



Loose Id

# Ingram's Charm

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# INGRAM'S CHARM

Melany Logen

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## Chapter One

“Here’s your payment.” Reli shoved Charm with one meaty fist into the other man’s arms.

He grunted as she landed against him, which was like landing against a rock wall. He made her feel small, which was not easy to do. She was as tall as most men, but his head hovered inches above hers.

The man’s black eyes looked down at her, filling with confusion. “What the fuck are you doing, man?”

Inwardly, she cringed, but didn’t dare show her anxiety. She disliked it when the new Master came for his payment and wound up with her instead. She rolled her shoulders back to steady herself. Reli always liked to play it that way, never letting her in on what to expect at these things. She put on her sweetest seductress expression. She’d learned it well from the House of 9000 Pleasures after much training and lots of time in punishment. If only she’d been younger, they’d said she would have learned faster, better. They did their best work on those they had from childhood.

“Squaring up with you, Ingram.” Reli spat a generous amount of *bacco* juice into the can he always carried with him. Bacco exuded a stench that smelled of rotten fruit.

Her nose twitched as she ignored the desire to retch. After all this time, she should be used to the smell, but it always turned her stomach.

Ingram curled up a lip, pushing Charm a minute distance from him. It would have been more, but she grabbed his arm and hung on. He glanced down at the arm she clutched at, then muttered, "I thought we'd be paid in cartouche."

"I had intended to." Reli had promised to, as he always did to his marks, but never paid with anything except for her. "Couple of deals fell through. She's a *Delicant*, though." Reli tossed a scroll at him, which he caught in a tight fist. "Her papers. She'll bring you big money, on any market."

"I don't trade people." Ingram folded his arms across his wide chest.

Men always protested at first. Then, they'd back down and take her as payment without too much thought.

She continued to clutch his arm as though her hand was a vise.

Reli smirked. "It's all I have. Take her or don't get paid."

Ingram looked down at her again. Releasing him, she dropped to her knees in supplication before the man who would be her new Master. How many times had they done this ruse? The steps were always the same. But did they have to set this particular trade up on the dusty plains of *Alcalazar*? Her knees would be filthy with tan dirt, which stuck to everything as if it was backed with mechanic's putty.

A low baritone voice rumbled from the man standing behind Ingram. If Ingram was big, this man was huge, wide as a *Zyberian* polecat and twice as hairy. "The crew won't like it if we don't get paid. Again."

Ingram drew in a large breath. "Fine."

She ducked her head down, going lower than before. It always happened like that. A short protest, then they accepted her so they could sell her and reap their profits. That fit right into Reli's plans.

"We can trade her at the next station."

Reli's grin showed his beige teeth. "Delicants bring in lots of *cartouche*. I almost hate to have to give her up myself. I had plans to collect a great deal on trade for her."

A lie. Charm rested on her knees. He made money on her over and over again. But the statement was one that would make Ingram, the captain of the *Bruiser*, feel as if he was making a good deal. The words were designed to put him one up above Reli, even while Reli snuck around to stab his underbelly and take his ship. She was the distraction to help Reli get on board. She glanced to the old shuttle craft behind the two men. If the *Bruiser* was as old as that thing, she didn't know why Reli was interested.

The big man's hand went to his sidearm, fingers near the trigger. "It's the deal you offered." Reli's men would be ready, too. She didn't even have to look back. This could get ugly. She lifted her head slightly, making sure she could see if firing started.

"And, he'll keep his word. Right, Reli?" Ingram's hand went down, not to his weapon but close enough to his hip so he could draw it in a hurry.

Reli held up his hand with a smirk. "I never said I wouldn't." He backed up, keeping his front to them until the last moment, before heading up his shuttle's plank with his two men accompanying him. "Later, Ingram." He didn't spare her a backward glance or speak a farewell. He never did. Why bother when in a few days' time, she'd be back in his clutches. Not to mention she was a Delicant. Men like Reli saw them as lower forms of being, and no law bound common courtesy to the treatment of Delicants.

Charm ducked down her head as far as she could before she presented herself in a ready position. All Ingram would have to do was put a hard *cacete* into her splayed *chocota*.

The big man arched a brow at her display.

Ingram made a noise deep in his throat and hauled her to her feet. "Come on."

He walked so quickly, she had a hard time keeping up even as she frowned. Why hadn't he taken her?



As soon as she was in the shuttle, he shut the door. "Dammit."

The big man shook his head. "The crew isn't going to be happy, Gram."

Bowing her head as her Delicant training required, she studied the big man. He looked as if he could eat a *Barboan* cave lion all by himself. Probably bring it down by himself, too. She'd have to tread carefully around this one. He could break her in half and never work up a sweat.

Now to see about Gram, who was her main focus on this mission.

His eyes surveyed hers, probably because he'd noticed her interest in the big man, who'd called him Gram, which suited him better than Ingram. "You have a name?"

He had her papers with all her information in them, but some Masters didn't take too kindly to being reminded of things they had or didn't. And they tended to reply with fists rather than mouths. "Charmara, Master. Most call me Charm."

"Joy. Great name for a Delicant."

She started before she could control the reaction. That was something, as a Delicant, she couldn't afford to do.

Quickly, she composed herself. Few knew the exact meaning behind her name. How did Gram? He sighed. "Charm it is. And I'm not your master. Well," he amended, "I am until we sell you, but don't call me that."

The big man offered her his thick hand with a stoic expression. "I'm Tmarr."

She should have recognized him. Maybe she was more nervous than she thought, though why this job would send her into a tizzy already, she didn't know. The information Reli had gathered had said Tmarr was a gunman on Ingram's ship. He was one to watch, loyal and protective to Ingram.

She nodded to Tmarr, staring down at his outstretched hand. What did he want her to do? Delicants weren't allowed to be greeted formally. No one was supposed to bow down to or shake hands with them, just as Reli had treated her earlier. They were slaves.

He withdrew his hand with a shrug of his shoulders.

Gram patted his shoulder. "Come on, let's get back to the ship." Gram plunked himself down into the pilot's seat with Tmarr positioned in the copilot's chair. "Strap yourself in, Charm."

She approached Gram, sitting on the floor next to his chair.

"What are you doing?" His voice held genuine puzzlement. Great. He must not have ever owned a Delicant before, or be familiar with their ways.

"I must sit next to my Master at all times, Master."

"Don't call me that. We could run into trouble on the way back. You'd do better strapped in."

No one had ever objected to her calling them Master for this long. Usually, they liked her subservience. She lowered her head. It was all she knew how to do. "Master..."

"Strap yourself in, Charm." His voice lowered to a tone that sent chills along her back. "Now." His voice carried an authority that said he wasn't used to anyone defying him.

That quiet authority sent more of her tingling than anyone ever had. "Yes, Master. If you wish."

"I do." He began punching buttons on the console, preparing them to take off.

Charm sat down in the seat behind her new Master. He'd given her a direct order, which she must follow, otherwise, she'd have stayed beside him. There was a black belt running across the seat. She struggled with the clasp, trying to get it to lock. She'd never used one before. Reli didn't allow her the use of seatbelts.

*I can do this.*

*How hard could it be?*

After a few minutes, Gram looked back to see her still fooling with it. "Need some help?"

“Please, Master.” She sat up straight as he rose and took two steps back to her seat. His smell accompanied him, something spicy. A *Valdorian* root perhaps? He must take special vapor showers that were for more than removing grit and grime. That was not a usual thing with outfits like his. Most of the time they didn’t take vapor showers at all.

“Here.” He took the belt and ran it across her front. His fingers touched her skin gently, warming wherever he stroked. Her skin tingled where he touched like static electricity. He froze, eyes glancing down. He must have felt the strange sensation, too.

Her neck arched, pushing out her breasts for his inspection.

A tic beat in his jaw. Did she imagine it or did his other hand reach for her breast before pulling back?

Then, his fingers brushed her hip bone, tugging on the seat belt. She wriggled in her chair, making sure his hand stayed on her hip as long as possible, which made it harder for him to snap her belt shut.

His gaze flew to hers, his jaw tightened even more. Locking the belt, he stalked back to his seat without a word.

Smiling, she leaned back in her seat, having garnered exactly the reaction she wanted, much better than what she’d received a few minutes ago. Gram liked women. Reli hadn’t been sure. Her job of seduction was made easier when her mark liked females. She wiggled in the seat again. Taking a cacete up the ass was not her favorite game of sex, but when she had to seduce someone who liked males, it was all she had to offer them besides a blowjob. She had no choice but to win at seduction even when they didn’t like women. Reli’s punishments could be most harsh.

During the flight, she used her time to study Gram, the man behind the *Bruiser*.

He was stunning. No other word for him.

His hair seemed to be the dirty blond color of *flaxam*, the food crop for *gazeltocks*. She’d seen enough of it growing up to know the exact shade. His eyes were so much darker

than his pale skin and light hair. They compelled her gaze up to look into them. They wouldn't let her go. She'd never seen eyes like his, and she'd seen lots of eyes. His body was muscular, but not bordering on super buffed up. She'd bet he'd been a soldier, probably bred to be one. He had that look. A honed dangerous look that drew her gaze as well as made her shiver.

She squashed any of those reactions and thoughts. She wasn't here to admire his looks, no matter how they made her feel. Time to think about what she knew about him.

Reli had told her all that he'd found out, but Reli's files weren't official or comprehensive. Gram was the one Reli had the least on. From his actions, they knew he was loyal to his crew and a rebel, doing lots of things the law wouldn't allow.

She tapped a finger on her chin. How did all this knowledge help her? She wasn't sure yet. Sizing up the situation would take a day or so, then she'd proceed. His crew was probably the same as Reli's, everyone out for each other. All of them would be one step away from betraying each other. She'd find their weaknesses and exploit them, as Reli had ordered her to do, before exposing them so Reli could take them down and swipe their ship. It always came down to orders for a Delicant.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gram scrubbed his face and stood up at the sound of the door opening and closing behind them. Hake, the *Bruiser's* pilot, had arrived.

"Sorry, Cap, I didn't hear the alarm." Hake arched a black eyebrow, indicating the Delicant. "A special guest?"

He gritted his teeth, only to bite the bullet. Might as well go ahead and get it out of the way. "No. She's payment."

Hake's other eyebrow went up.

"Look, just fly this bucket. I've got some things to take care of."

Tmarr snickered from the copilot's chair.

He thumbed toward the door. "You, come with me." His gaze lingered on Charm's pink pussy. How had she continued to sit with her legs drawn up to her chest? The hard-on, which hadn't left him since she'd been tossed into his arms, twitched.

A Delicant. What, in all the gods, was he to do with a Delicant?

Well, it was obvious what he was supposed to do. Fuck her until he was a limp mass, but still.

He looked away.

"Yes, Master." After a click of the harness, her bare feet padded on the floor behind him.

Every step he took brought his cock in contact with his pants. He'd have preferred to have the sex slave caressing it.

The thundering down the corridor grew louder. He stopped walking and grabbed an overhead brace to keep from being knocked over. "Grab hold of something."

Charm stretched up to snatch the bar overhead. Her brown hair hung in a cascade down her back.

Gram licked his lips at the sight of her nipples so perfectly on display. His gaze lingered over her ribcage and locked on her pierced bellybutton. The flare of her hips captivated him. Slowly he explored her curves one at a time. He enjoyed the slight rise and fall of her stomach. And her breasts couldn't be more perfect in shape, tipped with puckered nipples. But while her body intrigued him, her face took his breath.

Charm was a beauty. A real beauty. Full lips. A straight nose. High cheek bones. And eyes...eyes that'd caught him looking his fill.

Dozz hit him dead-on, knocking the air from his lungs. "Gam, you're back." The giant cub squeezed him until he worried his spine was in danger.

"Hey, big guy." He groaned, patting the little fella's broad back. "I told you I'd return."

Dozz released him with a squeal.

Gram grabbed his back to rub at the ache Dozz always left, as the cub hid his eyes.

Once able to straighten, Gram waved a hand. "Charm, this is Dozz." *Hades*. He'd never had to explain Dozz before. "He's my cub." He shrugged a shoulder. "Sort of. I adopted him."

"Gam's raising me." Dozz repeated something he'd probably heard others say about them.

"Hello, Dozz." She still clutched the overhead bar tightly in her hands.

Gram pointed. "You can let go. It's only the first impact you have to worry about."

"Thank you, Master." Her smile hit him in the solar plexus. *Dammit*. No one had ever smiled at him. Well, besides Dozz, who normally drooled when he did.

Dozz tilted his head to the right side, one brown eye peeking from between two hairy fingers. "Gam, Charm don't got no penis."

"Um, no, she doesn't." He waved his hand. "She's a female." She was the first female the cub had ever seen. Females were more legend than real. This was his first up close and personal experience as well.

"How does she pee with no penis?"

He risked a look at the Delicant. Her lips were clamped together. He glanced back at the cub. "Look, females..." He brought his hands up out of habit. "...females, well, they squat to pee."

"A female squats? Bet she's got real bad aim peeing. What are those fat round things on her chest?"

Gram rubbed his neck. *Dammit*. Dozz asked more questions than any other being alive. He was sure of it. 'Cause he'd spent the last four or five years answering them. "Uh, females have breasts. They're used to feed babies."

Dozz covered his peeking eye. "Breasts are like the bottle you used to feed me from, huh?"

He shot Charm another look. *Dammit*. Dozz talked too much. “Yeah.” He’d liked to never gotten the cub weaned off the baby bottle.

“Gam?”

“What?” he asked with his teeth clenched.

“How come you let your Charm run around naked, but you make your Dozz wear clothes?” the little cub asked, clearly pouting. “It ain’t fair.”

He sighed. “Dozz, I want you to go hang out with Yon.” He waved his hand to indicate the Delicant. “I have to get Charm settled in.”

Dozz jumped up and down, shaking the walkway under their feet. “Yeah, Yon will let me play with his stuff.”

He nodded, and the cub loped off. Yes, the medic would occupy the little bear for a while.

Gram waved a hand, “Come on. I’ve got a lot to do.”

“Yes, Master.”

\* \* \* \* \*

At his door, he hesitated. *Dammit*. His cabin was a real mess. It had never mattered before. The only person to go inside was Dozz, and the little bear only made it messier rolling around.

A pounding of feet came above their heads, and he looked up to glare. Quickly, he reached over to the commbox. “Yo, Dozz, quit running. You’re going to get hurt again.”

Dozz’s voice echoed throughout the ship. The cub always yelled into the computer to make sure he could be heard. “I forgot. No running.”

A moment later, his feet thundered overhead again in the passageway.

Gram sighed and opened his cabin door. Inside, he used his foot to move several toys aside. Next, he picked up a stack of books, placing them on the desk. Looking over his shoulder, he motioned Charm inside. "Come on in."

She smiled. "Yes, Master."

He sucked in a breath as his cock swelled once more. The sight of her breasts held him entranced with every step she took. He forced himself to look anywhere but there. "Move anything out of your way. Dozz tends to play with everything and never pick up anything." He took her papers from his pocket and placed them in a cabinet for safe keeping.

"Yes, Master."

His heart raced at the sight of her bending over. *Gods, what an ass.* Charm's tempted him as nothing ever had before. He cleared his throat. "My name is Ingram Hayes. You can call me Gram."

She straightened and placed more books on the corner of the desk. Her puckered nipples jutted out from her breasts as she adjusted the stack. "Ingram Hayes, you are my Master now. I'll call you Master, as I'm expected to do."

His cock twitched. Gods, he could get used to having a female around.

He wanted nothing more than to fuck Charm. He'd settle for jerking off. Anything to relieve the constant pressure in his cock. Surely, he'd be able to think straight then.

He turned away. Clothes. He needed to get some clothes on her.

That would help.

At his closet, he slid the door open to shuffle through his shirts. He backtracked, shoving over racks of pants. Hades, how would he know what wouldn't fall off her? Maybe her fine ass would catch enough to hold them up?

He discarded the pants. Marka, the smallest of his crew, would come closest to Charm's size. Yes, the Halfling was slim enough. Marka's pants would cover her without falling down.



He frowned at his shirts. Why had he never noticed he had nothing but white shirts? Maybe one of his vests would work over a shirt? Or maybe Marka would have a shirt that would camouflage her nipples? Yes, he definitely needed something to hide those little treasures.

He turned around and nearly stumbled. Charm knelt on the floor in front of him, her hazel eyes shielded by long lashes.

With nimble fingers, she released the buttons on his pants before he could draw a breath.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

The will to stop her didn't exist within him. He groaned as his cock sprang free.

"Master, what a fine cock you have. The better to suck." She leaned forward to rub her cheek against his stiff length. No time passed before she rubbed her face along the other side of his cock as if admiring him.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

To brace his legs, he reached up to grasp one of the balance bars.

Never before had he seen anything as erotic as Charm on her knees before him. Her long brown hair fell to her ass. Never before had such raw lust surged through his veins. Climax waited only a breath away.

*Oh, fuck, no.*

*Not yet.*

He closed his eyes when she ran her hands up his abdomen, then down to push his pants further out of her way. Her face continued to nuzzle his cock.

Charm's wet tongue ran along the side of his erection. He inhaled and opened his eyes. He wouldn't miss this. In amazement, he looked on at her eagerness as she toyed with his engorged flesh. Her pink tongue licked and lapped, until he thought he might throw her to

the floor and bury his cock as deep as he could get, coming until he thought his brain might explode.

Her talented tongue flicked the tip of his cock, and she moaned.

Sweat beaded his upper lip. His cock, which stood as rigid as possible, twitched. His balls grew tighter, letting him know his climax boiled up.

As if sensing his need, Charm leaned over and sucked his right ball into her heated mouth.

Gram groaned from deep in his chest, his hips thrusting forward.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

The Delicant released his sac, only to grasp the other side in her mouth until sweat sheened his chest. "Charm," he moaned between his clenched teeth.

She released his ball to nuzzle his cock once more.

The muscles in his thighs and ass quivered as he fought to hold off his climax.

"Master." She ran her tongue along the bottom of his cock. "Would you like for me to suck your cock now?"

"Yes." The air rushed from his lungs as she first swallowed his head in a circling movement to engulf the whole of his cock. Her hands gripped his thighs.

Gram moaned in desperate need of release.

*Not yet.*

Her hot mouth sucked greedily at his cock. Up and down, she drew her lips around him.

Chest heaving, he reached to bury his hand in her thick hair. He bore down to send his hard cock further into her sucking mouth. She accepted the invasion with eager lips. Her cheeks hollowed out. His balls hit her chin, and his body shuddered.

At the feel of her nails biting into his thighs, he pulled his hips back to watch his slick flesh reappear. Mesmerized, he shoved forward to watch himself disappear once more.

Charm moaned and rubbed her tongue along the bottom of his hidden cock. His balls ached like never before.

