceremony was upon her before she knew it. The king would preside over the ceremony, then all were invited to the feast afterward. Hundreds of people gathered to witness the pledging.

When she saw Jarrod standing in front of the king, waiting for her, she caught her breath. She'd forgotten it was customary for the man to be bare-chested for the pledging ceremony. His tattoo stood out for all to see. Of course, she thought it was the sexiest thing she'd ever seen. He was the sexiest man she'd ever seen.

A strong emotion rose inside her, so fast and intense that she caught her breath. She was filled with joy and longing. If she didn't know better, she'd swear it was love for her Master. Hanna blinked back her tears and hurried to his side.

The ceremony took only moments.

King Lars held Hanna's right hand and Jarrod's left. "In front of these witnesses, do you pledge your lives to each other?"

"We do," they replied in unison.

"Then you are mated for all eternity," the king announced. He placed Hanna's hand into Jarrod's. "Live well."

Jarrold looked at Hanna, his hand clutching hers. "That's it?" he whispered.

"Do you need more?" she asked with a grin. The king had already left them standing in front of the dining hall. The people were following him inside for the celebration.

"No. I was afraid it was some lengthy ritual and I wouldn't get to enjoy your body for hours and hours."

"Well, the ceremony may be brief, but Vanyans love dinner parties. The more elaborate, the better. I'm afraid it may be hours before we can leave."

He clutched both her hands. "We could leave now. They won't miss us."

"You are one of the guests of honor. You will be missed."

He groaned. "Then let's get this over with."

Hanna led him into the huge dining hall. A long table set for five sat at one end of the hall. Large round tables, enough to sit the hundreds of Vanyans, filled the rest of the hall. Long cloths the color of the Vanyan sky covered the tables and pooled on the floor.

King Lars sat at the center of the table. He placed Micah on his left, with Serena on the other side. Jarrod sat on the king's right, with Hanna on the other end. Servants quickly filled their glasses with cold portberry wine. While they filled all the other glasses, the king made his speech, first congratulating Jarrod and Hanna on their pledging. Then he explained what happened to the princess and how Jarrod and Micah had saved her. He talked about the other planets of which he'd been informed and what Vanya must do to protect themselves and bring their planet up to date with the rest of the universe.

King Lars liked to talk.

The whole time he talked, Jarrod was touching Hanna somewhere. He started just casually stroking her arm, while he looked at the king. Just that innocent contact sent her sex tingling. Then, as the king droned on, Jarrod swept her hair off her shoulder, drew a finger down her throat and played with her collar. She shivered with his touch.

He leaned over to kiss her ear and whispered, "Spread your legs."

"What?" Hanna struggled to keep the astonishment off her face. Yes, the tablecloth reached the floor, but what if the king saw? And she really hadn't expected Jarrod to make demands on her now, in public.

"No one can see." Jarrod slid his hand gently beneath the hair at the back of her neck and tugged back on the collar. Not hard, just enough that she felt it when she swallowed. Just enough to remind her she was his slave. "Spread your legs for me."

She did as he commanded. She'd never really considered otherwise. If anyone noticed her shifting in her seat, they'd think she was as bored with the king's talk as they were.

Jarrold slid his hand beneath the tablecloth. He stroked her thigh from knee to crotch, pushing up the skirt of her dress until her sex was exposed. She shivered. "Spread them farther."

She grabbed her glass and took a long drink of wine. Then spread her legs even farther apart.

Jarrold looked behind her chair and frowned.

"What?"

"I think your skirt is caught." He slid out of his chair and knelt behind her. Hanna didn't dare look over her shoulder to see what he was doing. She struggled to keep her smile as she faced the crowded tables of Vanyans.

It was impossible not to react when he grabbed her ankles, pulled them behind the chair legs and hooked the ankle cuffs together. She gasped and caught herself as she felt her body shifting forward.

"Sit back. Shoulders straight." How could his whispered commands sound like shouts?

She leaned back as best she could and was able to find a comfortable balance. Jarrod returned to his seat beside her and casually cupped his full wineglass in his hand as if nothing had happened. He smiled and nodded at whatever the king was saying. Hanna had long since given up trying to pay attention.

He set the wineglass down after he'd taken a sip and placed his hand over her bare sex. It was so cold, she almost gasped out loud. His chuckle was so low, she knew she was the only one who heard it. He slipped a finger inside her, then two. He pumped them roughly in and out of her. She couldn't help but wriggle in response.

He buried his face in her hair. "You like that, don't you? My pretty little slave is hot and wet."

She couldn't do more than moan softly and rub her face against his. Anyone looking at them would think they were new mates who couldn't wait to be alone. No one would know what they were doing right in front of them.

He slid his fingers in and out of her, slipped them through her sensitive folds, brushed them against her nub. She gasped as the sensations built within her, scrambling along her skin and concentrating exactly in the spot where her Master was playing. She clutched the edge of the table and stared into his eyes, panting. He continued to play with her, sliding his fingers along her flesh, thrusting deep within her and bringing her almost to the peak.

