



BELLY OF THE BEAST

by

Kimberly Zant writing as

Desiree Acuna

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Dear Readers:

I really pushed the envelope here, for me, at least. I feel this should come with a warning-- don't try this at home-- any of it! My world is a fantasy world, my characters pure imagination and, as god of the world I created, no one gets hurt unless I will it—which, of course, I don't, because this is all in fun. Beware, there are many elements in this work that could offend and/or possibly repulse those not 'in' to seriously kinky sex!

Chapter One

The summons at the door of their cottage was so abrupt, so fierce a demand, that it startled Lady Mariel Champlain. She jerked reflexively, burning her hand on the pot she'd been on the point of pulling from the cook fire. Whirling, she glanced fearfully at her father, wondering if he knew who it might be, or if he would deal with whomever it was. He had been drinking steadily for days now, though, and scarcely seemed to register the pounding, even when it came again.

Realizing that she would have to deal with whatever the situation was, she turned to look at the pot of thin stew and quickly moved it away from the fire, setting it on the hearth. It was all they had to eat and, regardless of what calamity might wait on the other side of the door, she couldn't bear to allow the little food it held to go to ruin while she was distracted.

Sucking the burn on the side of her palm, she set her spoon and the folded cloths aside and hurried to the door before whoever stood on the other side broke it down, fearful that it might be more creditors that she would have to try to fend off.

The setting sun dazzled her for several moments, making it difficult to make out the dark figure who stood upon the threshold. Slowly, her eyes focused upon him, however. A debilitating wave of shock went through her

as her mind registered who, or rather *what*, he was.

A Trull—a demon soldier of the dark Lord Valdamer, the warlock who ruled Daeksould. Once they had been human, but the demons who inhabited their bodies had erased all traces of humanity from them beyond the human shell they inhabited. They were not evil so much as they were soulless creatures, without pity, without remorse, without emotion of any kind, but they were the minions of Lord Valdamer and they did as they were commanded without question.

As numb as if she had suddenly been frozen and separated from thought, emotion, and even physical feeling, she fell back instinctively as he stepped into the tiny cottage she had shared with her father since they had fallen upon hard times and lost all that they had once had.

Closing the door behind him, the Trull folded his arms over his broad, muscular chest, his stance wide, his back guarding the door as he glanced around at the stark furnishings. “I am here to see Lord Champlain.”

Swallowing with an effort, unable to speak, Mariel glanced at her father again. He’d roused from his drunken stupor enough, she saw, to look around. The look of terror on his face mirrored what should have been her own, except that she could feel nothing at all. He seemed paralyzed by his fear, for he made no effort to rise. “I am Lord Champlain,” he responded hoarsely.

The Trull nodded. Stepping forward, he grasped Mariel’s arm. “I am Behsart, sent by Lord Valdamer to accept your offering. Is this the female?”

Weakness washed through Mariel as she stared at her father uncomprehendingly.

For perhaps a second, their eyes locked and then he looked away from her. “Aye.”

Without a word, the Trull pulled a set of manacles from his belt. Fastening one to the wrist of the arm he held, he grasped her other arm and manacled it, as well. Pulling a bag from his belt, he tossed it to Lord Champlain. “Your pay for your offering.”

The bag landed in her father’s lap, jingling. He grabbed it up with shaking hands and pulled the tie from it, pouring the contents into his lap—a pile of golden coins.

Mariel was still staring at him blankly, in complete disbelief, when the Trull pulled on the chain attached to her manacles and turned toward the door once more. She stumbled as she was dragged across the threshold. Instinctively, she righted herself once more, struggling to keep pace with the man who led her away. As he tugged her through the gate that fronted the tiny yard, she glanced back at the cottage, still unable to accept that her father had sold her for coin, hoping that she would at least see denial in his face, concern, shame—but there was no sign of her father.

Catching her around her waist, the Trull lifted her up onto the black fire steed he had tied at the gate and climbed up behind her. Holding the prancing beast to a walk, he urged it along the road and through the streets of the village. Some of Mariel’s numbness began to wear off as they rode.

A flicker of thought here and there entered her mind.

She had been sold by her father as sacrifice to the demons the warlock Valdamer owed his powers to.

She was going to die. She had not even lived yet. She was only twenty. She had never been courted, never gone beyond the village, never wed—though she should have long since and would have if her father had not squandered their fortune. Now she would not get the chance of any kind of future at all.

She shied away from that thought.

Why had her father done it? Only for the coin?

Sickness welled inside of her. He had gambled away his fortune and now used her to rebuild it?

She had never felt her father loved her, but she would not have believed he felt so little that a bag of gold coins was worth more to him than her life. Surely, she had least had some value to him above that? If nothing else, she had cooked and cleaned for him.

She thrust the thought aside, unwilling to accept it, certain there must have been more to it than that. Perhaps they had demanded that he make sacrifice and the coin was something offered as recompense?

In any case, did it truly matter? For whatever reason he'd done it. He had not even warned her. He had allowed her to go about her chores with no notion that any moment a knock would fall upon the door and she would be told her life was over.

She found it nigh impossible to grasp that she was to be led away to her death without warning of any kind, without ever having done anything to deserve such a fate.

After a time, it occurred to her that they were many days ride from Valdamer Castle. She would not be sacrificed until they reached it. The Trull had said that. She might have a chance to live if she could only gather her wits about her.

She was still too stunned to do so. With the best will in the world, she could not seem to think beyond her father's betrayal. As she looked up and saw that the Trull was leading her to the Demon Temple, what little wit she'd gathered deserted her.

The priestesses of the temple were assembled on the piazza that fronted the temple, awaiting her. Mariel's heart began to hammer in her chest with fear as the Trull pulled the horse to a halt and dismounted by the steps. Four priestesses with mallets began to hammer at the two drums suspended on either side of the temple door as the Trull reined his horse to a halt at the foot of the temple. Pulling her from the saddle, the Trull wrapped the end of the chain connected to her manacles around one fist and began to ascend the stairs, towing her behind him.

She could walk, or she would be dragged.

She concentrated on keeping step with him, mindlessly counting the stone treads as they climbed--twenty, and they reached the piazza. The High Priestess stepped forward. Taking the chain from the Trull, she turned

Mariel so that she was facing the village. Mariel saw that a crowd had gathered below, drawn by the summons of the drums.

“Behold—the bride of the Demon Sheenigan, the demon of many mouths!”

She nodded then to someone beyond Mariel’s view. The priestesses surrounded Mariel, tearing at her clothes and ripping them from her body piece by piece. Within moments, she had been stripped completely bare for all to see. Catching her by her arms, the priestesses paraded her back and forth along the edge of the piazza so that all might see that the bride offered to the Demon Sheenigan was without flaw.

Numbly, she walked and turned at the priestesses command, still too numb to feel anything at all, even embarrassment at being displayed in such a way, wondering a little hysterically what they meant by “flawless.” She was certainly no great beauty, but perhaps they only meant that she was not lame, not hunchbacked, not twisted or deformed in any way?

When the High Priestess had offered a prayer to the Demon Sheenigan, she was surrounded by the priestesses and led into the temple. Torches lit the stone corridor that she was led down into the heart of the temple itself. The procession halted when they reached a large room at the end. In the center of the room was a pool. Steps led down into the crystal clear water. Around the pool were several stone benches. At the end, taking up most of one entire wall, water spilled into it from a statue of the Demon Sheenigan himself. She swallowed uneasily as she stared at the nightmarish

creature, wondering if it was only her imagination that he seemed to be staring down at her lasciviously.

Leading her to the ‘purification’ pool, the priestesses bathed her. When they were satisfied, she was taken from the pool again and made to lie down on a stone bench. Anointing her body with oils, they rubbed it into her skin from her neck down—her arms, her body, her legs—between her legs. Next, they took scrapers and worked them over her body, removing the hair from her entire body, until her flesh throbbed and burned with the abrasive scraping.

She lay still until her legs were grasped and parted. Unfortunately, they had apparently anticipated that she would be reluctant for them to touch her private parts. They held her, pried her legs apart and scraped the hair from her mound and between her legs.

When they had finished, they took her into the pool and bathed her again.

This time, when she emerged, she was dried. Still naked, she was escorted from the chamber. Instead of returning the way that they’d come, the procession turned as they left the bath and Mariel saw that there were stairs leading downward into the bowels of the temple.

The air grew cooler as they descended, whispering over her throbbing, heated skin and pebbling it until shivers began to quake through her. When they reached the foot of the stairs, Mariel saw that they had emerged at one end of a large room. Torches flickered in sconces around

the stone walls, showing a vast, empty chamber—bare save for a perpendicular slab of stone that protruded from the floor. She was led to it and all save two of the women departed. The two who remained turned her, pushing her back against the slab. The cold stone against her back sent a hard shiver through her, piercing the numbness that she'd begun to cling to, to welcome since it prevented her from feeling the terror that hovered at the back of her mind.

The two women lifted her arms up until they were above her head, attaching the end of the chain to something Mariel could not see. When they had secured it, they bent down and lifted leather cuffs from the floor. Wrapping the cuffs around her thighs just above her knees, they tightened them and then knelt and picked up another, smaller set of cuffs. These were secured around her ankles.

Mariel stared down at them in consternation, feeling the first twinges of fear working their way through the numbness, wondering what it was that they meant to do her.

It was not something she truly wanted to know, but she was not left to wonder long.

When the two priestess had finished securing her, they stepped back. The slab Mariel had been attached to was tilted and she discovered that it was a table—an altar. For several moments as it began to tilt backwards, she hung by her arms and then the tilting table caught her and she was slowly lowered until she was lying completely flat.

She closed her eyes, willing herself to remain calm, desperately seeking the numbness of before, telling herself that she was not to die today. The warlock Valdamer would sacrifice her. His priestesses would not dare to kill her. Whatever it was that they meant to do she could endure it knowing that she would not die.

She felt a tug on her legs and opened her eyes. The chains attached to the cuffs around her thighs and ankles were being tightened, bending her knees upward even as her feet were lifted.

The cranking stopped. The two priestesses who'd bound her, grabbed her and dragged her down the altar until Mariel could feel the edge of the stone biting into her buttocks. When they were satisfied with their positioning of her body, the cranking began again. Slowly her knees were drawn upward until they were perpendicular with her body.

The lifting stopped. Then, just as slowly, her thighs were spread. Mariel jerked at the chains, trying to pull her arms down, trying mindlessly to hold her legs together and succeeding only in causing herself a great deal of pain. The pulling continued until she felt the petals of flesh that protected her sex yield to the tug and part, felt cool air caress the sensitive flesh of her cleft—and still the chains were tightened until it reached the point where she began to feel a burning as the tendons were stretched and her mind instantly shifted from the discomfort of being so shamelessly exposed to the fear of pain.

To her relief, the pulling stopped. The chains that held her ankles

were tightened, holding her feet in place. Then the women moved up her body and tightened the chains that held her wrists until her arms were resting on the table above her head and she could not move them at all.

When the tightening of the chains stopped, she relaxed fractionally, thinking, perhaps, that they would stop. Instead, they pulled leather straps from beneath the altar stone and bound her hips to the table and then bound her chest, just beneath her breasts, so tightly she could only breathe shallowly.

She lay panting with fear, unable to move any part of her body except her head and her arms prevented her from twisting her head more than a few inches. She saw, though, that the room was filling with the priestesses, all wearing the hood and half mask of the Demon Sheenigan. They had discarded their robes and now stood along the colored circle of stones that surrounded the altar as completely nude as she was.

The Trull stood near the entrance, the fire from the torches throwing off blue and silvery highlights in his pure, black hair, throwing harsh shadows across his rugged features. He, too, was completely naked now, his arms folded over his chest, his expression impassive.

A shiver went through her as her gaze was drawn inexorably toward the obscenely huge cock that jutted from his belly before she, resolutely, looked away again.

The Trulls were the most feared beings in all of Daeksould, the realm of the dark Lord Valdamer. She had never seen one of them except from a

distance, but, even without Lord Valdamer's colors, she would have known the moment she saw the one who called himself Behsart that he was a Trull. There was no softness in him, she knew, despite his starkly handsome features, no pity, no mercy. He did not study her coldly. He studied her dispassionately, without emotion of any kind.

She would never escape him and she had no hope that she could convince him to free her. Why had she even considered that she had a possibility of finding a way to save herself? Was there any tiny speck of reasonable hope? Or was it merely that she could not accept that her fate was sealed and she could not change it?

The High Priestess appeared in the doorway beside him carrying the headdress of the Demon Sheenigan. He knelt and she placed the hooded mask upon his head. When he rose once more, Mariel saw that the mask covered all but the lower portion of his face, making him seem, if possible, even more forbidding than before.

Stepping away from him, the High Priestess turned to face the chamber and lifted her arms.

The priestesses of Sheenigan began to chant, offering their bodies to serve him, calling him to receive the offering. Slowly, they shuffled in a circle around the altar where Mariel lay, following the circumference of black stones. She closed her eyes, trying to close her mind to the world around her, trying to shield mind and body from the unknown terror that awaited her.

She jerked when the first hand touched her, her eyes opening wide with fear. The priestesses had closed in upon the table, she saw. As they moved around her, they skated their hands over her body, touching her everywhere. Mariel's skin prickled. A shiver raced through her.

After a few moments, they moved back once more, chanting, still performing the slow, shuffling dance, calling Sheenigan to enter their bodies and use them for his purpose. Calling upon Sheenigan to come and taste his bride.

The cool touch of a hand on her thigh made Mariel jerk all over. She lifted her head and saw that the High Priestess was standing between her spread thighs. Without a word, she placed a hand on Mariel's mound, spreading the flesh that surrounded her sex with her fingers. Mariel gasped as she felt the intrusion of a finger. For several moments, the priestess felt around inside of her. Finally satisfied, she stepped back. "She is a virgin, emissary of Sheenigan."

Mariel saw then that the Trull stood just behind the priestess. As the High Priestess moved away, he stepped forward. Laying his hand on her mound as the priestess had, he parted the flesh with his fingers and thrust the middle finger of his other hand inside of her. Mariel winced, her body flinching even though she was unable to jerk away. Gasping, panting, she stared up at the ceiling, trying not to think about the finger she could feel moving around inside of her.

After a moment, the finger was withdrawn and Mariel let out a sigh of

relief.

They'd checked to make sure she was a virgin. She told herself they would release her now. She knew that must be what this had all been about, to make certain that they had a virgin to sacrifice.

They didn't.

Instead, as the Trull stepped back once more, the High Priestess moved between her thighs once more and the others began to circle closer to the altar, still chanting. Abruptly, the chanting ceased.

"Demon Sheenigan, we welcome you! Come! Sample your bride!!" the High Priestess cried out.

At once, the women crowded close. Bending toward her, they began to lick and suck her flesh. Mariel was too stunned at first to feel anything at all, but the shock did not protect her long. Two of the priestesses had covered her breasts with their mouths, sucking at her nipples hungrily. As revolted as she was, nothing she could do could stop the heated sensations that began to filter through her body to her brain.

She jerked, trying to struggle away from them at first, but she was pinned so tightly to the altar that she couldn't move more than a hair's breadth in any direction and soon lost the strength to struggle at all.

She squeezed her eyes closed, trying to block the sensations from her mind, but they invaded insidiously as the priestesses continued to lick and suckle her all over. Heat pelted her from every direction, from her nipples, from her arms, her belly—even her fingers and toes.

Despite the assault of sensations, she flinched all over as she felt the heat of an open mouth on her inner thigh. Her heart, already pounding, began to beat in her chest so hard she thought it might burst. Slowly, the hot, moist, sucking torment moved downward toward her sex. She strained uselessly against the leather that bound her hips, trying to evade the touch she knew instinctively—feared was coming. It changed nothing, availed her nothing. The hot mouth settled over her sex, sucking, licking the tender flesh. The breath left Mariel's lungs as if she had been punched in the stomach as pleasure so intense it was almost painful shot through her.

Sheenigan, the demon of many mouths, she thought dizzily as she stared at the priestesses and realized their eyes had gone blank, that they no longer controlled their bodies, their hands, their mouths or their minds. Sheenigan had entered them and taken possession.

As repugnant as the thought was, it was almost easier to believe that it was women who touched her so intimately than to consider that it was a demon who moved over her flesh. She tried to focus her mind on the fact that it was women who caressed her and that she should feel nothing at all beyond disgust, but her body did not know the difference. Her body only felt the pleasure and that pleasure built and built until she was mindless with it. Her mind clouded with ecstasy. Her body felt fevered. The pleasure reached the edge of pain. She found that she couldn't breathe enough air into her lungs. She lay gasping hoarsely, still fighting the pleasure that surged through her until she felt as if she was reaching a point of crisis.

As abruptly as they had begun to torment her, they pulled away. Bending, they picked up small vessels and began to chant once more.

When they poured the contents over her, Mariel lost her breath, felt blackness swarm around her, for the liquid was so cold against her heated flesh it felt like fire. The tension and pleasure vanished abruptly, her body seizing, clenching. She lay shivering as they began to circle her once more.

Slowly, the painful chill eased. Her heart ceased to hammer painfully against her chest and she began to breathe more easily. As if they had only been waiting for her body to return to normal, they moved close once more. This time, she knew as they leaned toward her what they intended. She cried out, lurched against her bindings. The two who had captured her breasts in their mouths bit down on her sensitive nipples just hard enough to warn her that resistance meant pain. She subsided abruptly, trying to close her mind to the stabs of pleasure that went through her as they sucked her nipples, licked them, sucked again, teasing the sensitive buds with their tongues until the drug of bliss filled her again.

The demon had many mouths, and each was a torment to her, sucking, licking, teasing her to the edge of madness. She gasped hoarsely when she felt the heat of a mouth covering her clit, sucking it hard as her nipples were sucked, licking it. Within moments, she reached the state of mindlessness that they'd brought her to before.

Try as she might, she couldn't close her mind to the sensations. No sensitive area of her body was ignored. Pleasure assaulted her from every

direction. Within moments, she was gasping so hard her head swam with dizziness. Blackness skirted her consciousness, but remained beyond her reach. They sucked her flesh until it became pure torture before they withdrew once more.

Again they tipped the freezing liquid over her body, jerking her from the sharp edge of pleasure so abruptly that she lost her breath for several moments.

She lost track of the number of times they moved forward to violate her senses. Hours seemed to pass in a haze of heat and desperation. Finally, she reached a point where her body failed to cool even when they poured the chilling liquid over her. It continued to hum, to throb all over until she felt as if she was in the grips of a high fever, lost awareness of anything beyond her torment and an absolute desperation to find surcease.

Abruptly, the chanting stopped and the priestesses moved back. Dizzy, completely disoriented, Mariel lifted her head with an effort, wondering if her torture had at last come to an end.

She saw that the Trull had come to stand between her spread thighs. As she watched, his ankles were seized and his legs parted and manacled. Next, his wrists were manacled. He leaned forward over her body as the chains that bound his wrists were tightened, hovering inches above her, suspended by the chains so that the muscles of his chest and arms were taut and bulging with the strain. The High Priestess began to dance around the altar where she and the Trull were chained. Mariel stared at her blurrily,

trying to figure out what seemed strange about the woman.

She realized when the Priestess had made her second circuit that the woman had strapped a garish red penis to her lower belly that bobbed obscenely as she danced around the altar.

When the High Priestess had circled the altar thrice, she stopped behind the Trull. Mariel met the Trull's gaze in confusion. Something flickered across his face and he let out a harsh breath, gripping the chains as he moved forward.

He'd jerked forward twice before Mariel realized that he wasn't moving forward. He was being thrust forward as the Priestess forced the cock she was wearing inside of him. Before that had even fully sunk in, she felt something nudging against her cleft. Looking between her body and the Trull's, she saw that the Priestess had grasped his cock. In a moment, Mariel felt something huge and rounded being forced inside the mouth of her sex.

She panted as she felt her muscles resisting the intrusion, bucked, trying to evade the determined pressure. For a second the pressure stopped. Mariel had just drawn a breath of relief when the Priestess slammed against the Trull once more. The force of her thrust impaled Mariel on the Trull's cock, ramming his turgid cock deeply inside of her. She cried out with a mixture of pain and pleasure as she felt his engorged flesh rammed so deeply inside of her she felt as if he would split her in two.

The painful throbbing in her body that had only just begun to subside,

tore through her as he drove into her over and over, slamming so hard against her she felt his groin grinding against her clit.

Abruptly, something inside of her seemed to shatter. Ecstasy such as she'd never known exploded within her, tearing a scream from her throat, dragging her down into blackness.

As she fell into the black void, she heard the Trull's harsh cry of ecstatic pain as he, too, was forced over the edge, felt his cock jerk inside of her and a warmth bathing the channel of her sex.

Chapter Two

Her first awareness afterward was of a sense almost of weightlessness. Swimming upwards slowly to consciousness, Mariel realized finally that she was being carried. She felt the solidity of an arm behind her back and another beneath her knees, felt the heat and strength of a hard chest against her cheek, heard the pounding of a heart not her own against her ear.

The sense of moving ceased after a few minutes and she felt herself being lowered onto something soft. The softness beneath her shifted and a body pressed against hers.

Dimly, she realized that it was the Trull, Behsart who lay beside her, his arm and leg holding her prisoner, but she could not find the will to care.

Within moments, she drifted downward into nothingness once more.

When she woke, she found that she was alone on the bed. Still groggy and disoriented, she sat up as she saw that the priestesses of Demon Sheenigan had filed into the room.