With gritted teeth, he withdrew to the head and then, pushed his cock back in. Charm moaned only to toy with her tongue once more.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

Over and over, he pulled his cock out of her sucking mouth to force his way back in.

At the tension of his muscles, his hand tightened in her hair. His come erupted from his balls to shoot deep within her throat. He groaned. His eyes shut as her throat and mouth worked to swallow his offering.

Her mouth caressed his cock until he withdrew semi-erect from between her lips.

Weak-kneed, he worked to get his pants back on correctly. Through lazy eyes, he watched her lick her lips before she helped to right his clothes.

“Master, did I suck to your liking?” Her eyes remained downcast.

He stared. Was there a wrong way to give head? Watching the way she fidgeted, he supposed there was for some. He nodded to reassure her. “Most definitely.”

Charm’s smile once again hit him in the solar plexus. *Dammit*. He turned back to the closet. What did one say after receiving a blowjob? Thanks hardly seemed to cover it. If only he had experience in these things.

Unease hit his spine. What did she think this had been about? “Whoa.” He should’ve explained her future to her before he shot his load down her throat. *Dammit*. He turned back around. “Look, let’s take a minute here to discuss your situation.”

The Delicant still crouched on the floor, her pussy exposed for his view.

He swallowed. Plowing into that tender pussy would be bliss. No way he could think with that in front of him. He needed to get her some clothes first, and then they could talk.

## Chapter Two

Acting dutiful, as the good Delicant should, she followed behind Gram as he quick footed it down dark, narrow corridors. The ship looked much smaller from the outside. Inside, it was almost roomy, though somewhat gloomy and shaded.

She moistened her lips, still tasting his come, not an unpleasant flavor. Yes, Gram wasn't going to be a hard assignment -- so to speak. Parts of him had been hard since she'd arrived. He'd been without a woman a long time, if he'd ever had one. That always made it easier for seduction.

Why did he want her clothed? He planned to use her, then sell her, as they all did. No Delicant should ever have to wear clothes. In fact, they could be punished for the offense. Didn't he know that? Besides, he'd enjoyed what she'd done to him. He'd enjoy fucking her that much more.

Gram pushed a button, opening a door off the corridor. He quickly stepped in first, and she followed.

"Marka?" he bellowed, then stopped short, causing her to run into him. A low curse slipped out of Gram.

Two men were entangled on the bunk. Each held the other's cacete in their hands. They remained frozen, hands locked, at Gram's entry.

"Don't you knock?" The larger of the two sat up, releasing his hold on the smaller man's cacete. He stared at them as if he could wish them away.

"Don't mind Luban. He's cranky when he's horny." The smaller one still lay leisurely on the bed, his hand stroking the other's turgid flesh. Lithe and petite, he looked human, except for pointy, elfin ears, which shot up above his short dark hair. "You bellowed, sir?"

A tic beat in Gram's jaw. "I need clothes, Marka. For her." He pointed to Charm where she stood beside him.

Luban straightened as Marka continued to touch him. His breath came in pants even as he glared at Gram. He said something in another language gruffly to Marka.

Marka sighed. "Very well." He pulled his hand away. "Who's this lovely creature, Gram? We haven't been introduced."

He scrambled off the bed, walking to them with an extended hand. He grasped hers in his warm one. Considering where it had been a few minutes earlier, shouldn't he have washed it? But he insisted on shaking hers; he wouldn't let her avoid the contact like Tmarr had. Didn't these people know anything about Delicants?

His body was hairless except for one thick patch at his cacete, which considering the proportions of the rest of him, was huge. He must be part elf. "I'm Marka." He thumbed at the other man. "My mate is Luban."

Luban slid off the bed and bowed formally to her before pulling on a robe and a gun. He was one of Gram's gunmen and protectors. Could his loyalty be shifted? Reli hadn't known for sure.

Marka was a bit of an enigma. Perhaps a little more shiftable than the rest. But his being mated to Luban probably precluded that.

"This is...Charm. She's going to be staying with us a while." Gram's mouth pulled up into a slight frown. Maybe he'd noticed where her eyes had gone. That was good. Jealousy was a great way to manipulate men. "Get her some clothes."

Luban's deep voice went up an octave, sounding strained. "Why are we taking on a woman? And where did she come from?"

Marka pulled her with him as he walked to a closet. "Let's see what we can find for you to wear." He didn't dress, but went naked, ignoring Luban's frown at him.

Gram turned away from Luban, speaking quickly like the rapid fire of a ship's gun. "Reli gave her as payment."

Luban's eyes bugged in his head, visible even at where she stood. His thick neck corded, tendons standing out. "What the fuck is that about?"

Marka pushed open the doors, peering into the clothes. "I think you can wear my stuff. Definitely not Luban's. He's big. In all ways."

Gram grasped an arm and propelled Luban out the still open corridor door. It shut behind them.

So Tmarr was right, the crew would be upset about her as payment. Anything to cause discord boded well for taking over a ship.

Marka pushed through some things, pulling out a tunic and gazeltock pants. "Try this."

She touched the pants gingerly with a finger, stroking the soft fur. She loved the spirited animals. They always reminded her of things she should never think about. Their fur was so warm. She hardly ever noticed the cold anymore, but she remembered being home and under a gazeltock blanket... Yes, it made her think things she shouldn't be calling to mind right now.

*Focus. Find ways to break apart the crew.*

Marka looked at her with a piercing gaze. He had deep black eyes. Yes, he was of elven ancestry and didn't miss anything. "Are you a Delicant?"

She nodded. Pulling the tunic over her head, she heard him say, “Interesting. I’ve never met a Delicant before.”

That much had been obvious about the crew she’d met so far. Shaking back her hair, she reached down to pull on the pants and noticed Marka looking at her. Slowly, she shrugged them up her legs, wiggling and caressing her skin with her fingers, inviting his attentive gaze.

A knowing gleam came into Marka’s dark eyes. “You can save your show. I’m mated.”

Was Luban a species that mated for life? She wasn’t sure what he was. Neither elves nor humans did. She hadn’t noticed any mating marks she was familiar with. And elves had a high sex drive. Better to be contrite after being caught fishing. “I’m sorry if I displeased you, Master.” With a proper sale, she’d transfer the title of Master to only her new owner but she hadn’t been properly sold. This use with Marka was for show, as it was with Gram. They weren’t, nor would they ever be, her Masters. But, men liked hearing the title no matter how much they said they didn’t.

“Save all that Master shit for Gram. I’m not a Master, I’m merely Marka.”

She snapped the pants shut. He was shrewd, and she’d overstepped her bounds with him already. She’d have to be more careful in the future.

“Do they fit?” He rummaged again.

“They do.” The top was a little loose around the waistband, which made it slide around, the deep V-neck possessing the ability to display bared cleavage. The cloth also tickled her nipples, pebbling them.

He handed her a few more items that he’d picked out from his stash. “These should fit too, then.”

“Thank you, Master.”

He shook his head. “Marka.”

“Marka,” she said softly.

The door opened, and Luban strutted in. Marka's eyes deepened into a black so deep, it looked like the far reaches of space. She almost expected stars to shine in those depths. As Luban came to stand by him, Marka's erection came shooting up again. Luban's own robes became tented.

Gram followed Luban in, walking slowly behind him. His face looked relieved as he surveyed her. "Good, you found her something." His eyes took in the tunic, his nose wrinkling up. "Don't you have something..."

Marka interrupted, "I'm broader in the chest. Everything is going to hang like that on her."

"Dammit." Gram's gaze centered on her breasts.

She moved her torso back and forth, making the tunic shake, and the rubbing continued across her sensitive nipples. Wearing clothes was so different than going naked. They made her skin tingle with energy. She'd worn them as a child before she'd come to be a Delicant. Maybe if she hadn't been so old when she'd come to the House of 9000 Pleasures, she wouldn't have missed them so much. Now, she was out of practice with wearing clothing.

Marka waved a small hand toward the top. "It could be taken in. But we'd have to stop at a station."

Luban skimmed a hand down Marka's back, eliciting a slight shiver from him. Electricity hummed between the two. "She won't be here that long. She's payment from Reli."

Charm looked at her feet, pretending not to hear. They'd never make it to port to sell her. That was the only reason she didn't protest the clothes. She'd have to make sure they came off before Reli saw them. She shuddered. He hated seeing her dressed and enjoyed her punishments too much.

Marka's eyes narrowed to slits. He'd seen her shiver, the astute part-elf that he was.



Luban folded his arms across his broad chest. "Time for you to go."

Marka thwapped Luban's arm, making a noise of displeasure. "That's rude."

"Well, it is." Luban shifted his weight, not looking sorry at all.

Marka turned to Gram and Charm. "Excuse him. He does get grumpy when he's horny."

"So that's why his temper shows all the time." Gram arched a brow.

Luban let out a low growl, causing Gram to chuckle.

"We do need to be going." Gram took the arm holding the clothes. "Come on, Charm. We need to talk."

\* \* \* \* \*

Gram headed toward his room, only to switch directions to the infirmary. He needed to talk to Charm, but first, he needed to talk to Yon. The medic would have the answers concerning the Delicant.

Silently, Charm followed behind a step or two. An odd feeling settled in his chest. Damn, if he didn't like her there with him. What would life be like with a companion around? Someone to talk to? Share with? And fuck?

At the sliding infirmary doors, she pressed into his back. Instantly, his cock thickened.

He waved her in ahead of him. "Charm, meet our Doc. Yon, this is Charm. She'll be staying with us a few days."

Yon bowed. "I'm at your service."

She bowed back. "If my Master wills it, I'm at your service, too, while I'm here."

"Not forever?" Dozz asked, as he lumbered his way to his big hairy feet.

"No." Gram glanced the Delicant's way. "Not forever."

"Why?" Dozz's wide brown eyes didn't blink. "Don't ya like her?"

Absently, Gram rubbed the ache in his neck that always seemed to appear when Dozz asked too many questions. "She can't, is all." No way in Hades he'd mention he'd have to sell the Delicant to pay the crew. The little bear would never understand.

"I don't like that answer." Dozz folded his beefy, furry arms across his stout chest. "You always say that when you don't want me to know nothing."

"Buddy, can you do me a favor right now? Later, we can talk more about Charm leaving."

Dozz's bottom lip stuck out. "What?"

"Take her to the kitchen and get you both something to eat."

The cub's eyes rounded. "I can go to the kitchen by myself?"

"No. Charm will be there with you." He leaned over and pressed his lips to her ear. "Don't let him overeat. He'll puke his guts out."

"Yes, Master," she whispered back, sending a shiver to tighten his balls.

Dozz stomped a foot. "I never get to go by myself nowhere."

"No fits." He looked hard at the cub. "If you have any trouble from Nirk, call me." He walked the two into the hallway and looked into Charm's curious eyes. "Commbboxes are located at the end of every corridor and in every room. Press this and say my name. I can hear you anywhere on the ship. You don't have to yell. And Nirk is our general asshole."

Dozz grinned and took Charm's hand. "I can't say asshole."

Gram sighed. "Dozz, once you two have eaten, take her back to my room and go to bed."

The cub nodded. "Come on, Charm. I'm in charge."

She turned back for a moment. "You aren't hungry, Master?"

His gaze lingered on the swell of her breasts. Yes, he was hungry, just not for food. He shook his head and walked back to join Yon.

The android wore his permanently blank expression.

“Doc, I need a crash course on Delicants.” He placed a thigh over a stool.

Yon arched an eyebrow. “What is to explain? They are meant to be fucked.”

“Yeah.” Gram grunted. “Look, I want her to be comfortable until we can get to an auction house.” He’d have to do some research and find one that Delicants were treated fairly at. He’s sold many things in his life, but never another living being.

“We?”

He glared. At times, the android had as many or more questions than Dozz. “Explain Delicants to me. I get enough questions from Dozz.”

“To make her comfortable” -- Yon settled onto a nearby stool opposite Gram -- “I suggest fucking her.”

Gram sucked in a breath and released it. That wouldn’t be a difficult task. “Can you do better than that? I know she’s a sex slave.”

“Delicants are here for the express purpose of pleasing their Master sexually.”

Gram nodded, encouraging the android to go on to something Gram didn’t already know.

“A Master’s wish is a Delicant’s world. It is their only reasons for living.”

Gram frowned, folding his arms. He could deal with that. She’d only be here for a short time.

“A Master’s responsibility is to think only of the slave’s well-being.”

*Protection.* Now that he could handle, too.

“Rarely happens that way, though, for most of them. Statistics say that seventy-five percent of all Delicants are abused by those in charge of their care in one way or another.” Yon folded his arms. “A well-trained Delicant can be anything a Master wishes of them. A companion to share with. A slave can be orifices without a voice. A Delicant will gladly

allow their Master to beat them, and say thank you afterward, if that's what is required to please."

Gram held Yon's gaze. He didn't like the image of Charm being beaten. Hades, he didn't like the thought of anyone being beaten. He'd lived through too many as a child.

"Cane. Whip." Yon shook his head. "A Delicant will be a urinal if it's wished of them."

Now, that got his full attention. No way on Hades would another piss in his mouth or anywhere else on his body. A violent shudder racked his frame.

"Captain, I don't think you understand. Oftentimes, power, control of another, can lead into sadistic scenes. A slave will do anything. *Anything* for the one they consider their Master."

"The one they consider a master?"

"Yes. Some Delicants can adjust to new Masters easily. Others have bonded with one and will never adjust." The android shrugged a shoulder. "It also depends on how long the school had them to train. The younger they start, the more ingrained the behaviors."

He closed his eyes. Charm had come willingly enough. The experience hadn't seemed traumatic to her. She'd seemed to adjust well to being his slave. His cock rose up to concur. How many masters had she been through? How long had she been with Reli? He'd look at her papers soon.

"Anything else?"

"I suggest, Captain, you ask her likes and dislikes. It might help determine what state she's in. If she can't tell you, only wanting what you like, her Delicant nature is ingrained and natural to her. If she can tell you, it may mean she still has some free will left."

That had been in his plans, too. Bastard that he was, he wanted to know her likes so he could give them to her. An image of her kneeling before him, asking him to smack her ass blindsided him.

Recalling Yon's earlier words, he shifted uncomfortably. *Hades, don't let her like to drink piss.*

"I was going to assign Dozz-sitting to her. What do you think?"

"Yes. Get her involved on the ship. That'll help settle her." Yon shifted as if mimicking him. "And, it will be good for Dozz, too."

He searched the android's face. Had he heard a slight change in the medic's voice? He'd swear the android looked almost amused.

Gram stood. "Alright, thanks, Doc. I've gotta get busy."

Yon stood, following suit. "Anytime, Captain."

\* \* \* \* \*

Charm followed behind the bustling bear cub after a brief stop at Gram's quarters, which were on the way. His incessant questions soon tired her out. She didn't know why space was so black and cold or why women didn't have cacetes. She couldn't think with all these questions, and she needed a plan. Blowing out a breath, she looked straight into his brown, beady eyes. "Tell you what, Dozz. Why don't we play a game?"

He bounded around her feet. "Let's! Let's! What is it?"

"The quiet game. You have to be as quiet as you can. First one who talks, loses." They'd played this often at the House of 9000 Pleasures. Delicants were known for being silent. Only no one would lash the cub when he spoke out of turn.

His nose wrinkled. "Uh, okay."

She smiled, holding a finger to her lips. "Bet I win."

"Bet you don't."

She arched a brow at him.

"We hadn't started yet!" His mouth drew up in a pout.

"Fine. We'll start at one, two, three." She continued following him through the twisting corridors. Most of them were tiny. Some of the wider ones had stuff stashed in them.

The silence gave her time to think. Here she was, stuck spending time with the only other member of the crew she wouldn't fuck. Even she wouldn't stoop that low. Dozz was a child. Gram's adopted son, for all practical purposes.

That hadn't been in the file.

He displayed so much patience with the little cub. More than her own father had ever shown her. That filled her with emotions she couldn't quite name.

Shaking her head, she shook off those sappy thoughts. In her line of work, she couldn't afford to be that way. Time to focus on what she was there to do.

Luban and Marka were mated, so she couldn't fuck them. She'd have to find other routes for getting the crew so worked up, they wouldn't notice other things going on. Like a ship on their tail until it was too late. Like her disabling shields and weapons until it was too late.

She needed to find out the correct time to see how much time she had left.

The kitchen was sure to have a timepiece. From going on board, she had forty-eight hours. And it passed quickly. She also needed to find the bridge and ferret out the most vulnerable member of the crew. Next, she'd see when they'd be on the bridge. There was so much to be done. And, her head hurt from all Dozz's earlier questions.

Rounding another corner, the cub stopped short. A man leaned up against the wall. His eyes were the color of burnished copper, his hair dark and long to match his clothes. Several weapons were hidden, the bulges imperceptible to most. She'd had to take all weapons off of men at some point without touching them, so she always visually checked every logical place for men to hide them. Her heart pounded as his eyes surveyed her, while his mouth twisted

up into a cruel sneer. It was only sheer force of will that kept her standing where she was. She wanted to turn and run back to Gram.

Back to *Gram*?

She had lost it. But, somehow, he'd keep her safe. Why she thought that, she didn't know. After all, he was getting rid of her soon.

Instead of running, she took a deep breath, ducking her head down out of habit.

"Hey, little shit, who's the bitch?"

Sneaking a look up, she saw his gaze focus on her breasts. Even hidden under the cloth, his gaze centered on them. Ah, yes, a man she could manipulate. She'd found her weak link. Moistening her lips, she made sure he saw as she pushed out her breasts to their full perkage.

Dozz didn't answer. He held his finger up to his lips.

"Shithead, I was talking to you." The man's voice raised a few octaves.

Dozz's lip quivered, but he still didn't say anything.

Charm shot him a look. He'd better talk, or the man would give him hell.

The man's eyes, hell, his whole face, tightened with anger. "Answer the fucking question." He advanced on Dozz, big feet clomping, the sound echoing.

Charm bit her lip, surveying up and down the wide corridor they were in. She'd known men prone to violence. This man had that look about him. No one was around to intervene. Dozz wanted to win the fucking silence game. *No. Answer him.* She shouldn't intervene.

The man kicked at the cowering cub. He didn't make contact, but clanged right beside him. "Answer me, you dumb shit."

Charm spoke quietly, her head down. "Talk." She didn't dare say more, but the word made Dozz the winner in their stupid little game.

The man's head swung around toward her.

"Ah ha ha ha, I won. I won. You talked before me." Dozz forgot the danger in the moment, jubilation radiant on his face.

The man didn't move his gaze from Charm, but kicked again beside Dozz, making them both jump. "Won what, shithead?"

"You said bad words, Nirk. And kicked at me." Dozz's lips puckered in a giant frown.

