

ALPHA DELICIOUS Silky's Master



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Undercover in the royal palace of Amazurn, Silky, a reporter, tries to gather evidence of abuse suffered by Princess Voluptia's harem boys. Invited to the Princess' secret sanctuary where men are used as sex slaves, she meets the former gladiator Shawn-Dan Dawn, who has been imprisoned there.

The passion between Silky and Shawn is stronger than an exploding star, but dangerous to them both. When the Princess abducts the Queen's lover, Silky risks arrest to free Shawn and expose the secret harem.

Chapter One

"This is a big day for you, Pearlann," Princess Voluptia said with her usual condescending smile. The woman's slanted blue eyes narrowed in her plump face and she swept a tendril of curly gold hair from her brow. "You've proven yourself a woman of similar tastes to my own. Over the past months I've enjoyed your company immensely."

"I'm glad," Silky replied. She had grown so accustomed to her alias that responding to it felt natural. Like the princess, she wore a satin robe, belted loosely at her waist, and high-heeled sandals. Dressed for leisure, they made their way down a hidden corridor beneath the princess' chamber in the palace located at the Amazurnian capital. "When we met at the auction, I knew we'd be friends."

The secret and illegal slave auction had disgusted Silky, as did her "friendship" to the princess, but it had gotten her entrance to the royal harem. Though men had far fewer rights than women on Amazurn, actual slavery had been outlawed. Other than the underground auctions, men could no longer be bought and sold. Some argued that those who worked in the legal pleasure houses or signed into the harems of wealthy women were no better than slaves. Others argued that since they kept the profits, their prostitution was not slavery, but a career.

For many men, working in a pleasure house or joining a harem offered more benefits than other careers. A successful prostitute or harem boy had wealth and security. Many handsome young men aspired to be selected for one of the royal harems. Queen Pussyanna had a vast harem and was known for her kindness. Her daughters, Voluptia, Marka and Rosetip, also had harems, though Voluptia hadn't inherited her

mother's generous nature. Still her harem boys appeared to live in the lap of luxury, well-treated and protected.

However Silky had reason to believe life in Voluptia's harem was not as pleasant as everyone thought. Since arriving months ago, she had not seen any serious abuse -- some verbal scolding every now and then, but nothing alarming. Yet she knew in her heart something was wrong in the palace.

Surely if Voluptia harmed her men, she wouldn't do so publicly. Queen Pussyanna, with her stance on abuse of servants, wouldn't allow it. No, if the princess mistreated her men, or worse, she did so in private. Silky intended to uncover that dark, dirty secret, which explained why she had pursued a friendship with the princess under an assumed name.

"This is strange," Silky remarked as they made their way down a long, twisting staircase. Light from the princess' lantern danced on the brick walls and other than the click of their sandals on the stone floor, not a sound could be heard. "Why isn't there an elevator?"

"Ages ago, when the palace was built, this was the old security section. Later it was moved and this staircase sealed off. The dungeon beneath is no longer used, thanks to modern prisons. I discovered it about ten years ago and paid very well for workers to come here in secret and turn the old dungeon into my private sanctuary. No one, not even my mother, knows about it."

"Surely the workers and palace security --"

"Were paid well for their silence." Voluptia smiled wickedly. "Besides, not everyone agrees with my mother's indulgence toward male servants. Some members of security are my closest friends and enjoy this sanctuary as much as I do. At least here the ways of old Amazurn are preserved."

When they reached the bottom of the stairs, they turned down a corridor illuminated by wall lights. Voluptia turned off her lantern and hung it on a hook. At that moment, a tall, redheaded woman with powerfully muscled arms exposed in a

purple uniform vest stepped into the corridor and approached. She wore black trousers and boots and carried a stun pistol.

"Captain Ironess, this is my friend, Pearlann. She's been living off world for the past twenty years but has returned with a longing for old Amazurn, if you understand."

"Oh yes, Your Highness, I understand. She won't be disappointed here."

"Lead on," the princess ordered and the captain bowed her head and guided them down another corridor.

They paused near a heavy wooden door reinforced by steel. Using an old-fashioned iron key, she unlocked the door and pushed it open. Two guards, dressed in black vests and trousers and also carrying stun pistols, blocked their entrance. At a motion from their captain, the women stepped aside and bowed deeply as the princess and Silky entered.

At first glance, this harem appeared no different than the ones upstairs. Several small rooms, once prison cells, some still retaining their iron bars, surrounded a large central room. Rugs and enormous pillows covered the floors. Lush couches and chairs were scattered randomly and each of the small cells contained a bed covered in silk or satin sheets. The scent of cologne filled the room.