Then he casually slid his fingers from her body and left her hanging.

She whimpered. "You're so cruel."

He chuckled as he wiped his fingers on his napkin. "Would you really want to come? Here? Now?"

She shook her head as she thought about how her body would thrash uncontrollably if she came. That would certainly get everyone's attention. Again, her Master knew what was best for her.

Finally the food was served and the king stopped talking. Never one for talking if there was food around, he dug right in. All his subjects followed suit.

Hanna wasn't very hungry. Arousal sang through her body. With her legs restrained, and her Master beside her, she found it very hard not to slip into slave mindset. Her skin tingled and her sex throbbed. Her nipples prickled with need and they'd not even been touched. She wondered what else he had in mind. Everyone was eating. No one was looking at them. She could only imagine what else he'd come up with.

He leaned over to kiss her cheek. His breath was hot on her face. "Hands behind your back."

Her sex clenched and she felt more moisture trickle from her core. "How will I eat?"

"I'll feed you."

She moaned and slid her hands at the small of her back. Jarrod hooked her cuffs together behind her.

"Good slave." His lips brushed her earlobe. "You look beautiful."

He ate first, obviously enjoying himself while she just sat there, unable to do anything. He cast glances at her from time to time and grinned. Her cheeks hurt from forcing herself to smile. When his plate was finally empty, he turned to her.

"Hungry?" He speared a piece of meat, as he'd done for her the first night they met. He offered it to her and she opened her mouth. At the same time that he shoved the meat into her mouth, he plunged two fingers back into her core.

He fed her slowly, thrusting into her just as slowly, building the need growing within her. Hanna noticed several Vanyans pointing and smiling. *Young love. Isn't that sweet? What a handsome couple.*

None of them seemed to notice that she no longer had the use of her hands. That one of his hands was under the table, still working in and out of her soaking wet sex, teasing her unmercifully. They saw what they wanted to see. Hanna wasn't sure how she felt about all this. She was so aroused she could hardly think at all. She wished they were alone so he could put his hands all over her, shove his cock into her, satisfy this aching need that was eating at her from the inside out.

Then, as he fed her another piece of fruit and told her once more what a good slave she was, she realized she had it wrong again. She should be only thinking about

pleasing him. Her Master knew what she needed. She had to trust him. She only had to do what he wanted her to do and everything would be all right.

"I'm going to make you come," he whispered, as he leaned forward to give her a sip of wine.

"No," she moaned. How could that be all right? How could he expect her to give herself over to him in front of all these people? She had no control of her body when she came.

With two of his fingers still inside her, he grabbed tightly onto her sex. The pressure pushed the heel of his hand down on her sensitive nub, a reminder that she had no control of her body anyway. "You *will* come." He tipped the wineglass to her lips again. "Drink up."

She swallowed the rest of the wine. She hadn't had much to eat and she was lightheaded. But was it from the wine? Or was it the arousal that had her on edge? Or the fact that she was bound in front of hundreds of people and her Master was going to make her come?

She whimpered softly. She couldn't close her eyes, couldn't drop her head back as his fingers drove her arousal even higher. She had to sit still, hold her position. She could do nothing but look out at the people still eating in front of her and hope her body didn't jerk like a puppet's when he took her over the edge.

A puppet. That's what she felt like right now. She had no control over her body. Her Master pulled the strings. He made her dance or cry or come alive under his hand. She moved at his desire.

She came at his desire.

He rubbed his thumb against her nub and that was all that was needed to make her dance. Her body rocked with the orgasm. He leaned over her and covered her mouth with his in an erotic kiss, swallowing her cries, blocking her jerking movements from view. He slid his fingers from her body and slipped them into her mouth.

She whimpered and sucked them clean.

"Is everything all right?"

The king picked this time to pay attention to what was going on around him. Jarrod calmly turned to look at him with a smile.

"Everything's fine, Your Majesty. My mate is simply anxious to begin our new life together."

The king laughed. "I understand. You are welcome to any bedroom in the palace."

"Thank you, but we'll sleep in my cabin tonight." As he faced the king and talked about his plans, he furtively pulled her full skirt down over her knees. "I want to leave very early in the morning, so we'll stay on board the ship tonight."

"Leaving so soon?" the king asked.

Hanna wondered the same thing. Jarrod hadn't said anything about leaving in the morning.

"I hoped you could fill me in on some of the technologies we're unaware of," the king went on.

"Micah will be happy to explain. He's much better at that than I am." Jarrod downed the rest of his wine. "A shipment of supplies should have been delivered at the trading post already. I need to check on them and on our property." He shook the king's hand. "Thank you for your hospitality, Your Majesty. We will return for a visit as soon as possible."

He stood while Hanna sat there, feeling like a fool, unable to move. "Let me help you with your long dress." He knelt behind her and unhooked her ankles in a flash. He leaned across her back and whispered loudly enough for the king to hear, "Did I tell you how lovely you look in this dress?" He unhooked her wrists, then whispered more softly, "I can't wait to get you out of it." He slid her chair back for her so she could rise.