"I'll do more than that, shithead. I'll make you into a fur rug. I been needing one of those."

"Gam wouldn't let you." The cub's chin stuck out in pride.

"I don't need to ask *Ingram* permission for anything I do." The man pulled out a knife and made slashing motions with it.

Charm shivered internally. A Delicant lived in fear of being cut beyond salability. If you weren't sellable, then no one had use for you. There were worse things than being a Delicant. They all had heard the rumors of the Cobblestone Harems. At least, Delicants had a chance of finding someone to take care of them. A good Master. There, in the Cobblestone Harems, caged up as if they were an animal, the unfortunate soul to be put in one, had things stuck up in them until they died. Death came quickly but not nearly quick enough.

"Don't you, now." The voice came from the other end of the corridor. All three of their heads swiveled to Gram walking around the bend.

Charm's heart began beating a rapid tempo at the sight of him. Plus, her body sagged in relief. Why, she didn't want to think about.

"Tell me, Nirk, since when did you make Captain of this boat?"

Nirk's eyes blazed with anger and hate so fierce, Dozz shrank back from it. "I'm not Captain." Left unsaid, but implied was, "but I should be." He took a long look at his knife before resheathing it on his belt.

"I didn't think so. As *I* am Captain. You *do* have to ask permission. And, I've told you about harassing Dozz."



“Yeah, you tell him, Gam.” Dozz grinned, puffing out his chest.

Rivalry between Nirk and Gram. That could be the most interesting thing she’d found yet. Yes, a lot of flirting with Nirk, designed to push Gram over the edge. His woman showing up in Nirk’s room at night. Those things would get a plan rolling along fast.

Her chest constricted at the thought of following through with them.

She looked at Nirk, who scowled. Not the worst she’d ever fucked. If only she could get past his cruelty. Though she had no choice.

“I see you’ve met Nirk. The resident...” Gram broke off, looking at Dozz, who took that as a sign to jump closer. “We don’t know what he does yet. The universe is waiting on baited breath to find out.”

“Who’s the bitch?” Nirk thumbed in her direction, ignoring Gram’s comment.

“She’s a Delicant.” Gram ruffled Dozz’s wayward hair. Over the bear’s head he turned a hard gaze on Nirk. “I’m only going to warn you so many times over name-calling.”

Charm ducked her head back down. Affection. Genuine affection. Not something she’d had anywhere. Her stomach clenched, even as she shoved the knot back down. No use longing for something she’d never ever have.

“You two go on to the kitchen now.”

Dozz took several steps away, almost to the end of the corridor before he realized Charm hadn’t followed. To go forward, she had to pass too close to Nirk, who instead of moving back, stepped closer to her.

“How the fuck did we get a Delicant? Or you took the fucking money and bought yourself a pussy? You better share. That pussy’s part mine.” Nirk’s hand went down to his sidearm.

“If you’d been paying attention, you’d know the last gig paid me with her. Next stop, and I’ll get the crew’s money.”

"You damn well better. And, as I said, part of that pussy is mine. Until I get my money."

Sauntering over to her, he reached his hand down, slipping against her chocota, stroking her through cloth. Instinct widened her legs as his hand pushed up against her, but her body stiffened at the contact.

*Shit.* She'd get beaten for that show of unease. Her eyes glanced wildly around.

A click sounded from behind Nirk's head.

He froze, but didn't remove his hand. She tried to shift him away from her chocota. He pinched with two other fingers, she managed to stay quiet, and another click sounded.

"Take your hand off her." Gram's voice came steely from behind them.

Swallowing, she didn't move as Nirk hesitated, but did what he'd been asked.

He gave no ground, but turned to face Gram, getting his smaller, shorter frame in Gram's space.

Gram had a bored look on his face.

"Why? She's my pussy, my payment. Why can't I fuck her until we dock?"

Gram shook his head. "You'll get your money. She's off limits."

Dozz danced from his position far down the corridor. He hadn't been able to see what Nirk did to her, but had heard the phrase muttered by Gram. "Off limits. Off limits."

"Shut up, shit..."

Gram tipped the laser pistol. The safety still wasn't clicked back on.

Nirk growled. Then, with a brighter look, he raised his hand, swinging it back and forth. The slight musky scent of Charm's juices he'd picked up from rubbing against her caught her nose.

"Pussy juice. My favorite." Nirk raised his hand, licking down his fingers, a satisfied grin on his face.

A tic worked in Gram's jaw. "Get out of here, Nirk. Before I shove you out the damn air lock."

Smirking, Nirk took off down the corridor in the opposite direction of Dozz. "See you later, little pussy. We'll get together again, don't you fret."

Gram ran a hand over his face.

Gram had saved her. He'd defended her. Warmth spread down to her toes over his actions. No one had ever before interceded like that for her.

It's only because he doesn't want others touching his property.

Yet, something told her he'd protected her because that's what Gram did. Protect his people. Already, she was seeing that she'd never known anyone quite like Ingram.

"He's a bad man. He calls himself a bad...with a word I can't say. Gam calls him a word I can't say and hole." Dozz nodded to Charm as she made it to him without Nirk blocking her way.

Gram stayed where he was.

She didn't comment, only looked down at her feet. Maybe it wouldn't be as easy working with Nirk as she thought.

"Go get food before you find more trouble. I'm going up to the bridge."

### Chapter Three

In the kitchen, Dozz whirled around like a *steggo* on wheels, a fast moving robot. “We have all kinds of rations.” He began naming all the flavors off. Nothing but reconstituted food, but it would do. It was better than what she’d had back on Reli’s ship.

She helped fix some food that the cub inhaled down, then wanted more. He could talk and chew at the same time, too.

The timepiece sat above one of the reconstituters, which provided the juices to make the dried out stuff eatable. She surveyed her plate of... She couldn’t remember what she had, but it was mostly edible.

The kitchen was huge, several reconstituters, storage space. Everything was neat and shiny. Someone took care of this boat. There was mess, yes, but not comparable to her ship. She’d seen no trash or rotting food left out like on board Reli’s ship. They’d once had a crewmate die and lay there for weeks before he’d been shot out an air lock.

“Charm?” Dozz spoke softly, a tone lower than his usual babble.

“Yes, Dozz?” She took a big bite, instantly regretting it. She’d stick to little ones from now on. The flavor was more palatable that way.

“Am I stupid?”

Her throat constricted, still trying to get the bite down. Where had that come from? And why the fuck did he ask her? “What?”

“Am I stupid?”

“No!” Talkative and rambunctious, yes, he was. But she hadn’t seen anything that indicated his brain didn’t work right. “What gave you that...” She closed her eyes as it hit her. Opening them, she stared at him. “Nirk.” The bastard.

“He always says I am.”

“Well, you’re not.” She patted his chubby hand.

“Gam says I’m not either. He says I’m a part of the crew. He even made a tag for me, see?” He pulled out an identification tag with “Dozz” etched in one side, “*Bruiser*” etched on the other.

Her chocota poked up and begged at the man’s name. She shifted taking the pressure off her swollen sex. “Gram’s a pretty bright guy.”

He was. She’d seen the books he had in his quarters. Not many star ship captains had them. Most didn’t know how to read that well. A voice activated computer was all they needed to pilot. His intelligence intrigued her. Something sparked in his eyes that she liked.

But his intelligence would make things harder for her to do what she had to do. She had to get on the bridge and disable enough systems within -- her eyes surveyed the timepiece -- forty-three hours. Then, Reli would come.

“He is. He loves me. He wouldn’t tell me if I was stupid. I thought you were new. You would.”

She patted his hand again. “I’m talking straight with you. You aren’t stupid. Nirk’s an ass...hole.” She cringed at saying words that Dozz wasn’t supposed to use or hear.

“You said Gam’s word for him.” Dozz laughed, tickled, rolling out of his chair.

She shook her head at his antics. Somehow, being with him, knowing he was someone she’d never have sex with, freed her to make mistakes with him. Not even a Delicant would

have sex with a child. It was *proibido*. The one thing listed in the sales papers, spelled out as not allowed.

"I like you, Charm." The cub hopped to his feet. "Come on, I'd better get you back."

She had to chuckle at his "all business" mannerisms, as if he were the protector. He'd be doing handsprings before they hit the second corridor.

"Remind me to show you a secret place tomorrow. Where I keep my special stuff."

She nodded, putting dishes in the sink. Tomorrow, she'd still be on board and his friend. It was only twenty some hours afterward that they'd all want to kill her.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the bridge, Gram spun his chair around to face Hake. "What's keeping you here? Go get some rest."

"You sure, Cap?"

"Yeah. I'll set the computer to call you in four hours after I head to bed."

The Hawkfin smiled, showing even teeth. "Not sure if I had that pretty pussy waiting in my room, I'd be here."

Gram thumbed to the door. "Get some rest. And call Luban to get his ass down here, again." His own call had been ignored. No doubt the lovers were still fucking.

Hake nodded. At the door, he pressed the commbox's button. "Marka, get your mouth off Luban's cock and get him to the bridge. Captain's orders."

Gram shook his head, a grin tugging his lips. Good thing Dozz would be asleep by now.

Ignoring the vast star-filled space that spread out in front of his viewing window, he flipped on the computer. "Yes, Captain?" the feminine cool voice whispered.

"Show me a female's naked human body." Like many men, he knew very little about females. Their world was overrun by males. Males outnumbered females a thousand to one.

Delicants were strictly for the wealthy. For all his bluster about liking pussy juice, Nirk had no more experience with females than he did.

“Normally, it’s Marka who wants to explore erotic images. Please look directly into the screen.”

Gram did so, only to feel a moment of strong energy.

“I’ve collected your preferences. Please sit back.”

He grunted, before opening his water bottle.

A hologram woman, who looked remarkably like Charm, appeared right in front of him with spread legs. His mouth went dry. He’d never delved into the hologram programs before.

“Captain before you is your perfect type. Already your body temperature has risen.”

He could almost pretend the Delicant stood there. He swallowed. “Can a humanoid female have an orgasm as a male does?”

The woman sat back on the computer helm, her pussy clearly exposed. He shifted as his cock stirred.

“Yes, Captain. A human female has a clitoris. It swells much the way a male’s penis does. Would you like to practice? I assure you, the hologram feels real.”

“What I’d like is the real deal.”

Oh yeah, as pleasant as the hologram was, Charm was incomparable. And since when had she become his ideal woman? Especially considering he’d not seen any other females.

“As you wish, captain.” The hologram disappeared to have an image appear on the computer screen. “Females need stimulus to achieve climax. At a certain point, she will climax from the pressure.”

He sipped his water, doing his best not to think of Charm.

“Captain, my data shows another spike in your temperature.”

He exhaled harshly. His cock was stiff.

"Her clitoris, or clit as it's sometimes called, will pulse. Her vagina muscles will clench as her body tenses in climax. Unlike a man who must have some recovery time between, a woman can have multiple orgasms in rapid succession."

He shifted uncomfortably. Maybe he should have gone to Yon for advice.

"There's also an internal pleasure point for women." The computer droned on.

What he wouldn't give to discover Charm's pleasure point. He took a long swallow. Hades, he was hot. And hard. He was tempted to jerk off, but not with the computer watching.

"It can be reached and stimulated by a penis, toy, or fist."

He choked, spewing water all over the image's breasts. He coughed and wiped his mouth.

"Oh, fuck." He coughed once more, his chest aching.

"Are you all right, Captain?"

He nodded. "Did you say fist?" Quickly, he used the tail of his shirt to wipe the screen.

"Yes, Captain. Some females enjoy it."

He looked down at his balled hand. Hades. One was as big as a *Cherr* hammer.

"Will there be anything else, Captain?"

"No." He'd learned enough. The rest was up to experimentation. He turned the monitor off as the bridge doors opened behind him.

"G, I'll have you know his mouth was on my cock. Why is it you only call when I'm the one having a good time?" Marka folded his arms in front of his chest.

"Just psychic, I guess." Gram rolled his eyes.

Luban followed his lover.



Gram stood, turning the shuttle on auto pilot and setting the alarm for Hake. "Luban, there's a Universal Police Station five hours out. I need you to go and find out which slave market has had the fewest complaints filed against it."

"This is about the fuck slave, isn't it?" Marka asked.

"Charm." He narrowed his eyes on the Halfling. "Her name is Charm." He urged them all into the corridor.

"I hate riding in a space jumper," Luban growled. "My balls freeze."

Marka clasped his shoulder. "I'll be waiting back here to warm them up."

The three walked down to the bowels of the shuttle where the space jumper was kept. "I've already programmed the flight from the main frame." He stopped at the small room off the bay to stick his head inside. "Hey, Smitt, square Luban away for a space jump."

The mechanic rolled out of his bunk.

"Da...damn do...doz...dozed off waiting." Smitt scrubbed at his face and head to wake himself up as he stumbled by them toward the secured space jumper.

Gram thumped Luban on the shoulder. "I'll see you in about twelve hours." He left the two to say good-bye to each other, heading off to get some sleep.

As soon as the doors opened to his room, Charm raised up on her knees on the middle of his bed.

Blood rushed into his cock, swelling it to fill out his pants. "I thought you might be asleep."

"You didn't tell me to sleep, Master. I waited for you."

His gaze lingered on her extended nipples, slowly lowering to rest on her pussy and clearly exposed clit. He could get used to the way she sat, with her delicate pink flesh available to be greedily admired.

Yes, being a Master had its perks.

He unbuttoned his shirt, tossing it on the chair.

Charm's eyes were cautious while she eased first one leg, then the other, off the bed and retrieved his shirt. Carefully, she folded it and placed it neatly on the chair.

He grunted, sitting on the edge of the bed. He made a move to pull his boot off, only to have her drop on her knees before him.

Eyes lowered, she clasped his foot in her hands and removed his boot.

Blood rushed in his ears. Oh fuck, he could get used to this. To Charm.

She removed the other, then his socks. Next, she used a firm grip to massage his feet.

He groaned, leaning back on his elbows.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

Her hands were steady and well practiced.

His balls tingled from the pressure she applied to his feet.

"Does this please you, Master?"

"Oh, yeah." He let his head drop back as slow minutes passed. He'd never imagined someone touching his feet, let alone massaging them. Firm strokes applied needed pressure, wringing another moan from him. She moved on to his toes.

His cock ached. What a turn-on.

"Does this please you, Master?"

Abruptly, he lifted his head to frown at her. Her eyes were now closed; she massaged almost automatically.

"Do you enjoy doing this?"

She blinked, her eyes opened fully. "What, Master?"

"I said, 'do you enjoy it?' Rubbing my feet, that is."

"Oh, yes, Master, if it pleases you." Her gaze now held a hint of panic.

He sat up. "Get on the bed."

“Yes, Master.” She scrambled onto the bunk, leaving him to think no one had ever moved so fast. “Did I displease you, Master?”

Glancing over his shoulder, he watched her kneel on her hands and knees. She leaned forward and pressed the side of her face to the bed.

He inhaled sharply. Hades, what a fine ass she had. In this position, her pussy peeked out from underneath.

Slowly, he forced himself to look at her face. She was more than a body for his hunger. She was a person. He needed to remember that. He noted in her position, she could see his movements.

*Fear.* He could almost smell it. What was she afraid of? “You all right, Charm?”

“Yes, Master.”

“You didn’t displease me.” Damn, but communication wasn’t easy. Especially since she tended to respond with “yes” and “no.” “Um...” He waved a hand. “Why don’t you sit up?”

She scrambled around to sit on her ass, legs drawn up to reveal her pussy. Need drew his balls up.

“I’ll be right back.” He wanted to give her pleasure in return and had a plan in mind.

Quickly, he left her to make his way to the infirmary. When he opened the door, Yon spun around in his chair. “Captain?”

“I need some lotions. Something that doesn’t stink.”

The android stood up and went into the storage room without a word. When he returned, he surprised Gram. “Here is some lotion, but might I recommend this lube for anal sex?”

“Anal sex?” He grabbed both bottles from the medic to turn away.

“Yes. Luban and Marka prefer it. And as much as they fuck, they should know.”

*Hades. Anal sex.* His cock twitched, letting him know he wasn't opposed to the idea. But, it was Charm's pussy that intrigued him. Yes, the thought of her clenching pussy hastened his steps.

Long strides carried him back to the Delicant. He sucked in a breath, his nostrils flaring, at finding her in the exact position he'd left her in. Pink pussy exposed. His cock went rigid. Damn, but if her pussy didn't look slick.

He tossed the bottle of lube on the desk. "Stretch out and get comfortable."

"Yes, Master." She eased over onto her back, placing her feet flat on the bed, opening her pussy wide. The rapid pulse in her throat belied her serene facial expression.

He didn't like the way her pulse beat a frantic pace. She feared him. He didn't like the thought one bit. What hell had some Master made her suffer?

Gram wanted only to give her pleasure. To only leave her with good memories.

He squeezed a glob of lotion into his hand and sniffed. It smelled fruity. He guessed that was okay.

Her palms clenched and unclenched as he climbed up on the bed. He picked up her right foot in his hands.

Charm's hazel eyes shielded over with thick lashes.

Gently, he began to massage her foot, much the same way she had his. Once he got the hang of it, he increased the pressure.

A soft sound, something akin to a moan, escaped her closed lips.

"Feel nice?" His cock pressed aching along the cloth of his pants. He increased the compression of his grip. "Do you enjoy this?"

"If it pleases you, Master, it pleases me."

He growled. *What an answer.* He wanted to know her likes, needed to know her dislikes. "You'll be with me only a few days. I want you to be comfortable with me."

He ran his thumbs up the center of her foot, applying a deep stroke.

Her breath caught, and she shifted her ass.

“Is that a yes? Or a no?”

“If it pleases you, Master.” Her voice grew husky. “I like it very much.”

His lips curled into a slight grin. “If you like it, I want to hear your pleasure.” He applied yet more pressure on her toes. “And if you don’t like something I do, I want to hear your discomfort.”

“Yes, Master.” She panted. Her nipples extended.

He licked his lips. Lowering his lashes, he gazed down at her pussy. It was wet. Her clit had swelled.

The sight was another turn-on.

Gram released one foot and picked up the other, this time applying lotion to her skin. Taking his time, he worked it in.

She moaned; her hands fisted and unfisted.

With a steady grip he massaged the sole of her foot, lingering over her heel and toes. When he could take no more of the play, he released her.

His cock was one raw ache. Climax only a touch away. Teeth clenched, he maneuvered away.

Her wide gaze followed him. “Master, let me ease you.”

He sucked his lower lip between his teeth on a groan. Damn, her comment tightened his balls.

What would it be like to have her there, always taking care of his needs? Allowing him to meet her needs? Did she want to be sold once more? *Protection*. He could offer it to her. What would one more responsibility matter?

She was already moving. Nimble hands unbuttoned the buttons on his pants.