If the harem boys upstairs had been beautiful, the men who lounged and mingled in this harem were exquisite. From the slenderest, sweetest-faced youth to the most strapping, ruggedly handsome hunk, they were pure male perfection.

A hulking blond wearing nothing but snug blue trousers clapped his hands and all the men rushed to the center of the room and dropped to their knees, their heads bowed before the princess.

All the men but one.

A tall, lean-muscle man with piercing gray eyes, a hawkish face and thick black hair tied in a tail down his back stood behind the bars of a cell. He looked defiantly at the princess. She curled her lip, waved her hand to the others who dispersed and approached the cell.

"Pearlann, come with me."

Silky followed, though her full attention fixed on the man. She could scarcely believe her eyes. Could it possibly be?

"Like a breeder who keeps an unruly but supremely beautiful horse solely for her own perverse pleasure, I keep Shawn-Dan Dawn."

A jolt of shock shot through Silky. This *was* Shawn-Dan Dawn, the man who, two years ago, had won the queen's gladiatorial challenge in the single fighters division. He had accepted her personal invitation to fight against some of the greatest male warriors on Amazurn. Such warriors lived on the Alpha Islands, where dominant males were banished to prevent them from wreaking havoc on society. Though the men on the islands basically ruled themselves, they were prisoners there, not allowed to leave the islands or travel off planet. The winners of the queen's gladiatorial challenge were given a large sum of money as well as the freedom to leave Amazurn.

Since Shawn-Dan Dawn's win, Silky, like the rest of the world, believed he had left the island, never to be heard from again. Rumor had it he had fled the galaxy, having despised his exile on Alpha Island East and wishing to be as far from Amazurn as possible.

While some men enjoyed their lives on the Alpha Islands, others considered themselves little more than slaves and wished to leave. Shawn-Dan "The Master" Dawn, as he had been called in the arena, often made public his loathing for Amazurn tradition regarding men.

How then had he landed here, a slave in every sense of the word? Men who entered harems did so of their own free will. They signed legal documents stating that they wished to serve their mistresses. Perhaps the men in this dungeon hadn't agreed to anything. What if they had been taken against their will?

Silky's gaze met Shawn's. In her business she'd seen many horrors. She'd met saints and sinners, missionaries and cold-blooded killers, but never had she seen such an expression of hatred and revulsion as in this man's eyes.

"Magnificent, isn't he?" Voluptia continued. She reached out a fingertip to touch Shawn's chiseled lips and he stepped back in disgust. The princess sighed. "Not trainable, however. One would think a former gladiator of his quality would be quite trainable."

"If I remember him from news interviews, he doesn't like taking orders," Silky replied softly. Seeing this once proud athlete behind bars disturbed her. Though she didn't agree with some of the rules of male gladiatorial sports, part of her had been compelled to watch the magnificent fighters. Shawn had been among her favorites. He had been like a tornado in the ring -- powerful, skilled and darkly beautiful. Proud with a fiery personality, he had been the ultimate gladiator. She'd been in the audience the day he had won the queen's challenge and supposedly secured his freedom. When he'd stood in the arena, his fist raised in victory, his powerful chest heaving and his magnificent body gleaming with sweat and blood, she'd experienced a rush of overwhelming joy for him. Though she had never met the man in person, she had followed his career and knew how much freedom meant to him.

Now to learn it had all been taken away --

"Is something wrong?" the princess asked. "Pearlann?"

"I just... I was a gladiatorial fan and I never imagined being this close to him, that's all," she replied, trying to conceal her horror at his situation by slipping into the role of fan girl. It wasn't difficult, especially considering Shawn had once been her most notable celebrity crush. Now he no longer seemed untouchable. Obviously he was just a man like so many others on Amazurn -- under the control of a power-hungry woman.

"Yes he was marvelous in the arena, wasn't he? Unfortunately he's not so marvelous anywhere else. Yet he is quite handsome. Pleasing to the eye and when restrained and gentled, pleasing to touch. Would you like to touch him?"

"I don't know," Silky replied coolly. By the look of rage in his eyes, he didn't want to be touched. Still she couldn't back off now. If Voluptia questioned her intentions, it would blow her cover and her fate would be as ugly as the fate of these

poor bastards trapped in the princess' dungeon. "He looks dangerous. He's not a typical Amazurnian male. Alphas are --"

"The most fun to tease. Captain, see that Shawn is secured in the petting zoo. In the meantime, I'll show Pearlann around."

"Yes, Your Highness," said the captain.

Beckoning Silky with her finger, Voluptia said, "Come. There's much to see down here in my world."

They walked through the harem. Each man dropped to his knees as the women passed.

In the corridor, Silky followed the princess. "Does your mother know about this?"