Fear surged through her. She would have leapt from the bed and fled, but pain shot through her the moment she tried to stand and a wave of blackness threatened to engulf her.

She was seized by the priestesses and led from the room. A sense of panic invaded her as she saw they were leading her to the bath once more. She struggled, but she was greatly outnumbered. They merely surrounded her and dragged her into the pool. Two grabbed her arms. Two grabbed her legs and the others proceeded to bathe her despite her efforts to elude them.

When they were done, they dragged her from the pool and dried her.

The Trull entered the room with the High Priestess.

The High Priestess moved toward her, carrying a length of sheer, red fabric. The other women took it from her and slipped it over Mariel's head.

She saw then that it was a robe of sorts, loose and flowing, the sleeves loose also.

Her body was perfectly visible through the fabric, however.

When they had settled the robe around her, Behsart stepped forward, grasped her wrists and fitted the manacles over them once more. A sense almost of relief flooded her as he led her down the corridor they had traversed the day before and out onto the piazza that fronted the temple.

She glanced over her shoulder as they began to descend the stairs, but there was no sign of the priestesses. Settling her before him on the saddle, Behsart turned his horse and headed west through the streets of the village. Everyone stopped as they passed. Most averted their gazes, too terrified of the Trull to look at her. She saw pity on some of the faces, however, lascivious interest on others. Finally, she simply lifted her head and ignored them.

There was no hope for her among them. Even those who felt pity for her plight would not intervene.

When they had cleared the village and entered the forest beyond, Behsart urged the horse toward a small clearing beside the narrow road and dismounted. When he'd tied the beast, he grasped her around the waist and lifted her down.

She stared at the chain he'd hooked to his belt as he dug through the saddle pack. He'd lain with her the night before, as naked as she was. If she had not been so exhausted from her ordeal, she might have slipped away.

She had not thought that she was such a weakling. It angered her that her body had failed her so completely that she'd missed what might well have been her only chance to free herself.

When he'd found what he sought, Behsart pulled a wine skin from his saddle horn and turned, striding to the shade of a tree and settling beneath it. She had, perforce, to follow, settling beside him.

Withdrawing bread and cheese from the bundle he held, he broke off a portion of each and held them out to her.

Mariel's stomach growled the moment she saw the food, her mouth watering instantly and she realized that she hadn't eaten since early the day before. No wonder she'd had no strength to fight them, none to take advantage of a possibility for flight! She'd been so terrified the day before, she hadn't even thought of food after she was taken.

In truth, she was hardly less frightened now than she had been then, but her body clamored for sustenance just the same. She took the food he offered, nibbling at it, glancing at him from time to time from beneath her lashes.

The threat his mere presence represented could not be ignored, but she saw as glanced at him that the man he had once been was far more handsome than she had realized before. His features were all hard angles and planes, but pleasingly masculine, his nose a straight blade, his lips thin, but well formed.

His eyes, when he wasn't looking directly at her, were beautiful, a deep, gemstone blue, surrounded by thick, black lashes.

She shivered as he looked directly at her, for she could see the demon in his eyes.

"Why was I taken to the temple?" she asked hesitantly. "I thought I was to be a virgin sacrifice."

"You are. No man has touched you. Only the demon Sheenigan."

It was the man's flesh that had claimed her maidenhood, but she didn't think the demon would react well to that. She supposed the High Priestess had received the demon Sheenigan into her body and Sheenigan considered that he had claimed both her and the man, but she knew little about demons, in truth, and wished she knew far less.

"I am not to die?"

His head tilted curiously. "We are on pilgrimage to the temples of the seven demons who rule Daeksould through Lord Valdamer. Each will sample your flesh before you are taken to Valdamer, who will separate your spirit from your flesh so that you may join with the seven demons."

Mariel felt her throat close with terror. She coughed, choked and finally managed to swallow the mouthful of food she'd taken. "I must... I'm to be used in six more rituals? And then to die?"

"Sheenigan found the taste of your passion appealing. He was gratified that you received him with such pleasure. If you please the others, perhaps they will allow you to keep your body."

Mariel fought down a wave of nausea. It sounded no better that way. She didn't think she could bear more of the same as she had already endured. It was true they had wrung pleasure from her body in spite of all that she could do, but it shamed her that they had. She certainly felt no glory in it, no desire to go through anything like that again.

Her body called her a liar, burgeoning with heat at the thought of the forbidden pleasures, her mind filling with images of all that had happened to

her in the temple of Sheenigan. Resolutely, she thrust it from her.

She was uncomfortable that Sheenigan had chosen to use women's bodies to wring pleasure from her body. She wasn't certain, though, that she would have felt much, if any, better about it if it had been men—except that it would have seemed more natural to her. It would not have seemed quite so wrong to enjoy it.

She didn't *want* to be the bride of the seven demons of Daeksould! “Did he take pleasure in that body you wear, demon?” she asked sharply. “That was Sheenigan, guiding them all, wasn't it?”

Something flickered in the eyes. For a moment, she thought she glimpsed something that was not demon, but it was gone so quickly she wondered if it was no more than wishful thinking.

“It was Sheenigan. He used this body to plant his seed inside of you.”

Mariel's mind went perfectly blank for several moments, but the thought that finally erupted was denial. The demons were spirits. They could subjugate the spirits of others, chain them and use their bodies, but the man's seed was his. She could not, would not, believe that there was any possibility that a demon's seed might be growing in her belly.

“Who is the man?”

This time, she was certain she saw something flicker in the demon's eyes. “He was known once as Cavan, Lord of Reugal, but he is no more. I have sent his soul away and taken the shell for my own.”

He was lying. Demons always lied. But perhaps a part of it was true?

She didn't believe the man's spirit was gone. She thought it was there with Behsart, enchained by the demon's power, but too strong to be ousted. Perhaps the demon actually had given her the name of the man? But would it be of use to her?

He handed her the wine skin and she drank. When she'd finished, he pulled her to her feet, put the remains of the food away and lifted her to the saddle once more. He set the horse to a canter then, following the road westward.

It could not be said that Mariel's fear vanished, or even diminished a great deal, but she could not maintain it for any great length of time. Instead, it rose and fell inside of her, rearing up to strangle her and speed her heart whenever thoughts crept into her mind of what lay ahead, slipping to the back of her mind when she became focused on her discomfort.

They stopped again when the sun reached its zenith. Despite her hunger, Mariel managed to eat very little more than she had earlier. She tried, knowing that if she continued as she was she would grow weaker and weaker.

Not that her strength was of much use to her against the demon Behsart, but she knew she needed to keep her strength up in case an opportunity arose for freedom.

As the sun sank toward the horizon, they left the forest behind and began to pass farms, and then houses clustered more closely together. Ahead of them, silhouetted by the setting sun, the temple of the three horned

demon shed a black shadow across the village it commanded.

Mariel's stomach clenched at the sight. Her heart began to beat more rapidly, in time to the rhythm of the horse's galloping hooves as they moved nearer and nearer the temple.

When they reached the outskirts of town, Behsart slowed the horse, forcing him to a walk and she realized that she was to be displayed yet again, this time as the bride of the Demon Trihern, the three horned god.

The priests of the Demon Trihern began to beat the temple gongs as Behsart pulled his horse to a halt at the base of the temple. Dismounting, Behsart dragged her from the saddle and led her up the stairs. Her knees trembled, threatening to give way beneath her and send her tumbling down the stone steps once more. By the time they reached the piazza, she was shaking all over.

The robe, thin as it was, was stripped from her as a crowd gathered below.

"Behold," the High Priest called out, "the bride of the Demon Trihern!"

As before, she was tugged along the edge of the piazza, turned, walked all the way to the opposite end, so that everyone could see her. As much as she hated being gawked at by all those below, she was reluctant for it to end. When they had finished displaying her and the priests surrounded her, she resisted, pulling back against the chain. The priests on either side of her grasped her arms, dragging her toward the entrance of the temple,

lifting her when she stumbled.

The temple to the Demon Trihern looked much the same as the temple to Sheenigan. Torches lined the stone walls of a long corridor. She was marched down it and at the end she saw that there was a room with a pool as there had been in the other temple. This time, the statue hovering above the pool was a likeness of Trihern.

They bathed her as the priestesses had. When she was led from the pool, she was forced down on a bench. Because she had struggled, one priest knelt at the head of the bench and held the chain to her manacles tightly. Two others grasped her ankles and held them while another priest spread oils over her body and scraped her flesh, though she thought it impossible that she could have so much as a follicle of hair left.

It was worse, she supposed, because it was men this time, realizing wryly even as the thought occurred to her that she had thought it worse before because it was women. Perhaps, though, it was only because her shock had abandoned her allowing her absolute clarity of perception. Inwardly, she cringed when her legs were spread wide and her genitals scraped as the rest of her body had been.

It would've been a relief when they finally finished and led her into the pool again, except that she knew she was to be led to the altar. Despite her fear of Behsart, who, as ever, guarded the door and watched, she fought them, trying to break free in a mindless panic that took no consideration of the fact that she had no where to run to and no real chance of escaping all of

them even if she managed to break free for a few moments. They caught her, lifting her up into the air and carrying her down the stairs on their shoulders.

She did not see an altar such as the one in Sheenigan's Temple. She looked around in confusion when they'd set her on her feet. The chain attached to her manacles was seized and her arms lifted above her head. Seeing their intent, she began to struggle again, tugging at the chain. She was caught and held while the chain was attached to the hook hanging from the ceiling. When the two men released her, they caught her legs. She kicked out at them, but the struggle was all too brief. Within moments, they had captured her legs and fitted a manacle around each ankle. Chains pulled her legs apart until she was forced to stand on her tiptoes or hang from her arms.

She couldn't see the High Priest as he entered the room, but she heard him as he called the priests forward to pay homage to the bride of the Demon Trihorn with the use of their bodies to his service. The priests, wearing hooded masks with that bore the face of Trihorn, dropped the robes they were wearing to the floor and moved toward her, chanting. Each wore an obscene red penis strapped to their bellies above their own cocks.

Mariel stared at them, horrified, as they began to shuffle around her, striking her with some sort of whip-like instruments, except that the fibers hanging limply from the tips didn't hurt—not precisely. As they slapped them against her breasts, her belly, thighs and buttocks, her skin began to

tingle, to grow more sensitive the longer the 'thrashing' went on. They'd moved around her three times when one of the priests stepped from the line and knelt before her. Grasping the lips of her sex, he parted them and began to suck at her tender flesh.

A jolt went through her. She jerked, lost her precarious poise, and the weight of her body tugged painfully at her arms. With an effort, she caught her balance and rose up on her tiptoes once more. She'd barely regained her stance when another man detached himself from the group and caught one of her nipples between his teeth, tugging at it almost painfully, forcing fiery sensation through receptive tip and into her body.

She closed her eyes, fighting her body's response, but knowing even as she tried that she could not really fight it. Pleasure surged through her despite her best efforts.

She groaned in despair as another man detached himself from the group and began to tug at her other nipple. Behind her, yet another grasped her buttocks and parted them, licking the cheeks and the cleft between them.

The man sucking at her clit moved away. Before she could draw a breath of relief, another took his place. As the priestesses had, the priests moved over her body as if they meant to devour her, gnawing almost painfully at her flesh at times, licking, sucking any part of her body that was sensitive to stimulation and she began to think every part of her body was sensitive, some more than others. They came and left again, moving steadily around her, taking turns driving her almost to the breaking point.

Her nipples quickly began to throb incessantly. Her belly clenched and unclenched, saturated with warm moisture. Her clit pulsed with need when no one touched it and pounded harder when they did.

By the time the third had knelt between her legs, pushed the fleshy petals apart and began to suck her clit, she was so drunk with the haze of lust filling her that if they had not surrounded her, holding her in place she would have fallen and hung from her arms until they separated from their sockets. The third rammed a large finger into passage, thrusting it inside her over and over as he caught her clit in his mouth and sucked it. He'd barely begun to sucking the achingly sensitive bud of flesh when her body began to convulse in waves of keen rapture.

Unable to stop herself, she groaned as it seized her in an uncompromising grip.

Either he was unaware of the fact that she'd reached culmination, or it was immaterial to him whether she did or not and the demon that controlled him was only interested in his own pleasure. He continued to lick and suck her clit, driving his finger into her over and over until she was screaming with the jolts of pleasure that continued to wrack her body as long as he stimulated it. She collapsed weakly when he moved away, struggling to catch her breath. Her body was still pounding with the hard echoes of her release when another stepped from the circle.

Her nipples ached from the almost constant fondling. The muscles along her passage continued to spasm many minutes after her climax began

to fade. Blood beat in clit to the pounding rhythm of her heart, making it almost painfully sensitive.

It almost seemed more devastating to her senses than having release denied her for so long and she tried to move away from the man who opened his mouth over her breast and began pulling at the nipple.

A man knelt between her thighs, pushed the flesh apart, and fastened his mouth over her clit, thrusting a finger inside of her. One knelt behind her, parted her buttocks and pushed his finger into her rectum.

That intrusion was such a surprise that it shifted her focus abruptly. She flinched, struggled to evade the invasive touch, pressing more tightly against the man in front of her who was tugging at her clit with mouth. Despite the discomfort, pleasure began to radiate through her body from the fingers thrusting into both orifices. Within moments, her body surged swiftly toward release. She was still hovering on the edge when both withdrew. She slumped, gasping, feeling almost as stunned as if she'd stepped inadvertently onto nothing but air when she'd expected something solid.

She was still struggling to come to terms with the abrupt withdrawal when another took his place. Almost the moment his mouth closed over her clit, her body began to tremble with impending release. She cried out as he rammed his finger inside of her passage, coming. Blind and deaf to her jerking, convulsing body, her desperate, gasping cries as she passed beyond her endurance, the ritual proceeded without pause. The man continued to

thrust in finger in and out of her, tugging and sucking on her clit as if he'd found a particularly succulent berry and meant to suck it dry. His stimulation, and that of the others who fondled and sucked her breasts and belly, forced her body to continue to spasm with release until she was screaming.

She fainted, she thought, for several moments, completely losing awareness of her surroundings. The ritual continued unabated. Mariel surfaced to consciousness once more as the pleasure coursing through her body began to wind the tension inside of her toward release again.

Over and again, they brought her to culmination that was so intense, devastating to her senses that she would reach a point where she couldn't bear it any longer and swoon. She had climaxed until there wasn't an ounce of strength left in her body by the time they finally ceased to torment her. Only half conscious, she was barely aware of being released until she collapsed into someone's arms. Lifting her head with an effort, she saw that it was Behsart who held her and relief went through her.

She'd begun to think she would die from the pleasure, but it was over. They would allow her to rest.

To her stunned surprise, she was set on her feet and pushed down on a cold stone slab that bit into her belly and ribs. Weakly, she tried to rise as she felt her ankles caught in two hard hands.

Her legs were pulled apart and her ankles manacled once more. When she felt a tug on her wrist manacles, she looked up and saw that

Behsart was in front of her, removing them.

As her arms dropped limply on either side of the bench, they were caught and her arms manacled once more, this time to either side of her.

She felt a hand skate of her buttocks. Despite her exhaustion, she twisted, trying to look behind her. She could only move far enough to get a glimpse of the man, however. Her heart began to pound as she felt the man behind her pushing her buttocks wide, felt, a finger she thought at first, probing her rectum and one probing her vagina. Both were a good deal larger than a finger she discovered. The moment he had aligned both penises, he thrust inside of her.

Mariel gasped at the double penetration, feeling more surprise than either pain or pleasure at first. Behsart seized her hair, turning her head so that she faced him and shoved his cock into her gasping mouth. Belatedly, she tried to struggle but found with little surprise that she had been bound so tightly she could not move in any direction, could not escape the penetration of the three horned demon as he rammed into her body.

If she'd had the energy, or even the ability to think, she might have tried to bite the cock Behsart had shoved into her mouth, but she had neither.

As both men began to pump into her body hard and fast, however, she remembered what Behsart had said about pleasing the demon and it flickered in her mind that Behsart was only the demon that inhabited the body of Cavan. If she pleased the man's body, would he know it? Would

it reach his humanity?

Instead of remaining docile and allowing him to move his cock in and out of her mouth, she cupped her tongue and cheeks around his engorged member, sucking him. She felt a shudder go through him. It sent an answering wave of pleasure through her, joining with the rising tide of pleasure she could not stem from the man pounding frenziedly into her vagina and rectum.

Within moments, her body exploded with ecstasy. Almost mindless with the pleasure, she sucked Cavan's cock ravenously as the convulsions swept through her. Abruptly, he caught the sides of her face in his hands, jerking as he reached his crisis. She sucked harder, felt his hot seed hit the back of her throat and kept sucking until she'd milked him dry.

When she released him at last, he was trembling with the effort to remain standing.

Gasping for breath, he finally knelt and released her hands. To her relief, her ankles were released, as well, and Behsart hauled her limp form from the stone and cradled her against him as he left the chamber and ascended the stairs.

She struggled to retain her consciousness, but she was only vaguely aware of being lain on the bed and the heat of Behsart's body as he settled beside her and threw an arm and leg over her.

When the sound of movement woke her, Mariel realized that it was morning. Blearily, she lifted her head and stared at the priests who'd filed

into the room. She didn't protest or struggle when they caught her up and walked her down to the pool. The bath was soothing, almost enjoyable after her ordeal of the night before. It would've been more soothing if her body had not hummed to life almost the moment they began stroking her.

She began to have her first inkling that her ordeal wasn't over when she was dried, but led from the room naked. She didn't fully grasp the implications, however, until the procession turned toward the stairs once more. By then, it was too late to offer any resistance.

She was almost relieved when they didn't chain her as they first had the day before. Instead, she was placed on her back on the altar. Her wrists were manacled to her sides. A strap was placed over her ribs just below her breasts and tightened. Another was strapped across her hips. They caught her ankles then, secured a manacle to each and her legs until they were almost perpendicular to her body before they spread them wide. The chanting and dancing began almost at once.

The stone altar they'd placed her upon was too short to support her entire body. Her hips dangled over the edge of one end, her head and neck the other. She strained to hold her head up for a time and finally allowed it to fall backwards, resting, her eyes closed.

Except for the difference in her positioning, the ritual began much as it had before, with the dancing and chanting and the chafing of the hoarse hair flails. When they had completed three circuits of the altar, one by one they detached themselves from the group. Mariel lay limply as she felt a

mouth cover one breast, and then the other, felt fingers part the flesh of her sex and a mouth settle there and begin to suck at her as if they would draw her essence through her flesh. For a time, the discomfort of her position kept her focused away from what they were doing to her.

Slowly, the stimulation penetrated her mind, bringing it to focus on the pleasure rather than her discomfort. With dread, she felt her body skating upward toward culmination as they continued to tease her flesh. She'd begun to groan and struggle feverishly against her bindings when she felt a probing of her lower orifices. She was penetrated simultaneously. It wrung a gasp from her and as it did, someone caught her head, shoving a cock into her mouth. They pumped into her with almost mindless frenzy, driving her body rapidly toward the pinnacle. Both priests came almost simultaneously as her body crested and the first tremors began to quake within her passage. Withdrawing, they left her hovering on the edge.

She gasped, shuddering, stunned by the sudden cessation.

She'd long since lost any concept of pleasing the demon. She could think of nothing but the teasing that left her on the edge, unfulfilled, desperate to have her ache appeased. She knew the demon that controlled them was teasing her so much as he was deriving his own pleasure. He'd found release. He wanted more.

It was still nearly unbearable as the priests teased her with their mouths, bringing her to the edge again and again, but leaving before they'd given her surcease from the throbbing ache that only grew worse the longer

they tormented her.

She almost felt like weeping with relief when she felt one moved between her legs, felt the prod of cocks in her body's openings, penetrating. When a third cock was thrust into her mouth, she began sucking it at once, felt her body struggling to reach the peak. They pounded into her like pistons, jarringly, forcing their bodies to rapid culmination—forcing hers over the edge at last into the bliss she'd been frantically seeking.

She gasped in relief when they left her, sated, basking in the aftershocks that rippled through her and, for many moments, only dimly aware of the ritual continued around her even more frenziedly than before.

She groaned in protest when they began to prod her passion from her body once more. They alternated, sometimes penetrating her body, at others merely licking and sucking her until she was ready to scream. Dimly, she began to realize that the ritual would not cease until all had used her body to find release.

In time, she was only conscious of her body. The sound of the drums became the sound of her heart. The chanting was the rasping of her breath, in need, in torment, in blessed release. She drifted in and out of even that much awareness, prodded to focus by the demands of her body in response to the stimulation that was ceaseless, remorseless, almost unbearable.

When she was finally released, she was lifted from the altar and carried to the bath once more. The bath was almost as much torment. As many times as her body had found release, it still hovered on the brink, still

trembled with the aftershocks. She didn't even know when she was deposited on the bed once more.

She was too sore and exhausted to feel fear when she woke once more to discover the priests had come for her again. A good deal of dread suffused her, however.

To her surprise, they merely dressed her, this time in a sheer, flowing blue robe, and left. Before she could consider whether or not she was up to attempting flight, Behsart stepped through the doorway, the manacles in his hands.

Numbly, she watched as he secured them around her wrists. Her legs folded under her when he pulled her to her feet. Without a word, he bent down, scooped her into his arms and strode from the temple. When he'd climbed up behind her on the horse, he slipped an arm around her waist and pulled her back against him. She twisted, looking up at him in surprise and caught a flicker of something very human in his eyes before the demon surfaced once more.