Precome glistened on the head of his cock. Her tongue darted out, removing it. His hips arched.

*Oh, fuck, no.*

Stopping her, he caught her chin in his hand. "Straight up, did you or did you not like the foot rub?"

Her thick lashes lowered as she trembled. "Yes, Master. It was nice. Now let me please you."

Satisfied, Gram released her and lay on his back, allowing her to slide his pants down and off his feet. Maybe she wasn't so bonded to Reli or steeped in her traditions that she'd never know her own wants. He wanted to know her desires. To fulfill them.

Her mouth engulfed the head of his cock, causing his hips to arch.

"Your pussy. I want to see your pussy."

She continued to suck as she twisted around to bring her fine ass toward his face.

Like a seasoned athlete, she raised one leg in the air and continued to suck. Her knee and calf directed toward the ceiling.

Gram stared in awe. He liked the tight tendons in her parted thighs and her gaping pussy. How long could she hold the position? A part of him was tempted to find out. *A Master had the power to force a Delicant to do anything.*

Closing his eyes, he breathed through the hot pleasure of her sucking.

Eyes slowly opening, he examined her pussy. Reaching up, he ran one finger along her slit, from her puckered asshole to her opened pussy. Her ass seemed dry to his touch, which didn't dip inside, but her channel was damp even to fingers that didn't wander. He ran his finger along her seam again.

Her clit swelled from the teasing touch.

Using two fingers, he pressed onto her swollen clit. He rubbed it back and forth. Charm sucked harder on his cock. He liked the effect, so he repeated the action. His

movements grew rougher as he pressed and rubbed her slippery clit. He eagerly watched her pussy pool liquid.

Her mouth frantically sucked his rigid cock.

“Do you like this?” His voice was as rough as his fingers toying with her clit.

Her mouth engulfed his cock to the base. She moaned.

He grabbed her knee to support her. The muscles along her inner thigh remained tight. “Tell me, do you like this?” He pressed against her, frantically rubbing her extended clit back and forth.

“Yes, Master.” She gasped in between deep sucks on his needy flesh.

His hips lifted, he squeezed his ass in hopes of fighting back the climax that she urged from him. “Don’t make me come yet.” He wanted, needed to take this time with Charm.

Instantly, she stopped sucking to lick his cock up and down, all the while making soft moans.

Noting the trembling in her legs, he encouraged her to relax. “Straddle my chest.”

Without breaking contact, she swung her leg over.

He ran rough hands up the back of her thighs to grab her ass, massaging it, earning more moans from her.

Her tongue lapped at his cock from tip to base.

He shoved his middle finger into her pussy and watched as it disappeared. Tight. He hadn’t imagined it’d be so tight. Her muscles clenched around his buried finger. He ground his fist against her pussy before pulling it slowly out. One finger slowly fucked her. His digit was soaked, his folded fingers were, as well.

He added a second finger and ground his fist onto her hot pussy. So damn tight.

She whimpered.

His balls tightened.

Over and over, he fucked her tight, wet pussy with his fingers.

He removed them to stare at her pretty swollen flesh, fascinated by her outer and inner lips. Using his tongue, he cleaned his fingers and enjoyed her heavy taste.

He closed his eyes, unable to hold back any longer. "Make me come."

She took him into her mouth. Her body rolled forward and back as she sucked for all she was worth.

He groaned as it boiled up, erupting from his balls.

He grabbed her ass as his come shot into her throat. She swallowed pulse after pulse.

Once his climax eased, she continued to suck and lick until his breathing slowed down, but didn't release him completely.

*Oh, fuck, yes.* Already, he could feel his cock hardening once more.

*Her turn.*

He eased his middle finger back into her tight pussy. He fucked her, paying attention to her actions as he did so.

She liked it. Her mouth worked harder on his cock as he fucked her. He added another finger. Two fingers pumped while he arched his hips, his cock now rigid.

He liked how wet his fingers and hand got. He slid in another finger, and she squirmed. And moaned.

"You like this? My fingers fucking you?" Sliding his fingers out, he eased only one back in and used his thumb to press her clit. "Do you?"

She gasped, "If it pleases you, Master."

He ground his thumb into her clit, teasing the bundle of nerves back and forth until there was no doubt about like. A flush covered her ass.

*Dammit.* Still he wanted a straight answer from her lips as well as her body. "No coming."



“Yes.” She whimpered, between sucks on his cock. “Yes, Master.”

He shoved a second finger back into her slick folds and increased the thrusts to match the rubbing on her clit.

She moaned, her mouth working hard on his hard cock. Need curled hot.

He closed his eyes. Hades, she was going to have him erupting again.

*Oh, fuck, no.* Inexperienced as he was, he did have some stamina.

Her pussy was so swollen and wet, her clit so firm, he didn’t know how she hadn’t come yet.

Faster and faster, he fucked her, until his arm ached from the activity.

Sweat beaded his brow, finely coating his chest.

“Do you want to come?”

She moaned, his cock buried in her throat.

He flicked her clit once and stilled his fingers. “Do you want to come?”

“If it pleases you, Master.” Her head bobbed on his engorged flesh.

Balls tight, he removed his fingers to grab her ass.

She gasped, slurping his cock.

His purposely kept his touch rough. He lifted his head up from the bed and sucked her clit into his mouth.

She moaned, wiggled her ass in his grasp. Growling he hung on tighter.

Quickly, hoping to get her to come before he erupted, he jabbed his tongue repeatedly into her pussy. He lapped her taste up.

Charm groaned, and for the first time grabbed the base of his cock in her palm.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

*No.* His toes curled. He wouldn’t come, not yet.

He arched his hips. “Don’t make me come,” he groaned between his teeth.

She sucked his head back into her mouth.

Gram followed suit, slowly drew her clit into his mouth, and sucked for all he was worth.

She groaned around a mouthful of his cock. His toes curled once more as her body tensed and an orgasm tore through her. He kept sucking, fighting off his own climax until she quivered in a mass above him.

Gently, he patted the right cheek of her ass. "No more." He wouldn't overuse her. She'd allowed him to come, and he'd now returned the favor. Best of all, he'd learned some of her likes.

Trembling, she crawled over him, to sit so he could see her wet, still swollen pussy.

Her eyes accused him of something he couldn't understand until she lowered her gaze.

Cock still aching for release, he pushed himself off the bed and stumbled into the shower. Turning on the vapors, he squirted some soap on his hand. Three strokes later, he shot come on the shower wall.

He grunted with each blast.

Breathing hard, he braced a hand on the door, before easing onto a corner bench. His hand shook while he punched in a command for the sauna to heat. Resting his head back, he closed his eyes.

*Charm had come hard.* He'd made the Delicant come in his mouth. A good feeling eased its way into his chest. Her climaxing was something he could get used to.

How much of a bastard would he be if he kept her around a little longer than necessary?

\* \* \* \* \*

"You smell like sex on a stick." The voice shook Charm from a deep sleep.

She forced her eyes open to see Marka standing at the edge of her bed. “What? Where’s Master?” Her head wouldn’t start processing information, leaving her in a fog. The night came back to her. Ingram had given her an incredible orgasm, but then he’d gone and shot a load in the shower. She sighed. What a mystery he was.

“You smell like sex on a stick.” Marka grinned widely at her as he repeated it. “We’re having breakfast in the kitchen. I thought maybe you’d want something to eat.”

Charm’s eyes widened as realization shook her. She’d gone to sleep after being with Gram, and slept all night. She never ever did that. Masters woke her, she had things to do or she had bad dreams. It had been so long since she’d slept through the night, she was amazed at how much energy she had. She’d had no nightmares in Gram’s bed. Why did that make her belly flutter?

But she’d lost so much time. Her heart pounded in her ears as her breathing tried to catch up. She should have been up when he left, looking for rosters, seeing when she could catch someone on the bridge who could be manipulated.

“Are you okay?” Marka frowned.

“Fine. Yeah, breakfast would be great. Will Master be there?”

“If you mean Gram, he sure will. Everyone will be there except our pilot, Hake, more than likely. He doesn’t join us much.”

“Oh, good.” She tumbled out of Gram’s bed, pushing aside the covers.

“Uh, hon, might be good to put on some clothes.” Marka waved his hand to her naked body.

“Oh, uh, yeah, right.”

“Shower, too. You know where the kitchen is? Dozz took you there. Why don’t you come on down after you dress and shower?”

"I think I can find it." She had a great sense of direction, but they didn't know that. She could play off being lost if she got caught. Something occurred to her. "Does Hake stay on the bridge a lot?"

Marka had turned for the door. He turned back, his dark elfin eyes unreadable. "Yes, he does. Why do you ask?"

She shrugged. Her mind wasn't quite awake and able to finesse yet. Maybe she'd slept a little too well. "I'm curious. Dozz mentioned him." A lie but not an outrageous one. As much as Dozz talked, anyone should buy it.

Marka seemed satisfied. "Good. Hake's special." With those words, he walked out.

She blew out a breath. Marka was protective of his shipmate. She'd rarely encountered loyalty. At The House of 9000 Pleasures, no one was protective of each other. It wasn't encouraged for Delicants to be friends. Or even friendly to each other. She'd kept her head down, just surviving to get out of there. On Reli's ship, she'd seen stabbings for a bite of reconstituted rations. She'd seen members of his crew die for less.

Of course, the protectiveness begged the question of why? Why was he protective of Hake? What was special?

And how the hell did she get him off the bridge so she could do her nasty work to his computer?

## Chapter Four

Charm shimmied out of the vapor shower. Boy, showers were invigorating. She sighed. Better not get used to them or being clean. Reli's shower was broken, and she had to pay to use other crew members'. Straight out sex she didn't mind, but most of Reli's crew wanted more exotic pleasures.

Coming out, she discovered Gram had entered while she was showering. He wore tight leather pants and was bent over to rifle through his drawers. She watched the muscles curl under his skin, rotating back and forth. A round scar marred the smoothness of his skin on his right shoulder. It looked like a wound from a laser blast.

Her chocota slickened as she watched him move. His body straightened as he turned. He showed no surprise at her presence. He'd either scented her or heard her. "How was the shower?" His eyes drunk in her nakedness as if she was his favorite drink.

She shook her hair back. "Good, Master."

His lips tipped down into a small frown. "Glad to hear that." He went back to searching his drawer.

Licking her lips, she walked to him, coming up behind his back. He inhaled deeply as she got close. She arched against him, rubbing her breasts on his bare back. Her nipples

pebbled as the skin abraded them. Slipping up on tiptoe, she raised her head to his shoulder, planting an open-mouthed kiss on the scar. His breath hitched. His arms rested by his sides, fists clenched tight. He was trying to play it cool, but she affected him.

She slowly let her mouth descend from his shoulder to the middle of his back, gently kissing the whole way down. Gods, he tasted fine. A little bit of salt mixed with a lot of the sweet taste of his skin. She circled to the other shoulder, then returned to the place she'd started. Her tongue darted out to trace the puckered edges of the scar. Lifting as far as she could on tiptoe, she licked the side of his neck, then began a leisurely chain of nibbles until she reached his lower back.

Her hand slipped around the smoothness of the leather pants containing his ass. She ran one finger down the middle of his butt, before going down and sliding between his legs palm side up.

He shivered as she cupped his balls. Even through the leather, she could feel them in her hand. Squeezing and stroking, she placed the other hand around front to slip on top of his hard cacete. It fit her palm. She squeezed both places in rhythm, beginning with alternating touches, squeezing first the balls, then his cacete.

His breathing quickened, almost panting. He thrust his hips, pushing his cacete further up into her palm. The only thing better would be her hand on his bare velvet skin stretched along the hard length of him.

Her chocota wept, a drip dribbling down her thigh. His pants were too tight to get her hand in. Would he let her take them off?

Before she could try, Marka's voice came over the comm. "Should I tell your Delicant to get her mouth off your cacete?" Marka used the Delicant term for a male's member. He was an interesting elf, who was more than he'd seemed.

Gram swore, moving to disengage her hands. She resisted a second, but released him.

A snicker sounded in the background of the comm noise. "Breakfast is ready. And you know how Luban will be when he gets back. I need to keep up my strength."

"We're coming."

Charm sighed. Marka's frustration at being interrupted yesterday was nothing compared to hers. It shouldn't bother her. But damn, she'd looked forward to making Gram come again.

Marka tsked through the mic. "No, that's what making you late for breakfast."

Gram clicked off the comm with a muttered, "Bastard." He turned to her. "Get dressed."

More clothes. It was more comfy to be naked. "Yes, Master." Today, she'd do the job she'd been sent to do.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Smitt cooked *real* food." Dozz bounced in his chair, causing Gram to worry over its sturdiness. "He says it's in honor of Charm. How come nobody made real food in honor of me?"

"Cub, you don't even know what honor is." Nirk leaned back in his chair to fold his hands behind his head. The man's eyes stayed on Charm. Gram ignored him.

He stopped behind Dozz and clasped his broad shoulders. "Buddy, honor means respect. And you show it every day."

From the sparkle that lit Marka's eyes, he bet the little bear had stuck his tongue out at Nirk. "Cub, set the table for us."

Dozz, in his excitement, nearly knocked Gram over as he jumped to his padded feet. Gram grunted at the feel of Charm's hands on his back as if she could keep him upright. Firm hands lingered on his back, and his cock stirred, thickening to uncomfortably fill out the front of his pants.

Lust wasn't the only thing to stir. Something just as strong tightened in his chest. He liked the feel of her hands on him. He liked having Charm nearby.

Shaking the new emotion off, he walked down the length of the kitchen to reach his usual chair. Gods, he looked forward to Smitt cooking real food as much as Dozz did. At the end of the table, he patted the chair to his left. "Charm, sit here." He placed her beside Marka since the two seemed to get along.

"Smitt, you need some help?" Gram moved to head back to the stove, but stopped at the man's reply. "I've...I've...I've...I've got it."

"Smitt talks real slow." Dozz informed Charm in a loud whisper.

"I bet the Delicant would be a great help to ol' Smitty." Nirk's mouth twisted in amusement.

A loud clatter from Smitt's direction caused Charm to jerk. "Don't...don't...don't...need...need..."

"Help." Nirk finished for him.

Gram glared hard at the gunman. Ignoring Smitt's claim of not needing help, he joined him at the stoves. Noting the pans warming, he carried two to the table and placed them on hot pads.

Tmarr joined them. "Any word from Luban?" He plopped down into his regular seat.

"Lover got a late start back. He bought me a present at the Universal store."

Tmarr snorted, before taking a long draw on his coffee.

"You sure you don't want to try some food, Doc?" Dozz asked Yon.

"No, thank you. Maybe next time."

Dozz sighed, picking up the plate he'd laid in front of the android. Though the medic never ate, Yon had never missed sharing a mealtime with them. Had the crew grown on the android?



He grabbed two more bowls for the center of the table. "Scrambled eggs, Zue bacon, some kind of pancakes, and fruit. Eat up."

Dozz went straight for the pancakes. Though he needed to keep track of the little bear's intake, as he tended to overeat, Gram's eyes strayed to Charm. She hesitated or waited on all the others. He couldn't tell which.

He filled his plate and traded her empty one for it. He passed her a water bottle from the center before filling his own plate.

"You know, Captain." Nirk smirked. "The slave is supposed to wait on the Master. I could train her for you."

"I don't share." Gram stared down his gunman until the man shifted uneasily.

Nirk saluted him with his cup. "Yes, Sir."

Though Nirk could be an asshole, 'idiot' didn't describe him. The gunman knew Gram well enough to know if pushed, he'd push back harder.

Charm ate slowly as the conversation buzzed around them. He often caught her peeking from beneath her lashes at him. He lingered over his meal. When he offered her seconds, she declined.

Marka stood and stretched. "I'm going to take Hake a plate and go catch a nap before Luban gets back."

Charm's head came up from where she'd been toying with her food. "I...I can take Hake a plate." Her gaze shifted to Gram. "If you'd like, Master."

He leaned back in his chair and rubbed his chin. So, his Delicant was interested in Hake. A feeling he'd never experienced before stirred. Her interest almost angered him. He forced himself to relax. So what? She wasn't his. She'd be gone in no time.

He nodded. "Sure, take a plate to the bridge."

Her hands trembled as she heaped on the food. Her gaze met his only once before she left.

Nirk and Marka drifted off to their rooms, while Smitt set about cleaning up.

Dozz licked his fork and plate getting his furry face all sticky.

"Interesting behavior for a Delicant, don't you think, Captain?"

Gram turned his head to look at the android. "Very." Yes, the beauty was up to something. A niggling suspicion bore deep down inside him. Instinct born out of survival told him that he wouldn't like the outcome.

"Captain?"

"Yes?"

"Don't forget what I said about some Delicants bonding with a new Master."

"I won't forget." He stood up. "Come on, cub. You need a bath."

"Do I gotta?"

\* \* \* \* \*

Charm's knees knocked as she stood outside the bridge. She'd never been so nervous about a job before.

*Get in there, learn what you can, and figure out how to take them out.*

She'd studied enough about the consoles of most ships to take out their defenses. Start by taking down their shields, taking out their weapons. That made things easy for Reli's crew to board. They would beam over, take control of the ship, drop the original ship's crew on a planet, and sell the ship. It was easy.

But so far, nothing on this one job seemed to be going to plan.

She swallowed, balancing the plate in hand. It was the damn clothes. She didn't know how to be herself in them. They were stifling and itchy. She couldn't think well with them on. How did others stand wearing the things? To think, once upon a time, she'd missed wearing them.

She activated the door, opening it, and sashayed in, swinging her hips with an exaggerated motion. "I brought dinner."

Hake, or at least the being that must be Hake, barely acknowledged her existence. "Thanks."

Her eyes surveyed the consoles. The instruments looked standard, nothing out of the ordinary. The controls she needed should be easy enough to locate and jam. Finally, something was going her way. Where were they? The sooner she found where they were, the sooner she'd get done what she'd been ordered to do. Now all she had to find out was how to get onto the bridge by herself or with someone who could be easily distracted. Could Hake be her man? As he rarely left the bridge, he might have to be.

Without even bobbing his dark head, Hake spoke quietly again. "You can leave the food."

She took a couple of steps nearer to his chair, setting the plate on another chair. "Here you go." She looked around again, nervously wiggling. She couldn't leave the bridge until she'd spotted where the controls were she needed. This might be her only preemptive shot.

His glossy black hair gleamed in the lights of the bridge. It reminded her of the feathers of a *glossack* bird. They were glossy in any sort of light. He turned so she could see his profile. He possessed a harsh face with severe dark black eyes. They blinked at her. His nose curved like a beak. He had the face of a bird as a man. The effect was creepy and unsettling.