While his words sent new tingles flowing through her, Hanna didn't let him rush her. She hugged Serena and Micah, promising to be back for a visit soon. She thanked the king and was touched to receive a hug from him as well. Then to her surprise, Jarrod swept her up into his arms and carried her through the maze of tables. Hanna was shocked at the applause and laughter that rang out around them.

The sky had grown dark by the time they left the dining hall. Bright stars dotted the vast expanse. Jarrod strode toward the field where the *Galaxy* sat. It was merely a shadow in the distance. How much her life had changed since she'd been snatched from that same field not that long ago.

She wriggled in his arms. "You can put me down now."

He gathered her closer to his chest. She felt safe and loved in his embrace. "I'll carry you."

She knew there was no sense arguing with him and as she snuggled against him she wondered why she'd wanted to try. She closed her eyes and listened to the steady beat of his heart.

Once they were inside the ship and the door closed behind them, Jarrod grabbed her dress and yanked it off her shoulders. Hanna cried out when she heard the seam rip. "Careful!"

He frowned and let her help him get it off her body as quickly as possible. He tossed the lacy dress away. "That's the way I like to see you."

She knelt down and gathered the dress up in her arms. "This was a gift from Serena." And at the moment, the only piece of clothing she owned.

"I'm sorry. But it's not like you're going to be wearing it again."

Hanna clutched it a little tighter. "Why not?"

"There's not going to be a lot of call for fancy dresses where we're going."

She'd mend it and wear it sometime for him as a surprise. "I wish you'd tell me more about where we're going. I know so little about our new home."

"We'll have plenty of time for that during our voyage." He pulled her to him and pushed his rigid shaft against her stomach. "I have more pressing needs now."

She couldn't let him distract her. "I need to get some of my clothes together before we leave tomorrow."

"You don't need any clothes." He pinched her nipple and tugged on the silver ring. "I prefer you naked."

A jolt of pure desire shot to her sex, but she had to keep her thoughts straight. "I can't always be naked."

His gaze burned into her as he looked her up and down. "As far as I'm concerned, you can."

She stepped away from him and he let her go. "Be reasonable. You said there are a lot of rough, lonely men where we're going. Do you want them to see me naked? Marked as a sex slave?"

His expression darkened and he grabbed her arm again, tighter this time. "No one else will see your body." The possessive look on his face sent a thrill racing along her skin. "I'll get you some clothes after we arrive. You can wear one of my T-shirts when we leave the ship."

"What about until then?"

He stared at her as if it was obvious. "I want you naked."

* * * * *

When they entered his cabin, Hanna saw that Jarrod had managed to obtain hooks and find places to install them all over the room. Big, heavy ones in the ceiling. Small ones on the legs and back of his chair. More heavy ones on the walls of the alcove in which the bunk sat.

They had more incredible sex that night where he enjoyed her body thoroughly and then held her gently in his arms after she'd climaxed more times than she could count. She was drowsy and well satisfied when he got up off the bed and without a word, hooked her right wrist cuff to the wall. She watched while he did the same to her other wrist and both ankles, until she was stretched spread-eagle on the mattress. Then he turned around and walked to the door.

She missed the touch of his skin on hers, the heat of his body against hers. She shivered from the chill. "Where are you going?"

He turned around and frowned at her. "Go to sleep." Then he turned off the overheads, closed the door behind him and left her there in the silent darkness.

Hanna knew she should just relax and trust him, but it was difficult when she had no idea what was on his mind. Was this the way it was always going to be? She closed her eyes and tried to relax but her frustration began to build. Along with a burning resentment.

She didn't know how long she lay there before she heard the ship power up. The familiar whine was followed by the soft vibration she'd gotten used to over the last few days. Hanna blinked away tears. For some reason, her Master didn't want her to be in the seat beside him when they took off for their new home, as she'd been looking forward to doing.

He said he wanted her with him. He'd just pledged his life to her. Didn't he want to share all parts of it with her?

Or had Serena been right all along?

Hanna fell asleep at some point, her cheeks wet with tears she wasn't able to wipe away. She awoke to Jarrod brushing his lips along the curve of her breasts.

"Good morning, beautiful slave. We are now on our way to our new home. We should be there in a few days."

Hanna just stared up at him. She didn't care if the hurt she felt was reflected in her face. She hoped it was. He leaned over to kiss her lips but she looked away from him, toward the blank wall.

"Why do you turn away from me?"

"Can you release me, please?" she asked, her voice flat. She wasn't going to answer his questions until he answered some of hers.

"Of course." He quickly unhooked her cuffs, running his hands along her arms and legs as he did so. Her traitorous body responded to his touch, as it would probably always do, but Hanna didn't let it distract her this time. She sat up beside him. He was so handsome, he made her heart hurt.

"Why did you tie me up and leave me last night?"