Pausing, the princess raised her eyes to the heavens. Placing a bejeweled hand to her full breasts, she said, "My mother? The Queen of Bleeding Hearts? She gives her men far too much freedom. You should see how she dotes on her servant, Satin Hood, the world's oldest harem boy. It's disgusting."

"He's been with her quite a long time, hasn't he?"

"Men should be discarded once they reach a certain age. The young, handsome ones are the easiest to keep. Some middle aged ones are still beautiful, but they begin to lose certain abilities, if you get my meaning."

Silky grinned. "Isn't that what drugs are for?"

Now that she'd recovered from the initial shock of finding Shawn, she fell back into her role of rich, sleazy mistress.

"Ah." The princes smiled. "Are you simply good at guesses or have you suspected my little tricks all along?"

"Having gotten to know you so well, I suspected."

"There's much for you to experience down here, much for you to learn. But not all in one day. Let's take it one step at a time so you can fully enjoy this sanctuary."

The princess continued down the corridor. She showed Silky her spacious suite, as luxurious as her chamber in the upper palace. They visited the kitchen where

servants prepared delicious, healthy foods to keep the harem boys strong and the princess satisfied. Voluptia took her on a tour of the gym where still more gorgeous males used cardio machines and free weights to tone their perfect bodies.

Partway through the tour, the princess received a call from the captain on her wrist communicator. They turned around and headed toward the other end of the corridor.

"The section we visited is for everyday living," explained the princess. "The section we're about to see now is for pleasure -- the darkest, fiercest pleasure on Amazurn."

Chapter Two

Silky followed the princess to the other end of the corridor. They passed many closed doors, but the princess didn't stop to explain what was behind them. The captain stood in front of the last door and opened it with a bow. Voluptia and Silky entered and it took most of Silky's self-control to appear undisturbed by what she found inside.

Other than tables in each of the four corners with men strapped to them, the room had no furniture. Three other men stood or crouched near the walls to which they were chained, thick leather collars around their necks. Shawn lay on one of the tables, his long-limbed, lean-muscled body naked and bound spread eagle. His broad chest heaved with every furious breath. The chiseled muscles in his flat belly rippled and his powerful arms and legs strained against their bonds. He snarled around the black silk gag stuffed into his mouth. Intense gray eyes flashed with hatred so strong that if he could kill with a look she and Voluptia would be dead.

Despite her disgust, Silky's gaze riveted to his thick, magnificent cock, which rose from a nest of wiry pubic hair. The balls beneath pulled up tightly. She didn't believe for a moment this situation aroused him. Most likely he'd been stimulated by drugs.

In the past she'd fantasized about him, but never in those fantasies had he wanted to kill her, nor had he been forced into submission. The situation sickened her, but if she had any hope of exposing the truth about this pit she needed to stay and gather as much information as she could.

Despite the stone walls and floor, the room was comfortably warm. Voluptia shrugged off her robe and slung it over her shoulder. She wore a white satin bra and panties beneath.

Following her hostess, Silky also removed her robe and held it in one hand. Clad only in her black bra and panties, she glanced toward Captain Ironess who smirked and closed the door, leaving Voluptia and Silky alone with the slaves.

"Welcome to the petting zoo," Voluptia said, gesturing around the room. "They might look fierce, but most of them are quite docile."

The males stared at their mistress. Despite their size and strength, they appeared as calm and "trained" as Voluptia suggested.

Except Shawn.

"Why is he gagged?" Silky asked.

"Unlike the others, he snaps. But I assure you he can't escape his restraints. If he struggles too much, it triggers a mild electric shock."

"Couldn't that kill him?"

"It's only strong enough to calm him. Otherwise he'd do himself far worse damage. When he first arrived, he required almost constant medical attention due to self-inflicted injuries. He's a regular in the room we call "house of pain." Since he seems to enjoy pain and has a remarkably high tolerance for it, we put him where his talents are used best."

Silky's stomach clenched. She didn't believe for a moment Shawn "enjoyed" pain. One look at him and anyone could see his stubborn pride drove him to rebel.

"Touch him, Pearlann. Go ahead. Do whatever you want. I know you tend to like privacy so I'll occupy myself with one of my favorite pets." The princess strode to the far end of the room where a redheaded slave lay strapped to a table. He lifted his head toward her for a kiss and the princess covered his mouth with hers. Either the poor bastard feared for his life or else he enjoyed submitting. Regardless of his reason, Silky pitied him.

Her heart pounding, she approached Shawn.

"Go ahead," Voluptia said, glancing at Silky over her shoulder. The shrewd look in her eyes sent a shiver down Silky's spine. Did the princess suspect her ulterior motives after all? Was this some kind of test to see if she truly fit in here, and if she didn't, then what? Silky knew in her gut if the princess discovered her true motives, she wouldn't leave this palace alive, no more than these slaves would ever see a sunrise or sunset again.