Taking a step away, she could read nothing from his expression. "I'm Charm." She licked her lip, watching to see if he followed the motion with those dead-looking eyes. He didn't. Had she not been trying to get his attention, she'd have been grateful.

"Yep."

She ran her hand along the side of the control, touching it as if it were cartouche or a big cacete. He didn't even blink, swallow, or do anything that made her think he was

reacting to her. Usually men were easier to get distracted than this. Who was this male that he didn't?

Well, shit. The man who manned the bridge was going to be a *nutter*, an overly hard nut, to crack apart from his pilot's chair. Somehow, she'd have to get him off the bridge. Huh, maybe he ate worms, not that she had any to offer.

"I've never seen the bridge of such a fine ship, Master." She trilled her voice, going into the octaves men didn't seem to possess.

One bushy eyebrow shot up quizzically at her use of the title. Sometimes, to hear that word in reference to themselves made men think things they wouldn't normally. Like how to claim her for their own.

She'd seen bigger ships' bridges and ones more elegantly laid out. This one was small and practical. Nothing was there that didn't need to be there, nor were there frills. Should make what she had to find easy. There. The console by his right knee was the one that held the ship's defenses. She made sure of it, peeking around Hake to see.

His eyes met hers. They were so unnerving. She couldn't tell if he was seeing her or not. She ran a hand over her chest, trailing her fingertips slowly down to between her legs. Damn clothes. It was much more a show when the fingers could bury in her chocota. One that made all men stand up and notice, unless they liked other men, in which case her show had no effect. And even some of them liked to watch her.

Nothing had ever been taught in the House of 9000 Pleasures about how to carry out sexual acts in these kinds of garments. Only silk, satin, and gossamer clothing had been used, but most of the time, the students had been naked. Most teachers assumed Masters would want to keep their Delicants in the nude the majority of the time.

Before she'd reached the outside of her pelvis, he turned back to his controls, surveying a radar, blatantly dismissing her without even a backward glance. "Thanks." It was such a rejection of her talents, such an obvious unspoken command to go away and leave him alone.

Her shoulders straightened as her hand jerked back from her nether regions to rest at her side.

“Bye now, Master.” She ducked her head in the correct manner before backing away to the door. Surely, his predator eyes had seen her. Maybe that would start things mucking around in his head. Maybe he’d start thinking about what she’d do if he were her Master. Probably not a possibility, but short of putting her chocota on his lap or in his face, it was the best she could do.

Damn clothes. If only she could take them all off. But the crew all knew Gram had ordered her to wear clothes. There would be questions if she didn’t obey him like a good Delicant, so she had to wear something.

She frowned as she stepped off the bridge. The crew was loyal to Gram. Everyone she’d met, except for Nirk, didn’t seem as if they had a pressure point to push or an in to exploit -- even those she’d met only briefly -- not when it went against the ship. And seeing Gram in action, she understood why. He was so different than most men. Few Captains would have helped out in the galley with a stuttering cook.

Rubbing her head, she wandered back to his quarters.

Opening the door, a wet bear cub darted out. “Charmmmmmmm.” He danced around in circles, vapor shower mist flinging off of him.

She watched as he zipped around like a steggo on wheels. Gram was drenched in vapors. He swallowed, a tic beating in his jaw. “He doesn’t like baths or showers. Come back here, Dozz. You aren’t finished.”

\* \* \* \* \*

“Captain to the bridge.” Hake’s voice sounded through the comm.

Gram leaped from his chair, leaving Charm to deal with a wet Dozz. Rarely was he paged to come to the bridge, so something was up. Worse yet, something had to be wrong.

Heart racing, he punched the button twice before the doors slid open.

Hake spun around his chair. "Luban's gone."

His heart caught. "Gone?" Luban and he went way back.

"One minute, his space jumper was there; the next it was gone."

"What?" Marka whispered from behind him.

Gram turned. Marka stood straight, his body tensed, followed by the entire crew. They'd heard the page and known something was wrong. Nirk, Smitt, Tmarr, Yon, a still damp cub, and Charm all stared at Gram.

Hake stood and shook his head. "The space jumper is gone. It was about three hours out and disappeared. It vanished off my screen. There's no space debris. It couldn't have blown up. He's gone. It happened..." His black eyes didn't blink. "Shortly after she left the food."

"No." Marka's voice rose in panic. "Luban isn't gone. I'd be dead if he was." His face tightened with an anger Gram hadn't witnessed before. In a blink, the Halfling turned toward the others. "There's only one new bitch on board who knew Luban went out. We've been played." Marka snarled, as Gram managed to get his arms around the Halfling's chest. "G, I'm telling you, as I got her clothes she attempted to feel me out..."

"Enough." He grunted at the feel of Marka's elbows and feet jabbing at him. He was taller, but the elf was full of rage that wouldn't quit. Marka might look small and helpless, but he was far from it. In a fight, he was the one to watch, not Luban.

"Let the fuck go." Marka threw his weight back into him and the two hit the floor. "I'm going to rip her fucking tongue out."

"T, get Charm to my room." He growled between his teeth, fighting to hang on to Marka.

A wildness lit Charm's eyes. She dragged her feet. "Ho..."

Tmarr pushed her along.

"Calm down." Gram grunted. "If Luban was picked up by anyone, we can get him back." Yes. Luban would adapt if he'd been captured and hang on until they could get there. There were no prices on his head, so it couldn't have been the Rendorians or any bounty hunters.

Marka continued to fight until a groan rattled his throat.

Gram closed his eyes. He lessened his grip, but he didn't let go. He held his friend.

"I won't kill the bitch. You can let me go now." Once, Marka's body relaxed somewhat, Gram rolled up onto his feet. "The bitch played us. She had to have sold us out."

Dozz wrung his paws, making a simpering sound.

Gram raked a hand through his hair. "Yon, take Dozz to play."

"I don't want to play. I want Luban."

Gram sighed. "Cub, this is one of those times you have to show respect and do as you're told."

Dozz pouted, but slowly let Yon lead him away.

Hake helped Marka into a chair. The Halfling rested his head back. "Luban isn't gone. He carries my soul. I'd be dead if he were. But, where the fuck is he? What happened out there?"

"Any takers that he left Marka's scrawny ass?" Nirk leaned back on the door frame.

Everyone knew Luban would never leave Marka. The two adored each other.

"What do we know?" Gram moved up to the comm.

Hake took his seat to punch a command into the computer. He pointed at the view screen when a faded magnetic line appeared. "This is where the space jumper was last seen." He shook his head. "Then, nothing."

"Tractor... b...beam?" Smitt asked, moving to their sides.

Hake shook his head again. "I've scanned in every direction."

"What...what about...about an outlawed ghosting mechanism?" Smitt finished on a rush.

Gram looked at Hake. "Possible?" Only an idiot would be that stupid. The police outlawed those centuries ago. If found, they'd blow the vessel up, the crew along with it.

"Anything is possible." Hake nodded.

Suspicion stirred. Yes. A scavenger would do it. A scavenger like Reli. There were rumors of him taking ships to salvage. Ships he'd supposedly found abandoned. Oh, fuck no. "I'll be back in a few. I want to talk to Charm."

"Gram?"

He turned back at the door. "Yeah?"

"If she's responsible, I'm going to enjoy watching that bitch up on an auction block." Marka's eyes gleamed with malice.

The door slid closed behind Gram.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charm's heart pounded, her mouth dry as could be.

What had happened out there?

Luban's shuttle had disappeared before it got back to Gram's ship. She'd seen the replay. One second, the vessel was there on radar, the next it was gone. It was almost as if a tractor beam had been used to pull the ship in. Reli's ship did have one. But that made no sense because they would have seen Reli's ship on radar.

Reli was out there, following the *Bruiser*, waiting for her to get on the bridge and take down the ship's defenses. Why would he scoop up Luban, though? Reli had always talked about secret weapons, but none of the crew, except he and the first prime, knew what he talked about.



Reli'd never done anything like that before, take a crew member prisoner while he was by himself. He always waited for her. Perhaps he'd seen the opportunity and seized the ship. Perhaps he had doubts about her. He was right to. She'd never encountered anything like Gram's crew.

The look in Marka's eyes haunted her. He'd looked so lost, yet so ferocious. The whole crew had reacted with loyalty to their taken crew member. They'd all run to the bridge at the first sign of trouble. Not anything she was used to. Reli's entire crew was disposable, and they knew it. That's why there were always so many fights on board.

Reli's crew wouldn't hurt Luban, or more precisely, they wouldn't kill him. Reli would see him as a bargaining chip. If things went bad, they could barter Luban's life. Luban wouldn't come out of this unscathed, though. They'd be torturing him for information right now, nothing that would leave too many marks, but would be painful nonetheless. She shivered. Marsoleius liked men and enjoyed fear. He would love the idea of taking a mated being. Hopefully, Reli would keep him from too much until they had the *Bruiser* in hand.

If she were ever taken by another crew, no one on Reli's ship would do anything like this crew for her. They'd go on their merry way. Reli would find someone else to be his bait. She'd be left at the mercy of her captors.

She rubbed her face with her hands.

Marka hated her now.

She'd seen the emotion in his flashing eyes.

He'd put together the connection, even though he didn't know how she fit in.

Shit, why did that bother her? She'd barely met the elf, and soon she'd be gone, never to see him again. Never to see any of this crew again.

There was no more time to think as the door to the room swept open, and in marched Gram with a malicious expression.

"What the hell did you do?"

“Nothing, Master.” The frustrating thing was she hadn’t done anything. Things had happened outside of her control. She went down into a ready position, spreading her legs. In clothes, the act was damned uncomfortable, nor would it have the same effect as it did when she was naked. However, in the state Gram was in, she doubted even naked and double jointed would have had the same effect.

He didn’t let her stay down on the floor. He grabbed her shoulders, yanking her up as he shook her. “What did you do? Where’s Luban?”

His grip bit into her skin. “I didn’t do anything, Master. I swear it. I don’t know what happened to Luban.” Her words were only partially a lie. She couldn’t be sure of anything, was only speculating, so she honestly didn’t know what had happened.

Reli had made her job much more difficult. They didn’t trust her now. It would be harder to move among them, to get on the bridge again and tinker. If only she hadn’t been with Hake right before Luban had been taken.

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know, Master.” He shook her again so hard that her teeth rattled. “I swear I don’t know what happened.”

He released her, and she almost fell. “I want to know where he is, dammit.” He stayed in her space. “I want to know now.”

“I don’t know.” Tears pricked at her eyelids but she blinked them back.

Delicants learned early on how to fight tears. At the House of 9000 Pleasures, teachers said, “Cry in your head, for that’s the only place you’ll find someone who cares.”

His arm raised. To hit her. To administer justice the only way men knew how. She folded her arms in front of her breasts and tummy. They were the vulnerable spots so she protected them. They’d beat her for that at the House. They’d given her lashes in those places as retaliation. But after she’d left there, she continued to protect that much of herself. They’d said she’d come to them too late for them to get her completely right as a Delicant. It

was a wonder they hadn't sent her to the Cobblestone Harems. Only the cartouche paid by her first Master had saved her ass.

The blow didn't come.

Her eyes peeked open at Gram with her head still ducked down. He stared at her. "Much as I want to, I'm not going to beat you."

She didn't relax, but kept her body tensed, her eyes cast downward. Masters had said too often they wouldn't hit. They usually went back on their word. Reli had whips and belts -- she shivered -- and other things that hurt even more.

Gram paced in front of her. "Tell me what you know."

Her tongue slowly caressed across her lips. "I don't know anything, Master."

He paced more. "You're lying. I can tell." He banged a fist into a wall, making a couple of cabinets fly open. She winced from the harsh crack the punch made. Hearing the blow reminded her of whips on flesh, only that was more a tearing sound.

Unless he was an empath, he was only fishing to see what she would give up. She remained silent, looking down at his brown boots. He wasn't an empath. She had to stay quiet, and she'd survive this interrogation.

"You stay off my bridge, got it? You're supposed to do what I say. You stay off the fucking bridge." He slammed a cabinet drawer shut before stalking out of the room. His anger hadn't been masked. His fury had been like a bomb about to explode. But he hadn't hurt her like so many others had in a rage. He had every right to be angry. She refused to consider why it stung that he was angry at her.

He'd given her the one order from him she couldn't follow. Reli's orders superseded it. Damn Reli for this move. It had made her job so much more difficult, almost impossible to do.

For the first time ever, she entertained the thought that maybe she wouldn't do the job. The crew here was so different. They cared about each other. They were willing to risk

themselves to get Luban back. Not to mention, the *Bruiser* had Gram, making it heads above any other ship in the galaxy. He hadn't hit her, though he suspected her involvement in all of this. Why did she find him so fascinating? So attractive? So heart-stopping? Such a smart man? She'd always admired intelligence in men because so many were led around by their dicks. Gram wasn't.

*Yeah, where are you going to stay? Surely, not here. They hate you now. Remember Luban?*

One hand clenched her thigh. She couldn't be thinking this. They'd never accept her here now. Her flesh crawled, the hairs standing up straight. And Reli would make her return horrific. She was stuck between two men and the job she'd been sent to do.

## Chapter Five

Someone should kick his ass. Gram raked his hands through his hair and leaned back in the chair. Fuck...talk about being led around by the cock. He should have known something was up.

Should have fucking known.

"This isn't your fault," Hake said without looking his way.

He grunted. He couldn't find anyone else to blame.

"Smitt will figure out what was used."

Until then, he'd do some more blaming. They were banking Reli was behind Luban's disappearance. What other reason was there for a man to give up a Delicant? A beautiful heart-stopping Delicant? Bells should have rung in his head as soon she'd parted her pussy on his gangplank.

"She was funny when she was snooping earlier."

He turned his chair to clearly see the pilot. Hake had never been much for conversation. When the man spoke, Gram tended to listen.

"She came across as a lost little girl while she tried to entice me."

Uncomfortable, he shifted. Had Charm turned his friend on? "Did she...I mean, did you...?"

"No. Not a spark of desire."

"Good. Well..." He caught his damn tongue between his teeth and stood up. "You know what I mean." No one deserved a mate more than Hake. And no one needed to find a mate more. It sucked to think his friend would be gone in a couple years if he didn't find his. Hake's, as well as Marka's predicament due to Luban's possession of his soul, gave him a reason to be thankful he was a humanoid. He had no destiny crap to deal with.

"I do, Captain."

"It's getting late."

"I thought you should know I've set a sensor for the computer to sound the alarm if anyone touches the comm besides us or Smitt."

Gram nodded and headed toward the door.

An hour later, Gram stepped off the running track. He was as frustrated as he'd been before his workout. He scooped up a towel and made his way to his room.

Chamber doors opened to expose Charm setting in the middle of his bed.

Naked.

Didn't the woman ever wear clothes?

He cleared his throat.

She shifted. He looked down to the apex of her thighs. Yep, her pussy was as pink and inviting as ever.

The front of his running shorts tented.

Her eyes widened as she licked her full lips.

*Dammit.* Why couldn't he control his responses to her? What about Charm stirred so much within him?

He sat. "Look, I'm sorry about earlier." Hungrily, he watched her nipples harden.

"Oh...I don't understand, Master." Her face wrinkled as she cocked her head.

"I got kind of rough. I shouldn't have." He clutched the arms of the chair. He'd never apologized before. "I shouldn't have shaken you."

"Oh..."

He pointed to the clothes on top of the desk. "I borrowed more clothes from Marka earlier. You're welcome to workout. I have a small gym in the hold."

"You want me to put the clothes on, Master?"

"Yes." He swallowed as she crawled from the bed, breasts and ass swaying. Yeah, clothes would be helpful if he ever wanted to think clearly around her.

First, she slid into the tight shorts.

His cock twitched at the outline of her pussy under the cloth. Damn Marka.

Next, she pulled the top over her head to cover her breasts. She flipped her hair back.

The Halfling bastard had to have known the clothes would be too tight.

"You wish for me to workout, Master?" Her hazel eyes were shadowed with confusion.

"Yeah, you're a humanoid, aren't you?"

She nodded.

"Deep space is hardest on humanoids. Our bodies degenerate at a faster rate than other races."

She smiled, and it hit him like a punch. The woman was breathtaking. "I fuck, Master. I get a lot of exercise."

A groan rumbled from his chest before he could stop it. His balls tightened. Slowly, he took in the fine curves of her body. Yeah, she got plenty of exercise. However, fucking was an entirely new exercise for him.

"Ah..." He waved a hand. Was this how Smitt felt all the time? Gram's tongue wouldn't work properly. "I think we got off on the wrong foundation."

She knelt on the floor right in front of him.

His mouth dried. Oh fuck, what an eyeful he was being presented.

"Yes, Master."

"Look, before, I tried to treat you as I would anyone else who paid the *Bruiser* a visit. No more." Well, sort of. He'd never been sexually interested in another passenger. But still, he'd done his best to make her comfortable.

She moistened her lips.

He stared, transfixed by her small pink tongue. She had to do that on purpose. He'd give anything to be alone so he could jerk off. "No longer."

"Yes, Master."

"From now on, I'll be your Master until you leave my ship. Got it?"

She nodded. "Oh, yes, Master. I like our new foundation."

A tic formed in his cheek. "No, I don't think you understand yet. Yes, you're submissive, but I've yet to be your Master." Yon's explanation and reminder that not all Delicants accepted new Masters had been eating at him. Since Luban's disappearance, instinct drove him to the conclusion. Even away from the bastard, she thought of Reli as her true Master. The thought pissed him off.

He needed her to trust him. He also needed a clear head to think things through.

Sweat broke out on his forehead and beaded his palms. Cock stiff, he stood. His knees nearly buckled at the feel of her firm hands on his thighs. "Excuse me a minute."

Gram moved around her and stepped into the shower stall. Gods, he needed a minute to breathe and figure out how to proceed. Clueless didn't describe how he felt. How did one go about breaking a bond a Delicant had with a former Master?



He collapsed onto the corner bench. His palm pushed down on his erection. He groaned. What a dumbass. He'd left a Delicant on her knees.

He had only closed his eyes when sultry music burst from the shower's sound system.

He frowned. He'd never played songs before.

The door opened to reveal a once again naked Charm. There was no hesitation as she began to dance her way into his corner.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

He was a goner.

This wasn't a fantasy he could stop. Nor did he want to.

He studied the sway and swivel of her hips, the quiver of her thighs, and the thrust of her pelvis.

Groaning, he grabbed the support bars that ran around the stall at the perfect position.

Her breasts bounced. His balls drew up as she massaged them, her belly, and her pussy, before pinching her own nipples.

No denying she'd danced before. He liked the shimmy of her hips, and the thrust and gyration of her ass.

He whimpered like a newborn bear as she straddled his lap. She sat on his thighs, only to thrust her pussy into his cock, rolling her body up and back down again.