A tiny ray of hope filtered through her despite her weariness. She had thought even when the notion occurred to her that she might be able to reach the man held captive by the demon Behsart that it was no more than wishful thinking. She began to think, though, that Behsart was not nearly as strong as he believed himself to be—either that, or the man was far stronger than Behsart believed.

They were still many days from Valdamer castle. Perhaps there was a

chance of saving her life after all.

Instead of stopping as he had before, Behsart merely pulled food from his pack and handed it to her. As she nibbled it, she considered the situation carefully, realizing that she had never before heard of a sacrifice being taken on pilgrimage to the different temples before she was taken to the castle and offered as sacrifice to the demons.

Of course that didn't necessarily mean a great deal. As far as she knew, there had been no sacrifices for many years, not since Lord Valdamer had first come to power.

She frowned, realizing after several moments that there had actually been *none* since Valdamer had come to power. The other sacrifices had occurred when Lord Belean had been in power, the warlock Lord Valdamer had defeated to gain control of Daeksould.

What, if anything, she wondered, might it mean beyond the fact that Valdamer had his own way of performing sacrifices to the demons?

Perhaps it was the demons who had demanded it?

Realizing finally that that line of thought was leading her nowhere, she went back to puzzling over the emergence of the man whose body Behsart controlled, wondering if it was possible the pleasure itself was what seemed to be weakening Behsart. Demons were evil creatures who took pleasure from pain, inflicting or receiving it. As difficult as the rituals had been for her, though, she had not suffered pain—some discomfort, more pleasure than she felt like she could bear at times—but still pleasure.

Even though the rituals had summoned the Demons Trihorn and Sheenigan, their hosts had experienced pleasure, which meant that Behsart had. And if it had, as she thought, weakened him, what effect had it had on the great demons? Had they been less affected because they were so powerful? Or had they, because they had entered the bodies of each of their worshippers, weakened themselves?

The thoughts occupied her until they stopped to rest mid-day. When they'd refreshed themselves, Behsart sprawled beneath the shade of a tree, watching her through drowsy, heavily lidded eyes as she removed the food from the pack and tore off a portion for each of them. She pretended to concentrate on her own meal, but she couldn't help but notice that his gaze moved over her body hungrily and she made no attempt to block his view. When she'd finished, she stretched, and finally lay down on the grass on her back, dropping her arms onto the grass on either side of her head.

She'd begun to drowse when she felt his presence beside her. Lazily, she opened her eyes and looked at him. His gaze locked with hers, his face taut as he grasped the robe and began to push it up her body. She lifted her hips, allowing him to push it all the way up. Catching her thighs, he parted them, kneeling between her legs and leaning forward to suckle her breasts.

Her breath caught in her throat as she felt the heat of his mouth enfold the tight bud that tipped her breast, felt sharp desire flood through her, but she remained perfectly still, allowing him to do as he pleased.

He was breathing heavily when he abandoned her breasts and moved

down. Cupping her buttocks, he lifted her hips to his mouth and dipped his tongue into her cleft, parting the flesh with his tongue, licking her, delving deeply and running his tongue along that most sensitive flesh. Her scent seemed to drive him into a sort of madness. He moved his mouth over her hungrily, sucking and licking her until she felt the first tremors of her climax gripping her. Her gasps and moans spurred him on and he continued to suckle the bud of her clit until she was screaming his name, begging him to stop. He moved over her then, shoving his cock inside of her to the hilt, pumping his hips frantically, driving his cock into her so hard he lifted her from the ground with each thrust.

Abruptly, another climax caught her. As her passage began to spasm around his turgid flesh, he growled, jerked and slammed into her hard, grinding into her as his seed flooded her passage.

He collapsed on top of her, gasping for breath. Even as she felt her body float downward toward the mellow warmth of her afterglow, however, he pulled away from her. Grasping her, he rolled her onto her belly, lifted her hips until she was on her knees and then thrust into her again. She groaned, feeling her body surge upward instantly as he rammed into her with almost painful thrusts, burying himself so deeply inside her she felt as if she would split, then pulling slightly away and hammering into her again. Her body quaked, spasmed, exploded with ecstasy. The convulsing muscles dragged him over the edge with her and he cried out hoarsely, surging into her as his seed bathed her passage once more.

When he pulled away at last, he lay back on the grass, gasping for breath. Mariel wanted nothing so much as to drift into oblivion, but she thought the demon might be at his weakest and if he was she needed to try to reach the man she believed still dwelt within that body with the demon. With an effort, she rolled onto her side and studied him with an expression of interest. “You must be a very powerful demon to have destroyed the spirit of such a powerful man,” she murmured, reaching out to stroke the hard, bulging muscles of his chest and arms.

He opened his eyes and looked at her and she saw the demon vanish from his eyes for several moments. Swallowing, she shifted closer to him. “Cavan?”

The moment she called to the man, the demon rose once more. “This man was weak. His body is weak. It demands rest when I want to find more pleasure,” Behsart muttered, almost angrily.

Smiling with an effort, Mariel placed her palm on his chest, over his pounding heart. “The body will rest and we can find more pleasure in a little while.”

The comment didn’t seem to appease him much, but he turned thoughtful. “We lingered too long in the Temple of Trihorn. We can not reach the next temple tonight. I will take my fill of you when we make camp tonight,” he said, rising abruptly and adjusting his clothes.

Still weak in the aftermath of her explosive release, Mariel rose without objection and allowed him to place her on the horse once more. He

pulled her against his chest possessively, wrapping one arm snugly about her waist when he'd mounted behind her. Mariel wasn't certain whether the possessiveness was the demon or the man, Cavan, but she allowed herself a faint smile as she leaned trustingly against his hard chest and closed her eyes.

Chapter Three

Contrary to what Behsart had believed, they reached the edge of the forest before nightfall. Mariel saw a wide plane. Rising up from it in the gathering mists of evening, was the dark shape of the Temple of Hezifath, of the snake tongue.

Instantly, her belly clenched in dread anticipation. She didn't know if it would have been worse if she'd known what she would face here, or not, but not knowing made her heart pound painfully in her chest. Despite that, her body burgeoned with anticipation. Until only a few days ago, she hadn't known carnal pleasure at all, but the rituals of the demons had enslaved her body to the pleasures of the flesh and no matter how much her mind shied from it, her body welcomed the possession of her body in carnal torment.

She glanced up at Behsart uneasily. “They will be expecting us?”

“Yes.”

His voice was grim. She could sense the reluctance in him to give up what he’d promised himself, and yet she didn’t think he dared disobey the demons more powerful than he. After a moment he seemed to come to some decision. Looping the reins of the horse around the saddle horn, he grasped her, turning her to face him and drawing her legs over his so that she sat astride his lap. Dragging her robe up, he bent her backwards over one arm and fastened his mouth over the peak of one breast, raking his teeth over the distended tip almost painfully. When it began to throb with the rush of blood into the swollen flesh, he sucked it into his mouth, tugging on it with his mouth and tongue until Mariel was gasping dizzily. Releasing it, he moved to its twin, raking that nipple with his teeth before he pulled it into his mouth. As he sucked her, he reached between her legs, parting the flesh of her sex and thrusting a finger deeply inside of her, spreading the creamy moisture that had gathered there.

She saw when he released her nipple that he’d pulled his cock from his loincloth. It stood stiffly erect, pulsing. Grasping her around the waist, he lifted her up and speared her flesh with his hardened member, bearing down on her until he’d forced his cock past the resistant flesh of her passage and buried himself to the root inside of her.

Grasping her manacled wrists, he looped her arms around his neck and wrapped one arm around her hips, pulling her tightly against his belly,

shifting slightly and grinding into her and drawing a low moan from her throat. Taking the reins once more, he kicked the horse into a gallop.

The bounding motion of the horse beneath them bounced Mariel upward so that his turgid cock slipped almost completely from her body, then slammed her down against him, impaling her on his cock, before bouncing her upward again. Despite the painful depth of his possession and the brutal pace with which his hard flesh was rammed repeatedly into her body, heat flashed through her with his first ramming thrust, soaking her passage so that her body slipped more easily over his erection. It spiraled upward rapidly, until she was gasping and shaking with impending orgasm.

Her belly clenched around him as the muscles began to convulse with release. The continuous, rapid pounding of his cock drove her to the edge of darkness, forcing her body to convulse on and on in release without cease or even a lessening. She was near to weeping when she felt his cock jerk inside of her and begin to spasm as he found his own release.

When his own body had ceased to convulse with his climax, he slowed the horse and finally brought it to a stop. Quivering, only dimly aware of her surroundings, Mariel gasped as his spent flesh finally slipped from hers and she slumped against him, resting her forehead on his chest as she fought to catch her breath.

Her breathing had barely returned to normal when he grasped her hips and lifted her and she felt his hardened cock probing her once more, thrusting deeply inside of her as he pulled her tightly against him again.

Wearily, she lifted her head to look at him, feeling her passage clench around him as he urged the horse forward once more into a fast walk that moved her gently along his turgid length, then a jog, that began to jounce her a little harder, and finally a gallop.

By the time he'd urged the horse into a gallop, her body was already high on the scale to completion. Within moments, the ramming motions of his cock inside her set off another wave of bliss.

His body climbed slower toward completion the second time. Hers convulsed in blinding rapture until she blacked out for many moments. Slowly awareness began to drift back into her mind. Still, she lay limply against him, completely spent, unable to lift her head for some time. When she finally managed to pull away and look around, she discovered that they'd reached the outskirts of the tiny village that dwelt in the shadow of the Temple. She stiffened, trying to move away.

His arm tightened, holding her against him. "You are mine," he growled into her ear.

As she looked up at him in surprise, she felt his cock harden inside of her again. He set the horse to a trot. The animal's gait jogged her up and down on his cock in a quick, hard rhythm that stirred the ashes of her passion. Aware that the curious were glancing at them as they passed, she tried to hold the sensations at bay, but they quickly overwhelmed her, driving her upward toward her peak. She bit down on his shoulder to keep from crying out as her body began to convulse once more in spasms of

pleasure.

She was hardly aware of the cessation of movement until Behsart lifted her arms from around his neck and loosened his grip on her, allowing her to slide from him. She looked around then and discovered he'd reined the horse to a halt at the foot of the temple steps.

Without a word, he adjusted his clothing and climbed down, dragging her off with him and settling her on her feet. When he'd tossed the reins to a waiting priest, he led her up to the piazza. They were halfway up the stairs before the priests began to pound the gong to call the worshippers of the Demon Hezifath.

She saw when she reached the piazza that the priests who waited looked both worried and confused. Behsart ignored them, passing the chain he used to lead her to the High Priest and stepping to one side.

Collecting himself after a moment, the High Priest began the ritual of display.

Mariel was still so dazed from their coupling she merely stumbled after them as they led her across the piazza. Finally, almost with a sense of relief, she saw that they had turned to enter the temple.

Mariel had thought she knew what to expect here, at least, if she still had no idea of what the Demon Hezifath would demand of her. She found that she was wrong. Instead of taking her to the bathing chamber, they took her to a small chamber, empty save for a narrow cot, a pitcher of water, and a chamber pot for her needs, and locked her inside.

At first, Mariel was too exhausted from her coupling with Behsart and the hard, multiple orgasms he'd driven her to to be greatly disturbed by the difference in her reception at this temple to what she'd come to expect. Bathing herself, she drank a little of the water and collapsed on the narrow bunk, falling asleep almost instantly.

She was awakened sometime later by a scraping noise. When she sat up, she saw that a tray of food had been set inside the door. Hungry from days of travel, little food, and the expenditure of energy in fear and the pleasure that had been wrung from her body again and again, she retrieved the tray, sat on the bed and ate.

She began to wonder why she'd been placed in the chamber, whether it was because she had arrived before they were ready to perform the ritual, or if it was because they had been in no doubt that Behsart had sampled the bride of the seven demons of Daeksould.

Slowly, fear began to creep inside of her as the thought took hold that that was exactly the case and that her 'pilgrimage' would be cut short and she would be sent directly to Valdamer's castle and put to death. Rising, she set the tray with the half eaten food by the door and began to pace the small chamber, wondering if there was any hope of escape if that was to be the case.

Behsart had reached a point where he could not seem to resist his desire for her flesh, but what little power that might give her over him, if any, would be of no use to her if the demons were angered with him and

someone else was sent to take her to Valdamer Castle. She stood no chance of escaping if that was the case.

It occurred to her after a while that she hadn't even tried the door to see if it was locked. She knew it must be, but she moved to it and tried it anyway. Without much surprise, but with a great deal of disappointment, she found that it was.

Moving away from the door, she began to pace once more, glancing now and then at the tray. Finally, she settled to watching the door, deciding when it opened, if only one priest stood there, she would see if she could catch him off guard and escape.

She would've felt better for her chances if she were closer to the outer door to the temple, but she realized fairly quickly that her chances were virtually nil any way she looked at it. As long as she had felt that she had some chance of coaxing Behsart into lowering his guard, she had thought patience the wisest course. Any attempt to escape would put him on guard and make another attempt useless. She had to wait until the most opportune moment.

Behsart had said that if she pleased the seven demons they might consider allowing her to keep her life. She didn't really believe that in her heart of hearts, but she had clung to the hope that it was possible, that if she failed to escape she might still have a chance for life.

If, as she suspected, she had displeased them, she thought her chances less than nothing.

Despite her fear, or perhaps because of it, exhaustion finally got the better of her once she'd stopped pacing the room and settled to watch the door, but it was the sound of the door opening that woke her. She surged to her feet at once, swaying slightly with the grogginess of sleep. Two priests entered. Ignoring the tray, they seized her and dragged her from the room, down the long corridor that led to the bathing chamber.

She had already learned that trying to fight them was useless and yet she could not command herself not to. She struggled as they forced her down on a stone bench beside the pool. They held her, anointing her body with oils and scraping her skin until she throbbed all over. When they had bathed her, they led her from the pool and dried her.

As they left the chamber, they turned and followed the steps downward to the offering room. Below, she could hear the priests chanting and an almost hissing noise as they shuffled their feet across the stone floor. Mariel's dread grew with each step. As relieved as she was that it seemed that they would perform the offering anyway, she feared what she would have to face in the chamber. It might have frightened her less if the ritual had been the same each time, but each time it differed in every respect except that the demon, she knew, would whip his followers into a frenzy of carnality and that they would wring pleasure from her body until they'd sapped her of all strength.

Hezifath was the demon of the snake tongue. Her mind refused to supply her with how he might manifest himself in his followers.

As in the other temples, she saw that a stone altar stood in the center of the chamber. Instead of leading her to it, however, she was seized by the two priests who had walked beside her as they descended the stairs. Dragging her beyond the altar, they forced her down on the stone floor in the center of a circle made up of different colored stones so that it looked like the eye of a serpent. The stone was cold beneath her and she began to shiver as they knelt and removed the manacles that bound her wrists together.

Each man took one of her arms and pulled it straight out from her body, manacling her directly to the stone floor. They moved down her then. A third man approached, carrying a wedge shaped stone, and knelt beside her hips. The two who were binding her for the offering to Hezifath lifted her hips. The wedge was pushed beneath her buttocks. When she was lowered once more, she realized that it had curled her hips upward. Catching her legs then, they bent them at the knees and spread her legs wide, chaining her ankles to the floor.

She lay staring up at the ceiling, shivering from dread and the cold, listening to her heart hammering in her ears and the breath rasping from her chest in frightened gasps.

The High Priest came to stand between her legs. He lifted his arms. “Come, followers of the Demon Hezifath, of the snake tongue—pay homage to his bride.”

As the priests advanced toward the circle where she had been

chained, she saw they wore the hooded headdress of the demon Hezifath. Their bodies were painted in a pattern that made their skin appear as serpent's skin. They wore no more than a cup over their genitals.

When they reached the outer ring of the circle, they began to chant and dance in a circle around her, writhing, moving their arms sinuously. After a time, the chanting began to sound more like the hissing of serpents than sounds from human throats. As she watched, they knelt to the floor and then lay upon their bellies, moving around her with the sinuous, undulating movements of serpents, resembling huge snakes.

One moved toward her, undulating around her, flicking his tongue over her breast until her nipple grew turgid, standing erect. He bit down on it, drawing a gasp from her. She relaxed fractionally when she felt no more than a twinge of pain, but even as he moved away again she wondered if the next bite would, or the one after that. She knew once it began that it would continue much the same and feared once the fever was fully upon them that they would begin to bear down on her harder each time, biting her in truth rather than merely simulating a bite.

As he left, another approached her from the other side, flicking his tongue over belly, nipping her flesh before he moved on. Both fear and heat surged inside her as another approached her, flicked his tongue over her other nipple and then, lightly, bit down on her, raking his teeth along the distended tip before he released it and moved away. Within moments, she felt them all over her, felt the flicking of their tongues over her skin, nipping

her. Sometimes it bordered on pain, occasionally one bit her hard enough to draw a gasp from her, but she began to relax as pleasure began to far outweigh the discomfort and even the harder nips with sharp teeth sent heat spiraling into her belly.

She closed her eyes, but that only seemed to focus her mind more surely on the sensations flooding her. Her head began to swim as the drugging euphoria of bliss sucked her down. Despite the clouding of her mind, she tensed as she felt the heated flick of a tongue along one thigh. The licking moved lower, traced her nether lips and the seam where they met. After a moment, the tongue parted her nether lips, flicking along her cleft. Gasping, she pushed backward with her legs, moving away from the touch.

To her relief, instead of following her, he moved away.

Her relief was short lived. A moment later, Behsart knelt over her. Straddling her belly, he dragged her hips to the edge of the offering stone once more until it bit into her buttocks and her legs strained against the counter pull of the manacles around her ankles. Tightening his knees around her, he pinned her so that she could not move. As a tongue flicked along her thigh once more, he caught the fleshly lips of her sex and pulled them wide, stretching her so that the mouth of her sex opened.

She felt the flicking tongue move along the tender flesh of her cleft, sending sharp stabs of pleasure through her belly. Moving up her cleft, the hot tongue flicked the tiny, exquisitely sensitive bud of her clit, until heated

desire had her belly clenching and unclenching. She gasped when he nipped her, sending a sizzling shaft of arousal through her. He did not linger. Once he had bitten her, he moved downward again and she felt the tongue thrust inside of her. It seemed to swell, to lengthen, undulating through her passage. As it began to slowly withdraw, Behsart's hold shifted, spreading her body's opening wider so that the tongue plunged more deeply inside her, curling against the walls of her passage, stroking her.

She shook, tried to twist away and discovered she couldn't. The thrusting continued until she was gasping hoarsely, her body trembling.

As he moved away, Behsart shifted once more. Bending his head, he opened his mouth over her exposed flesh and sucked and licked her clit almost savagely, punishing her for her attempts to escape the invasive tongue until she was gasping shrilly.

She was trembling on the brink of release when he lifted his head. She shuddered at the abrupt cessation of stimulation, feeling a shiver skate through her as her body began to cool. Moments passed. While she struggled to catch her breath, the priests began to nip and lick at her breasts and belly once more, her arms, her neck.

Her flesh quivered as she felt the skate of a hot tongue along her thigh. As the tortuous sensations neared her sex, Behsart caught her nether lips, pulling them wide and offering the exquisitely sensitive inner flesh for the delectation of the demon Hezifath.

The heated tongue moved back and forth along her cleft, nipping at

her clit until she began to quake with imminent release. She fought it, dreading it, knowing that once it began they would not allow it to stop until they were ready to move on. As he moved down her cleft, Behsart shifted his hold on her, spreading the mouth of her passage wide to receive the tongue of the serpent. Two others approached her, flicked their tongues over her nipples and bit down on them as the tongue was thrust deeply inside of her. She gasped sharply, her body convulsing with pleasure. It continued to spasm as the tongue was thrust into her over and over.

The moment the priest withdrew and moved away, Behsart shifted again, burying his face against the tender flesh, sucking her clit into his mouth, teasing it with his tongue. The tremors of her climax, which had begun to subside, mounted once more, tearing through her in almost painful waves until she was screaming with the nearly unbearable pleasure.

Darkness began to engulf her before he ceased to torment her.

She was still gasping, trying to catch her breath when they began moving over her again. Her body, heated now to the point of release, was not allowed to cool more than a handful of moments as they continued the ritual unceasingly, teasing her flesh to such sensitivity she felt faint, dizzy. Each time the serpent approached to spear her womb with his tongue, Behsart parted the lips of her sex, opening her wide for them and holding her. Again and again they brought her to culmination, until she was hoarse from crying out, until her flesh quivered and shook without cease.

She wasn't even aware that the torment had ended at last until she felt

her ankles freed from the manacles and her legs dropped limply to the floor. When her wrists were freed, Behsart scooped her into his arms and lifted her.

She hung limply, too weak even to feel much dread as he strode from the circle and lay her face down on the altar. She was dragged back until her feet touched the floor. Her legs were spread wide, her ankles chained again. The manacles were placed around her wrists once more, drawn upward so that her arms were above her head, her cheek resting against the cold stone.

She'd thought that they had wrung every ounce of pleasure from her body that could be had, but as the first moved behind her, parted her buttocks and shoved his cock into her rectum, her body began scaling the heights once more. One after another, they drove into her frenziedly until she gasped hoarsely and came, and still the ritual continued until she lost count of the number of times her body was wracked by spasms of pleasure and fell finally into a deep black pit.

The shivering as her heated flesh began to cool roused her to dim awareness and she realized that she was cradled in Behsart's arms. Carrying her to a room with a wide bed, he laid her upon it and joined her. Instead of merely throwing one arm and leg over her, however, he gathered her close against his body, wrapping his arms around her.