He frowned, as if he didn't understand why she would ask. "I had work to do to ready the ship for the voyage and I wanted you to be secure before we lifted off."

"I wanted to be at the controls beside you when we left Vanya." She winced inwardly at the whine in her voice.

"You would have been no use there." He said it gently, as if trying to calm a small child. "You don't know how to work the controls."

Were all men this thick-headed or was it only Jarrod? "We were taking off for our new life together. I wanted to share that moment with you."

"Oh. I'm sorry." He dropped a kiss on the top of her head. "I didn't know that. You should have told me."

He was right. Just because she thought he should have known didn't make it his fault when he didn't. She realized they were both assuming a lot where the other was concerned.

"Tell me about our new home. Tell me what our life will be like there."

He stroked her hair, which probably looked a mess. "We have lots of time for that. Let's get some food —"

"I want to know now." She hopped off the bunk and began to pace, as she'd been unable to do in the past when the questions had overwhelmed her. "I have taken a leap of faith to follow you to a distant planet and share my life with you. I deserve to know what to expect."

"Of course." He patted the mattress beside him. "Sit."

She shook her head and crossed her arms, rubbing her hands over the chilled skin. "Tell me."

He nodded. She could tell he'd finally figured out something was seriously wrong. "Micah and I are opening a trading post in the settlement of Daybreak on the planet Ceylon 7. People will be able to buy supplies with coin or trade for goods they may have. We've had a building built and should have merchandise waiting to stock the shelves when we get there. There is a landing pad for ships within walking distance and word has already spread that we will be in business soon. That's why I'm anxious to get there."

He caught her gaze and she nodded as if to say, "Keep going."

"There is one living unit on the second floor. Micah will live there for the time being. I've had a small house built out back and he will be doing the same soon."

"And what do you see as my place in all this?"

"I'm afraid at this point our house is crude, I haven't had the time to spend on it. I know you will make it a fine home for us." He stood up and crossed to her. He gently stroked her hair, then hooked his finger through one of her nipple rings and twisted. A rush of pleasure flooded her sex. "And of course, I'll expect you to be available any time I want to enjoy your body."

"So I am your slave."

He circled her throat with his fingers, just above her collar. "Of course, you are my slave. When was that ever in question?" She swallowed and felt the pressure, the familiar reminder against her throat. "I am your Master. That doesn't change when we open the bedroom door. And it doesn't change when we step off this ship."

"So I am to be nothing more than your personal sex slave?"

He dropped his hand and stepped away from her. His dark expression made her shiver. "You are twisting my words," he growled.

"How else am I supposed to take them?" Then she remembered that she'd never come out and told him what she wanted from their new life. "I want to be a partner with you. Yes, I want to continue pleasuring you, but I can help you with the business too."

"You don't know anything about running a trading post."

"You can teach me. I'm smart. I'll learn. I can stock shelves. I can sell goods. I want to be useful."

He glowered at her. His words came out slow, each word like a nail through her heart. "I don't want you in the trading post at all."

She should have remembered what he'd told her before they left Noria. He'd said the same thing then. How could she have forgotten?

"You will be very useful." He hooked her collar with his finger and yanked her up onto her tiptoes before him. "You will keep our home and you will be ready whenever I want your body. There is nothing more you need to do."

So she'd be back to the same boring life she had on Vanya. A few housekeeping chores and then she'd have nothing else to do but wait around to do her duty. Didn't he understand she wanted more than that? She needed more than that.

"If I'd wanted to be a nothing but a sex slave I would have stayed on Noria." She sneered at him. She had to hold onto the anger so she didn't fall apart. "I could be living in a castle. Pleasuring a king. And I wouldn't even have to clean his house."

Chapter Eight

Anger flared within Jarrod, making his body shake. How could she say she'd rather have stayed on Noria? After all he'd risked to get her out of there! She was ungrateful and spiteful and deserved to be punished.

He grabbed her wrists and hooked the cuffs together in front of her. Then he dragged her over to the chair. She cried out as she stumbled behind him. He sat in the chair and plopped her over his lap. Her bound hands hung down to the floor in front of her, her round ass at the perfect angle for his palm.

She screamed at the top of her lungs with the first hard swat. He grinned. She could scream all she wanted. There was no one else to hear her. She squirmed on his lap and his cock began to harden. As he rained smacks over her skin, she continued to scream, kicking her legs and cursing at him. He didn't let up on the spanking, turning her skin a brighter red each time his palm landed on her ass.

Her cries became softer as time went on. Turned more throaty and needy. Her skin glowed and he knew it had to sting, just like his palm did, when he swept it over her cheeks.

Now she continued to moan and simply pressed her bottom harder up into his hand. As he rubbed one hand over the sore skin of her ass, he slid the other over her pussy. It was so wet, his fingers slipped right into her core. She moaned and her muscles sucked him right in. He didn't realize how close to the edge she was. One brush of a slick finger over her clit and she exploded. Her body rocked on his lap as the orgasm took her over.