Frustrated, he groaned when he wasn't permitted to suck a nipple into his mouth.

The next instant, she danced away as gracefully as before. Only this time, he was treated to a full view of her ass. And what a fine ass she had.

He couldn't breathe while she shook her ass cheeks for his pleasure.

Then, she spun around, twirling to the beat of the music. Her hair became a magic curtain, hiding her breasts here and there as she moved.

His heart raced. He couldn't take her eyes off her swaying body.

Her hands fluttered, rubbed, and toyed with her own curves and crevices to entice his fever.

Ever so slowly, Charm resumed her position on his lap, and he thrust his hips upward. She escaped. Her breasts rubbed his chest. His hands tightened on the railings.

He gulped air as she brought a leg up in front of his face and spun around to press her ass back into his cock.

He groaned. Damn, she was limber and talented.

A lap dance.

She rubbed her ass up and down along his cock through his shorts. Hips thrust forward, she rested her head back on his shoulder for only a second. On the next thrust, her ass cradled his cock again. She ground backward.

He moaned.

He didn't want to come yet.

He nearly choked on his tongue when she grabbed his knees and rose up on tiptoe. Her pussy came down on his hidden cock head.

An inch of his cock disappeared into her pussy. Desperate, he thrust up wanting to fuck her hard.

She moaned, rising up higher, escaping him and bringing her fine ass back down to tease. Over and over, she rolled her ass around in his lap. She rubbed his thighs inside and out. Massaging her own breasts, she pulled at her nipples until he couldn't handle any more sexual torment.

His balls tightened. He groaned, erupting come into his shorts.

She continued to seductively dance in his lap until he relaxed.

"Did you like that?" he asked, his chest still heaving to calm.

"Oh, yes, Master." She wiggled in his lap.

He moaned, catching her hips. A rough hand slid down between her thighs.

He discovered her pussy wet and swollen. He squeezed her clit between two fingers, earning a gasp.

She rolled her pussy into his hand.

*Oh, fuck, no.*

He wanted to dominate her, as she had him moments ago. "Stand up."

She did without question.

Once he stood, he reached down to pull the bench out away from the wall and jerked it up until it latched into the hooks, locking it into a higher position.

"Climb up on here." He patted the soft cushion. "And grab the rails for support."

She did, and he noticed the change in her breathing. "You're going to fuck me, Master."

Gods, how he wanted to. "No." At least, not yet, anyway.

He ran two fingers down across her puckered ass, over her wet slit and swollen clit. "Balance on your knees. I want your pussy exposed and hanging over the bench."

He watched her move, shoving his two digits into her tight pussy.

She moaned.

Encouraged by her reaction, he removed his fingers to suck them clean. "You comfortable?"

"Yes, Master." Her voice was no more than a whisper. He tried to see her face, to see if she was frightened. It was difficult to tell with the dim lightening. The position of her head in the darkened corner didn't help. "Let me know if the water is too hot." He moved to the computer control panel outside the room. He pressed buttons to make sure only three nozzles exploded.

Water opened up inside the shower. He smiled as Charm moaned. Oh yes, turnabout is fair play. Vapor showers were the preferred method of cleaning, though the *Bruiser* came equipped with recycled water.

He made his way back to Charm's side. While watching the water erupt from the floor and smacking her in her pussy, blood surged to his cock.

*Oh, fuck, yes.*

Without hesitation, he adjusted the two wall nozzles to spray her breasts. Her nipples dangled. His balls tingled at the sight.

Her breath already nearly panted.

"Water too hot?"

She shook her head.

"The force too strong?"

Again, she shook her head.

Testing the flow aimed at her swollen clit, he grunted. It was lukewarm. He wanted the water as hot as she could handle it to increase the pleasure. He moved about and turned it up a notch, then two more. He also strengthened the pressure of the water stream.

She moaned as he tested it once more. Satisfied she'd receive pleasure, he pulled his hand away. Her body jerked as the spray hit her pussy. "I want this to stay aimed at your clit." He briefly palmed his cock. "You can come all you want."

"Y...yes...yes, Master."

"I'll be back in a little while." His gaze lingered on her ass. He wanted to fuck her so bad, but not yet. "Don't move until I tell you to."

She whimpered. "Yes...Master."

Quietly, he slipped out, leaving her there. He grabbed another pair of workout shorts and left, locking his door behind him. He had no desire for others to find Charm in the position he'd put her in.

A Master. There was something addictive in the power the position held.

\* \* \* \* \*

The minutes passed slowly for Gram. He took his time showering and jerking off. Images of Charm coming by herself and at his command fueled his fantasies. Once dressed and relatively relaxed, he returned to his room.

He looked in on her, refusing to interrupt. Her fine ass and swollen pussy faced the door. He stayed as quiet as possible, enjoying himself more than he'd ever admit. The sounds of her climaxing excited him to a fever pitch.

But business first.

At his desk, his hand shook as he withdrew Charm's Delicant papers. He didn't want to look at them. His instincts told him Reli had fucked him over, but good.

A long, deep moan drew his gaze to the open shower. His cock twitched. Without another thought, he unrolled the scrolls.

Skimming, he laughed, figuring it was always good to laugh at yourself.

*Fuck!*

Suspicious confirmed. He'd gotten boned. He should've looked at the damn papers before Reli had gotten back on his damn ship. But Charm's feminine curves had been more than distracting. Then again, would he have gotten off the planet?

Reli was Charm's Master. Her papers said as much. Ownership hadn't been transferred to Gram in any way, shape, or form. He balled the papers up. How many illiterate captains had been shafted?

The fucker hadn't even paid for her when she'd come into his possession. He'd won her in a fucking bet.

Another moan burst from inside the shower.

Hades, how many missions similar to this had the bastard sent Charm on? How many times had she been abused to please a man that didn't give a rat's ass about her? How many times had she been forced to bow to the cretins of space? His chest constricted with anger, igniting to fury.

No doubt she'd been placed in danger time after time.

*Never again.*

Roughly, he straightened out the papers to put them back in his cabinet. This time, he locked them safely away.

How in Hades was he supposed to break the hold Reli had on her? Did he have a chance in Hades at winning her over? A frown creased his brow as he eased the force of the water.

A whimper from Charm's direction caused his cock to twitch. Blood surged south. Damn, he'd thought the shower would have cooled his lust. The part Charm more than likely played in Reli's plot should've cooled his lust, but it didn't.

He tried to recall Yon's words. *A Master cared for and protected a Delicant. A Delicant lived only to please her Master.*

What a great setup.

Too bad she'd been involved in boning his whole crew. He couldn't see how they'd forgive her, even if she were innocent in all things but survival.

At best, all he could do was get her away from Reli and find her a new Master. The thought didn't sit well. Not well at all.

Turning the water off, he entered the shower stall and clenched his fists.

At her side, he eased her trembling body around to sit on her ass. Legs dangling, she moaned. Her forehead was damp, he guessed as much from sweat as water spray. Her nipples looked sensitive.

Her pussy looked wet and swollen.

Lickable.

His cock thickened. "Did you come for me?"

"Yes." She gulped air. "Master."

Satisfied she'd enjoyed herself, he grunted. How often had Reli allowed her pleasure? His jaw beat a tic with both anger and jealousy.

He dried her as best he could. Then, he applied lotion to her feet and legs until her body calmed its shaking. Having never pampered another, he massaged her arms and hands as well. He kept his strokes firm, enticing moans past her slightly parted lips.

Bracing an arm under her thighs and the other around her back, he picked her up. She gasped, clutching his neck.

Puckered nipples rubbed across his bare chest.

At the bed, he managed to pull the blankets down and put her to bed.

"You okay?" He straightened up.

She nodded. "Yes, Master."

"Good. You want some clothes on?" He swallowed.

Her head rolled back and forth on the pillow. "Yes, Master."

He chuckled at the movement negating her words. "Sorry. Clothes are a must around here." He cleared his throat. Her eyes hadn't left his cock. She wasn't helping his reaction. "Look." He waved a hand toward the door. "I've got to go tuck Dozz in or he'll pout for a week."

"Master...?" her voice was hesitant.

He kept eye contact.

"How did Dozz become yours?"

"I...We rescued him from a traveling freak show. He sort of claimed me." The cub had been a tiny little thing. He reached down, pulling the blanket up around her. "Why don't you go to sleep?"

"I'll wait, Master."

Sweat beaded his palms. He exhaled slowly. *Oh, fuck.* The night was going to be a long one.

\* \* \* \* \*

Trembling and spent, Charm lounged on the bed. Her *grelho* tingled from the wealth of orgasms she'd experienced. She'd put on the shirt, but left off everything else. The cloth chafed her in the most irritating ways. How did people stand the feel of clothes? It was amazing that most humanoid species preferred to cover their body with such irritating material, even if she'd once preferred them.

She rubbed her fingers over the sheet, oddly disappointed.

Why?

Why was she so let down by the way Gram had treated her earlier? He'd acted as any other Master would do. He'd treated her as the Delicant she was. It should make her happy. He'd commanded her. He'd put her in front of a stream of water that had brought her to orgasm many times over.

Nothing she hadn't gotten from men before.

What more could she want from him?

Especially when she was going to be gone soon enough. She'd be back on Reli's ship until the next time she was sent out to infiltrate a crew.

A crew that wouldn't be this one.



Besides, they hated her here anyway because of their crewmate.

She sniffed the air. It smelled musky from her sexual cream. The scent still permeated, even after her being lotioned down.

That part puzzled her more than she wanted to think about, his rubbing lotion all over her body. He'd pampered her. Massaging the lotion into her skin, he'd allowed his fingers to bring her pleasure by touching her skin softly without going into her sex or causing her pain.

She'd been fucked often and all over the universe. But no one had ever touched her with gentle hands. Not when they didn't have to. Not when they didn't plan on fucking her six ways to Sunday afterward. Instead of fucking her or asking for a blowjob, Gram had told her to go to bed. He'd done something without seeking pleasure back.

That was why she preferred to think about the first part of their encounter. That part she understood. It was the second part that fretted her and confused her.

Had there only been the first part, she could live in her disappointment, which was the usual way of her life.

Men didn't ever give without taking. Only Gram had. Her heart sped up. Gram was an enigma. He would take years for her to understand. The fun would be in the attempt. Only she didn't have years.

She sighed, her confusion growing despite trying to put it out of her mind. Best to forget about the second part of what had happened. It was best to focus on delivering Gram's ship to Reli, though she still didn't have any ideas on how she was going to get access to what she needed.

The door opened, and Gram sauntered in with sure steps. "Hello, Charm. I see you're still up." He turned away from her, his well-formed ass peeking at her under his tight leather pants.

*Remember what you are here to do.*

She looked down at the floor, her eyes sinking to his feet. "I told you I'd wait up, Master. Is Dozz tucked in?"

"Yes." She could hear the grin, even though she couldn't see it. "He's in bed for the night."

She swallowed, her mouth dry. No one had ever tucked her into bed. Not even when she was a child. Her father had been too busy. Or drinking *galouchin* wine. She'd always gone to bed herself, drifting off to the *meeps* from the gazeltocks.

Dozz was so lucky.

No one had ever cared so much about her.

Not her father, who viewed her as a burden because she didn't have fur and provide for his welfare. Not her teachers at the House of 9000 Pleasures, who'd only strived to make her a good Delicant and told her she'd failed until she'd learned to shut off the parts they didn't like and keep them hidden. Not the Masters who'd come and gone in her life. All they'd wanted was fucking, which she'd given. Then they'd moved on.

On this ship...on this ship...she could have had a chance. She could have had someone care about her. That was what was different here. She hadn't been able to put her finger on it until now.

The crew could have cared about her.

Most importantly, Gram could have cared about her. Maybe he'd have lotioned her down every night. Tucked her in. Made love to her instead of only fucking her body.

Only, she'd lost the chance before she'd ever walked on board.

The situation was all because she'd been won in a game by that bastard ship stealer, Reli.

Her eyes met Gram's, who looked at her in puzzled confusion. "What's wrong, Charm?"

*Everything.* “Nothing, Master.” She licked her lips, reverting to the Delicant with no emotions she’d had to be to survive. “Nothing at all.” The time had come to play the part. Maybe somehow she’d get an idea to do what she needed to do.

Slowly, taking each step with care, she moved toward him. Dropping to her knees, she hit the floor.

Moving her body low down, she slithered across it, twisting and arching her hips.

“What...what are you doing?” His hands clenched by his side.

Her eyes closed. He didn’t know. Didn’t know of the Delicant’s sign of submitting, of ultimate submission. Shit, he should know more about Delicants. Her unreasonable expectations ebbed as quickly as they had flared. Maybe that was what had caused the second part of his earlier actions. The lotion part. He didn’t know about having a Delicant. He didn’t know he wasn’t supposed to do anything without seeking something in return. He was just being Gram, the man who did things for those... No, she wouldn’t go there. He didn’t care about her. He couldn’t.

Whatever he’d done couldn’t have been for her alone.

The first part of his actions proved that. He thought of her as Delicant and nothing more.

For the first time in her life, she wanted more from someone. More from Gram. She steeled herself against the emotion.

“I’m showing you my submission, Master.” She reached his boots, kissing right over his big toe with an open mouth. She moved back, arcing up her hips so her front was in the air. She presented her chocota to him, drawing apart the slit until the air moved up her folds.

“That’s what they are calling it now, hmm?” His eyes were drawn to the hole as if he couldn’t look away.

“Calling what, Master?”

“Never mind.” He stood up. “Look, you...don’t have to do this.”

She plastered a strained smile on her face, trying to keep her Delicant attitude. "Yes, I do. For you, my Master." She could do this.

He rubbed a hand over his face.

"Let me show you, Master. Show you everything." She blew out the words, huskily drawing them out so her breath rolled through her mouth.

He straightened up. "Charm. It's going to be a long day tomorrow. We both need sleep."

"I can make you sleep, Master."

## Chapter Six

Gram let out a rough chuckle. "I bet." He looked at her, his hands unclenching. "Sit on the bed, Charm."

Orders. What she was used to. Yes, that made it easier.

She sat on the bed, the shirt tucked all around her and waited for his next command.

He approached her, sitting in front of her. "Okay."

"Okay, what?"

He gently stroked the underside of her chin. His fingers were warm and smooth as they slid across her skin. The hand slipped back under her hair to press against her head and guide her to him. His mouth descended at the same time for a kiss so soft, it barely pressed against her lips.

She opened under him. His hand tightened in her hair, clasping her closer to him. Ever so slowly, his mouth plundered hers. He went from gentle to scorching within a few seconds.

The exploration of her mouth was novel. Never had a man kissed her so slowly. So sensually.

His other hand crept around her hip to stroke her back under the shirt. It wound circles on her fired up skin before skimming around to her tummy.

He trembled, skin rolling with the movement.

This slowness was costing him.

"You okay?" he murmured against her lips.

No one checked to see how a Delicant was doing.

She nodded, not wanting the contact of his mouth to break away.

That was not a Delicant thought.

Masters could break away sexually any way they wanted, any time they wanted. They *owned* the mouth that kissed them. That fucked them. The Delicant part of her brain railed against her.

But Masters didn't do this gentle assault on the senses, either.

They took. They demanded. They never gave. They never asked.

His hand swirled up to her breast, cupping it in a caress. His thumb pushed into the hardened nipple. Movement flared in her stomach. Was that an assistance rocket that flared across her stomach?

His hand toyed with her, taking its sweet time to strum her.

The other hand came down to meet the first, which had left her breast. He pulled the shirt over her head.

His eyes glazed over with passions swirling in their midnight depths.

His voice sounded strained as he panted out words. "Need to undress."

Yes. Yes, her Master did.

He stood up by the bed, fumbling with his pants and belt buckle. His hands shook as he mastered the buckle to slide the pants down. Only they met his boots, which he hadn't taken off yet. "Dammit." He plopped down, pulling on the tight boot on his right foot, trying to remove it.

He almost seemed flustered.

She reached up to the top button on his shirt. “May I, Master?”

“Yes...you may.” He yanked on the second boot harder than the first. It went flying over to the wall with a soft thud.

His clothes off, he jumped up, cacete swinging back and forth like some battering ram of old. A Delicant had told stories of knights from once upon a time when she’d been at the House. She *bit* her lip. Gram would ram her. A shiver rocked her body, a thought not something Delicant-like at all.

He settled beside her on the bed. His hands touched, his mouth nipped, and all thoughts of Delicants left her mind.

Making it down to her chocota, his tongue slurped up the already engorged flesh. Fingers slipped inside to touch the moisture that continuously pooled.

Charm twisted her head back, ecstasy in the man’s touch driving her ever upward. Too much. This was too much after the water torture.

His fingers pushed under her grelho, sending her whole body into shaking spasms. More of her cream coated his fingers.

He lifted his head. In a hoarse strained tone, out popped the question, “Do you like to be fisted?”

She stilled. He’d asked without acting first. What did he want to do?

As she looked up at him, he shook his head. “Forget I asked.”

“If you wish it, Master.” She panted as his fingers continued to touch and play. It wreaked havoc on conscious thought. No, she must pull herself together. Be there for his pleasure. Being a Delicant was her way.

“No.” He shook his head violently back and forth, which moved his whole body. “No. I asked did you like it?”

“If Master wills it...”

His growl was immediate, rough, and loud. “What do you want? Dammit, tell me.”

She blinked her eyes at his vehemence. His fingers withdrew. She'd displeased him. Her answer had been wrong. She'd lost her Delicant attitude. Gods, she couldn't do anything right. "I'm sorry, Master. I displeased you."

"No. Yes. No, you didn't displease me." He sat further up, straightening his long body out. "But I want to know what you like. Not what I want."

Her mind reeled as she sucked in a breath. Her chocota pulsed in time with her heart rate. She had no idea. Men did stuff to her. They told her when to come. They filled her with their seed but never let it germinate. There was no room for what she liked. Not in her life.

"Do you like fisting?"

She looked down at the pillow, not meeting his eyes. Some Masters liked it. If done right, the act could be pleasurable. Done wrong, and fisting hurt like hell. Why was he asking? Did he want to do that?

"I take that as a no."

Her head shot up. "Master, I..." She should have fallen to her knees by now. At the House, she would have been whipped for insolence long before, starting with her hesitation at the question. This was not what her training had taught her. Only, she'd never done as well as she could have with training. Only a Master with cartouche ready had gotten her out the House. They didn't like to send out ill-prepared Delicants. But they liked to get subjects as children, and could only do so much to those who came in older.

Why was he so interested in what she wanted?

One of his fingers pushed on her lips, perpendicular to them. "If you liked it, you'd be quick to say so, right?"

She wanted to offer up her ass for punishment, but his finger pressed to her lips kept her still, not wanting to break the contact. Who'd have thought a finger could have so much presence.