"You will displease them if you fight it, my love and I can not allow it. Yield to them. Take the pleasure they offer you and soon we will both be

free,” he murmured, his voice sounding deeper, less harsh than Behsart’s voice usually sounded.

“Cavan?” she whispered, but she didn’t know if he responded or not. Within moments, strangely reassured by the steady pounding of his heart beneath her ear, she sank into oblivion again.

Chapter Four

When she had been bathed the following morning, the priests dressed her in a deep blue gown. She glanced at Behsart as he took the chain attached to her manacles, but there was no sign of the man. Behsart looked back at her, his eyes filled with nothing but heat and possessiveness.

She swallowed with an effort. The look should have heartened her, for it could only mean that she was right. Behsart, drawn by the pleasures of the flesh, was slowly but surely losing his control. However, she'd begun to realize that she was as much in control of Behsart as vice versa. He had only to look at her and her body responded with welcoming heat. His rough possession of her drove her into mindless bliss. Moreover, she had seen no more than a glimpse of what she believed to be the soul of the man inside.

If she was, in truth, weakening the demon Behsart, why could she not see him more frequently? For longer periods of time?

When they had left the temple behind and set out across the plain once more, she remembered the words he had spoken to her the night before. She knew it must have been Cavan. The words, the way he had held her, spoke of human emotions.

She'd thought Behsart was punishing her for her resistance, but it seemed that Cavan had been saying that he was the one who had assaulted her senses so devastatingly. It confused her, but the promise of his words lifted her spirits, as well, added another ray of hope to the few that she had managed to gather to comfort herself.

She tried not to think about the fact that her time was growing short. They had made pilgrimage to three temples. The Demons of each had claimed her. Only four more lay before them and then she would have no more time. Then, if she had not managed to escape, she would be taken to Castle Valdamer and she would either die, or the seven demons would take her to them in her fleshly form and she would be theirs.

To her surprise, Behsart pulled the horse to a halt as soon as they had entered the forest at the edge of the plain. Her belly tightened with a mixture of dread and anticipation as he turned her to face him, spreading her thighs over his own. Without a word, he caught her arms, looping them around his neck and lifted her against his belly. She swallowed with an effort as she felt the probing of his cock. He bore down on her, sheathing

his turgid flesh inside of her. She licked her lips. “Why? To punish me because I tried to resist?”

He studied her face for a moment. “Because I want my flesh buried inside of yours,” he growled, kicking the horse into motion once more.

To her dismay, he rode with his flesh buried inside of her until the sun had reached its zenith. She could not stop her body from responding to the constant stimulation any more than he could. By the time he pulled the horse to a halt beneath a tree, she was hanging limply against him, too weak even to move. Holding her, he dismounted and finally allowed her to slide to ground. When he’d unhooked her arms from around his neck, her knees gave out and she wilted to the ground. Lifting her, he carried her to the shade of the tree and settled her beneath it.

She stared at him numbly as he turned and walked to the horse to pull their food from the packs, but she was in no condition to take advantage of his inattention—which he was probably well aware of.

They ate in silence. Mariel was almost too tired to eat at all, and certainly too tired to try to think of anything to say. He allowed her to doze for a little while after they’d eaten before he drew her to her feet and led her to the horse once more. To her dismay, the moment he mounted, he turned her and mounted her on his turgid shaft. Again, they set out and, despite her weariness her body responded to the ramming thrusts of his cock, building her to a fever, giving her release, and then building again until finally, late in the afternoon, she reached a point where her body was simply too exhausted

to respond and she slept, slumped against him.

She woke when the horse stopped, lifting her head and looking around fearfully.

She saw that they were still in the forest, however, and relief flooded her. Behsart chained her to a small tree while he made camp. When they'd eaten, he led her into the woods and allowed her to relieve herself and then to a stream. When she'd bathed, he drew her robe over her again, manacled her wrists and took her back to camp.

He lay beside her on the pallet, pulling her closely against him, but, to her relief, he made no attempt to couple with her. The following morning, they rose and ate, then resumed their journey. To Mariel's surprise, he merely pulled her against his chest when they had mounted.

As relieved as she was, she puzzled over it, wondering if he had completely sated himself with her and what that might ultimately mean beyond the fact that her body was allowed to rest. At dusk, they stopped and made camp once more. When Behsart made no attempt to couple with her, Mariel's anxiety deepened, but when she noticed that he still watched her every move hungrily, she began to realize that it was not that he had lost interest in her but something else that restrained him. She finally decided that it must be his fear of the demon that he was taking her to, but that brought her no comfort at all.

Instead of stopping as dusk began to settle around them the following day, Behsart pressed on, slowing the horse for a time until the moon rose

and then urging it into a brisk trot. They came at last upon a village and Mariel stared with dread at the tall, dark shape that loomed in the center of the village. When they reached the temple, she was taken to a cell much like the one she'd been locked in at the Temple of Hezifath and left.

The soreness and weariness from her coupling with Behsart, and the rituals, had worn away in the days she was allowed to rest, but she was weary from the travel and when they'd left her, she simply climbed gratefully onto the soft mattress and fell asleep.

She was awakened the following morning when the priests came for her. Grasping her arms, they led her to the main corridor and turned toward the main entrance of the temple.

She heard the banging of the gongs as they began down the corridor. They seemed almost to step in time to the pounding. When they reached the piazza, the robe was stripped from her. To her surprise and dismay, the priests lifted her up. Spreading her legs, they displayed her to the worshippers of the Demon Bileezal, of the horned cock.

Fear clenched inside of Mariel as the High Priest intoned the name of one the most feared demons of Daeksould, ousting her discomfort over the way that the priests had displayed her to the worshippers at the foot of the temple.

It came to her as they set her on her feet at last that the path of the pilgrimage that she'd been led on had begun with the weakest of the seven demons and that each successive temple they visited belonged to a demon

more powerful and terrible than the last.

Her knees went weak as they led her inside so that the priests who held her arms had to support her with each step. She was too filled with dread even to consider struggling as they took her to the bath chamber and prepared her to receive the Demon Bileezal.

When they had finished, instead of leading her from the chamber, they lifted her onto their shoulders as they had when they'd displayed her and carried her down the stone steps to the offering chamber. Below, she heard the pounding of a drum. The priests moved in concert to the rhythm beat out, stepping, hesitating, stepping again. Mariel's heart seemed to beat at treble the pace. She was panting with fear by the time she was lowered to the stone floor and set on her feet.

She looked around fearfully as the procession of priests left the chamber. Her arms were pulled behind her back and her wrists bound together, then she was turned to face a doorway across the chamber. The altar lay between where she stood and the doorway and she stared at it in sick fascination.

A flickering light caught her attention, dragging her gaze to the door. A priest, wearing the hooded headdress of the Demon Bileezal appeared in the opening, holding a candle that cast the mask into frightening relief. He was bare, even of paint, except for the hood and the cod piece that cupped his genitals. His cock stood erect, protruding from his belly.

She saw as he stepped from the doorway that the priest behind him

looked identical in every respect. In all, twelve filed from the doorway moving to stand on either side of the altar. When they'd lined up, they began to chant. The two who held her arms pushed her forward. Pushing her face down on the altar, they attached manacles to her ankles and then attached the chain to her wrists so that her legs were bent behind her.

When they had lifted her up once more, they turned her so that she was perched on her knees on the end of the altar. She wavered as she spread her knees, but they held her arms, preventing her from falling. She began to shiver with nerves as the priests began to move around the altar. Despite every effort, she could not prevent herself from staring at the erect cocks that stood out from their bellies. Each shaft was studded with small, rounded metal balls from the tip to the root and around the circumference of the cock. The cocks themselves seemed impossibly huge, nearly as big around as her wrist and almost as long as the distance between the lips of her sex and her belly button.

She swallowed against the knot in her throat, knowing the size alone was enough to cause her discomfort if not outright pain. She had no idea of what the hard, rounded 'horns' might do to her, but her belly clenched spasmodically as she stared at them.

She was jerked back to attention as the priests holding her arms, thrust her shoulders forward, bearing down on her arms at the same time until her back arched, and her breasts were thrust forward. One of the priests circling her stopped. Covering one breast with his mouth, he shoved

the erect cock between her legs as he closed his teeth over the engorged bud at the tip of her breast. A mixture of pain and pleasure shot through her as he pulled away, holding her nipple tightly between his teeth. When he released her and stepped away, another took his place, tugging at her other nipple in much the same manner.

She flinched in anticipation when the third stopped. Instead of catching her nipple between his teeth, he suckled it, flicking it with his tongue until wetness coated her sex. When he had stepped away, a fourth took his place, suckling her other nipple until she felt weakness seep through her. The fifth caught her nipple as the first had, biting down just hard enough to send a shaft of pain through her pleasure.

At first, each time she felt teeth latch onto her, it jerked her completely from the pleasure the suckling mouths had instilled in her. After a time, her body began to react differently, flooding with sharper pleasure as she felt the pinch.

She was so dizzy and weak she would have collapsed long before they ceased to tease her if the two who held her had released her. Instead, when the procession around her finally stopped, they lifted her and turned her to face the altar. She saw that eleven of the priests had stepped back from the altar. The twelfth climbed onto it and lay down on his back. The High Priest approached carrying a vessel and poured the contents over the erect cock. The priest lying on the altar worked the liquid over his cock until it glistened from the rounded head to the root.

She was lifted and moved up the altar until she was straddling the man who lay there. Reaching between her legs, the priests who held her pulled the lips of her sex back and placed her over the cock, aligning her body so that when they settled her, the head of his cock was inside her. Mariel's heart slammed into her ribs as she realized what was coming.

The drum was struck. Catching her legs, the priests who held her impaled her on the cock the other priest held straight up. She gasped as it was rammed inside of her to the root, too stunned for several moments to realize that she'd felt very little pain as it was driven into her without allowing her muscles to adjust to the enormity of the size of the cock, that they'd anointed the shaft with oils that allowed it to be forced inside of her without ripping her apart.

The drum struck again. They lifted her, poising her on her knees so that little more than the head of the cock remained inside of her. Before she could catch her breath, the drum stuck again. Pulling her knees out from under her, they slammed her downward, impaling her once more. She gasped, feeling the rounded 'horns' rippling along her passage and sending out sharp jolts of pleasure that made her belly clench almost painfully around the hard cock that had stretched her to her limits.

Again they lifted and then forced her down, moving to the rhythm the drum set. By the time the huge, knobby cock had been slammed into her a half dozen times, her body was on fire, begging for release.

She was almost more dismayed than relieved when they lifted her

from him and moved her to the end of the altar again. Turning her to face outward, they jerked her shoulders back, thrusting her breasts out in offering.

Again the priests began to move around her. She shook as the first stopped and caught one nipple, raking it with his teeth as he pulled on it and finally released it. When he had moved on, a second stopped. Bracing herself, Mariel was caught off guard when he caught the nipple of her other breast and suckled it. When he had moved away and a third took his place, she tensed, expecting the pleasure/pain of his teeth. Instead, he suckled the nipple that still throbbed from the first priest's teeth. The fourth caught her by surprise, biting down hard enough that it jolted her from the pleasure that had begun to make her thighs quiver with weakness. She cried out, panting for breath as he finally released her and moved away.

Expecting the next to suckle her, she was caught off guard once more as he, too, bit down on her nipple, tugging at it, raking his teeth over it. Her belly quivered.

She found very quickly that she could not brace herself. Each time one stopped, he threw her off guard once more, suckling and giving her pleasure when she expected pain, biting her painfully when she expected pleasure.

As before, her body ceased after a time to react any differently. Regardless of whether pain or pleasure was inflicted on her, her belly clenched with pleasure, her body shuddered.

When they ceased at last and lined up on either side of the altar once more, her nipples were pounding, her sex was throbbing, her back ached from being held so long with her back arched and her breasts thrust forward.

She gasped as they jerked her upright and turned her.

In a heated fog, she watched as a priest climbed upon the table and lay flat. Again the High Priest stepped forward, pouring oil over the cock that stood stiffly erect. She was moved. When they had set her on her knees above him, they reached between her legs and spread her wide, shoving the cock head inside of her.

She gasped dizzily as she felt the cock head stretching the mouth of her sex, caught her breath when she heard the drum, flinching instinctively. Grasping her knees, they impaled her on the shaft, slamming her down so hard against him she felt her clit grinding into his belly. Before she could catch her breath, the drum pounded again.

This time the rhythm the drum set was much faster. She was lifted and rammed down on the shaft over and over so hard and fast that she felt her body skating the fine edge of pain, felt it hovering near release despite the pain.

She was moved again just as she felt her body gathering itself toward culmination.

Her heart began to pound in both anticipation and dread as she was settled at the end of the altar and her arms pulled back once more. She tensed as the first stopped before her, but there was no bracing herself when

she never knew whether she would be given pleasure or pain. Each assault caught her completely off guard.

With dread, she felt them turn her to face the next. Again, she was held and her body aligned. This time, the rhythm was so fast she came as soon as the cock was rammed inside her the fourth time. Her belly clenched, convulsing with spasms of pleasure that became almost more torture than pleasure as she was driven down over the rigid shaft again and again, without respite.

Her entire body was tingling with release as they moved her to the foot of the altar once more. She faced it with dread, sated, unable to bear the thought of being pleased again so quickly.

To her dismay, as they settled her on her knees, they pulled her thighs wide so that her knees were on the very edges of the altar. As they bore down on her arms until her back arched, lifting her breasts and thrusting them forward, the priest on either side of her reached between her thighs and caught her nether lips, peeling them back to expose her clit. She jerked, tried to twist away from their grip, but she was still so weak from her release it was no contest.

She flinched as the first priest stopped, kneeling and placing his mouth over her clit. Considering that her body had only just found release, the sucking and licking was almost as much torment, she thought, as it would have been if he had bitten her. Her passage tightened, heat and moisture flooding through her.

When he had moved away, a second man took his place. He bit down on her breast so hard she cried out, gnawing at her nipple, pulling it. She looked down at herself when he released her at last, surprised to see he hadn't broken the skin. Even as she glanced down at herself, she felt the priests peel her nether lips back, offering her pussy to the one who knelt in front of her. He bit her, sending a shaft of pain through her and ripping a cry from her throat. Scraping the sensitive bud with his teeth, he pulled on it as they had her nipples.

Blood pounded in the sensitive flesh as he withdrew and the lips of her sex were released. She jerked reflexively as another priest took his place and leaned toward her. To her relief, he covered the tip of breast so recently abused and suckled it, lathing it with his tongue. The throbbing ache subsided and heated pleasure replaced it.

The next man knelt and Mariel felt her belly jerk as the men who held her drew her nether lips back and offered her throbbing clit to him. Instead of soothing the tender flesh as she'd expected, he bit down on her, raked his teeth across it and tugged. Even as pain spread through her, however, he released it and began to suck her. The pain was transformed abruptly to pleasure. The moment she relaxed, he closed his teeth over her again, tugging, and sending another shaft of pain through her. Then, he suckled until she was dizzy with the alternating sensations cutting through her body. Her nipples and clit throbbed without cease as each took a turn, giving her pain, and then pleasure, over and over until her body began to respond with

need even to the pain.

By the time they had ceased tormenting her, her body throbbed all over, begging for release. Dizzy and breathless, she was turned once more to face the impaling. This time they didn't even rest her knees on the altar. Lifting her, they thrust the cock head inside of her and bore down on her. Pain and pleasure jolted through her as the cock was forced inside of her, withdrawn, slammed into her again. Her body convulsed with pleasure as the cock was rammed into her for the third time, and kept convulsing as they impaled her over and over.

She lost awareness of her surroundings as they lifted her away once more and positioned her at the end of the altar. Her whole body was still thrumming with release, felt boneless. When they arched her back, they had to hold her upright.

Briefly, the hope rose that she'd been assaulted so endlessly that her body had gone numb, moved beyond feeling anything. Instead, she discovered that it had progressed to a state where it rushed from satiation, to peak, and into culmination far more rapidly, where pleasure shot through her when she was given pleasure, and a sharper, harder pleasure shot through her when she was given pain.

She was barely even conscious as the dance of offering began to circle her. She didn't realize the first priest had stopped before her until those who held her curled their fingers into the lips of her sex and pulled the flesh back, exposing the sensitive inner flesh in offering. He closed his

teeth on the throbbing bud, raking them along the flesh as he pulled and tugged at the clit and tender petals of flesh that surrounded it. The pain jolted her back to full awareness, sending stabs of pleasure through her and making her heart pound. He rose and stepped away and another took his place, kneeling as the first had. Again the priests who held her drew her nether lips back, offering her fully. He closed his teeth on her tender flesh, tugging, suckling for a moment and then biting into her sensitive flesh again.

As he moved away, another took his place. This one settled his mouth over her breast, gnawing on her nipple ravenously.

She'd come to expect that they would alternate, though there was no rhythm that she could find, no way to tell when she would be given pleasure, or when it would be pain. One by one, the twelve stopped. Each time, she thought that they would soothe the throbbing. Instead, each time her nether lips were drawn back in offering, stabs of pain and pleasure went through her as they moved over her tender flesh with their teeth. Each who took a nipple into his mouth, gnawed it hungrily. Each assault sent sharp stabs of pleasure/pain through her, until her body was humming for release.

When they positioned her once more for the impaling, she was looking forward to it almost with a sense of desperation. She'd begun to feel as if her body was on fire and she would die if she didn't find surcease. As soon as they had spread her flesh and wedged the cock head inside of her, she wanted to thrust herself down upon it. They held her. When the

drum sounded, they bore down on her, grinding her against the belly at the root of the cock and her heart slammed against her ribs as pleasure shot through her in equal measure. A heart beat passed. The drum was struck again and she was lifted. Another heartbeat and they bore down on her, ramming the hard cock into her.

Despite the pleasure, the measure was too slow. Each time they moved her, her breath caught, her body quivered, but release remained beyond her reach. She was nearly sobbing when they moved her to the end of the altar and thrust her breasts and cunt out in offering.

They suckled her nipples and her clit, licked her. She bit her lips, trying to keep from moaning in frustration, needing more. When at last she felt the lips drawn away from her clit and the offering was taken with savage hunger, she groaned, feeling her body shoot toward climax. Before it had caught her, he moved away. She felt like weeping, was nearly mindless with need. The next three suckled her, teased her. The next caught her nipple and tugged at it, but it was not enough.

Almost as if they knew that she hung on the edge, desperate, needful, they merely tormented her.

When they positioned her above the cock once more, she was gasping so hard she felt faint. Spreading her flesh, the cock was inserted. She waited, poised, hoping, dreading. Catching her on the first drum beat, they bore down on her. Almost the moment she felt the root grinding against her, the drum sounded again and she was lifted. Again it struck, the rhythm so

fast she'd hardly landed before she was pulled away. Her climax began to quake inside of her as they bore down on her again. It exploded shatteringly through her, almost painfully as they continued to pound the engorged cock into her over and over.

She was weak with relief when they moved her again, but it did not last long. She was positioned at the end of the altar once more. The torment began to seem endless. At last, however, when she had received each of his twelve minions, the Demon Bileezal allowed her to rest. She was unbound, lifted onto the shoulders of those who'd carried her to the chamber and borne away. She was settled on the softness of a mattress and she knew no more.

Chapter Five

Mariel was so disoriented when she woke, she had no idea of where she was beyond the fact that it was a cell. Rising, she attended her needs, glanced with little interest at the tray of food by the door, and fell into the bed and slept. She roused when the scrape of the tray against the stone floor penetrated her dreams.

Slowly memory returned as she drifted to full wakefulness. She sat up. To her surprise, she felt little tenderness. She frowned. Vaguely she remembered that someone had rubbed soothing oils into her skin, massaging the soreness from her. Her stomach growled and she got up. The food on the tray told her little, but she saw that it was not the same as before and wondered how long she'd slept.

Shrugging the thought off, she ate, set the tray by the door once more, and lay down on the bed again. She was awakened again when the door opened. Sitting up, still groggy, she watched as two of the priests entered. Without a word, they pulled her to her feet and escorted her from the cell to the bathing chamber.

When she'd been bathed and led from the pool, she looked toward the door expectantly, knowing that now the High Priest would bring a robe for her and she would leave the temple.

The High Priest did not appear. Instead, when she'd been dried, the priests lifted her onto their shoulders and carried her from the room. Her heart jerked painfully as they lifted her for she knew her ordeal was not over.

As she'd known they would, they carried her down the stone stairs to the offering room. When they set her on her feet, the two priests beside her caught her arms, turning her. With dread, she stared at the doorway on the opposite side of the room, hearing the beat of the drums, the scrape of feet as the favored priests of the Demon Bileezal appeared there, bearing candles. As they entered the chamber, they moved to stand on either side of the altar, extinguishing the candles and laying them on the floor at their feet.

The High Priest emerged last. Turning when he'd stepped from the door, he lifted a vessel and moved toward the altar. As he passed before each of the twelve priests, he tipped the vessel, pouring a glistening liquid over each cock. When he'd completed the circuit he held up his hands. The

drumming stopped.

The two men who stood on either side of her caught her arms. Dragging her toward the altar, they lifted her and sat her on the end. Her arms were pulled behind her back and bound and they lowered her until she was lying on her arms, her back arched upward from her hands in the small of her back. Two other robed priests joined those who'd placed her on the altar. Catching her legs, they bent them at the knee, placed manacles around her ankles and attached them to either side of the altar so that she couldn't straighten her legs, resting her feet on the edges of the altar.