Unless Silky found a way to bring the princess to justice, these men would spend the rest of their lives in this dungeon. Most likely those lives would be short. What had Voluptia said? After a certain age, men weren't worth keeping.

Silky stood near Shawn. Their gazes locked and she placed a hand to his chest. It was warm and rock-hard. Beneath her palm his heart beat wildly, probably from anger and maybe whatever drug he'd been given.

"May I take his gag off?" Silky asked.

"Oh, dear." Voluptia wrinkled her nose. "He's so obnoxious. His language will burn your ears off. I considered having his tongue cut out, but it seems a shame when he can be quite skilled with it under the right conditions."

Silky didn't want to think about what he'd been forced into during his time here. Her gaze still fixed on his, she tried to tell him with her eyes that she would make this as tolerable for him as possible.

Soft moans drew her attention across the room. Voluptia and the redheaded slave kissed passionately while the princess curled her fist around his cock and stroked.

With the princess now completely involved with her slave, Silky leaned closer to Shawn and whispered in his ear, "I don't want to hurt you, but I have to do what she expects."

He stopped struggling and his eyes narrowed, as if he were trying to discern her motives.

Again she bent and whispered in his ear, "Let me?"

She drew back and their gazes locked. Ever so slightly he nodded and she offered a smile that she hoped reassured him. Then her gaze drifted to her hand, which

lightly stroked his chest. This man had the most beautiful body she'd ever seen, and being a gladiatorial fan she'd seen the best.

Her fingertips trailed down his belly, caressing each perfectly developed muscle and stroking his prominent ribs. Though he'd been out of the arena for a couple of years, he looked as fit as ever.

"I'm right in assuming he's had his contraceptive and disease control shot?" Silky asked.

"You know all my men have their monthly shot," Voluptia replied. "What's the fun in venereal disease and pregnancy by a slave?"

"Some women breed with their harem boys," Silky said.

Voluptia snorted. "There will always be fools. Decent women wouldn't condone such behavior."

As if you'd know what it means to be a decent woman. Prior to visiting this sanctuary, Silky had considered Voluptia an arrogant, self-centered brat. Now she knew the princess was nothing short of a monster.

"Don't you agree?" Voluptia asked.

"That's why I asked about the contraceptive. After all, why would I breed with an obviously alpha male? I don't want my children banished to the Alpha Islands."

The princess laughed, the sound of nails on a chalkboard, and straddled the redhead.

"Of course if my mother wasn't queen, she probably would have mated with Satin Hood. The way she admits her love for him is revolting." The woman seemed to have a fixation on her mother and her servant. Voluptia removed her bra and placed it on the table. Bracing a hand on either side of her slave's head, she leaned down so her full breasts brushed his face. He took one of her nipples between his lips. "When my mother passes on and I assume leadership of Amazurn, women like us won't have to hide our pleasure in a dungeon like this. I'll see that we return to the old ways, when women ruled with unlimited power," Voluptia went on breathlessly, her neck arching and her eyes closing as the bound slave lapped and sucked her breast.

Disgusted, Silky turned her attention back to Shawn who, from the corner of his eye, shot a look of hatred toward the princess. Leather straps held his head in place, so he was unable to turn enough to level his full gaze upon her.

The urge to free him almost overtook Silky, but she needed to keep her cover, otherwise she'd never find a way to help him and the other prisoners. Silky's fingers brushed lightly over Shawn's crotch. She slid her fingertips up and down his cock, enjoying the sensation of velvety skin over rock-hardness. Her hand curled around his shaft and her thumb lightly stroked the underside of his cock head.

He groaned and his eyes slipped shut, his face tense. When his gaze met hers again, she clearly saw his disgust and desperation. "Is he drugged?" Silky asked.

"Theo? No he loves to pleasure me."

"I wasn't talking about him." Silky glanced at the redhead then jerked her head toward Shawn. "I mean him."

"Yes, otherwise he doesn't perform well. It's not that he can't. He simply won't. Unfortunately simple punishments like beating and solitary confinement don't work on him. Only extremes, such as shock and drug therapy gentle him enough to be handled."

"I bet I could handle him," Silky said in her most lethal voice. If she convinced Voluptia to leave her alone with Shawn, she might find a way to help him and perhaps gain important information from him that she could use against the princess. She had little doubt he'd cooperate, if he trusted her. Gaining his confidence wouldn't be easy, not after all he'd suffered in this hell.