All her squirming had turned his cock to iron beneath her. Her body hadn't even stopped quivering when he pushed her onto her knees on the floor and unzipped his pants. She took him deep into her mouth, sucking hard on his rigid shaft. She raised her bound hands to the base of his cock and rolled his sac between her fingers.

He came with a roar, sending his hot seed spurting down her throat. After she'd swallowed all of it, she gently licked him clean. He watched her tend to him so lovingly and hoped they'd both gotten their anger out of their system and things could go back to the way they were.

When she was finished he helped her to her feet and unhooked the cuffs. "Are you all right?"

She nodded. "My bottom is sore. Could I have the Marvel Cream?"

His heart sank. "Of course." He grabbed the tube. "Lie down on your stomach." With trembling hands, he spread the cream gently over her skin and watched it erase all evidence of her submission.

Why couldn't she accept he wanted what was best for her? He couldn't bear the thought of her working in the trading post, on display for all the unscrupulous characters that frequented Daybreak. They would see her slave jewelry and think they would be permitted to enjoy her body. And most of them wouldn't even care if it was permitted or not.

If he hadn't been so selfish, if he hadn't wanted her with him so badly, he would have insisted that Hanna stay on Vanya for her own safety. The closer they got to Ceylon 7, the more nervous he got when he thought about her living there. But she wouldn't understand. She'd say she was strong enough, smart enough. But she had no idea what it was like there. He'd do whatever he must to keep her safe.

He hoped more people would settle there soon. He'd talked with Micah about it as they made their plans. They hoped, as word got out, that enterprising people would come to open more businesses in Daybreak. People who were tired of the overcrowded planets. People with families who would take pride in their town. Most of the settlers so far came into town for food, drink and supplies before they went back out in the wild to hunt and trap in the lush forests surrounding Daybreak.

Keeping Hanna tucked away in their little house for the time being was the only way he knew to protect her.

* * * * *

It was a long voyage for Hanna to dwell on her heartache. It was her fault for not having this conversation with him before they pledged, before they left for a distant planet together. Yes, she'd promised to be his slave, but she thought it would be only when they were having sex. Serena was right. He wanted to dominate every part of her life and she knew she couldn't live that way.

Again, he kept her tied up in the cabin most of the time. He still enjoyed her body often and she received her share of pleasure in return. Her body still came alive whenever he touched her. She was certain she'd never find anyone else to make her feel like that.

Even though the days seemed to drag, suddenly they were closing in on Ceylon 7 airspace. Jarrod had released her from her bonds a short time before so she could clean up before they landed. He'd brought her one of his shirts to put on, but she pulled on her blue lace dress. The shoulder seam on one side was partly ripped, so it slipped off one shoulder, but she didn't mind. She felt pretty in it. He would just have to deal with it.

He was concentrating on the control panel as she approached. The planet, a whirling mass of green and white and blue, loomed large in the huge window. She slid into the seat next to him, where she would have liked to have spent more time.

He glanced over at her and frowned. "What are you wearing?"

"My dress. My only piece of clothing."

"I want you to wear my shirt."

"Too bad. I want to wear my dress."

He flipped some switches on the panel and typed something on the console. "I'm busy landing the damn ship, I can't argue with you right now."

"Fine, because I don't plan to argue about it."

"Strap in. We'll be going in soon."

She nodded and pulled her seat belt tight. "Jarrod, I'm only going to stay with you until you go back to Vanya for Micah."

He whirled around to stare at her. "What?"

Her hands shook and she clutched her sweaty palms together in her lap. "When I pledged my life to you, I thought we would be partners. Equals outside the bedroom. You obviously don't feel that way."

A loud beep, like an alarm, sounded. Jarrod cursed and brought his attention back to the control panel. "We'll talk about this after we're on the ground."

"There's nothing else to talk about. You've already made it clear that you think I'm not good for anything other than sex and the occasional housecleaning."

He typed something else in the console and the beeping stopped. "I didn't say that."

"Yes, you did."

He finally looked at her again, his eyes narrowed. "So what will you do?"

She shrugged, trying to look casual. "I'll go back to Vanya. I'm sure I can find someone there who appreciates my mind as well as my body."

"You pledged to me on Vanya. From what I was told, no one else will touch you there."

He was right. Vanyans took the pledge vows very seriously. "Fine. I'm sure with all the lonely men on Ceylon 7, I won't have any trouble finding someone who wants to do more than tie me up and spank me."

"Hanna."

His voice was low and angry, hot sparks flashing in his eyes. Hanna had to glance away from the heat and when she did, she looked out the window and saw the ground rising rapidly toward them. "Jarrod!"

He cursed again and turned back to the controls. A button or two later, they were slowing, gracefully landing on Ceylon 7. After the ship settled on the ground, Hanna whipped off her seat belt.

Jarrod was already out of his seat. He yanked her to her feet and crushed her against him, covering her lips with his. Her body burned from his touch. He devoured her with his hungry lips. When he finally pulled away, they were both breathing heavily.