"Let's try this." He rolled onto his back. "Come 'ere, Charm."



Biting her lip, she moved over to him. Did he mean for her to ride him?

Now, that was a favored position. But rarely did men choose it. Her resting on top put her in control of the act.

She slid over to him. He helped her up on top.

The instant her chocota sheathed his hard cacete, he hissed. The sound echoed in the room. She clenched her thigh muscles to squeeze her chocota even tighter around his cacete.

He groaned, his face tensing.

Lifting up, she splayed her hips before coming back down to clench her walls around him again.

He let out a loud sound. His neck muscles corded so tightly in his neck that she could see them. “Oh, gods...”

Up she traveled again, doing the same thing with her hips, this time grinding her pelvis down into his.

His hands covered her breasts. Tweaking and twiddling, they toyed with her, even as she went up again and down.

A rough hand splayed down her belly until he pressed and toyed with her grelho. Charm gasped and momentarily lost her rhythm as the pleasure built.

She sucked in a breath, savoring the bliss. His fingers played until several passes later his orgasm hit, his face contorting beautifully.

She lowered herself onto his sweating body, panting madly. His breaths came as quick as hers.

He turned, tucking her into the curve of his body. He kissed her forehead softly, his lips pausing for a second. “Get some sleep, Charm.” He pulled the covers up around them, wrapping his arms around her.

Even when light breathing signaling sleep echoed from his body, she lay there awake beside him. Holding on tightly.

Gram did the best damn tucking in she'd ever had.

\* \* \* \* \*

Awakening, Gram shifted under the weight of Charm's warm body, his cock already thickening. He nuzzled her temple. Her hair smelled as good as it had yesterday.

He sighed. There was no doubt for him now; he wanted to keep her. No doubt, if he could manage it. With the crew up in arms about her involvement with Reli, it'd take work to get them all to come around. Though he didn't need their approval to keep her around, he wanted their acceptance.

Smitt rushed through the door unannounced. "Cap...tain." His presence startled Charm awake.

Wide-eyed, she pushed up onto his chest.

Smitt turned as red as his hair.

Gram reached down to pull the blanket up to cover her full breasts.

Smitt gulped as they disappeared. "I...I...I figured it...it out."

The mechanic opened his mouth to say more, but Gram stopped him with a raised hand. "It's okay. I'll be on the bridge in a few minutes."

Smitt nodded enthusiastically. "Go...good." He stumbled out of the room, doors sliding closed behind him.

Gram rolled his head to look up at Charm. She hadn't moved. "Good morning."

"Morning, Master." She let the blanket drop with a smile.

He chuckled. "I could get used to this." He sighed as she hid her eyes with her lashes. She'd done the same thing last night when he'd told her he wanted to fuck her. Pushing up on an elbow, he lifted her chin with his free hand.

Gently, he pressed his mouth to her lush lips. "I want you."

Again her lowered lashes shielded her gaze. "I'm yours, Master."

Sitting up fully, he cupped her face in his hands. “No, Charm, you don’t get it yet, but you will by the end of the day.” He kissed her fully on the mouth, his tongue briefly seeking entrance. “I want you.”

Last night had taught him one thing: he wouldn’t let Charm go. Not for Reli, and not for his crew. He’d knock someone’s teeth out if he had to, but she’d remain his.

His chest heaved as he kissed her again. Urgently, he tangled his fingers into her hair and tilted her head back.

The next kiss explored until he turned possessive, dominating her mouth.

She moaned, rubbing her nipples against his chest.

“You’re beautiful,” he murmured into her parted lips. In no time, his fully hard cock ached. His balls tightened in anticipation.

“I want you.” He pulled the blanket out from between them. “I want you.”

Panting, she climbed up onto her knees to straddle his lap. With a roll of her hips, her heated pussy captured the head of his solid cock.

They shared a lingering kiss. His hard length pulsed at the wet heat, which encased him.

She gasped.

“I need you.” He grasped her hips. “I need you so damn bad.”

Pussy muscles clenched around him in an early attempt to milk his cock for all they were worth.

*Oh, fuck, no.*

*Not yet.*

“Easy.” He took control. He wanted to share the experience. Slowly, he eased her up his rigid length. Slower, he brought her down. He wouldn’t permit her to roll her hips or grind down on his cock.

His balls ached with each clench of her pussy. He watched her face as her breath quickened. A flush spread up her cheeks and cheekbones. Her eyes darkened.

He wanted to come from watching her pleasure.

A moan broke past her lips. After a moment, she caught her lower lip between her teeth. He slowed the motion down even further.

He swallowed when her pussy reached the base of his cock. She sat fully impaled. A firm hand held her in place as his other hand trailed across and down her belly.

His fingers toyed with her wet clit.

Moaning, she rolled her hips forward, grinding her pussy on his cock. Another flick of his fingertips sent her over the edge. Her body tensed on a guttural groan. Her pussy clenched around his buried length.

Over and over, her body convulsed around his in climax.

*Not yet.*

Once her climax passed, he rolled them over, bringing her down under his weight. He scooted them up on the bed. He knelt between her legs, looking down at his slick cock half hidden.

He pulled on her thighs. "Keep your legs up."

Need tightened in his balls as she spread her legs, only to bring them fully up along her body.

Her pussy clutched at his cock.

She hooked her feet under the safety rails.

Gram groaned, unsure he dared to move. Gods, she was so damn limber. But, he didn't want an act. He wanted Charm. He helped her loosen her legs and grunted when they wrapped around his hips.

He pushed up on his knees, leaning over to brace his weight on his hands, and fucked her with all his strength. Sweat coated his chest and shoulders.

Charm screamed in pleasure with every thrust and draw of his ramming cock. Using brutal thrusts, he fucked her for all he was worth.

A second climax tensed throughout her body. The clinging of her pussy walls sent him plummeting over the edge with her. Come erupted, flooding her depths with thrust after thrust, leaving him sweaty and exhausted.

Breathing harshly, he eased back, and she loosened her leg hold.

She moaned as he withdrew from her. He rolled over onto his back.

At the press of her trembling body, he rolled to his side and wrapped his arms around her. “Did I hurt you?”

She shook her head, but remained silent.

*Dammit.* Had he hurt her?

He nuzzled her temple. “Thank you.”

She burrowed deeper into his chest. Tightening his hold, he held her as long as he dared. His crew waited.

Breathing back to normal, he reluctantly pushed to an elbow. “I’ve got to get to the bridge.”

She still trembled. She wouldn’t meet his eyes, either.

He caught her chin in his palm. He kissed her lightly on the mouth. “I want you, Charm. I want you bad.” He rolled from the bed.

He stopped only long enough to take a piss before entering the shower. There was no time to relax under the vapors.

Five minutes later, he approached the bed. He clasped his double holster around his waist. Checked to make sure the lasers were set to kill. "I'm going to get Luban back. Then, I'm going to take Reli out."

Her eyes widened.

He disappeared into the closet, returning with a spare single holster and a smaller laser. He checked the setting. He laid out her clothes along with the holster on the bed. "I want you to shower and dress."

She nodded.

"Be on the bridge in fifteen minutes."

"Yes, Master."

Leaning over, he braced his fists on the bed to plant a hard kiss on her trembling mouth. "I want the laser strapped on, got it?"

Her chest heaved.

"I want you, Charm. Don't you dare disappointment me."

Outside the room, he closed his eyes at the sound of her crying. His fists balled. Hades, what had he done? Given Reli's slave a laser? His chest ached. Would she realize what he was offering her?

*Dammit!*

The choice would be hers. If she showed up on the bridge with the laser, it'd go a long way in his keeping her at his side without creating too much tension with his crew.

And if she turned it on him or one of his crew...he'd be the one to...

Nausea rolled in his stomach. He didn't want to think about the what-ifs.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charm averted her drying eyes away from the laser. She refused to wipe them. She never cried. Why had she started now on this ship? Tears could be beaten out of you. They

could be used against you. She'd learned that lesson early. Never cry, and they don't know how you're feeling. Never cry and you can take what they dish out without breaking anything inside. Now that the tears had started, she had trouble turning them off. It was as if once they'd broken free of her eyes, they wanted to stay free.

Yet, her teary eyes kept being drawn to the laser. Again and again, she glanced at the holster. The weapon acted as a magnet for her eyes.

What the hell was she going to do?

Delicants weren't supposed to touch weapons. *Ever.*

That was against the law. It went against every code and fiber of her being to pick up the laser and strap it on.

The punishments would be incredible for both of them if they were caught.

Gram had no clue about Delicants. This was proof of his ignorance about her role. And, she'd been too stunned to inform him of his poor choice. He'd be whipped and imprisoned right along with her.

Why give her a weapon?

Her eyes closed, thinking about last night.

He'd given her control over their sex. He'd tucked her into the curve of his body when he'd gone to sleep. And, he'd loved her so sweetly in the early morning hours.

Now, he wanted her to show up on his bridge wearing a weapon.

This could be the chance she'd been waiting for.

Betrayal.

With a laser, she could make Gram's bridge drop shields. She could pave the way for Reli to come on board. He'd be pissed the takeover hadn't gone by script, but he was the one who'd caused that. As if that would stop him from beating her. Unlikely. He'd beat her harder because he'd say she messed up. He'd never see his own actions had caused the delay and made the difference.

Though uninvited, the forbidden thought entered her mind. Her hands clenched hard into fists as she tried to send the idea away. But still, the thought came.

Acceptance.

She could use the weapon to defend the *Bruiser's* crew if they were boarded, using it against Reli and the rest.

She could throw in with Gram. Take her chances on his crew accepting her into their midst.

Only, they hated her.

At least on Reli's ship, no one thought much about her at all.

On this ship, Gram's crew wanted her hurt for what had happened to Luban, even though for once, she'd had nothing to do with what had happened.

She couldn't throw in with Gram. The crew would never accept her even if Gram could. That only left doing what she'd come here to do.

Either way, she had to pick up the laser and strap it on. There was no other choice. Gram had commanded her to do so. She could put on the weapon without making a decision about what she'd do next.

Opening her eyes, she got up on shaky legs, moisture dripping between her thighs after her night of sex. She reached out, taking the holster in hand, touching the cool metal of the laser's hilt.

No alarms went off. Nothing came crashing down on her to punish her for doing what she shouldn't.

The experience was completely anticlimactic. She'd expected bells at least.

Snorting at her fanciful thoughts, she pulled on the holster. It was heavy. It hung at her side.

She was armed.



\* \* \* \* \*

Arriving on the bridge, Charm saw Gram was busily conferring with Hake. He glanced at her. His eyes darkened as he caught sight of the holster by her side. His pleasure at seeing her wearing what he'd told her to was unmistakable. Her body warmed from head to toe. His happiness became hers for a brief moment.

She smiled, the edges shaking after a second. Her arm extended down to pull on the holster. She'd take the weapon out and...

"Charm! Charm!" Dozz suddenly danced around her, bouncing up and down enough to make her dizzy. "You got a laser."

She shushed him. "I do. Now hush."

But he kept on with his dancing and loud voice. No one else had noticed before now what she wore. But with his outburst, the entire crew on the bridge looked her way. Marka's face turned to stone as he glared at Gram. Hake shook his head before shifting his attention back to his controls. Tmarr rubbed his chin. Gram barely looked up. Nirk smirked.

"But you got a laser! Ain't that neat? I bet it feels heavy by your side. It's a big one." He sighed, the sound wistful. "Bigger than mine. I only carry it when Gam says I can."

"That means everybody's got a bigger gun than you, dummy. You still have that tiny little thing?" Nirk had stalked up to their sides. He leaned back with a snide grin. Musky aftershave choked Charm's airways until she adjusted to it. He must have used a copious amount. He smelled like a house where slaves were used for sex. His voice was quiet so Gram wouldn't overhear. "Even a slave has a weapon bigger than anything you have."

Dozz's face shifted down into a frown. His whole body drooped.

Nirk continued to look smug at the little cub's expression.

Charm patted Dozz's shoulder. Even under his shirt, her fingers could feel the fur under it. "It's not the size of the gun that matters. It's using it. Big guns only compensate for...smaller things." She looked pointedly at the huge gun at Nirk's side.

Dozz's face pinched in confusion while Nirk sputtered before stalking off. Dozz may not have understood, but Nirk got her meaning.

She couldn't contain her chuckle. Served the man right.

A strangled sound reached her ears. Tmarr was standing in earshot. His wide shoulders shook as he cleared his throat. Turning from them to saunter back to where he'd been, his body continued to shake suspiciously.

She met Dozz's dark eyes. "Your gun is fine."

"I keep it under my pillow." He smiled so radiantly, she thought he might rival a sun. "I hope you stay here forever, Charm." He caught her up in his arms, hugging her. The powerful small arms tightened so much around her. When he was full grown, he would be able to squeeze the life out of other beings. He could almost now with the way his arms tightened, but he released her before she became too uncomfortable.

Her face fell as Dozz turned away. Her hands twiddled her fingers back and forth. She wouldn't be here forever. She should never have interceded as she had. Now, he expected her to stay. Taking up for the cub would confuse him when she helped to steal his ship and left. Still, the cub's reaction gave her a tingling in her throat. Not quite as intense as knowing Gram approved of her wearing what he'd told her. But, the feelings inside were enough to question again what the hell she was doing.

"Dozz, I need you to head for the kitchen and help out in there." Gram approached, nodding to Charm. His eyes didn't flare pleasure as they had earlier, but were guarded. She couldn't read his emotions.

"Ahhhhh, Gam." Dozz pouted. "Things are going on up here. There's a fight coming, I bet. I want to stay."

“No, cub. Do what I ask.”

Growling reluctantly, Dozz marched off the bridge. The doors shooshed closed behind him.

Gram didn't say anything else, but went back to Hake.

The low hum of the ship's engines droned on in the quietness, only broken by an occasional stray voice. No one checked to see what she was doing, but she could feel their gazes on her. They all watched her every move from the corner of their eye. One wrong move and they'd end her quest.

They must be expecting trouble since Gram had sent Dozz away. Her hand clutched at the holster on her side. She'd wait for the right moment and use the laser, instead of doing so now. Better to wait for the opportunity.

And she could still use the weapon to defend Gram and his crew. If she didn't act now.

Hake's quiet, “I found them,” told her she wouldn't have long to wait to make her decision.

## Chapter Seven

Gram winced at Hake entering his mind. *Reli teleported two men below deck. They're in hiding.* The Hawkfin pointed to the computer. *I've warned Smitt to take extra care.*

The *Bruiser's* pilot often mind spoke when he didn't want others to know the details. This instance was due to lack of trust in Charm.

Gram nodded. "Keep a watch on them. I want to know if they move."

"Of course."

"Can you reach Luban yet?"

Hake nodded. "He's shitty as Hades, but fine." A rare smile crossed the man's face. "He's causing a riot among Reli's crew. The captain isn't well respected."

Perfect. The plan he'd shared with Hake was coming together.

The *Bruiser's* crew was damn lucky to have Hake as a part of it. The Hawkfin had a kickass mind. At times, Hake's psyche unnerved him. As soon as Reli's ship had gotten close enough, Hake had located Luban and shared the plan with him. The plan had been Luban would do his best to goad Reli into invading their ship. "What else you got?"

"Reli's either stupid or crazy. He's approaching us."

The bastard planned to board them. He turned around to glance at Charm. How much of Reli's routine would she share with them? The corner of his mouth lifted in a smile. Didn't matter. She'd put the laser on. Whether she knew it or not, she'd taken her first step to leaving Reli behind. That was more than enough for him, even if she didn't use it. Pride swelled in his chest for the Delicant.

"Stop looking at her. You're making her more nervous."

With no desire to take his gaze from her, he turned back around. There was something wholly sexy about a female wearing a laser.

Hake made a suspicious sound.

He glared. "Get the fuck out of my mind."

"Yes, Cap."

The first blast slammed into them with their shields vibrating the *Bruiser*. "Dammit."

"Does Reli normally fire upon a ship? I thought he confiscated them," Nirk snarled from his chair.

Gram swung around once more to lock gazes with Charm. She was nervous. "Is this typical?"

She barely shook her head.

Another blast jolted the ship.

*You still prepared to reduce shields?*

"Yes, let the fuckers board," he growled under his breath.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The last shot knocked out shields." Hake frantically pushed buttons on the console. His fingers flew almost faster than Charm could watch. "We're being boarded. Signals are coming in from all over the ship."

Gram's mouth set in a thin line. "Can you isolate them? Set up force fields to keep them away from our people."

Charm ached to ease his alarm. She took a step toward him. He'd said "our people," not key systems. Even in this attack on his ship, he looked after his own.

"I'm working on it. But they are on board and heading for the bridge." Hake let out a curse as he punched hard on a button. The ship twisted again, a roar and an explosion sounding. "I hit their ship. She's disabled. She can't send anyone else over."

Why hadn't Reli's crew beamed directly to the bridge? Their sensors must be having malfunctions. The ship had been damaged in a fight before she'd been given to Gram. It must have done more damage than Reli had thought.

Gram's eyes glanced to her, scanning her. Expecting her to do something.

Did he expect her to turn on them?

That was exactly what she'd planned.

Only when her hand tightened on the laser by her side, she couldn't pull it out. Her fingers wouldn't tighten on the weapon.

Now was the time. Now was the opportunity. She could pull her weapon and secure the bridge before Reli and his crew arrived.

She didn't like seeing that look of disappointed expectation on Gram's face. Her knees trembled. She didn't like him thinking of her that way. Not at all.

"Are our people secure?" Tmarr pulled out a big gun of his own. Everyone on the bridge but Hake seemed to get getting ready for a fight.

"Marka, where's Dozz?" Gram's voice rose in frustration.

"On one of the lower decks." Marka had his hand tightly on his own weapon. He'd conferred with someone on comm moments ago. "You told him to go the kitchen, but he's not there. The cub got upset when the ship was fired upon. Smitt only turned his back for a moment... He thinks Dozz slipped out to go for his laser."

“Dammit. That stupid toy.” Gram’s face looked stricken. Everyone else could take care of themselves, herself included. But Dozz was different. He was so young. Impulsive. Protective. And his feelings had been hurt by an asshole over his ability to protect those he cared for.

Charm found her voice, having an idea where the little cub was. “I’ll go find him, Master.”

Heads turned to look at her with stunned expressions.

She swallowed noisily as another shudder wracked the ship. “I’ll go find him.” What was she saying? She should be trying to stay on the bridge. Stay there and wait for her opportunity to use her weapon. But somehow, finding Dozz seemed right. She picked a piece of lint from her shirt so she wouldn’t have to see the disbelief in the other’s eyes. From the side, she tried to read Gram’s. Did he have that look in his eyes? *Please don’t let him.*

Hake slapped the console. “The ship’s listing. That’s what’s causing the movement. And the other crew is coming up fast.”