As the High Priest moved around the altar and came to a stop at her feet, the two who'd bound her ankles grasped her thighs and pulled them apart, then reached between her legs, parted the flesh. The High Priest tipped the vessel he carried, pouring the clear liquid over her genitals. Mariel flinched as the cool liquid poured over her warmth of her sex, sending a shiver through her.

When the High Priest stepped back, he lifted his head. "The Demon Bileezal has favored his bride, devoting the first half of the ritual to her pleasure. Take your devoted servants, Lord Bileezal and take your pleasure of your bride."

The drums began to beat again as the High Priest turned and moved away. Around her, the priests chanted, summoning the beast. Mariel's heart kept time to the drum beat, pounding in her ears as fear filled her at the priest's words. The four men who surrounded her lifted her, moving her

toward the end of the altar until the edge cut into her buttocks. She was settled again, but instead of allowing her feet to rest on the altar, the two priests at her feet caught her legs, spreading them.

As the vessels of Bileezal began to move around the altar, Mariel's throat closed. They circled her three times before one stepped from the circle and stood between her legs. The men holding her legs pulled thighs wider and parted the lips of her sex with their fingers wide in offering. Stepping forward, the man guided the head of his cock into her and leaned over her. Propping his hands on either side of the altar, he dropped his head and caught one distended nipple in his mouth, raking his teeth across it, pulling it, then moved to the twin, nipping her hard. Both pain and pleasure shot through her as he began sucking and biting her flesh almost frenziedly. Abruptly, he thrust inside of her.

Mariel cried out as he rammed into her, felt her flesh yielding reluctantly to the intrusion, spasming around the enormous cock. The force of his thrust would have pushed her up the table except for the fact that the four who surrounded her held her to receive as the man, keeping rhythm with the drum, pounded into her joltingly, grinding against her, biting and sucking her breasts. There was no measured number of strokes as there had been the day before. He rammed into her over and over until she thought he would split her in two—and in spite of the pain he inflicted, her body heated, drugged with the euphoria of pleasure, climbing toward release.

Abruptly, it ripped through her, dragging a hoarse cry from her throat

and still he rammed his cock inside of her on and on, pushing her climax to the limits of her endurance. Suddenly, he jerked, shuddered, his seed pouring inside of her. Straightening, he stepped away and rejoined those who still circled her, chanting.

A second stepped from the group. Pushing his cock head into her, he thrust deeply inside of her and began to pump into her frantically, jarringly, wringing weak cries from her as her body began to climb toward release almost immediately. She came, her body wracked by excruciating spasms as he slammed his cock past the quaking walls of her sex. Mellowing heat washed through her and then her body began climbing again. The jerking of his cock as he climaxed sent her spiraling over the edge once more and into near oblivion.

Mariel lay panting for breath as he pulled his cock from her and stepped away. Something cold was poured over her heated, throbbing genitals, sucking the breath from her lungs. She was still trying to catch her breath as she was lifted until she was sitting nearly upright.

A man stepped from the moving circle, grasped both her breasts in his hands and began devouring them feverishly, biting, suckling, licking, and drawing her back from satiation to heated need once more. When he released her breasts at last, he knelt, feeding upon her clit as her nether lips were drawn back to offer it to him. Mariel was nearly mindless before he ceased and stood, shoving his cock into her and fucking her as feverishly as he had sucked and bit her. She climaxed twice before he pumped his seed

into her and stepped away.

She was barely conscious by the time the fourth had pounded into her until he'd emptied his seed.

Removing her bindings, they lifted her and carried her from the offering chamber and up the stairs to the bathing chamber. The cool water revived her. The bathing was far from pleasant, however. Her body felt so sensitive she could hardly bear to be touched.

To her dismay, she was borne to the offering chamber once more where the drumming and pounding continued unceasingly. As before, she was bound and offered to Demon Bileezal. Four more times he took her, driving her into release over and over before he took his own.

She knew even as they took her to the bathing chamber that her ordeal was not yet over, but when they took her down the third time, she felt like weeping. By the time they bore her down the stairs the fourth and final time she was almost beyond knowing or caring—almost. They still managed to wring pleasure from her, and hoarse cries, over and over.

Her last thought before she was allowed to sink into the darkness was that she hoped she'd pleased the Demon Bileezal. He'd nearly fucked her to death and she hated to think she'd endured two days of offering her body in vain.

She was allowed to rest for two days before she was escorted to the bathing chamber, bathed, dressed in a golden robe and led away by Behsart. He said nothing. He rarely spoke, but despite his typical reticence, she

immediately noticed the repressed rage in him as he settled her before him on the horse. Mounting behind her, he pulled her tightly against him, turned the horse and spurred it into a trot as they rode from the village.

They had not ridden far into the forest when he guided the horse off the road and into a clearing. Dismounting, he tired the horse and pulled her from the saddle. Leading her to the shade of a tree, he pushed her down and followed her, shoving her gown up and falling upon her as if he were starving and she a loaf of bread. The savagery of his possession heated her blood until she was moaning beneath him and when he parted her thighs and thrust into her, excitement surged through her. Within moments, her body began to convulse, closing around his thrusting cock and milking him so that his crisis jolted through him, as well.

Briefly, he rested and then he took her once more, as desperately as he had the first time, ravishing her hungrily, thrusting into her with frantic need until he brought her to culmination again and followed her, shuddering with his own release.

When he'd ceased to shudder, he rolled off of her, lying on his back in the grass and staring up at the tree above them. Mariel dozed. When she woke, she discovered that he was lying beside her, staring down at her, his expression almost puzzled. She gazed back at him, equally curious, wondering if she was seeing the demon, Behsart, or the man, Cavan.

He'd made love to her, she realized with a touch of surprise. Despite the desperation of his possession, he had held her, stroked her body almost

worshipfully, pleased her before he sought his own release.

Was it at all possible that the demon was capable of softer feelings?

She could not believe that he was. Cavan had begun to gain control of the demon as Behsart weakened.

But who was Cavan?

Behsart had said that he had once been known as Cavan, Lord of Reugal. The name meant nothing to her, but she had no way of knowing if it was because Behsart had lied to her and made the name up, or if it was purely ignorance on her part. Until the Trull had come for her, she had never traveled beyond her own village. For as far back as she could remember, they had been poor, for her father could never hold on to money long and the poorer they got, the more heavily he drank until that began to eat into the little that was left from his gambling.

As tempted as she was to try to reach the man she'd begun to feel emerging from the grasp of the demon, in the end, she held her silence, fearful that she would arouse the wrath of Behsart if she tried to summon Cavan and undo whatever good she'd gained. She thought that she would be far better off to pander to Behsart's lust for her and feed him upon it until he became so sated and weakened Cavan could supplant him and aid her in escaping her fate.

She had been surprised but tremendously relieved that she'd been allowed time to rest after the last ritual, but she knew that the worst trials were ahead of her. The ritual at the Temple of Bileezal had been by far

worse than anything that had come before. It made her ill with fear only imagining what she might have to face at the temples she must face next.

The only thing that sustained her was the belief that, no matter what, they would see to it that she reached the Castle Valdamer. It was not much to find comfort in, but it was all she had.

Perhaps, since the Demon Bileezal had taught her that pleasure could be had, even from pain, she would be able to endure.

Abruptly, Behsart rose and moved to the horse, retrieving the food pack. When he returned, he handed her a portion and took some for himself. They ate in silence. Mariel glanced at Behsart several times from beneath her lashes and saw that his gaze had settled unblinkingly on her.

She was almost disappointed when he made no attempt to couple with her again. Instead, when they'd finished, they took their ease and returned to the horse.

When Behsart had settled behind her, Mariel turned and looked up at him. "Pleasure me as you did before," she whispered huskily.

His face went taut, his eyes blazing instantly with passion. His hands shook as he turned her to face him, settling her thighs over his as she looped her arms over his head. His cock was already hard and throbbing as he shifted his loincloth and released it. Tightening her arms around his neck, she lifted up so that he could push his cock head inside of her and, once he had, settled on his lap, feeling the dampness that remained from their coupling easing his passage. He caught her hips, thrusting upward as he

bore down on her until her clit rubbed his belly.

His eyes glazed as he tightened his arm around her hips and set the horse into motion. Mariel clung tightly to him, welcoming the heat that began to build inside of her at once. The body, the scent, the touch belonged to the man—not the demon Behsart and she knew the man was aware of her, desired her, drew pleasure from her body even as he wrung pleasure from her.

She relished the closeness, the sense of belonging, as much as she enjoyed the desire and clung to him as they brought each other to culmination over and over, until they were drunk with each other.

They stopped to refresh themselves, but each time they mounted the horse to go on their way, she mounted his cock and rode him. At dusk, they made camp. When they had eaten and bathed in the stream, they rolled together in Behsart's bedding, curling around each other and making love slowly. He pulled her across his chest when they had sated one another, stroking her back, holding her close. As Mariel drifted away toward slumber, he spoke.

“I grow stronger with each day that passes. Stay strong for me, my lovely Mariel. Together, we will banish the demons.”

Behsart was sullen and withdrawn when they woke. Mariel was in no doubt that the demon was once more dominant, banishing Cavan once again, for she saw it with every glance. She wasn't certain whether he was angry with her because Cavan had escaped his control the night before, or if

it was because he was looking forward to turning her over to the priests of the next temple with resentment. She thought it possible that it was a little of both and made no attempt to draw him into conversation or to tempt him to couple with her.

The following day, they reached a range of gentle, rolling mountains. They camped that night in the foothills and began the climb the following morning. By midday they had topped the crest and started down once more. Toward evening, she saw the towering Temple of the Demon Raezitath, the ringed demon.

She didn't know whether to be relieved or sorry when Behsart stopped to camp once more. She was certainly in no hurry to reach the temple, but the fear of waiting in dread was almost as bad as reaching their destination and knowing that she only had to endure the ritual and she would have it behind her.

At dawn, they rose and mounted the horse and set it toward the Temple of Demon Raezitath. The priests began pounding at the gongs even as they cantered the horse up the main road. By the time Behsart had tethered the horse and helped her down, worshippers had already begun to gather. When they reached the piazza, the High Priest took hold of the chain and Behsart departed once more.

Mariel watched fearfully as he strode down the stairs, mounted the horse and rode off, wondering why it seemed he would not even be allowed to enter the temple. Or had that been his decision? Did it mean she would

be here many days, as she had at the Temple of Bileezal, she wondered fearfully? Or did it mean nothing at all beyond something so simple as a need to run some mundane errand, such as having the horse shod?

When they had finished displaying her, she was escorted inside. Despite the robed priests that surrounded her and the dimness inside the temple after the bright morning sunlight, she saw almost at once that the Temple of Raezitath was not laid out as the other temples had been. The corridor, instead of running straight and level through the temple, slanted downward, dipping more sharply as they reached the center of the temple and splitting off to the right and left.

The procession turned left as they reached the end of the corridor. Mariel saw as they reached the floor below that the bathing, or purifying chamber, was a part of the offering room. She tried not to think what significance that might have as they came to a stop and the manacles around her wrists were removed.

A priest seized her by each arm and walked her toward a mosaic on the floor near the pool, forcing her to lie down on her back. Kneeling on either side of her, they grasped her arms and positioned them straight out from her body, clamping a manacle that was set into the floor around each wrist. Uneasily, she watched as they moved back toward her, clamping a second manacle around each upper arm.

A leather strap was fed through a ring in the floor, across her body just below her breasts and into a second ring on the other side, then

tightened to that she could barely breathe and could not move at all.

They moved down her body then. Grasping her ankles, they parted her legs so wide she'd begun to feel pain in her hip joints and groin and finally fastened her ankles with manacles connected by rings to the tiled floor. Moving up her legs, they secured two more bands around her upper legs, tightening them against the floor, as well. The two who had secured her stepped back.

Chapter Six

Minutes measured in pounding heartbeats passed. Finally, two other priests approached her. One knelt between her legs and the other straddled her, settling his buttocks on her lower stomach with his back to her. Mariel swallowed, panting in little gasps, unable to take a decent breath of air into her lungs as she waited fearfully to see what they would do.

In a moment, she felt fingers parting the seam of her nether lips, felt the flesh peeled back. Her clit was captured between two fingers and stretched. A moment later, fire shot through her. She screamed, jerking against her bindings, waiting in terror for the pain to be repeated. It wasn't. They continued for several moments to tug and pull at her clit, but the fiery pain began to dissipate to a dull throbbing.

Finally, the two stood. Moving to either side of her, one lay something cold and metallic on her stomach. The priest on her right grasped her left nipple and stretched it. The second thrust a thin, sharp needle through the flesh, running it all the way through and out the other side. Mariel screamed the moment the needle pierced her flesh, surging against her bindings. Ignoring her, the one with the needle set it aside, picked up a tiny ring and inserted it in the hole he'd made, fastening it. She stiffened as they moved to her right breast. Again, her nipple was pinched and the skin stretched. The one with the needle pierced it and a second ring was attached and fastened.

She watched in fear as they collected their tools and rose, wondering if they meant to pierce her anywhere else. To her relief, they turned and left.

The two who had bound her returned and began to release the manacles. When they had finished, they pulled her up and walked her to the pool. The pain of the piercings had subsided to a dull, pounding throb, but the bathing was an ordeal. The slightest touch sent new waves of pain through her sensitive areas and the scraping that followed was almost worse.

The drums began to pound even as she was led from the pool the second time. The priests began chanting. Mariel stared fearfully at the opposite end of the chamber as she was dried. There were perhaps a dozen robed priests besides those who attended her in the purification. As she watched, however, six others filed into the room. These wore the hood of

the beast. They were naked beyond that except for some sort of harness-like contraption that cupped their genitals. Their cocks were erect, standing obscenely against their bellies and painted bright red. Mariel wasn't certain if it was fear that made it appear that their cocks were even bigger than those of the Temple of Bileezal, or the paint, or if they actually were bigger. The men themselves were massively muscled.

When her attendants had finished drying her, she was led to the offering area and toward three posts that stood up from the floor. She was pushed back against the center post. A strip of leather perhaps four inches wide was laid on the floor at her feet. At each end of the strip was a large ring. Chains were attached to the rings.

Her feet were threaded through the larger rings and they were drawn up to her thighs. She was told to sit then. When she'd settled, the two priests who'd escorted her pulled on the chains attached to the rings. Slowly, the chains grew taut and began to lift her thighs upward. The strap beneath her buttocks tightened. Her hands were placed on the chains and then she was slowly raised up from the floor until she was hanging several feet above it.

The lifting stopped. Taking another pair of chains from the floor, the two priests attached them to the rings around her thighs and moved to the posts on either side of her. Threading the chain through rings set in the posts, they began drawing them tighter and tighter until Mariel's thighs had been drawn so wide she felt the tendons pulling painfully. When they'd

secured the chains and released them, it released some of the tension and her tendons, to her relief, ceased to burn.

Returning to her once more, one of the priests pulled her hand from the chain and pulled her arm behind her back, then reached for her other arm, twisting that around behind her as well and binding them behind the pole. The second took a pair of manacles from the floor, fastening one around each ankle. When he'd finished, he took a tiny chain and threaded it through a loop on the manacle of her right foot.

She stared at him in confusion, wondering what possible purpose so tiny a chain, which looked as if it could be snapped easily, could have. Reaching above her head, he threaded the tiny chain through a metal eye protruding from the side of the post. Pulling it taut, he threaded it through the ring piercing her right nipple, down through the ring in her clit, up again through the ring in her left nipple and to a second metal eye on the opposite side of the post before attaching it to the manacle on her left ankle.

Sensation that was part pain and part pleasure shot through her as he tugged on the chain, adjusting it and finally securing it. Mariel swallowed with an effort when he moved away. The slightest movement of her feet sent waves of sensation through her nipples and her clit. The greater the movement, the closer to pain it became.

She held still, hardly daring to breathe as they moved away from her at last, discovering that it was not only a matter of moving her feet that tugged against the delicate chain. Each rise and fall of her chest with

breath, the slightest movement of her body, tugged at the rings and stimulated sensation. Heat burgeoned inside her body in response and she had not even been touched.

She looked at the two priests in dismay as they returned. One stepped between her legs. The other stood to one side, holding some strange looking devices. Taking one, the priest grasped the flesh of her nether lips. Clamping the metal end into her flesh, he wrapped the strap around her thigh, drew the flesh back, then clamped the other end of the strap a little lower on her fleshy lip. The second was attached as the first had been, holding the lips of her sex wide. When he'd finished, he ran his finger along her cleft, parting the thin inner lips. After studying her sex a moment, he and the other priest moved to the two poles on either side of her and tightened the chains spreading her thighs.

The tightening spread the lips of her sex wider and tugged on the chain running through her nipples and clit. Mariel gasped, panting as needles of pain went through her seemingly everywhere at once. The gasp sent a second wave through her and she squeezed her eyes closed, holding her breath, trying to slow her pounding heart. She opened her eyes as she heard the chanting grow louder and saw that the chanting priests were approaching her. The six who were bare lined up in front of her. The High Priest moved along the row, stopping at each and tipping oil onto the head of their cocks. When he'd reached the last, he turned, lifted his arms and offered her to the Demon Raezithath.

At once, three of the six moved toward. Instead of circling her, however, they began to stroke her body, to suck and nip at her with their teeth and lick her. Each time she jerked reflexively, sensation shot through her nipples and clit at the same time. The harder she jerked, the greater the pain and the less pleasure. By the time she realized she was inflicting most of the pain on herself, her whole body felt as if it was throbbing. She closed her eyes, willing herself to remain perfectly still.

She quickly discovered, however, that she simply could not control her reflexive actions. When they gnawed along the keenly sensitive soles of her feet, she jerked. When they sucked her toes, she jerked again. One knelt before her and ran his tongue along her cleft, teasing the ring in her clit with his tongue and both feet jerked at once. After a time, the pain and pleasure began to merge, turning her body into a throbbing mass of pulsing sensation.

One of the three stopped between her thighs, pushed the head of his cock into her and then thrust deeply. The abrupt invasion made her jerk all over, sending a hard wave of pleasure through her. Grasping the post behind her, he withdrew slightly and began to pump into her hard and fast, jolting her body and sending both pain and pleasure screaming through her. As her body began to convulse with the first tremors of release, tightening around his cock, he began to ram into her harder and faster until she was screaming with the sharp convulsions of pleasure. When he'd come, he moved around her and began to suckle one of her breasts. A second moved

between her thighs, sheathed his cock inside of her and began thrusting into her as the other two moved to her feet and began to suck and nip at them, causing her to jerk reflexively. The cock thrusting in and out of her, the jolt of pain and pleasure that went through her when she jerked, set her body to spasming in another hard release. The moment the walls of her sex began to convulse, he grasped the pole and began to pound into her harder until his cock began to jerk inside of her.

She was gasping so hard when he finally stepped away from her that an almost constant stream of sensation ran through her as each breath pulled on the rings in her nipples and clit. When the third man positioned himself and pushed inside of her, she came almost instantly. The muscles of her passage convulsed around his hard cock and continued to spasm as he drove into her frenziedly, seeking his own release. By the time he reached his crisis, she was nearly hoarse and barely conscious.

Something cold and hard was pushed into the mouth of her sex, reviving her instantly. As cold liquid poured through her passage, bathing her hot sex, her belly clenched and she jerked hard against the chain. Pain erupted everywhere at once. When she was able to unclench her eyelids, she saw that the three who'd received her had returned to the line of priests. Several moments passed and then the other three moved forward.

Surrounding her, they suckled her breasts, nipped her inner thighs and sucked bites of flesh into their mouths, tormented the soles of her feet and toes, sucked and lathed her cleft and clit until once again she was a mass of

pulsing flesh, dizzy with the heat that clouded her mind. One by one, they sheathed their hardened cocks in her flesh and thrust into her until they were spent.

Again, when they moved away, cold fluids were forced inside her sex, jerking her from the edge of unconsciousness. The first three approached her again, tormenting her with their mouths, and tongues and teeth, and then thrusting their cocks into her and fucking her until they came.

To her surprise and relief, when the second trio had received her again, she was lowered and her bindings removed. Leading her to the purification pool, the attendants bathed her, dried her and then lifted her to their shoulders and carried her up the incline to the main corridor. Instead of turning, however, they crossed the bisecting corridor and continued. At the end was a stout wooden door. When it was opened and she was carried inside, she saw it was a large chamber. Pillows were scattered about the floor and formed piles along the walls. Curtains lined the walls. A single narrow stone table stood near the door.

They lowered her onto pillows in the center of the room.

Instead of leaving, however, they extended her arms to either side of her and manacled them to the floor. Her knees were bent, her thighs spread wide and bindings were placed around her thighs and ankles, pinioning her legs to the floor. The clamps they'd used to hold her nether lips wide were attached to her once more.

They left her then. Mariel stared up at the ceiling, wondering what

was to come next. As time passed, however, exhaustion got the better of her and, despite her discomfort, she slept.

The opening door woke her sometime later. As she glanced toward the door, three of the priests who'd received her entered the room and closed the door again.

Two moved to the mounded piles of pillows and sprawled out on them, lying on their sides, their heads propped on their hands. The third picked up a pillow and approached her. Kneeling between her thighs, he pushed her hips up, shoving the pillow under her so that her hips were tilted up. When he was satisfied, he settled on his stomach and opened his mouth over her cunt and proceeded to suck and fondle her genitals with his tongue until Mariel was squirming beneath the onslaught.