"I don't want you to go back to Vanya. I don't want you to look for another Master."

She stepped out of his embrace when every instinct begged her not to. "Then can I help you? We can be partners as well as Master and slave?"

"I'm trying to protect you."

"I don't need protecting! I need a man strong enough to let me be his equal."

His expression darkened again. He grasped her arm, his fingers digging into her flesh. "You think you can find a man stronger than me?"

"I *need* a man stronger than you." She pulled away and he let her go. "Can we get out of here? I want some fresh air."

She walked away from him because she couldn't stand to look at him anymore. He didn't understand what she was talking about and that made her even sadder. How could they be so perfect when they were having sex, but not fulfill each other's needs outside the bedroom?

Jarrold opened the door to the ship, grabbed his weapon and then they walked out of the *Galaxy* onto Ceylon 7. Hanna took a deep breath and sighed. The air was so clean and crisp she could almost taste it.

Jarrold took a deep breath too. "This air. It's why we picked this planet."

Hanna nodded. After years being imprisoned underground, she could see why Jarrold and Micah would think this was a wonderful place to live.

This glimpse of the planet she got from the landing pad was beautiful. The sky was a brilliant blue, darker than what surrounded Vanya. She saw rich green forests in the distance. A golden meadow to her right. And straight ahead, down a hard-packed dirt walkway, was a group of buildings.

Hanna pointed in that direction. "The trading post is this way?" He nodded. "Let's go."

He glanced around, as if he expected them to be attacked. He grasped his weapon and slid the strap over his shoulder. "I'm going to get a blanket to wrap around you."

"I'm not cold."

He growled. "You must trust me."

"I'm not wrapping up in a blanket."

"I don't want anyone seeing you like this."

"What's wrong with the way I look? Don't I look pretty?"

He rolled his eyes. "You look beautiful. I don't want you tempting any of the rough characters around here."

"Now I'm a temptress?" She laughed bitterly. "Guess you should have let me grab some of my clothes before we left Vanya."

"Yeah, I guess my mind was on only one thing that night."

She laughed. And then stopped as quickly as she started. "It's not all about sex. It can't be." She turned away from him and headed down the path toward town. Her bare feet were soon covered with dust from the dirt road.

Daybreak was larger than she thought it would be from Jarrod's description. She stopped at the edge of town to look it over. She'd pictured a few ramshackle shacks, but the ten buildings were sturdy and clean. She saw a saloon and a bank and a lumber mill. "Builders must be in high demand." She looked down at her feet. "You should put the word out for some pavers."

Jarrod put his hand on her shoulder and glanced past her. "Walk."

She followed his gaze and saw a few crude-looking men sitting in chairs outside a saloon. Now that she knew they were there, she could practically feel their eyes burning off her dress. They must have been what Jarrod was worried about when he wanted her to dress differently. Maybe she should have listened to him. She stayed a little closer to him as they walked on.

They continued until they reached a large building with a long front porch and a trading post sign. "Looks like you could use some help around here." Boxes were stacked on the porch, some of them opened. "I could help you. Unless, of course, I go back to Vanya."

"You're not going back to Vanya." He grabbed her hand. "And you're not working here." He led her around the back of the trading post to a small house sitting in the middle of a green field that reminded Hanna so much of home. There was a large front porch on the house too and Hanna could picture them sitting here together, relaxing, at the end of the day. "This is our home," he said. "This is where you belong."

She couldn't forget Jarrod didn't have the same picture of their life in his mind that she did. "I'm not going to be locked in this house forever."

He slid the weapon strap off his shoulder. "Let's go inside and we'll talk about it."

He just wanted her off the streets and away from the eyes of lecherous townspeople. It was a lovely house but she was afraid once she got inside, she'd never get out. "You go ahead. I'll be right there." She took a step away from him. "Just give me a minute, please." She stared at him until he turned around and walked up the porch steps.

Jarrod didn't like leaving her alone out there. Spears and Larkin could decide to wander over and have a look. Longdecker or Toombs could walk by on their way to the tavern and see her. She could decide to take off on her own, she was that upset with him. But he figured he had to show her that he trusted her too.

His mind was so occupied, the fact that the door was unlocked didn't register until he'd opened it and stepped inside. His weapon was wrenched out of his hand before he knew it. He whirled around and came face-to-face with Gaylock.

Fuck.

"It's about time you got here," he said in that slimy voice that always crawled up Jarrod's spine like a mammoth worm. Gaylock motioned him away from the door with the barrel of his own weapon. "Good thing you had all those supplies delivered. I would have been starving by the time you got here and been in an even worse mood than I already am."

Jarrold brain worked furiously to figure out how to warn Hanna. Once she walked in that door, she'd be at Gaylock's mercy. But if he called out to her to run, he knew she wouldn't. She'd barge right in here to try to help him anyway.

"Where's your buddy?" Gaylock asked. He sat his fat ass down in an upholstered chair he'd dragged into the middle of the room. Jarrod would have to burn it if he got out of here alive.