“Marka will do it.” Gram turned back to the controls.

She put her hands on a console, squeezing the metal tightly. “You need everyone you can keep on the bridge. Especially a gunman such as Marka, Master.” He had to let her do this. If she was right, Dozz was in danger.

He chewed on his lip. The others would be heading for the bridge to defend it, except for a few like the doctor and the android. Charm had seen from other boardings of ships similar to this how this crew would act. Gram knew she was right. She was the only one they could spare to look for Dozz. “Fine. Go find him. If he’s already made it to his room, he’ll be heading back to the kitchen.”

Marka’s gun came up to point at her face. “You betray us, you won’t live long enough to enjoy the spoils.”

“Enough,” Gram growled.

With a dirty look, the Halfling lowered the laser.

On shaking legs, she headed off the bridge in search of Dozz. Marka would kill her if she betrayed them. And Reli would make her wish she was dead if she didn't. But somehow the only thing she could muster emotion for was putting the cold look out of Gram's eyes. That was the only thing that mattered. And that meant finding Dozz.

\* \* \* \* \*

Charm slipped quietly down the corridor. Her feet padded on the cold metal surface of the hallway. She'd been looking for Dozz for a few minutes. Noise came from everywhere on the ship. Phaser fire echoed. She was close to Dozz's room. Now if only she could get to him first, before she ran into any of Reli's men.

Rounding a corner, she quickly ducked back to where she couldn't be seen. Carefully, she craned her neck to peek.

*Reli.*

He stood in a large junction spot where four corridors came together. The corridor she'd almost entered went straight to him, then stretched out behind him. Had she not stopped, he would have seen her. A phaser in one hand was aimed at Smitt. "You'll give me access codes for the bridge."

"N...noooo." The man tilted his head up defiantly. "N...n...not a ch...ch...chance." His weapon was tucked into Reli's jacket. Smitt looked as if he'd taken a beating already.

Reli took the phaser and bashed him upside the head. "You will, or I'll kill you where you stand."

Swallowing harshly, Charm ducked her head back around the corner. Not good. Not good. She squeezed her eyes shut, taking in deep breaths, unable to move. It was as if she'd been shackled to the spot.

She should help Smitt. Reli would kill him. He meant what he said.



But Reli would also make her pay. For anything she did, and everything she'd done. Her body shivered. He had torture devices.

She could get Reli onto the bridge. That would bring her back into his good graces.

It would be simple to get up, walk over, announce herself to Reli, and take him to finish what he'd started on the ship.

Easy.

And, maybe then he wouldn't punish her. Much.

Seeing him had brought back all the punishments he'd ever given to the forefront of her mind. He knew how to hurt. He liked to hurt.

He was so different from Gram.

Gram cared about his crew. He protected them. Never had she seen a crew like theirs. They'd risked everything to get Luban back. What would it be like being a small part of that? What would it be like if Gram cared about her like his crew?

She didn't know. But she wanted to.

To attempt gaining a place among this crew meant going against everything she'd ever been taught. Reli was her true Master. She should obey him now that he'd arrived. Without question. She shouldn't be thinking of Smitt or Dozz. Or Gram. She should only be thinking of what she could do for her Master. His punishments should be accepted with grace and gratitude. A lesson taught over and over again at the House of 9000 Pleasures.

While she'd been crouched down, Reli had hit Smitt several more times, demanding that he betray his captain. Each thwap made her cringe. Rooted to the spot, she couldn't make her shaking limbs do what they needed to.

Suddenly, a new voice entered the fray. "You leave him alone."

Knowing the voice, Charm ducked down to peer around the corner again.

Dozz approached Reli from the other direction, straight down the corridor she peeked into. He had his gun drawn.

*Oh, no.*

"Little cub. With a weapon. Is it a toy?" Reli sneered at him, letting Smitt droop to the floor.

"It's real."

"Come to take me on, have you, boy?"

"You won't hurt anyone else." Dozz pointed the gun level with Reli's chest.

She'd never seen such a serious look on his hairy face. Or one that looked so mean.

Charm's breath caught in her chest. Dozz had been hurt by Nirk's teasing. Now he was determined to show what a warrior he was. And he'd probably get himself killed.

Could she let that happen? She'd have to move if Dozz was to be saved. Have to reveal her presence to Reli.

Gram wouldn't want Dozz hurt. Searching inside herself, Charm found...she didn't want him hurt either. Her hand came up to cover her mouth.

Reli moved closer. "Come on, little cub. Kill me. C'mon. Fire."

The cub watched him cautiously. His hands trembled on the gun, the only sign that he was afraid.

"I'll take you up to the whoreson of a Captain. He'll give me his ship, or I'll skin you, boy."

She saw movement from behind Dozz. Tilting her head, she got to a better angle to see.

Two men were sneaking up behind the little cub in the long corridor that stretched out behind him.

Charm rocked to her feet. She jumped out to the middle. "Dozz, look out!"

Reli turned to her, as Dozz turned sideways to see the two men. His gun moved back and forth to Reli, then trained on those who would have snuck up on him.

“Well, well, well. My little *chuchanga*.” The base term for Delicants Reli always used when he wasn’t trying to pass her off to crews he wanted taken over.

She pointed her gun level with his heart. Not that she was sure he had one, but it seemed like a good place to start. “Make them move away from Dozz.”

He laughed. “You’re giving me orders? You have forgotten your place.” His fingers tightened around the butt of his phaser. “I’ll have fun reteaching you, bitch.”

She gripped the trigger. “Make them move away from Dozz.” Her voice wavered. She’d never expected to side with those she’d come to take from, betraying her Master. She’d never expected Gram. But this was right. Her heart sped up even while it constricted. This was right.

Reli’s eyes widened, looking behind her.

She wouldn’t turn to look, not daring to look away from Reli. *Please don’t let it be Reli’s men.*

The voice that came loud and strong made her knees quake. “Drop the gun, Reli. It’s over.”

Gram reached her side. She’d been so trained on Reli, she hadn’t heard his approach. And Reli must not have noticed him until he was too close.

Reli grabbed for Dozz, who ducked down and around him, to shift out of arm’s length on the other side.

Dozz kicked Reli’s ass getting away from him.

Reli cursed and took off with his men down the corridor where the men had snuck up earlier.

Gram’s eyes surveyed her warmly. His look made her insides liquefy. It was filled with trust and something else she couldn’t identify. “Let’s get ’em.” He grabbed her hand in his. Her hand tingled. His other hand held his drawn weapon. “Dozz, stay here with Smitt. Catch them, if they come back.”

He wanted her to pursue Reli with him. He wasn't afraid she'd betray him. Her body snapped straight as she held onto her gun that much tighter. His belief in her made all of her go to jelly. And made her stronger at the same time.

Gram had changed her. That was why she'd acted for the first time in defense of a ship she'd come to take over. From the actions of his ship's crew, no one came into contact with Ingram without being affected.

"Okay, Gam." As she and Gram dashed after Reli, the cub bent over Smitt, crooning.

\* \* \* \* \*

Gram didn't take his gaze from Charm. He was proud. Damn proud. She'd protected Dozz, and that said everything.

*Oh, fuck yes.* She'd been sexy hot as she'd held the laser in front of her. Once they'd had Reli cornered, he'd gotten smart quick enough and hadn't put up much of a fight.

Heart still pounding, he motioned to a kneeling Reli.

"T, have the pleasure of escorting this scum back to his ship." He could hardly fry his brains with the cub watching wide-eyed. "From what I hear, there's some crew awaiting his return."

Tmarr put his boot on Reli's ass and shoved, sending the man into the wall. "Get your ass moving; I'm not as gentle as the Captain."

After a hate filled glare at Charm, Reli did as he was told.

"Cub, help Smitt to the Doc." Dozz wrapped a beefy arm around the protesting Smitt. Once he'd gained his feet, Smitt had come to offer his assistance. The cub, having none of the man's BS, dragged him down the hall.

Nirk clumped down the stairs. "Luban and Marka collected our payment."

He nodded.

"Reli lost seven of his crew..." Nirk's eyes blazed. "I...I..."

He frowned. Nirk had never been one to stutter.

“When T and I boarded after Luban, I came across a guy tied down to a desk. He’d been hurt bad...”

Again, Gram nodded, already knowing where it was leading. He glanced Charm’s way. Her face was still flushed, and her trembling hadn’t subsided. She’d put her laser back in her holster and now hugged herself tightly. Without waiting, he walked over and put an arm around her shoulders.

Nirk moved closer to them. “Anyway, couldn’t really leave him, so Yon is tending to him.” A dull flush had spread up Nirk’s cheeks. Did wonders never cease? Nirk had thought of someone else beyond himself.

“I’ll talk to him in a few.” Gram shrugged. First, he’d have to see what Charm thought of the injured man, and then, he’d see what they could do for him. If the guy had ever been shitty to her...

Saluting, Nirk left them.

“Thank you.” Gram nuzzled her temple.

Her slender arms came around his neck, and all was right in his world.

“All accounted for, Captain,” Hake announced over the comm system.

Gram sighed, unwilling to release Charm yet. He urged her to accompany him. At the comm unit on the corner, he pressed the speak button. “Plus, one.”

“Yes. We have a passenger in the infirmary.”

“Kay, get us out of here.”

He grabbed a nearby railing to support them as Hake used the boosters. The next second, the *Bruiser* vibrated from a nearby explosion.

Charm’s eyes were wide as she looked at him.

“Sorry, Captain, my thumb slipped,” Hake informed them, with his usual seriousness.

Gram held Charm's gaze. "Have I mentioned Hawkfins are one of the most territorial races in space? No one boards the *Bruiser* with Hake around." With a gentle hand, he caressed her soft cheek. Reli had forfeited his life when he'd placed her in danger. "Dozz was the only reason we let him walk off this ship." While the bastard's crew had fired first, the scumbag had laid his laser down when cornered. "I want your input on the man Nirk rescued from Reli's ship." He dropped his hand.

"Nirk rescued someone?" Her eyes widened.

"Yeah. Wonders never cease. I haven't had time to question him. He was a prisoner."

Her breath sucked in. "They had brought a man on board when I came to you. He had something they wanted. They were...torturing him." She shivered. "I don't know much about him, but they'd hurt him real bad."

Gods, he wanted to kiss her, hold her. Instead, he forced himself to give her a little time.

"You came through today. I'm damn proud." He clenched his teeth, ignoring the desire to hold her. "I want you Charm. I want you bad."

She caught her full lower lip between her teeth and worried it.

"I'm going to give you another choice."

She blinked.

"I want you. I want you in my bed. In my world. I can be anything you want me to be. You want me to dominate you? Lady, I'm your man." He inhaled, hoping to stay cool. "You want me to come up with scenes like in the shower? Hades, I'll get off on it, too. But, I need you to say you want me. And I need to hear your wants. Desires."

Her mouth quivered, and she stilled it.

He released the safety rail as the boat settled. "And, if I'm not what you want, I'll accept that, too. You'll find your signed Delicant papers on my desk. The real ones that I got from Reli. I've given you your freedom."

She gasped.

“You’ll be free to stay in my room alone as a crew member. I can take a small room below deck. I’m not forcing you, Charm. I want you bad, but I’m not forcing you.” His damned chest hurt as he inhaled again. “And, if you’d prefer, we can locate some relatively safe planet to let you off on. I’ll make sure you’ve got a nest egg to settle with.” Fuck, Reli owed her that much. He’d willingly give her the payment the men had collected. They’d have other jobs.

“There are some places women can pick and choose who they...” He waved a nervous hand. “...take to bed. You’d need an honest agent.” He shrugged, nervous. What if she took that option? Would he prefer her on the ship, where he could at least see her?

She didn’t even blink.

Hades...it was damned hard to breathe. “I’m giving you options. I want you, Charm. But you’ve got to decide.”

After some hesitation, she nodded.

“I’m going to check on the man Nirk brought in. Get Yon to perform a mind scan on him.” Give her some time, so she could pull her thoughts together. “Deal with Dozz. You can let me know what you decide later.” He backed away before turning and heading to the infirmary.

\* \* \* \* \*

The decision wasn’t hard.

The only thing that made her pause to think was that he’d given her her freedom. That had been unexpected.

She was *free*.

She’d never had a choice before. Her father had been her dictator. Then, the House. Then, Master after Master. And Reli.

She shivered.

Gram had ensured Reli would never hurt her again.

Now she was free to stay. Free to go. Free to be with Gram. Or not.

She snorted as she brushed her hair out. Like she wouldn't choose to be with Gram. He'd changed so much about her. But she didn't *have* to. That boggled her mind, making her head hurt. She had...choices. It had been so long since she could decide things in her own life.

She met her own gaze in the mirror. Her hand came up to touch her flushed cheek. She would choose Gram to come into her bed. But he'd respect it if she said no. Her hand ran down to her neck. He'd do more than respect her if she said yes. Her senses hummed thinking about what he could do. What they'd do to each other.

Only one thing worried her.

How did one act...free?

She'd been a child the last time she hadn't been owned. And her father had ordered her around, so that hardly counted.

What if she didn't know how to be free? What if she made mistakes? She didn't want to make Gram unhappy. What if...

A knock sounded at the door.

She hadn't expected Gram back so soon. "Come in." She took a calming breath. Time to tell him what she'd decided. Her decision. Gods, that sounded funny.

To her surprise, Marka scooted in, the door shutting behind him. "I brought you some more clothes. In case you need them. Not that you'll be wearing clothes later." He winked at her.

Her smile shook. "Marka..." She fingered the cloth, not looking up to meet his eyes. She didn't know what to say to him. He could have lost Luban. And it would have been



partly her fault. Even though she hadn't been involved directly in Luban's kidnapping, she'd been trying to help Reli still at that point. That made her responsible.

He held up a hand. "No. Don't. We have him back. And you helped save Dozz."

Her body sagged with a deep expelled breath. Marka would forgive her. Of all the crew, she hadn't been sure how he'd react to her staying. With such a trusted friend of Gram's, life would be hard if he couldn't accept her.

He offered her an arm, his elbow crooking out. "I'm supposed to escort you to the kitchen."

She drew back her hand. "I'm waiting for Gram."

"Yeah, yeah, he'll be along to the kitchen, too." He stuck his arm out further until she took it. "Make a good decision today, Charm. You won't regret it. Not with Gram."

She licked her lips. Everyone must know Gram had given her a choice. Man that he was, he must have told each of them. He'd do what he wanted on his ship, but he'd also make sure his crew didn't have major problems with what he planned. He was that kind of Captain. The best kind. Her kind.

She didn't regret a single thing she'd done with Gram. Her only regret was that she hadn't thrown in with the crew of the *Bruiser* sooner.

They traipsed to the kitchen. Marka pushed open the door, and everyone was there. Except Gram.

Her heart pounded. She should have waited for him. She pulled away from Marka. He'd be mad; she hadn't done what he'd asked. He'd...

Released her.

She was no longer a slave. And he wouldn't be mad she'd left his quarters without permission because she didn't need it. She took a deep breath. This not being a slave would take some getting used to.

Gram was being pulled in the opposite door to the kitchen by Dozz. Gram saw her, his eyes questioning, face serious.

She shot him a reassuring smile, though her mouth pulled up too far. Maybe she'd grimaced at him. She tried again but he wasn't looking at her. Now his face had tightened up, and he looked worried.

Before she could go to him, Marka spoke, "Charm. We wanted to welcome you on board. No matter what you decide, you'll always be a part of this crew." He handed her an identification tag. The metal had her name on it with *Bruiser* on the other side. The tag was the same make as Dozz's.

Smitt passed by her, his gait halting. He looked much better than he had the last time she'd seen him. "Hi, Ch...Ch...Charm."

"Hi, Smitt. I'm glad you made it."

He nodded. "Me, t...t...too."

Nirk pushed in his chair to settle by Smitt. "No one misses a free meal around here." He helped Smitt get settled in a chair. "Boy, that run-in you had sure didn't stop your speech. You know a speech atomizer..."

"I...I d...don't likkke..."

Nirk grabbed himself a drink and pushed one to Smitt. "Only a suggestion. I wouldn't know what to do if you could talk faster."

Charm walked away with Smitt and Nirk bantering.

"Listen up." Gram spoke up from where he stood by the door, arms crossed in front of his chest.

Marka shushed him. "We know you want to be alone with Charm. But you need food first." He waved a hand. "We seized a few things from Reli's ship. In his private cabin. It's feast time."

Reli had fruits, meats, and vegetables, not anything replicated, from one of their last stops. He'd kept the expensive things under lock and key. Luban had taken it all, and they'd all share in these spoils, not only the Captain.

Luban sat with his hand on Marka's knee and an expression that belied his feelings. He was glad to be home.

*Home.*

She could call this ship home if she wanted. And oh, how she wanted to.

But maybe Gram had changed his mind? His face was so pinched. She approached him, to tell him of her decision. He didn't make a move toward her, making her come to him. And with her new freedom, she could. She didn't have to wait for him. Maybe this slave stuff wouldn't be as hard to adjust to as she thought. Her teachers had always despaired of her making the cut to proper Delicant. If a Master hadn't wanted to buy her when he had, she'd almost wound up getting sent away. But money talked to the House of 9000 Pleasures. And that was a good thing. Without getting sold, she wouldn't have made her way to Reli, and met Gram. That would have been a damned shame.

Dozz bounded up. "Charm." He didn't say anything else but wrapped her in a cub hug before bounding over to the table to share in the wealth of fresh food.

Gram pushed her hair back from her face. "Looks like a feast."

She nodded. "Yep. Gram?"

"Yes?"

"Afterwards?"

"Yeah?"

"I'm all yours. Not as a slave. But as your woman." Her stomach dropped down several parsecs. Her belly was filled with flutters that tingled all the way to her chocota, which moistened and slid deliciously as she shifted. *His woman.* Gods, what would he say? Had he changed his mind?

His eyes searched hers before he took her hand and pulled her into his body for a dueling kiss.

On the *Bruiser*, Charm had found something that had eluded her up until now -- the meaning of her name. She'd found her joy.

 THE END 

## Melany Logen

Once upon a time, two little girls grew up hundreds of miles apart. They lived, they loved and especially, they read. Reading led them to finding each other and discovering a mutual love of writing.

We are two lucky people who have found a best friend and a wonderful writing partner online. We met writing fan-fiction and discovered a common bond in writing engaging characters. It wasn't long before we were branching off from each other's stories. We wrote together quite creatively, naturally, and sensually. We understood one another, we *clicked*.

Not only do we have a lot in common, we aren't afraid to criticize, guide and push each other. It seemed natural that we could take our association out of role-play and heat up the romance genre.

Melany Logen was born.

Visit Melany on the Web at [www.melanylogen.com](http://www.melanylogen.com).