The other two merely watched for a time, but finally they rose and moved toward her and began to suckle her breasts until her body began to jerk and spasm in release. Before the last echoes had faded away, the one who'd been gnawing and sucking on her clit came to his knees, thrust his cock inside of her and began slamming into her. Within moments, her shocks of release began to pour through her again, spurred to greater and greater heights as he began to thrust more rapidly in search of his own release. Grinding deeply inside of her, he held himself still until his seed had ceased to spew inside of her and finally withdrew.

Rising, he moved to the curtains along one wall, disappeared for several moments and returned with a wet cloth. When he'd bathed her, he

left again. A few moments later, he emerged from the curtained doorway, strode to a mound of pillows and sprawled atop them, composing himself for sleep. The other two fondled her for a while bringing her sated body to heat once more, and finally rose and returned to the pillows, dropping down on them.

Mariel swallowed convulsively. Before they'd begun to fondle her, her body had been sated. Now, she was a mass of unfulfilled desire once more. After a while, she drifted to sleep, however. She was awakened when the door opened again.

Blinking, she lifted her head and stared at the robed priest who entered, carrying a tray of food. Setting it on the table near the door, he turned and left.

His entrance had roused the three men. They rose and approached her. Releasing her from the bindings, she was told to attend her needs, bathe and return. Stiff and sore, she did as she was told. When she returned to the room, she was told to lie down again.

Her stomach felt as if it was caving in, but she saw no use in arguing. Once she'd lain down on the cushions, two of them set about binding her once more. When they'd finished, they settled cross legged on either side of her. The third lifted the tray and approached. Sitting down on the floor between her thighs, he took the bite sized chunks of food and laid them out on her body. When he'd placed all the food on her belly and breasts, he took a small pitcher from the tray and drizzled a thick liquid over the grapes

and small chunks of apples scattered over her body. Almost as an after thought, he drizzled a small portion over her exposed genitals.

Once he had finished, he set the tray aside and got on his hands and knees. The others followed suit. Leaning over her, they plucked the food from her body with their mouths and teeth. Turning, the one to the right of her leaned down, his mouth hovering just above hers, offering her the grape between his teeth. Grateful that she wasn't to be left to watch them eat, she took it. The grape popped in her mouth and she swallowed the juices thirstily. As they fed her with their mouths and her thirst and hunger began to subside, she began to focus on the feel of their mouths moving over her. Heat blossomed, built. It built far more rapidly when they'd polished off the tidbits of food and began to lick the sticky liquid from her skin. A shock wave of sensation flooded through her as the one between her thighs lowered his head and began to suck and lick the syrup he'd drizzled over her genitals. When he'd licked and sucked every drop of it from her, he moved over her and thrust his cock into her, pumping into her feverishly until he came.

Mariel was still throbbing on the verge of release when he withdrew, bathed her sex and then lay down once more. She dozed, drifting upward sometime later as the heat in her belly reached flash fire from the mouth suckling her clit. She came almost as soon as he mounted her.

She dozed when he'd finished with her. She was released twice more to attend her needs but bound again for offering as soon as she returned.

They pleased themselves on her when the mood struck them, taking turns. Sometime later, another tray of food was brought and they ate the food from her body as before. She dozed off and on, was awakened sometimes by a mouth suckling one or the other of breasts, sometimes her clit and sometimes they merely mounted her and thrust into her until they came.

In the morning, the robed priests returned. Releasing her from the bindings, they carried her to the offering chamber once more. When they'd bathed her a thin chain was brought. Threading it through the ring on one nipple, they pulled it down, threaded it through her clit ring and then up again through the ring on her left nipple. The ends of the chain were then pulled over her shoulders and she was forced onto her hands and knees. Two of the six receivers approached her and got down on their knees, one at her head and the other behind her. The one behind her pushed her legs apart and thrust the head of his cock into her opening. Grasping the chains in his hands, he held the ends tightly as he pushed inside of her.

Pain and heat shot through her as the chain was pulled taut by his thrust. Even as she opened her mouth to cry out at the pain, her hair was caught and her head pulled up. The man kneeling before her shoved his cock into her mouth. The man thrusting into her pussy set the pace, slamming into her and forcing her forward so that the cock in her mouth slid deeper. Each thrust sent both pain and pleasure coursing through her as it tugged on her nipples and clit. As the heat rose inside of her, she began to suck more feverishly at the cock in her mouth. When she climaxed and her

body began to quake, the man thrusting his cock into her pussy began to slam against her more desperately, sending more pain and pleasure ripping through her so that she sucked harder and harder on the cock in her mouth until it began to convulse, spewing his seed into her mouth and down her throat. She gagged, tried to pull away. The chain was jerked so hard she thought it would tear the rings from her. She swallowed convulsively at the command, feeling the man behind her come.

When they rose, they carried her to the pool, bathed her and returned her. Two more took their place, thrusting into her until their crises erupted. Hours passed in a hot, throbbing morass of pain and pleasure until it was all she could do to remain on her hands and knees and receive them. One by one she received their cock into her mouth and then in her vagina.

She was almost too tired even to feel relief when she emerged from the pool and they lifted her, carrying her from the chamber. She was asleep almost before she fully settled against the pillows.

When she awoke, she discovered she'd been spread again and manacled. Three of the receivers were sprawled on the pillows around her, but she had no idea if it was the same three that had shared the room with her the night before, or the others. They still wore their hoods. She could see nothing of their faces beyond their eyes and mouths. She thought it was probably the other three, but it made little difference to her. They were mere shells. All them were the Demon Raezith, who used their bodies to pleasure himself on her so that he was not subject to the limitations of one

body. When one tired, he allowed it to rest and used another.

For a time, they seemed content to move to her and slake their lust as it suited them. When they'd released her the second time to see to her needs, however, she was not bound again. Instead, one caught the chains that were still threaded through the rings in her genitals and nipples and held it. When he wanted her, he pulled on the chains until the pain woke her and she crawled to him. Sometimes he would push his cock into her mouth and make her suck him and mouth fuck him until he came. At others, he would mount her from behind, or throw her to the pillows and thrust into her pussy until he found release. When he was sated, he would tug on the chains and pull her to the next.

She dozed for brief periods, but she was never allowed to sleep for long before she felt a painful tug on the chain that drew her to whoever held it to offer herself once more.

Chapter Seven

Mariel had never been more glad to see anyone than the two robed priests who came for her the following morning. If she had not been held by the chain, and too weak even to stand, she would have leapt to her feet to follow them. They came to her, lifted her and carried her down to the pool, bathing her.

Her body throbbed all over, ceaselessly.

Instead of dressing her when they'd dried her, they carried her to the offering room once more. She was bound against the post, her thighs and the lips of her sex spread wide to keep them from hindering access to her body in any way. As they had the first day, they took her by threes, expending themselves on her body repeatedly before allowing the other

three to sate themselves on her.

When she was released, she was taken to the chamber of pillows once more. Again, she was pinioned to the floor. Three joined her, and again they exhausted themselves on her.

She was barely conscious when the priests bore her away to the pool the following day and the bath revived her very little. Apparently they saw that she would merely collapse if they forced her onto her hands and knees again, so she was taken to the post. She was barely conscious as they thrust into her over and over and yet her body convulsed regardless.

When she was finally released, she hung limply from the arms of those who carried her, barely aware of anything. She lapsed into complete unconsciousness as she was laid on the pillows. She was allowed, at last, to rest, barely aware of the passage of time. They roused her and forced her to eat periodically, but the moment they ceased to prod her, she fell over and slept once more.

When she finally awoke to full alertness, she had no idea of how much time had passed. The robed priests entered the room. She leapt to her feet and then went still with stunned surprise to discover that she was completely unfettered. Before she could recover, they moved toward her, lifted a black robe and drew it over her head, settling it around her.

Relief flooded through her, undiminished even as they placed the manacles on her wrists and led her from the chamber.

Behsart awaited her on the piazza. Without a word, he took the chain

the priest held out and crossed the piazza, descending the stone stairs rapidly. Mariel hurried after him, fearing any moment she would be dragged off balance and roll to the bottom. When he reached his horse, he lifted her to the saddle, climbed up behind her and spurred the horse into motion.

Mariel settled against him uneasily. He was enraged. His eyes glittered with it. His entire body was taut with anger held barely in check. If she had doubted before what that anger signified, she no longer did.

He did not like yielding her to the temple demons. His sense of possessiveness was rapidly moving beyond his control.

They did not stop to break their fast when they had left the village behind as had become their custom. After a while, however, Behsart pulled bread and cheese from the food pack and handed them to her. She placed her hands over his as she took the offering. As innocent as the contact was, he hesitated for a long moment before he withdrew his hand.

When she had eaten, he took the wine skin and handed it to her, watching as she drank. The food and wine comforted her, easing some of her tension, but much of it still lingered. His anger was unnerving enough. The fact that he seemed to have withdrawn was even worse.

Only two temples lay before them now. That did not allow her much time to devise a way to save herself if Behsart did not succumb to her.

She had counted on it. There was nothing else. Since she had been taken, she had been bound, watched, or simply too exhausted from the

offerings to have any hope of escaping.

At mid day, they stopped to refresh themselves. Behsart watched her hungrily, but he made no attempt to take her and she found she simply didn't have the nerve to try to approach him herself when she could see that rage was a good part of his hunger.

"Why are you angry with me?" she finally asked when they had set out once more.

He was silent for so long that she thought he wouldn't answer her at all.

"I am not angry with you," he said finally, his voice a low, husky growl.

He said nothing more and, jog her mind though she would, she could think of no way to keep the conversation going in the direction that she wished. After a time, he shifted, slipping an arm around her waist and pulling her back so that she lay against his chest. Breathlessly, she waited to see what he would do next.

He did nothing more, and her uneasiness began to grow once more.

She cleared her throat. "You do not want me anymore?"

"We want you."

Mariel shivered. Two voices had emerged from his throat simultaneously. "Then—I don't understand."

"It is forbidden," he growled, his voice as it had been before.

Startled, Mariel glanced up at him. "Why?"

He fell silent for a time. She had just decided that he had no intention of telling her when he spoke again.

“This man is an enemy to us. He is rebellious. Thrice, he has tried to banish us.”

Mariel threw him another startled look, her heart skipping several beats as she realized he was talking about Cavan. She didn’t know why, but it hadn’t occurred to her before that Cavan had been captured by the demons while he had been fighting them.

Just how did one go about fighting demons, she wondered?

They were spirit creatures—powerful spirit creatures. Surely to battle them would require knowledge of magic? Had Cavan been powerful enough that he had had reason to believe he had a chance of defeating them? Or had he merely been too foolhardy to know better? Too arrogant to consider that he could fail?

“Us?” she finally prompted.

“We are one,” Behsart growled. This time, his voice sounded like many voices entwined.

The sound sent another shiver skating along her spine, but the words were almost as frightening. “They know... all that you do?”

“No. I am not as powerful as they are, but I am still strong.”

She digested that for several moments, wondering if she dared pursue it. Finally, she asked, “But they know about... They must know that we....”

He leaned down until his lips were near her ear. “They smell him on

your body, taste him on your skin,” he growled in a gravelly voice.

Mariel’s nipples tightened almost painfully as his heated breath caressed her ear. She didn’t have to glance down to know that it must be very obvious if Behsart cared to look down. Her body burgeoned, scattering her thoughts. She swallowed. “So... you cannot touch me again because he is an enemy of the demons?”

He slipped his hand upward from her waist, flicking at the ring on one distended nipple. “When I bury this flesh deeply inside your sweet body—when I taste this tender bud,” he growled, pinching her nipple between two fingers, “he feels it as I do. He enjoys your taste and your scent, the smoothness of your skin, the softness of your body. He enjoys the heat at your core, the feel of your flesh wrapped tightly around his, feeling your body shiver and convulse in pleasure. He is not allowed surcease from his torment. He is not allowed to taste our bride.”

Mariel swallowed with an effort, dizzy with the heat that enveloped her at his words, entranced with the sensations flowing through the nipple he toyed with and into her belly. She fell silent, too aroused to think, unwilling to distract him in any case. After a time, he ceased to toy with the nipple ring, ceased to pluck at her nipple. She didn’t know whether to be relieved or sorry when his hand slipped down to her waist. It settled there for only a moment, however. He caught the robe, bunching it in his fist and slowly drawing it higher. When he had bared her lower body, he began to play with her clit ring and finally slipped his hand lower, pushing one finger

inside of her.

A shudder went through her. She shifted, offering him better access.

He let out a harsh breath and began thrusting his finger as deeply inside of her as he could reach and then sliding it out once more. Removing the finger after a few moments, he teased her clit, then slipped his hand down and pushed his finger inside of her again.

She groaned, leaning against him and lifting her hips to meet the thrust of his finger, half fearing that he would stop before he brought her to crisis when he moved his hand upward once more. He pinched her nipples, tugging on the rings and flicking his fingers against them until he drew a moan from her throat. He slipped his hand down her belly to her clit then, teasing it for several moments before he pushed his finger inside of her again, thrusting into her quickly. A shudder went through her as she came. She groaned as his finger continued to thrust inside of her until her passage ceased to quake.

She slumped weakly against him as he withdrew his finger at last. Lifting his hand, he sucked her juices from his finger. After a moment, he slipped his hand between her legs once more, cupping her and pulling her back against the hard ridge of flesh she felt against her buttocks.

He made no attempt to touch her otherwise, but his palm remained cupped around her sex for some time before finally, almost reluctantly, he moved it up to her waist once more.

Near dusk, Mariel saw that they were approaching the mountains

once more. They made camp near a pool fed by a waterfall. Mariel studied the falling water longing as she sat near the fire, eating.

“Would you like to bathe in the pool?”

She glanced at Behsart quickly. Doubt surfaced almost the moment he offered. “Is the pool deep?”

“It will not matter. I will go with you.” He rose and began to discard his clothing.

After a moment, Mariel rose, as well, and pulled the robe off, following him a little nervously to the edge of the pool. Behsart waded in, halting when he discovered the chain had gone taut. He turned, studied her for a moment and finally waded back. Scooping her into his arms, he waded into the pool once.

She uttered a squeak of surprise when he set her on her feet and the cold water lapped her knees. “It’s c-c-cold.”

To her surprise, he chuckled. “It is mountain water.”

Mariel stared at him for several moments and finally looked away, totally bemused by the fact that he’d laughed—the demon? She didn’t think so. It was Cavan, and he was growing stronger. More and more, she heard him in the things that he said, and the way that he behaved.

Heartened, she ignored the chill of the water and waded toward the pool. The water was almost up to her breasts by the time they reached the water fall, and the chill made her breathless. She held out her hands beneath the falling water and finally moved closer, stepping beneath it and allowing

it to pelt her for several moments before she stepped out again.

They had not brought either soap or cloths to wash with, but Mariel felt clean and fresh when at last they waded out once more. She shivered as the night air caressed her skin and Behsart drew her closer as he led her back to the fire. Taking one of the blankets, he wrapped it around her and urged her to sit on the bedding that he had lain out near the fire, then knelt behind her, raking his fingers through her long, dark hair until he'd removed most of the tangles and the fire had dried the dark mass.

Finally, his hands fell still. Mariel held her breath, waiting.

Clutching her hair in his fist, he tugged on it until she lifted her face to look up at him. "You are a fever in my mind. My body hungers for you until I can find no rest. Are you a sorceress?"

Mariel swallowed with an effort. "I am only a mortal woman."

Cupping the side of her face, he leaned down and opened his mouth over hers hungrily, thrusting his tongue into her mouth and exploring the exquisitely receptive flesh, sending flashes of heat through her. Mariel sighed into his mouth, stroking her tongue along his.

Breaking the kiss after only a few moments, he pushed her back against the bedding and followed her down, moving his mouth over her face, her neck, the upper slope of her breasts ravenously, as if he wanted to taste all of her at once. His breath rasped harshly from his chest.

Nuzzling her chest, he placed a kiss over her madly pounding heart and traced a path with his tongue to one nipple, teasing it with the tip of his

tongue and the heat of his breath before he took the engorged tip into his mouth and sucked it. Keen pulses of heat rushed along her nerve endings to her sex, making it contract so tightly her belly ached with the tension.

Impatiently, he cupped her other breast in his hand and suckled the tip, moved down and sucked the flesh underneath it. Shifting, he nibbled a path over her ribs and down the center of her body to her belly, placing little sucking bites across the quivering flesh.

Abruptly, he shifted once more. Catching her legs, he parted them, sucking a trail of kisses along the flesh of her inner thigh. When he reached her pussy, he let out a harsh breath, parted her nether lips and opened his mouth over her hungrily.

Mariel cried out, arching up to meet him as she felt the heat of his mouth, the flick of his tongue. He finessed her tender flesh more lavishly, dragging his tongue up her cleft, flicking her clit with the tip, fastening his mouth over her and sucking until she was gasping hoarsely, her body trembling with imminent release, sucking until she began to thrash about mindlessly and finally began to jerk and shudder as her body convulsed in an explosive orgasm.

He moved over her then, propping his body on one arm as he reached between them and pushed his cock along her cleft until he reached the mouth of her sex. Thrusting the head of his cock inside of her, he hunched upward, claiming her wet channel by inches, withdrawing slightly and driving deeper each time until he had possessed her fully.

Lifting his upper body slightly away from her, he watched her face as he undulated his hips, pushing deeply inside of her, withdrawing, pressing forward again. Mariel parted her thighs wider, lifting up to meet him. A tremor skated up his arms and through his body. Groaning, he lowered himself fully against her, buried his face against her neck and set a more desperate rhythm. The stroke of his flesh along her sensitive passage, the urgency of his thrusts, sent heat spiraling through her once more, lifting her rapidly toward her pinnacle. As she felt his body jerk and shudder with release, her own soared over the edge once more.

Gathering himself after a moment, he slipped an arm around her and rolled onto his back, carrying her with him. When he had dragged one of her legs across his, he caught her hair and tipped her head back, kissing her without hunger, or heat, but instead with warmth and tenderness. He tucked her head against his shoulder then and sighed gustily, stroking her back. "Offer prayers to the ancient ones, my love. We need all the help we can get," he murmured.

* * * *

There was no warning, no sign that they had reached their destination until they broke from the forest. One moment Mariel lay against Behsart's chest, half drowsing, the next she saw the Temple of Annomiz looming ahead of them.

They had traveled for three days from the Temple of Raezitath, camping the first night beside the pool, the second on the eastern slope of

the mountains they had scaled, and the night before, they had stopped beside a forest stream.

Cavan had not emerged since that first night beside the waterfall. She had drifted to sleep in Cavan's arms and woke with Behsart, who was almost as ill tempered over his lapse as he had been that he had been denied in the first place. He had taken her to the pool the following morning and told her to scrub herself, making her stand in the chilly water for nearly an hour before he was satisfied and allowed her to come out again.

His temper had mellowed very little since, but although Mariel took care not to stir it, she was inwardly pleased, for she had had Cavan with her much of a day before he vanished again—far longer than any time before.

That warmth had sustained her through the wearying travel.

It deserted her as she stared in dread at the temple they approached, the Temple of the Demon Annomiz, the stone demon, the demon of fire and ice.

Chapter Eight

The walls of the temple seemed to exude cold, but Mariel wasn't certain if that was actually the case, or if it was fear that made her bone deep cold as she was escorted down the main corridor into the temple and prepared to receive the stone demon of fire and ice.

The name alone struck terror into her heart. Try though she might *not* to think about the rites at the temples of Bileezal and Raezitath, she could not keep the fearful thought from her mind that each had been worse than the last, and at each she had had to endure longer.

Her mind skittered even from the thought of pain. Except for her deflowering, she had not really known pain until she had reached the Temple of Bileezal. There, she'd been forced to endure both pure pain and

pleasure that had bordered on it until her body had quivered and exploded with devastating culmination regardless.

It had been much the same at the Temple of Raezitath.

She feared it would be as bad, and possibly far worse, at the Temple of Annomiz.

When the priests had dried her, a thin chain was threaded through the rings as they had been at the temple of Raezitath.

They placed a blindfold over her eyes next, tying it tightly around her head, and then bound her arms behind her back, no doubt to prevent her from tearing the blindfold away from her eyes—something she was instantly desperate to do.

Her heart fluttered, then beat a little faster. She was so dizzy and disoriented as she was lifted and carried from the room that she began to think that she might pass out.

She prayed for it as she heard the beating drums and the chants of the priests, summoning Annomiz. She was shivering with fear and cold when they stopped. She felt cold stone beneath her feet. She swayed, but she was not released.

She was neither commanded by voice or the pressure of the hands holding her. Instead, the chain connected to the rings in her nipples and clit was yanked down on hard enough to send pain shooting through her. Her knees went weak and the two priests who held her allowed her to drop to her knees.

Her fear increased. Blinded as she was, if they would not tell her what they required, she could not know what they wanted until they snatched on the chain.

She was bound. She had no idea of how except that her thighs were spread so wide she felt as if her legs would separate from her body and even that did not seem to be wide enough to suit them for they clamped her nether lips, peeling them back until she felt cold air caressing her sensitive inner flesh.

She was lifted and carried. Her knees settled on stone once more. Something cold, hard and stiff was inserted into the mouth of her vagina and she was forced down over it. Her belly clenched as it entered her. Her heart hammered so hard she might have fallen if they had not been holding her.

The pressure on her shoulders ceased when she felt something cold against her parted nether lips, when the thing they had pushed inside of her bumped against her womb, causing it to clench and sending spasms of pain through her. She panted fearfully.

The hands holding her released her and she heard the scrape of their feet on the stone as they moved away. She swayed. The chain was jerked upward and she righted herself with an effort.