"He didn't come this trip. It's just me."

"Too bad. I'm here to take you back," Gaylock said, his tone deadly. "I'm going to ink the hell out of your body when we get there."

Jarrold strove not to show any emotion the bastard could feed off of. "I'm not going back to the mines."

"Oh you'll go back. Dead or alive, makes no difference to me."

"You'll have to kill me then."

"My pleasure." Gaylock pushed the safety off the weapon.

Hanna walked in the door. Jarrod's heart kicked up into double time. She looked from Jarrod to Gaylock and then boldly stepped right between them.

"Hanna, get out of here!" Jarrod called out in frustration. She ignored him. Turned her back on him.

"My, my, my," Gaylock said, slime dripping off every word. "How did you get yourself your very own Norian sex slave?" He rubbed his crotch with his free hand. "I'll just have to take her as my own once I've killed you."

"Don't touch her," Jarrod growled.

"You don't have to kill him to get me," Hanna said, softly, seductively. She sauntered closer to Gaylock, still standing between him and Jarrod. Her damn dress was slipping off her shoulder. In the back of his mind he knew he should be worried about more important things, but right now he wanted desperately to yank that dress up where it belonged.

She lifted her hair off her shoulders and then let the silky gold rain down her back. "Can you offer me more as a Master than he can?"

"Oh most certainly." Gaylock licked his lips and Jarrod shuddered. He felt so helpless, but if he tried to jump Gaylock now, Hanna would be caught in the middle. "Take off that dress. I want to see what I'll be getting."

She didn't even hesitate. She stripped and tossed that dress she loved so much into the corner. Gaylock's eyes glazed over as he let his greasy gaze run all over her body.

"He doesn't appreciate me," she said with a bit of a pout in her voice. She walked closer to that bastard. She was almost within his reach. "You'd appreciate me, wouldn't you?"

"I appreciate you already," he chuckled. "Come closer. Would you look at those nipple rings? You could hang a hell of a lot of weight off them. That would really stretch out your nips, wouldn't it?"

"Yes, it would." She took another step forward. Jarrod was trembling with frustration. He wanted to jump Gaylock, beat his face to a pulp for even thinking about touching her. But he knew he had to trust Hanna.

He'd been so stupid to underestimate his little slave. Didn't he already know how strong and brave she was? She could take on anyone. Even his archenemy. She didn't need him to protect her.

And he knew in that moment that he loved Hanna. What he felt for her was so much more than the mere devotion of a Master and his slave. How could he have ever doubted it? He loved her and now he might never get the chance to tell her.

"Would you like to touch me?" she asked Gaylock. She swept her hands down her ribs and over her hips. Jarrod's stomach knotted, his hands balled into fists as he watched her offer herself to that bucket of slime. "My skin is so very soft."

Gaylock groaned and motioned her forward. He glanced over her shoulder at Jarrod and smirked. "Step a little closer, slave."

Had Gaylock's grip on his weapon loosened a little? Jarrod focused on Gaylock's hands, waiting for the opportune moment. Maybe he could move fast enough if Hanna got out of the way.

"Would you really kill my Master?" she asked softly, leaning over Gaylock, letting her breasts sway in front of his face. The tone of her voice made her sound merely curious.

"I'm *going* to kill him," Gaylock said, chuckling evilly. "But I think I'll tie him up first and make him watch while I enjoy your sweet body for a few fun-filled hours. Then I'll kill him."

"No, you won't," she whispered so softly that Jarrod barely heard it.

He watched in astonishment as Hanna grabbed the weapon from Gaylock's hands, turned it on him and pulled the trigger. At such close range, the energy ball swallowed him up whole.

"Get back!" Jarrod shouted. He lunged for her and pulled her back before she could get caught up in the energy field. They fell to the floor and curled up in a ball, limbs entwined, cheek to cheek.

"Are you all right?" he asked when the breath had returned to his body.

She nodded. "Is he dead?"

Jarrold looked over at the empty spot on the floor where Gaylock had been before Hanna vaporized him. He wouldn't have to worry about burning that chair now. "He's dead."

"Good." Hanna pulled him closer. She began to shake, after being so calm when it counted. Jarrold held her tighter and rubbed her back. "I was outside the door when I heard him say he was going to kill you if you didn't go back to the mine. I knew it must be Gaylock."

"That was him." He kissed her soft hair. "Can you sit up now?" She nodded. As soon as they sat up, he cupped her face in his hands and kissed her softly. "I love you, Hanna, my brave little slave. I love you with my heart as well as my body."

She gasped. "I didn't think we were allowed to love each other."

"Love doesn't listen to rules." He gathered her close. "I know I don't deserve it, but I hope someday I will earn your love."

"I do love you, Jarrold. I just never let myself believe it was possible." She took his hands and kissed them. "I'm sorry. I'm so lucky to have you as my Master. If I can please you by keeping your house and being ready to pleasure you, I will do it willingly. You're right. It's all I know." Tears glittered in her eyes. "I don't want another Master. I don't want another life."