Voluptia laughed rather jerkily as she rocked upon Theo. Her satin-covered clit rubbed against the slave's stiff cock. She dismounted only to discard her panties, then she straddled Theo again, this time guiding his thick cock deep inside her. Her eyes closed, Voluptia pumped in a steady rhythm while continuing her conversation. "Pearlann, you're overconfident. I've had him for two years, under the strict tutelage of my personal guard. I assure you no one knows how to break men like Captain Ironess, but she hasn't succeeded in taming his spirit. Yet you think you can?"

"I'd like to try," Silky replied, rolling her fingertip over Shawn's bulging cock head. She smeared a droplet of pre-come over it and again he groaned and writhed in his bonds. The drugs flooding his system were obviously powerful. His stiff cock throbbed in her hand and his chest heaved with every excited breath. Teasing him like this was unconscionable, but for both their sakes she couldn't stop. She decided to make it as easy on him as possible. A few more flicks of her wrist and he exploded, his powerful muscles tensing and releasing and his cock shooting wildly.

To her horror, he shuddered and screamed around the gag. Then she remembered the electric currents. "How do you cut the power on his bonds?" Silky demanded.

"The button beneath the table."

Silky reached under and felt around. "Where?"

"Other side." Voluptia chuckled. "I suppose I should have mentioned that, but he deserves the punishment."

Silky's teeth gritted as she dropped to her knees and searched under the table. Finding the controls, she pressed the power switch. His eyes closed and his face and chest misted with sweat, Shawn trembled, but his breathing had already slowed, so Silky assumed the power surge had stopped.

Across the room, Voluptia cried out in orgasm. Her hips bucked upon Theo and Silky thought her ample ass and belly might pound the breath out of the slender, lanky slave. Theo moaned and thrashed, his hips jerking upward as far as his bonds would allow. "Oh, Your Highness," breathed the redhead.

"Talk to me, precious," Voluptia said, her nails scratching the slave's smooth chest, leaving pinkish marks on the pale skin.

"I love fucking you, Princess."

"I promise you more tonight, Theo. How I spoil you, but you're so perfect." Voluptia turned to Silky. "Isn't he lovely? Six feet of lean elegance with an eight-inch cock. Twenty-four years old with natural red hair and eyes the color of a tropical sea."

"He's very nice," Silky said. Theo was cute, but certainly not perfect. Shawn, on the other hand, was everything a man should be and so seldom was, at least not on Amazurn. But she couldn't blame men for keeping their place, not when dominant ones were imprisoned or banished.

"Pearlann, would you like to stay here tonight?" Voluptia asked.

"Yes, if I can ask a favor."

"Anything, dear." The princess slid off Theo and reached for her robe. "But first I must shower. I'll have one of my servants show you to your room."

"The favor I ask is to have Shawn for my personal use while I'm here. I don't think he's a favorite of Your Majesty, so I doubt I'll be overstepping my bounds."

Voluptia sighed and ran a hand through her long, dark hair. "I have many others who are better behaved. I don't trust him outside of the petting zoo."

"Damn." Silky sighed, stroking Shawn's cock, which once again rose stiff and twitching from the powerful drugs. "I really love a challenge and this man excites me."

"Well then, I won't disappoint you."

"Thank you, Your Highness."

Voluptia shrugged. "I know you're a gladiatorial buff and he was once such a star. I'll have him fitted with safety cuffs and a collar and have him delivered to your room. In the meantime, join me in my suite."

Shawn still hadn't opened his eyes, though she sensed he was very much awake. A flush colored the ridges of his high cheekbones. A pang of sorrow darted through Silky. She had no desire to compound the misery of this proud warrior, but until she convinced him that she was on his side, their interaction would cause him nothing but pain and humiliation. He wasn't the only one. Silky felt sick inside. When she'd agreed to this job, she'd known she would be forced to commit forbidden acts, yet knowing and doing were vastly different things.

"Come, Pearlann." The princess stood near the now open door. "Captain Ironess, release Theo. He'll be joining me tonight and will arrive at his leisure. Have one of the harem boys clean up Shawn, then I want him fitted with safety restraints and brought

to the guest suite. Shawn will be Silky's personal slave during her visit, is that understood?"

Captain Ironess stared at Silky and Shawn with a sleazy smile on her lips. "Of course, Your Highness."

Voluptia headed for the door, then paused and giggled. "Oh, I almost forgot. You may send these other men back to the harem too. Some of them have been here for a couple of days and I'm sure they can use some rejuvenation."

Captain Ironess nodded and stepped into the petting zoo as Silky and the princess left. Before the door closed behind her, Silky glanced at Shawn and found him staring at her with an unfathomable look in his beautiful gray eyes.

Chapter Three

Just when Shawn thought he'd endured every humiliation possible, that bitch Voluptia introduced something new. Perhaps what he'd experienced today hadn't been among the worst mistreatments, but it had been particularly frustrating because he couldn't understand his feelings for the princess' strange friend, Pearlann.