Slowly, her body adjusted to the long, cold object.

She heard the scrape of feet nearby and jerked her head instinctively toward the sound. The movement caused her to sway again and again the chain was jerked. She went still, concentrating on trying to keep her

balance.

Something touched her. She jerked reflexively and again pain was the response.

She was touched again and again as they circled her. Something covered her breast, seemed to suck, but it did not have the warmth of a mouth. Nothing that touched her had the warmth of living things. It was icy, so icy that it felt like fire if it lingered on her skin for more than a few moments.

Despite the pain and fear, the continuous caresses began to produce warmth inside of her, though why she couldn't imagine. Her body burgeoned, grew warmer. Moisture began to collect in her sex. Need grew inside of her.

The stimulus was not enough to bring her to culmination, only enough to make her begin to yearn for it as the minutes dragged into an hour.

When the touching ceased and the priests drew away, she was lifted and carried once more. Again, her knees settled on a cold stone surface. Fingers pulled at her sex and something cold and hard was pushed into her. It was bigger than the last. Despite the slippery substance that seemed to coat it, the object was hard and rigid as no human member and large enough it stretched her flesh as they forced her down onto it.

She was gasping for breath by the time they ceased to bear down on her, her belly clenching and unclenching around the unyielding thing

wedged inside of her. The dance began again.

The burgeoning had vanished, however, as the cold object was forced into the throat of her sex. Again she jerked and quaked as fire and ice moved over her body, stroking her, sucking at her breasts until heat slowly invaded her again. She'd been impaled upon it so long, however, that she began to waver. The tugging of the chain became almost constant as she struggled to keep her balance, to keep from falling down upon it and forcing it any deeper inside of her. After a time, the pain became heat, sizzling along her nerves and she began to moan as pleasure numbed her mind to all else.

The fondling became more insistent, more persuasive as the minutes ticked past. She began to gasp as she felt her body tensing on the verge of release. Something covered each of her breasts, sucking determinedly until her body began to convulse and spasm around the hard shaft inside of her.

The contracting of her muscles in release had scarcely subsided when she was pulled from the shaft, carried a short distance and settled on her knees. Hands pulled at her sex. Again, something cold and hard was forced into the mouth of her sex. It was bigger around than the last and she whimpered in fear and pain as she was impaled on it. Her belly spasmed and clenched, resisting the intrusion. Ignoring her distress, they bore down on her inexorably until the huge thing spread her, filled her passage completely, bumping against her womb. Beneath her, she felt the lips of her sex touch the cold base of it.

She was hardly aware of the dancing and chants as she was released and left to hang upon the shaft. She panted as her body continued to fight the intrusion even after it was forced fully inside, refusing to adjust, quaking around the unyielding hardness and sending sharp pain through her belly.

They did not begin to caress her until she ceased to struggle and pant. Even when they did, her body was slow to respond. As before, the fondling became more demanding and determined, forcing her body to respond, until heat built, until she began to gasp and moan as her body struggled against the pain and iciness, and struggled toward culmination.

She screamed when she came, her body convulsing so hard and so endlessly around the rigid shaft that she felt blackness swarm around her.

She was barely conscious when they removed her from it. Dimly, she realized that hours had passed and the hope sprang that she would be allowed to rest. When they settled her on her knees once more, fear inspired her to struggle, despite the fact that her entire body felt like jelly. She cried out when she felt the enormity of the shaft they forced into the mouth of her sex, fighting them despite the sharp tugs on the chain.

It availed her nothing. She whimpered as she was forced down upon it, felt it stretching her to the point of pain and began to fear that it would rip her apart.

When she realized fighting was useless, she tried to concentrate on relaxing her muscles and accepting it. It helped, but not much. The impaling was still long, torturous, and painful. She began to feel as if her

body simply could not hold it. She was weeping with pain and terror by the time they'd forced it fully inside of her. She gasped when she felt the lips of her sex meet the coldness, a tiny measure of relief washing through her when she realized she would not be forced to take more of it into her.

A sound, almost of rejoicing, or triumph went up from the priests.

A moment later, she felt hands touching her and her legs were unbound, her knees pushed from the stone so that the weight of her own body settled her more firmly over the hard shaft, sending a stab of pain through her that made her gasp. Her ankles were bound and chained to the floor—she thought. She only knew that her toes touched something that felt substantial. She could not reach it well enough to push herself up.

The manacles around her wrists tightened and she realized that the chain had been attached to something behind her. She stretched her fingers and touched something cold and hard. It helped her to balance, though.

The chain running through her clit and nipple rings tightened as it, too, was secured—in front of her.

Despite the throbbing pain of being impaled on something far too large for her body, she almost felt a sense of relief. She had taken it inside of her without being ripped in two. The fact that they were binding her seemed to indicate that she would not have yet another, larger shaft forced inside of her.

She knew that she could not have taken anything larger without being shredded. She was grateful that they had not tried.

Although she couldn't see them, she heard the priests moving around them as they began to dance almost frenziedly. Their chant became more like a song. The rhythm of the drum increased in pace.

In time, when the pain of being impaled on the huge shaft had begun to subside to a dull throbbing, the icy caresses began once more. With determination they stroked and caressed her until her body began to respond. Heat built inside of her, spreading moisture through her channel soothing the residual pain from the thing that had been forced inside of her. They teased and sucked and licked at her until tremors began to run through her and when she began to gasp hoarsely, they suckled her breasts more frantically still until they brought her to culmination.

The clenching of her body was excruciating. She screamed hoarsely as it rocked her almost endlessly. The moment she ceased to convulse, before her body could cool, they began prodding her body toward its peak once more. Within moments, her body began to spasm, clenching around the thing inside of her.

The moment she began to cry out and shudder, they began tormenting her again. Each time they did, because her body never fell far from the edge, her body responded faster, culminating in seemingly endless convulsions of rapture.

She had reached the point where she began to sway, felt blackness rushing up at her when the mask was abruptly torn from her eyes. She blinked, trying to adjust her vision. Slowly, her eyes focused and she stared

down at the thing beneath her.

She saw that she had been impaled on the cock of the stone demon, Annomiz.

As she stared at the frightening image, she saw a ripple of movement. She blinked, certain her eyes were playing tricks on her that they had driven her mind past rational thought. When she opened her eyes again, she saw the thing moving. Slowly, as she watched in abject horror, she saw the Demon Annomiz sit up.

His hands reached for her, grasping her hips.

The priests scrambled forward, releasing her manacles.

When they had freed her, he lifted her, bore her down again. She cried out, expecting pain, but her body was yet heated to the point of combustion and all she felt was a momentary discomfort and a rush of pleasure. As he began thrusting inside of her, her body skated upward again toward crisis. Within moments, she was shaking, and then screaming as waves of excruciating pleasure washed through her.

Holding her impaled on his cock, he stood, moved to the altar, lay her down upon it and began thrusting into her, jolting her with each lunge, pounding into her until, at last, he went rigid all over, lifted his head and roared as his body pulsed with pleasure.

Mariel felt the jerking of his cock, felt his fiery, hot seed spilling inside of her and lost her grip on consciousness.

She came to when she was dipped into the bathing pool, looking

around fearfully.

She felt little relief, however, when she saw no sign of the stone demon.

They would return her to him, she knew.

She began to think that she'd been wrong after all when they did not take her to the offering chamber. Instead, they took her to a room much like the one at the previous temple. She saw as they thrust her inside, however, and closed the door behind her, that Annomiz lay sprawled on the pillows, awaiting her.

"Come," he said in a low, growling voice.

Inside, Mariel quaked. Her legs seemed to lose all tone, but she managed to walk toward him. When she knelt at the edge of the pillows, he leaned toward her, grasped the chains attached to her rings, and pulled until she moved closer.

He examined her through narrowed, yellow eyes. "You are puny and weak... even for a human," he finally assessed her. "But your body pleases me. Your cries of pleasure please me even more."

He pushed her down onto the pillows and began to suck and lick and bite her—sometimes almost to the point of pain, sometimes past the point of pain. She was nearly delirious with the pounding demands of her body when he spread her legs and thrust his cock into her.

Her flesh yielded reluctantly, but his own body was more yielding now and the moisture of desire bathed her sex, allowing him to force his

cock inside of her without the terrible pain she'd more than half expected.

He brought her to crisis over and over, tirelessly pounding into her. She was barely conscious when he roared out his own pleasure.

He allowed her to rest, a concession she would never have expected, but she sensed he feared he would break his plaything if he used her as he wished. She had no idea how much time passed, because she spent much of it in exhaustion or complete unconsciousness, but she thought he toyed with her for at least three days before he decided he was satisfied and allowed the priests to prepare her for the journey to the Temple of Efathziman, the man beast, the seventh and most powerful of the demons of Daeksould.

When the priests had draped her in a sheer, white robe, Behsart led her away and they rode from town. She studied him surreptitiously when they stopped to break their fast.

He did not seem angry and that worried her more than his anger had.

She did not once catch him staring at her with the hunger she'd grown accustomed to seeing in the demon's eyes and that worried her even more. After a few moments, when he seemed in no particular hurry to be on their way, Mariel settled on her side and began to play almost idly with one of the nipple rings through the sheer robe she wore—she hoped it looked unintentional anyway. “Do you think I have pleased the demons enough that they will allow me to keep my life?”

When he didn't answer at once, she glanced at him and caught him staring at her finger as it flicked the ring.

He looked away. “They are pleased. Annomiz was not happy that he couldn’t fuck you more, but he concedes that, as a puny mortal, no more could be expected of you. You were wise to yield eagerly.”

Mariel looked down, plucking at the ring. “I could not help myself. I knew nothing of the pleasures of the flesh when you took me from my home. I had always believed that people only excused their failings—that they did not try to control their baser urges. Perhaps I was right, because, knowing that my life depended upon yielding willingly, I did not really try *not* to feel pleasure. And now it is almost as if my body has a mind and will of its own. When they touch those places that give me the most pleasure, I burn with the need to find release until I can not think of anything else.”

She heard him swallow convulsively.

“I do not want to die. If I had had a choice, I would never have chosen to become the possession of the seven demons. I would have chosen only to belong to one...”

She stopped herself before she said ‘man’, returning her attention to the ring. “I find the most pleasure when you possess me. I don’t know why, only that I do.”

He stood abruptly and dragged her to her feet. “We must go,” he growled.

She helped him gather the few things he’d unpacked and followed him to the horse, standing quietly as he repacked the food, but leaning just close enough that his arm brushed her breast as he turned to lift her to the

saddle. He stopped, watching the mound bounce.

Finally, he grasped her and lifted her onto the horse. Mounting behind her, he spurred the horse into a gallop. She sat rigidly upright at first, but slowly began to lean back until she'd settled snugly against him. After a moment, his hand settled around her waist. She relaxed fully against him, satisfied that she'd made some progress, at least.

When they stopped to make camp for the night, he surprised her by removing the manacles. She had worn them so long her arms felt strangely light without them. She rubbed her chaffed wrists, smiling up at him. "Thank you."

His gaze flickered over her face, then dropped lower. After a moment, he rose and removed the bedroll, tossing it her. She untied it and spread it out next to the fire he'd built as he took the pack of food and the wine skin from the horse.

When she'd finished smoothing the bedding, she settled on it crossed legged.

Behsart stopped abruptly as she folded her legs, staring down at the clit ring that gleamed through the sheer fabric as it caught the light of the fire. After a moment, as if he was completely unaware of the lapse, he settled beside her and cut a portion of meat and bread and cheese for each of them. He stared at the fire while he ate.

Mariel fell into thought, wondering why he'd released her when he'd never done so before. She would've liked to think that he might be

unbending, or offering her an opportunity to run, but she knew better. More likely, he was testing her and if she failed, she would deeply regret it.

When she'd finished eating, she brushed at the crumbs that had fallen into her lap and finally flapped the material of the robe, trying to shed them. Behsart was looking at her when she glanced toward him. She swallowed uneasily. "I need to relieve myself."

He studied her unblinkingly for several moments and finally nodded. "Do not make me come for you," he growled when she stood. "You will not like it."

She'd had no intention of trying anything. She wasn't stupid. It wouldn't take him ten minutes to run her down if he had been no more than a man. It was far less likely that she could escape a demon so easily.

The warning made her heart flutter uncomfortably, however.

She took care of her needs quickly and moved down to the stream, within his view, to bathe herself. Since she had nothing to dry herself, the robe stuck to her when she'd pulled it over her head once more.

It was a minor discomfort beside many others she'd endured since her journey had begun, however. She moved back toward the fire, drying herself and the thin fabric with the heat wafting up from it before she moved to the pallet. Behsart seized her wrist and jerked her toward him so that she fell across his lap. She stared at him wide eyed, her heart thundering in her ears.

After several unnerving moments, he released her. Rubbing her wrist,

she moved meekly to the pallet and lay down, curling onto her side. He remained as he was, staring at the fire for some time. Finally, he rose and left.

She lay tensely after he'd gone, listening for sounds of movement that would tell her where he was, what he might be doing. Finally, she heard the splash of water and knew that he'd moved to the stream to bathe. The splashing stopped after a time and she listened for his approach. He halted nearby, merely standing for many minutes and she supposed he was drying himself at the fire as she had.

“Take it off.”

Mariel rolled onto her back and discovered he'd come to stand over her. She stared up at him blankly.

“Now.”

Without a word, she sat up, grasped the robe and pulled it over her head. When she had laid it aside, she saw that he had knelt at her feet. Grasping her ankles, he tipped her onto her back, pushed her thighs wide and buried his face against her pussy. She gasped at the ferocity of his assault on the tender flesh, feeling fire course through her. Within moments she was gasping for breath, quivering, jerking as bolts of pleasure stabbed through her. When her crisis caught her, he lifted her hips and thrust his tongue inside of her. She screamed at the keen sensations that tore through her.

Catching her arm, he dragged her upright and pulled her across his

lap, thrusting into her. Heated delight surged through her still quaking channel at the invasion. She groaned, looping her arms around his neck as he guided her along the length of his shaft, thrusting upward and grinding against her clit each time she sheathed him to the hilt. Her muscles fisted tightly around him with each thrust until he began to groan, trembling as his body approached orgasm. Feeling his cock jerk as it neared ejaculation, Mariel's body shot toward the summit, erupting fierily even as he came.

He held her tightly as the tremors slowly dissipated, breathing harshly. Catching her hair, he dragged her head back and opened his mouth along her throat, sucking the tender flesh. After a few moments, she felt him growing hard inside of her once more. Twisting, he lay her down on her back and began the rhythm once more, moving slowly at first and then more quickly as his body began to reach toward the peak. As he began to shudder and jerk, he rolled onto his back, carrying her with him. Grasping her hips, he pushed her down on his cock, thrusting upward into her body until his seed spilled inside her once more.

She lay draped limply across him for a time, too sated to consider moving. When she finally gathered the energy to move off of him, however, he wrapped his arms tightly around her, holding her. She subsided and within moments passed into oblivion, his cock still firmly inside of her.

Chapter Nine

Mariel didn't quite know what to think of Behsart's behavior. Having resisted the temptation to possess her for so long, it began to seem as if he'd simply accepted the inevitability of it. Before, he'd been both angry and fearful when he'd lost the battle and yielded to his lust. This time, when they faced the worst demon of all, he behaved as if he did not care what the penalty of disobeying might be. Instead of trying to hide the fact that he'd fucked her, he spent the days of their journey taking her at every opportunity, sometimes stopping along the way only to do so.

She didn't object, even though, to her vast disappointment, she could see no sign of Cavan—and she didn't know what to think about that either.

She did begin to worry about the consequences, however.

If Efathziman was displeased with Behsart, would he not also be displeased with her? Would he destroy Behsart, freeing Cavan? Or would he destroy them both? Would he be displeased enough to demand her sacrifice after all, even though she had pleased the other demons and they were willing to allow her to keep her life?

She didn't try to question Behsart.

He remained so unconcerned she began to wonder if there was any chance that he'd decided he would not take her to the temple, if he'd made other plans.

She dismissed the thought almost as soon as it occurred to her, but it kept coming back as day after day passed and they did not reach the temple. After a time, she was able to put the fear from her mind for short periods of time, to simply enjoy his lovemaking, to allow herself to daydream about a future.

On the morning of the fifth day, her hopes were completely dashed. They topped a rise at the edge of the forest and, in the distance she saw the temple of the most dreaded demon, the Demon Efathziman, the man beast.

She glanced fearfully at Behsart. His face was grim, but otherwise she could tell nothing about his thoughts.

A shiver skated through her as he kneed the horse and set it into motion once more. Dread seemed to mount inside of her with every mile they covered until she began to feel cold and ill.

They reached the temple mid-morning. Again, Behsart left her with

the priests and vanished. She was taken to the purifying pool and bathed, oiled, scraped and bathed again. When the priests had prepared her to receive, her hands were bound behind her back and a black hood lowered over her face.

The moment the thing fell over her face, blinding her, seeming almost to deafen her, as well, her blood ran cold with stark terror. She was only slightly reassured when she discovered that she could breathe without difficulty.

She'd been blindfolded when she was taken to Annomiz and she didn't want to know if the hood had been placed on her head for the same reason, or if this ordeal would be even worse.

It took an effort to keep from blubbering in terror when they lifted her and carried her to the chamber. The dread did not dissipate as she was set on her feet. Instead, her stomach tightened even more. Her hands were unbound. Gripping her wrists tightly, the priests led her a short distance and then turned her and pushed her back against something solid. Lifting her arms out to her sides, they clamped manacles around her wrists once more.

Despite her fear, puzzlement descended upon her when she realized that the 'wall' seemed to end somewhere along the middle of her back.

Hands gripped her legs just above her knees and her legs were lifted and spread wide. For many moments, she hung from her arms while something almost as wide as the length of her thighs was wrapped around them. It was tightened, lifting her thighs wider and higher. The pain in her

shoulders eased, but she thought the pain in her thighs might have overshadowed it anyway. Fingers parted her nether lips. Something hot, moist, and faint rough penetrated the mouth of her sex, startling a reflexive jerk from her.

It was pushed slowly along her channel, almost as if it was exploring the cavity, until it touched her womb. After a few moments, it was withdrawn.

The tension went out of her as it was removed. A few moments passed and then she felt fingers parting her flesh once more. Again, something hot touched her. This time, however, it was smooth, rounded, large and solid. She gasped, panting as it was pushed inside of her, stopping a hair's breadth from her womb.

It was so hot that for the first few seconds after it was pushed inside of her, fear surged through her that it would begin to burn. To her relief, although it felt hot inside of her, still there was no discomfort from the heat of it. Neither was it so large as to cause her pain, although the rigidity of it did produce some discomfort.

She was not reassured, not when it was so reminiscent of her previous experience. She had thought her fears groundless, despite the mask, when they had taken her and pinioned her to the wall—or whatever it was that she was bound to. They had forced an object inside of her much like the priests had at the temple of the stone demon, however.

She knew the next would be bigger and the one after than larger still. She tried not to think about the possibility that she had angered the demons

and that they might decide to sacrifice her by splitting her body on a stone cock.

Something hot, moist and faintly rough raked over the skin of her leg, sending a shock wave through her. It felt much like a tongue, except rougher, and longer. In an almost leisurely manner, it 'licked' her belly. Moving upward, it stroked first one breast and then the other, making her nipples pebble painfully and stand erect. Heat and moisture gathered in her sex as it continued to stroke her breasts, alternating between them. Within a few minutes, she was moaning and panting with pleasure instead of fear. The pleasure escalated rapidly until she began to squirm and shudder, the muscles of her passage tightening spasmodically around the stone cock. She struggled harder and harder to drag in enough air into her lungs as the tension inside of her approached its peak.

Abruptly, sharp teeth fastened over one breast, digging in almost painfully, and a mouth closed around her, sucking so hard it flung her over the precipice into scalding, mind drugging ecstasy. When she'd ceased to shudder and gasp hoarsely, the mouth was withdrawn.

Slowly, the shaft was pulled from her body.

The warmth of her release vanished as abruptly as the shaft was pulled from her for she knew her ordeal had only just begun. She waited in tense dread for the next assault upon her senses.

When her body had cooled completely, she felt fingers tugging at the lips of her sex. A heated, round-tipped shaft spread the mouth of her

channel. Her belly clenched in resistance as it was pushed deeply inside of her. After a few moments, the tongue began stroking her flesh again, bringing her to heat. This time, however, instead of feeling a mouth and sharp teeth on her breast as she began to tremble with release, fingers pulled her nether lips back and she felt the hot, rough stroke of the tongue on her clit. The fourth stroke brought her to a shattering orgasm.

Weak as she was after two hard climaxes, dread filled her when she felt the shaft removed. A few moments later, she was stretched wide to receive an even larger shaft. She panted as it was forced slowly inside of her, stretching her until her muscles quivered and cramped painfully around it. The rough stroking of the tongue began almost at once. Her body responded with reluctance, tense from the probing shaft. The caresses became more and more insistent, demanding a response. The stroking of the tongue ceased and her breasts were sucked into a hot mouth, teased unmercifully until her body began to quake in nearly painful spasms around the hard lance stretching her passage.

She was left to rest while her body cooled. All too soon, she felt the touch on her sex again. She fought the suffocating terror that filled her as she felt the size of the thing they wedged into her opening, telling herself it was no bigger than the stone demon's cock, that her body would adjust.

She didn't know whether it was or not, but she realized very quickly that if it wasn't, she'd forgotten more of the experience than she realized. She was weeping by the time they'd forced it inside of her.