"I'm sorry too," Jarrold said, knowing he was lucky to have the chance to apologize. "I was a fool to want to keep you locked up here. I thought you'd be safe in our home and look what happened." He kissed her back. "But I don't know how *not* to be a Master when we're not having sex."

"I want you to be my Master in all things," Hanna told him. "What pleases you will please me. I'm sorry I forgot that. I will trust you in all things. We just need to learn to communicate a little better."

"I'm not used to explaining myself, but I'll try. We'll learn as we go." He kissed her again. "And I will trust you, my smart little slave. Once the settlers hear how you vaporized Gaylock, they won't bother you." He helped her to her feet and picked her dress off the floor and handed it to her. "I would love to have your help with the trading post. We can work side by side during the day and pleasure each other at night. How does that sound?"

"Perfect."

* * * * *

Hanna put the final touches on a new display of gardening equipment in the front window of the trading post. Jarrold hadn't been sure they needed to carry gardening tools and supplies, but he'd let her give it a try. The last few months had brought an influx of new settlers, many of whom wanted to grow flowers or vegetables or both. The goods had been flying off the shelves.

She waved at Lissa through the window as she climbed the porch stairs. The young mother had moved to Daybreak with her mate, who was opening a school for the children of the town. Jarrod had hired Lissa to work part time behind the counter to give Hanna more time to work on ordering and displaying the stock in the store, something she'd discovered she had a talent for.

When Hanna backed out of the display area, she bumped into two large hands cupping her ass through her long skirt. She laughed and whirled around into Jarrod's arms. He pulled her close and his hard cock nudged her stomach. Her Master had an incredible appetite.

Her pussy clenched. Her desire was just as great.

Lissa called out a hello and they kissed lightly before they broke apart and answered her greeting.

"I wish I worked with Aarick," Lissa said with a sigh. "I'd love a few hugs and kisses for lunch."

"But then you'd never get away from him bossing you around," Hanna said lightly.

Jarrod gave her a playful swat on her bottom. "Watch your mouth, slave."

Lissa laughed. "Has it been busy today?"

"Very," Hanna replied. "Morriss and Taggertt are back looking over the fishing supplies and that new family, the Manns, are checking out footwear for their children. I think they have some goods to trade."

"We're taking a lunch break," Jarrod said. "If you need any help, I'll be back in a little while."

Lissa rolled her eyes and grinned. "Take your time."

Jarrod hooked his finger in Hanna's collar and tugged. "Come." She followed him to their home out back. The sun was shining brightly, a cool breeze keeping the temperature pleasant. "I'm hungry."

She knew what he hungered for. "I have a surprise for you."

Holding onto his hand, she led him through the house she was beginning to decorate and out the back door into their own private meadow. The first thing Hanna had wanted for their new home was to have a high privacy fence built from the back of the house, encompassing a large section of meadow. Jarrod hadn't asked any questions, just did as she asked.

While he'd been helping a couple trappers load supplies earlier in the day, she'd snuck out to spread a blanket over the soft grasses and set down a stocked cooler chest beside it. She gestured at the blanket. "Have a seat, Master. Your slave would like to dance for you."

He grinned and dropped down onto the blanket. The robe Hanna wore was actually several layers of thin gauze that covered her from shoulder to toes. She closed her eyes and listened for the music that had played in her head back on that last day on

Vanya. She swayed her body to the melody, moving her hips in lazy circles, realizing that all the things she wished for that day that had come true.

Slowly, she stripped each thin robe over her head, one by one, revealing more of her body with each layer that was removed. The brush of the fabric teased her nipples. The light breeze lifted her hair. She heard Jarrod's heavy breathing over the music in her head. She felt the heat of his gaze.

Finally she slipped the last layer off her body and continued to dance for her Master, her love.

"Come here, slave," Jarrod called out a few minutes later, his voice passion-rough, the way she liked it.

She opened her eyes and smiled at him. "Yes, Master."

She stretched out on the blanket in front of him, arching her back the way he liked her to do. "How do you like my surprise?"

He swept his hands along her body and she sighed with delight. He bent her knees and quickly attached wrist cuffs to ankle cuffs, leaving her spread for his enjoyment.

"Fresh air, sunshine and a willing slave. How could life be any better than this?"

She chuckled and nodded toward the cooler chest. "Sunberries."

About the Author

I fell in love with the written word as soon as I could read. I started writing my own stories while I was still in grade school. I even passed around my own version of fanfic to my classmates long before the term was ever coined. As I grew up, I fell in love with romance and I love the chance to add some extra sizzle to my stories.

I live with my own real life hero who is happy to tell everyone that he's my inspiration. We travel in our RV whenever possible—the great thing about writing is I can take it anywhere. See you down the road.

Natasha welcomes comments from readers. You can find her website and e-mail address on her author bio page at www.ellorascave.com.

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