Voluptia had brought guests to the secret harem before, but no one like this dark haired, brown eyed woman. Not only was Pearlann smaller and slimmer than an average Amazurnian woman, but she had a softness in her eyes that he'd never seen before -- not in his home on Alpha Island East and certainly not here in this demonic palace.

To think that two years ago freedom had been within his grasp. The queen's gladiatorial challenge had been nothing but a cruel tease. He'd sacrificed his blood and sweat, his heart and his soul, all with the hope of finally escaping Amazurn to live as a free man. Instead he had ended up in this dungeon, far worse than Alpha Island East had ever been.

He'd been prepared to hate Pearlann, to close his eyes and let the drugs do their evil work while she clawed and ravaged him, just as other women had done. But to his surprise, she had looked at him with compassion and whispered what she'd intended as words of comfort in his ear. She'd said she had to do what Voluptia expected, then she had whispered, "Let me."

In all the time he'd been enslaved, no one had ever asked permission to touch him. Of course, he had little choice. Bound, gagged, and drugged, he couldn't exactly stop anyone from taking what they wanted.

Pearlann had intended to take him, but for some inexplicable reason, she wanted his consent. He could have refused to ease her mind, but something compelled him to nod in agreement. Perhaps it was the mere fact that he'd been asked -- a gesture of respect when for two years he'd been treated like an object, without rights or feelings. Then he'd asked himself if he had been free and seen Pearlann outside of this dungeon, would he have pursued her? Probably.

Once she'd started stroking him, the influence of the sexually stimulating drugs had overwhelmed him. He'd actually forgotten about the electrical charge until it struck him even more forcefully than his orgasm.

In the few seconds before he'd squeezed his eyes shut against pain and pleasure combined, he'd seen the look of horror on Pearlann's face. She hadn't intended to hurt him and she'd cut the power fast.

Thinking about these past few minutes made his heart beat faster. So many emotions flooded him, he felt mentally battered. He'd thought he'd hardened his heart over the past two years. Why did this woman, Pearlann, stir so many feelings within him?

The door opened and he glanced toward it. Lovebuck, or Love for short, a young, pretty slave with slender limbs that made his sizeable cock look even larger, entered the room. At the moment his cock was partially concealed beneath fitted blue trousers. His long blond hair hung loose down his shoulders and a shiny blue jewel on a gold choker accentuated the attractive hollow at the base of his throat.

He carried a basin of water and several towels. Pausing near Shawn's table, he glanced at the bound man with sympathy. His slender fingers worked the knot on Shawn's gag, then he tugged the saliva-drenched satin from his mouth.

Shawn ran his tongue around his mouth and over his lips while Love unfastened the bonds on his head, giving him at least some motion.

"I'm sorry, Shawn, but I can't release your arms and legs," Love said, though no explanation was necessary. Shawn knew if the kid set him free, he'd get his ass kicked. "Are you all right?" Love asked.

"I'll live, kid." Shawn glanced down at the come on his chest and stomach.
"Sorry about the mess."

"It's not your fault," Love said softly and dipped a hand towel into the water. He gently washed Shawn. Clasp his cock, he concentrated fully on his work. A slight blush crept into Love's cheeks and Shawn sighed. Despite his innocent looks, the youth had been in the harem longer than Shawn and had handled innumerable men and women. Yet Shawn knew the younger man had a crush on him and this forced bathing both aroused and embarrassed him. Shawn felt a bit uncomfortable as well, but neither of them had a choice.

"I hate them," Love whispered, tears welling in his angelic blue eyes.

"Be careful what you say, kid."

"Why should I care? It's not as if I'm ever getting out of here anyway."

"Never say never."

Love shook his head, a faint smile tugging at his lips. He met Shawn's gaze.
"How do you stay positive?"

"I think of this place like being in the arena. I never gave up there so I sure as hell won't give up here. This is just another challenge. As long as we're alive there's hope, got it?"

"I don't know --"

"I want a hell yeah."

Love smiled and dried Shawn with a soft white towel.

The door opened. Love jumped and he and Shawn both glanced toward Captain Ironess. "Finished?" she demanded.

Love nodded, gathered the towels and basin and headed for the door. When he stepped through, Ironess kicked him in the ass. The boy stumbled, almost spilling the basin of water.

"Hey, Cap, why don't you pick on someone your own size?" Shawn snapped.
"Oh, that's right. We don't have any Amazurn yaks down here in the dungeon."

Ironess forced a nasty laugh. She stepped toward Shawn and punched him in the face. Blood filled his mouth. He turned his head to the side and spat it on the table.