Despite the pain, relief filled her as the manacles were removed from her wrists, for she knew, hoped, it meant that she would not have to endure having anything bigger forced inside of her. A moment later, her thighs were released and her legs lowered. As the weight of her body shoved the enormous thing more deeply inside of her, she uttered a choked gasp.

Her feet touched--nothing. Her whole body rested on the hard shaft as her arms were bent behind her back and her wrists bound together and for many moments her mind was so clouded with red hot pain that she could not even think. As the pain began to subside, she realized her buttocks were resting on something hot and covered with hair.

She was not even vaguely curious to know what it was, however. She could think of nothing but the huge, hot thing inside of her, stretching her to the point of pain until she could only pant for breath, couldn't seem to fill her lungs. So long as she remained perfectly still, her body merely pulsed and throbbed of the edge of pain. The slightest shifting dug the thing deeper and sent a new wave of agony through her.

When the stroking began, she fought to close her mind from it. After a few minutes, however, the tenor of the caresses changed to a demand. The sharp teeth clamped over her flesh, bearing down just hard enough to promise suffering if she resisted. Her nipples were stimulated with the heat and adhesion of a hot mouth, the abrasion of the rough tongue until she began to pant and moan with rising need and moisture flooded her passage.

The need rose and fell, climbing until she felt close to release, then

dropping from under her when the muscles of her sex clamped painfully around the thing that yielded not at all.

The fondling moved down her belly. The fleshy lips of her sex were pulled back and the tongue began stroking her clit. She could not hold back the rising tide of fire inside of her then. Within moments, her body was scaling the heights, flying off the edge in a wracking orgasm that drew a sharp cry from her throat.

She'd barely caught her breath when the stroking began again, wringing a response from her, forcing her body to explode in ecstasy. Even as the last tremors of release shuttered through her, it began again.

She began to hope for unconsciousness as her body was wracked over and over by climactic seizures until she was exhausted, trembling all over. It did not come to her rescue, but weariness eventually did. When she'd reached the point where her body simply ceased to respond with more than a twitch, she was pulled from the hard shaft and borne away.

The hood was removed when she had been taken to a small cell. She was left to attend her needs and rest. She managed to choke down a few bites of the food that was left for her, but she felt no hunger, only complete and utter exhaustion. Her entire body throbbed. Her sex pounded harder, clenching each time her mind settled on the memory of that enormous thing that she'd been impaled on. Despite that, exhaustion held the upper hand and she slept. She was rested when they came for her again, but tired still.

The hood was placed over her head once more when she'd been

prepared and she was taken to the offering chamber, bound as she had been the day before. She should have learned long since that the only thing that she could count on, ultimately, was that she couldn't count on anything. No matter how similar her ordeal began, it always differed from what she expected.

Dread instantly filled her when they placed the hood on her head, but so, too, did the half formed thought that tremendous, stone cock was something she would not have to face at once. She was bound just as she had been the day before.

She began to get her first inkling that it would not be the same when her sex was swathed with something slick... and still she expected they would allow her to gradually accept a larger and larger shaft. Instead, when her flesh was pulled back, the frighteningly huge thing was forced into the opening, the pressure relentless until she had been impaled on it to the root. The lubricant helped them force it inside of her. It did nothing to help her body adjust to the massive size of it.

She was sobbing by the time they ceased to push it into her, her body spasming painfully around it. The pain subsided after a few moments, because a numbing heat that seemed to radiate outward in every direction and finally began to leave her as the hot stroke of the tongue moved over her body.

Tortuous hours seemed to pass in a heated, mind numbing haze. She came to dread the touch of that rough tongue, the sharp teeth and hot mouth

almost as much as the thing inside of her, for they forced her to climax over and over again and each time she did the pitch of rapture was excruciating.

When she passed the point of exhaustion, she was left pinioned on the shaft. All too soon, they began anew to torment her. She realized after a while that the hood itself seemed to prevent her from blacking out completely. Before, when she would begin to gasp air in really quickly, blackness would begin to crowd in around her. Now, no matter how desperately she gasped, oblivion eluded her.

That was enough in itself to make her want to rip it away.

In time, it filtered through the haze of her exhaustion that she had not summoned the demon Efathziman as she had Annomiz, if, in fact, she was impaled on the cock of Efathziman as she had been on that of Annomiz.

Had he simply decided not to take the offering? Had she failed to please him?

Fear tickled at the back of her mind, but she was in far too much distress for it to overtake her. When she had rested a second time, they began again and she felt like weeping. Her body was no longer her own, however. It responded with or without her consent, no matter how tired she grew, no matter how sated she was. Her body responded to the determined stimulus even when she thought she couldn't anymore.

At last she reached the point where her throat was so raw from screaming that she couldn't even make sound anymore, when her body had climaxed until it merely quivered. The torment stopped. The hood was

removed. Slowly, as her bindings were released, her eyes adjusted to the light in the room.

Beneath her was the man beast, Efathziman, not a likeness wrought from stone, the beast himself. His lower body was that of a ram, his upper body that of a man.

His head was a lion's head.

He grinned at her and sat up. Wrapping his arms around her, he thrust his tongue from his mouth and dragged it along the side of her neck. A shiver went through her as she felt the roughness of it, her mind simply refusing to accept for many moments that she had been pinned astride him for nigh two days, that it had been his mouth, his tongue—his cock that had brought her to such ecstasy that she'd thought she would die of it.

After a moment, he lifted her from his cock, caught her against his chest and stood. She was too weak with exhaustion even to feel fear. She hung limply in his arms as he strode across the chamber. When he stopped, she glanced around vaguely, wondering why.

Behsart, she saw, was chained to the wall so that he could watch as Efathziman pleased himself with her—as Efathziman dragged cries of pleasure from her. For an instant, she thought she saw a flicker of rage and hate in his eyes as he faced Efathziman, but it was gone so quickly she wasn't certain of it.

“Go to the Castle Valdamer and prepare for us. I will bring her when I am done with her,” Efathziman growled.

To Mariel's relief, she fainted dead away.

She swam upward toward awareness after a time, but she fought it until she sank into exhausted slumber. When finally she awoke, she saw that she was staring up at a vaulted ceiling. She lay still, allowing her gaze to encompass the room she found herself in.

It looked like a cavernous bedchamber. She was lying upon a bed.

She felt a tug on her clit and nipple rings and glanced down to discover a chain had been treaded through them once more. Her gaze followed the chain to the hand that held it. Efathziman was studying her through narrowed, feline eyes. "Come here, my pretty, and mount me," he said in a rumbling growl.

Mariel swallowed convulsively, glancing at his erect cock and the gleaming wetness that coated it. Finally, she rolled over, crawling to him on her knees. Her heart was in her throat as she studied the monolith, trying to figure out how, and if, she could take it inside of her when it had been forced inside of her before. Finally, she simply straddled his belly. He lifted her, perching her on top of it.

She put her fingers between her legs, spreading herself so that he could push the head of his cock into the mouth of her passage. Her body objected, but the slickness coating his shaft, and the pressure as he bore down on her defied the resistance. She squeezed her eyes shut as he seemed to fill her beyond capacity, panting as she tried to catch her breath when he'd ceased at last to force her over his rigid member and she'd sank fully

upon him.

Finally, as the discomfort eased, she opened her eyes. She saw that he was watching her expectantly. When she did not move at once, he tugged on the chain. Dragging in a shuddering breath, she lifted away from him and pushed down again. His eyes began to glaze with pleasure as she moved over him. After a moment, he sat up, flicking at one of her nipple rings. A shaft of pleasure arched through her at the touch and her muscles clenched around his hard shaft.

“These are pretty things,” he murmured, flicking at the other ring. “How clever of Bileezal to adorn our pretties.”

His mouth covered her entire breast. She jerked reflexively as she felt the prick of his sharp teeth, but as his mouth closed around her breast and he began to suck her, her entire focus became centered on the pleasure. She began to move up and down his shaft faster as her body heated toward culmination, spurred by his thorough attention to first one breast and then the other.

Suddenly, she felt his cock jerk. The movement sent her over the edge. He growled a long, rumbling growl as his body convulsed with ecstasy. He lay back when the shudders abated, studying her once more through narrowed eyes. Mariel held herself upright with an effort, struggling to catch her breath.

His hands moved from her hips to her thighs, stroking them for several moments before he skated his hands upward, following the curve of

her hips and waist until he had cupped her breasts. He kneaded them for several moments before he moved his hands to her back. Slipping one down to her buttocks, he sat up, turned and laid her on the bed.

Gripping her hips, he began to pump his cock in and out of her, slowly at first, but quickly increasing the pace until he was slamming into her painfully. She came, uttering a hoarse cry. He did not. He continued to pump into her until her body convulsed yet again before he followed her.

To her relief, he pulled his cock from her.

“Rest,” he growled. “I would not like to break my pretty so soon.”

If she hadn't been so exhausted, the command would have terrorized her, but she was well beyond fear. Sometime later, as she drifted toward awareness once more, it was with the feel of his tongue in her cunt. Reflexively, she tried to close her legs. He placed his hands on her thighs, holding them against the bed, and continued to lap at the walls of her passage as if feeding off of her. Her belly clenched at the rough stroke of his tongue. It brought her to crisis within moments, but she discovered very quickly that that hadn't been the object. He continued to lap at her until she would've screamed if she'd been able to force the noise past her raw throat. She came again. Her body had already begun to quake in a third wracking climax when he withdrew his tongue from her passage and fastened his mouth over her clit, sucking and lathing it with his rough tongue. He lingered over it, feasting off of her until her body was convulsing almost endlessly and she blacked out from the overload to her senses.

She knew she could not have been unconscious more than a few moments, for when she became aware again, she felt his tongue lathing her thighs. Slowly, he worked his way up her body, over her belly and breasts and when he was satisfied, he worked his way down again.

Apparently, he liked the taste of her cunt best. He began lapping at it once more, lifting her hips off of the bed to give himself better access. After a while, when Mariel had begun to think she would die if he didn't stop, and to pray for it, he withdrew with obvious reluctance and allowed her to drift away again.

Days, she knew, passed. She had little conception of time when she spent almost every waking moment in a haze of desire, but she knew that it must be days. She didn't know whether to be glad or sorry that Efathziman was, very obviously, far more interested in tasting her than mounting her. Occasionally, he would sprawl out on his back, tug her over to him with the chain through her rings and command her to mount him and ride him until he came. Sometimes, he would press her into the bed and pound his huge cock into her until she thought he would split her in two.

Mostly, he was content to run his tongue inside of her cunt and lap her until she was mindless.

He showed no sign of tiring of playing with her.

Finally, however, he seemed to rouse himself to business and Mariel was prepared by the temple attendants to depart the temple.

Fear had been the constant companion of her dreams when she did

not sleep the sleep of the deeply exhausted—which she had most of the time. Her waking hours had been so filled with carnality that she'd had no mind for thought.

It wasn't until they bathed her and dressed her in a crystal blue robe that she was cognizant enough of her situation for real terror to set in. She only vaguely recalled that Efathziman had sent Behsart away, but it jolted through her with absolute clarity the instant she was escorted from the temple and saw that Efathziman was mounted on the horse that awaited her. Around him, six brawny priests, wearing hoods and loincloths and nothing else, sat on six black horses. They reminded her strongly of the six from the Temple of Demon Raezitath, but as she'd never seen their faces she had no idea if it was the same men or not.

Efathziman drew her up onto his lap when the priests lifted her up to him. Turning the horse, he kicked it into motion and they quickly left the small village behind.

The journey took three days. Mariel searched frantically for a possibility of escape now that she no longer had even a prayer of help from Behsart. None was presented to her. She was not bound, but Efathziman saw no reason not to enjoy her body. Each night when they made camp, he spread her on the pallet and lapped at her cunt until she was completely insensible. When she woke each morning, he was sprawled possessively over her body.

The Castle of Valdamer stood on a rocky crag. Built of the same

stone as the mountain it topped, it was some time before she realized the regularity of the formations denoted a manmade structure. She felt ill with fear when the party turned their horses upon the winding road that led up to the castle.

The gates opened as they reached them, but as they road into the bailey, Mariel saw no sign of a living soul. The entire castle had the feel of a mausoleum, and that sense did not vanish as they entered the great hall.

She was led away by the six priests as they crossed the great hall, up a winding stone stair to a tower at the top of the keep. The room was sparsely furnished, but contained a huge bed, a chamber pot, a table with a pitcher and bowl.

Four narrow windows looked out at the view surrounding the tower, but each was covered with iron bars. The priests removed her gown, pushed her onto the bed and tied her spread eagle to the posts. When they were satisfied, they left again.

She could not fathom why she'd been bound. She couldn't possibly escape. If she'd wanted to fling herself from the tower, she couldn't... and she certainly had no desire to. Facing a knife could not be worse that falling so far and being crushed.

The stout door had been bolted from the outside.

When the sun sank low on the horizon and shadows began to crawl across the floor, the Demon Sheenigan appeared at the foot of the bed. She stared at the demon in horror for many moments, realizing belatedly why

she'd been bound.

Climbing onto the bed with her, he pleased himself on her until she was too weary to respond and then vanished.

When she woke, the room was filled with light and she found that she'd been freed. She spent most of the day pacing the room anxiously. As evening approached, the six priests returned and bound her once more, this time on her hands and knees. She wasn't aware that the Demon Trihern had appeared until she felt the bed dip. Her legs were pushed wider and he pushed his three pronged cock into her ass and her pussy. The third raked along her cleft as he fucked her, his appetite seemingly insatiable. Almost the moment he would come, he would begin all over again.

One by one, she was visited each night by one of the seven demons, who had gathered their power to appear in physical form.

On the seventh day, Efathziman came to her.

When two days passed and none of the demons appeared to take their pleasure again, she realized she had reached the time that she had dreaded since she had been taken from her home. She felt almost calm when the six priests came for her, bathed her and dressed her in a pale golden robe, for it had finally occurred to her that, with or without her mortal body, the demons had claimed her. They would not let her go.

She was led down the winding stairs, and then down a short corridor to another set of stairs that led from the main level of the castle, until she knew they must be in the bowels of the earth. Flickering torches lined the

walls of the vast chamber they reached at the foot of the stone stairs. In the center was an altar. She was led to it and laid upon it on her back and bound hand and foot.

The six priests who had escorted her moved to positions at the edge of a circle paved into the floor with black stones. Behind them stood six robed, hooded priests. Each wore the color of the temple they represented.

Silence reigned for perhaps a minute. A few moments later, a High Priest, wearing a golden robe entered, moved to the side of the altar and lifted his arms. She saw when he lifted his arms that he was holding a dagger perhaps twelve inches long. The blade was jagged, like a thunder bolt, and had been carved from crystal.

At his signal, the drums began to beat. The priests began to chant, calling forth the demons by name. Slowly, one by one, the demons began to materialize. With the exception of Annomiz and Efathziman, they were faint and indistinct at first. As they became more solid in appearance, they crowded around the ends of the altar and the side facing the High Priest, though their gazes were trained upon her avidly.

Her calm slowly evaporated. Fear began to gather in her belly as Mariel stared up at them, meeting each gaze in turn, seeing nothing in their gazes beyond lust.

The drumming stopped. The chanting priests fell silent. The High Priest lifted the blade toward the ceiling. Fire and light flowed from it, as if it were a torch rather than a cold crystal.

“Most dreaded demons--Bileezal, Efathziman, Hezifath, Sheenigan, Annomiz Raezitath, Trihern—I, Behsart, who are we, give you your bride, Lady Mariel Champlain—NOW!”

Mariel squeezed her eyes closed as she saw the blade slamming down toward her body. The sound of shattering crystal sent a jolt through her and her eyes flew wide. Time seemed to have slowed to a crawl.

As she looked around the room, without comprehension she saw the robed priests slowly withdrawing the knives they held from the bodies of the six massive priests who had escorted her to the castle, saw bright red blood begin to flow down their chests from the gaping grin carved into their throats, watched blankly as they began to sink slowly toward the stone floor.

Turning her head, she looked up at the demons surrounding her. On their faces, she saw shocked disbelief and dawning rage. Finally, she glanced toward the priest, staring at the broken sacrificial knife for several moments before she looked up at him.

He had tossed the hood of his robe back, but it was not Behsart who stood above her... not the one that she had come to think of as Cavan, the man held hostage in his body by the demon Behsart.

Instead, she saw a horned demon, more man than beast, but most certainly not a mortal man. Hair, black as night, streamed around his broad, muscular chest and shoulders.

His face was Cavan's.

Abruptly, the howls and screams of the demons filled her ears until

she thought she would be deafened, drawing her curious gaze from the demon priest. As she turned her head to look at them, she saw that they had grown faint, like wraiths, watched as their forms thinned to vapor and finally vanished.

She looked up at the High Priest as he dropped the shattered blade.

“I vanquish you!” he roared, lifting his arms in triumph.

When the echoes of his roar had died, he looked down at her for several moments, his eyes narrowed, speculative. “I, Demon Valdamer, claim Lady Mariel Champlain as my bride,” Cavan growled.

Chapter Ten

Mariel was too stunned and confused, her mind too chaotic even to grasp what had happened. She stared at Cavan mutely as he released her. Scooping her into his arms, he turned, crossed the room and ascended the stairs with her. He did not stop when they reached the ground floor. Instead, he strode to the second set of stairs and ascended them to the second floor. Reaching the main corridor, he strode down the length of it and entered a vast, opulent bed chamber.

A huge four posted bed stood in the center of the room. He strode toward it and laid her gently on the mattress, then sprawled out beside her on his side, his head propped in his hand, a faint smile playing about his lips.

“Where are the demons?” Mariel asked hoarsely.

“I... *you* and I have banished them to their dark world. They will not trouble us again.”

She didn’t know whether to believe him or not, but they had certainly vanished. She frowned, studying him carefully, wondering if her eyes had played tricks on her before, for now he looked as he always had. “You said you were a demon.”

“I am.”

Mariel swallowed with an effort. “But... you said you were Lord Valdamer.”

“I am.” His eyes had begun to gleam with suppressed laughter.

As tempting as he looked, Mariel glared at him. She had spent months in terror, culminating in the near sacrifice of her body. She was too confused to rest easy, too afraid that it wasn’t over to release her fear.

She saw no humor in the fact that she was so thoroughly confused.

Chuckling at the look on her face, he wrapped his arms around her and dragged her half across his chest, stroking her back soothingly. “It’s over. I give you my word. I’m sorry I frightened you, but there was no other way.”

He pulled away slightly, staring down at her. “Many years ago, I came to take Daeksould from Lord Belean. It wasn’t until I had slain him, however, that I realized it was not he who ruled, but the seven dark demons he had summoned forth to give him power.

He frowned, then shrugged wryly. “Perhaps I would have been arrogant enough to have tried anyway, but I did not know, and I was caught off guard. They overpowered me and again took control of Daeksould—this time through me. For many years we have battled and I had begun to despair that I would find a way to vanquish them. For the most part, the best that I could do was to keep them from the sacrifices that made them stronger.

“When your father came to me to sell you, he brought your likeness to me and I sensed an interest in Behsart that led me to believe that you were the strength I needed to vanquish them.”

“It *was* Behsart who held you then?”

He frowned. “It is hard to explain to a mortal. Behsart was a part of the others. Thus, the name and that is also why he was the weakest of them. I allowed them to believe that he kept me chained, because I knew that if they doubted it they would bind me more tightly.”

“He told me you were Cavan, Lord of Reugal.”

“I am—Lord of Reugal and also of Daeksould—now.”

Mariel frowned. “I don’t understand how you thought sacrificing me would weaken them if it didn’t before.”

“I never intended to sacrifice you. I could not have stopped them once they decided to take you. I did not have the power to do so.”

“You said you’d stopped the others,” she said accusingly.

He frowned at her, obviously striving for patience. “They did not lust

for the others. It was not that difficult to pander to their arrogance and convince them they had no need for more virgin sacrifices. They had no use for the others, beyond consuming their spirits, drawing strength from it. *You*, they lusted for. They would have to *expend* energy to have you and once they had decided that they would have you, I could not prevent it. I had not expected that you would be as brave, clever and—lusty as you were.”

Mariel reddened. “I...uh... I.”

He smiled faintly, brushing the backs of his fingers over her cheek. “I am not complaining. Their lust for you consumed them. If you had not responded, they would not have been so enthralled with you that they did not even notice how weak they were growing. I am certainly not complaining on my own account.”

His arrogance irritated her. She frowned. “You are assuming that I am yours.”

His expression changed instantly. “Make no mistake, my love, you are.”

Mariel felt a little prick of uneasiness, but the truth was she didn’t really object. After a moment, she sighed. “I was not courted,” she complained.

He chuckled. “I am more than willing to court you--however you wish to be courted.”

Mariel rolled her eyes. Men were never romantic. If you had to instruct them on courting you, there was little point in it.

He hooked his finger beneath her chin and forced her to look up at him. “Tell me—of all the things that you have experienced, which pleased you most?” he asked huskily.

Mariel reddened. That wasn’t exactly what she’d had in mind, but she supposed since they’d honeymooned most of the way to the Castle Valdamer, there wasn’t much point in weeping over the courtship she’d missed. In any case, she couldn’t help but be intrigued by his claim. “You could... do that?” she asked hesitantly.

He gave her an arrogant look. Abruptly, he sat up, hooked his finger in the thin fabric of the robe and ripped it down the center from the neck to her crotch. “I am the benign Demon Valdamer. Anything a dark demon can do, I can do better.”

The End