This time Ironess laughed for real. Heading for the door, she said, "You're lucky the princess' guest wants you tonight or else I'd have really worked you over." The door closed behind her.

* * *

Silky waited in the princess' suite while Voluptia showered. Seated on a black velvet couch, she glanced around the luxurious room with its plush carpet and walls decorated with colorful tapestries. It had old-world charm as well as every modern convenience.

Silky wondered how the princess could have turned this dungeon into a pleasure house without her mother's knowledge. Surely it had taken dozens of workers to complete the task. Hadn't the queen asked questions?

Yet the princess did inhabit the entire east wing of the palace. As the firstborn daughter, she was next in line for the throne. She had more property and authority than her younger sisters. Perhaps the queen truly was ignorant of this torture chamber.

Freshly washed and wearing a lace negligee, Voluptia stepped out of her dressing chamber followed by her maid, a short, slender male with braided chestnut hair. Shirtless, he wore flowing black pants and gold sandals. A fine gold chain threaded through his nipple piercings. "Shall I bring your dinner, Your Highness?" he asked.

"Yes, Goldpole."

Once the young man left, Voluptia joined Silky on the couch. "Tell me, what do you think of my secret hideaway?"

Silky smiled. "It's hard to believe someplace like this still exists on modern Amazurn."

"Isn't it, though? As I said before, when my time comes to rule, the old ways will return."

"Just what we need," Silky said under her breath.

"Excuse me?"

"I said it's just what we need," she said louder, this time with enthusiasm rather than sarcasm.

"Exactly. So much has changed over the years regarding men's rights and the abolishment of slavery. Nowadays we need a man's written permission before adding him to a harem. When you think of what it costs to take care of a man, to feed and clothe him and see to his medical needs, they should feel lucky someone thinks enough of them to give them a home."

"Many men enjoy supporting themselves."

Voluptia scoffed. "They're insane. Years ago only lower class widowers worked, except for the beasts on the Alpha Islands, of course."

"Purely out of curiosity, why is Shawn-Dan Dawn in your harem? I know you don't like dominant males and you're not a gladiatorial fan."

"That's rather a funny story." Voluptia chuckled. "He's here as a favor to my old friend Wildbush. She is simply *mad* about male gladiatorial games. A little over two years ago, just before my mother's gladiatorial challenge, Wildbush visited Alpha Island East for her yearly vacation. She arranged a meeting with Shawn-Dan Dawn. Like most gladiators he made lots of money doing side jobs, such as advertising and nude modeling. Wildbush had often taken gladiators to her bed and tipped them very well. Yet Shawn-Dan Dawn refused her. Can you imagine? As if most male gladiators are anything more than glorified prostitutes."

Silky's gut clenched and it didn't take much acting for her to look disgusted, though not for the reason Voluptia thought. "Imagine the nerve of the man," Silky scoffed.

"Wildbush *really* wanted him and his refusal simply infuriated her. She could have forced him, but that would have only stung for one night. The man deserved to pay for his arrogance. We waited until after he won the gladiatorial challenge. If he lost we would have carried out our plot, but if he won it would be a double blow. When he

arrived at his home after leaving the arena, Captain Ironess and other members of my personal guard arrested him and had him brought to me."

"Most people believe he left Amazurn."

"That's what we wanted them to think. Other than gladiatorial fans and his friends on Alpha Island East, Shawn-Dan Dawn is alone in the world. No family would look for him. No one would know or care that he hadn't gone off world."

"So you kidnapped him?"

An evil smile touched Voluptia's lips. "No. That's the true beauty of this plan. Not a single man in this harem has been taken against his will -- at least not legally. They've all signed documents binding them to me."

Something wasn't right. Silky's brow furrowed. "I don't understand. Why would a gladiator who won his freedom sign himself into a harem?"

"Because if he didn't, Wildbush would have said he attacked her on the night of their meeting. Other than her lady servant, who is very loyal, they were quite alone. No court on Amazurn would take the word of a man, in particular an alpha, over that of two women. As you know, on the Alpha Islands men rule themselves, but any resident who attacks a woman is automatically tried off island."

Off island trials had female judges and juries. Men stood little chance of being treated fairly. A man convicted of assault against a woman faced either life in prison or execution, depending on the circumstances.

"No court would take a man's word over a woman's at that time, but what about the controversy since the Nipplonia trial?" Silky asked.

Not long ago, a wealthy female resident of Alpha Island South had been slapped with a long prison sentence for the abuse and murder of several male servants. As a medicinist, Nipplonia had owned one of the largest drug companies on Amazurn and conducted illegal testing on members of her harem. Evidence against her had been supplied by her chief harem boy.

"Nipplonia was a good woman. I still cringe to think about the unfairness of her trial," Voluptia said. "It was a clear case of entrapment."

The harem boy had worked with island authorities who implanted a recording device under his skin. He recorded her ordering the illegal tests and also secured confessions from her during their intimate moments.

"Since his betrayal, many women, including myself, regularly scan their male servants for hidden devices."

"Is that why security is so tight around the palace for visitors as well?"

"It has to be. And doesn't it make you feel safer knowing that whatever you do here stays here? It would be a pity for any more of us to be imprisoned on the word of a harem boy."

Voluptia held Silky's gaze and she nodded. "Exactly so."

"Back to Shawn-Dan Dawn."

"Yes. Him. I gave the brute the option of going to trial or joining my harem. Of course if he chose to go to trial, I assured him that my mother and her team of legal experts would fully support Wildbush. Shawn-Dan Dawn might not be the brightest star in the sky, but he knew his best chance of survival would be to agree to my terms."

Silky felt sick to her stomach. Nipplonia's harem boy was forced to implant a recording device under his skin to bring his wicked mistress to justice, but Shawn, who was innocent, would most likely have been convicted on the lies of a jealous brat.

"Of course I think there have been moments when he wished he'd chosen the death sentence," Voluptia said, examining her long, square-tipped nails which were painted vibrant pink. She gave a wry laugh. "There are times when I've almost been inclined to indulge that wish. He is the most stubborn man I've ever met. Pearlann, dear, you must be into self-punishment to take him on, though after tonight I'm sure you'll be quite tired of him."

"As I said, I enjoy a challenge."

"Well, if you succeed in taming him, I'll give him to you. Whenever you visit, he'll be yours and while you're gone no one will fuck him."

Silky bowed her head. "Thank you, Your Highness. It's a gift I'll enjoy."

Goldpole arrived with their meal. When they finished, the slender young slave returned, followed by Theo. The redhead looked ready for a night of hard love. His long hair hung loose down his back. Snug black pants and boots encased his long, lean legs. He didn't wear a shirt, but thick leather straps adorned with silver studs crisscrossed his sculpted torso. "Your Majesty, I'll show Lady Pearlann to the guest room, then return to clear the dishes," Goldpole said.

"Get the dishes in the morning," Voluptia said, her gaze fixed on Theo. She beckoned him with a finger and he approached, dropping to his knees in front of her and bowing his head. The princess grasped a handful of his thick red hair and jerked his head up, forcing him to face her. "I'll be engaged for the rest of the night."

Poor Theo.

"Enjoy yourself, Your Highness," Silky said, rising and following Goldpole to the door.

"Good luck," Voluptia called, her voice laced with sarcasm. "If you get tired of him, feel free to select another man to please you for tonight. My harem is your harem."

"When you visit me off world, I'll be sure to extend you the same courtesy."

"Oh, you will. I'm looking forward to visiting that quaint little moon you've told me so much about and seeing those exotic males you've collected."

Silky had spun some wild tales about her non-existent harem. Details of the moon where she claimed to live had been easier to provide, since the real Pearlann had lived there for years.

Actually, she hoped to gather evidence soon and speak to the real Pearlann before sending her story to her news channel. Silky had worked undercover for years and was one of their best reporters. She'd faced dangerous situations before, digging for the truth not just on Amazurn, but all over the galaxy. Her job was so secret that her true name never appeared on her byline. Only her editor at her news station knew her true identity.

Sometimes she wondered how it felt to be publicly recognized for one's work. Then she considered all the good she had done, many times exposing criminal activity

or infringement on people's rights. She preferred gearing her stories toward men's issues in particular. They had little support politically and in the media. So often they were portrayed as objects or property, but Silky believed they were much more than that.

The sort of abuse found here in Voluptia's secret harem would challenge even the most biased woman's beliefs regarding the treatment of men.

"How long have you served the princess?" Silky asked Goldpole as they walked down the empty corridor.

"Three years, My Lady."

"Do you enjoy living here?"

"Yes, My Lady."

"Are you allowed to leave the harem often?"

Goldpole glanced at her nervously and hesitated before replying, "I don't want to leave. Everything I need is here."

"You don't like the outdoors? Fresh air, blue skies, a walk on the beach?"

"No, My Lady."

"Why?"

"I... Forgive me, My Lady, but I don't understand the question."

"Why don't you like the outdoors?"

"I suppose I'm a homebody, My Lady."

Silky nodded slowly. More likely he knew better than to say anything that might be viewed as a complaint.

They paused outside a smooth silver door. Goldpole opened it, then stepped aside and bowed his head. "If there is anything you need, My Lady, don't hesitate to call."

"Thank you, Goldpole. That will be all." She closed the door and walked to the center of the room. Though not as large as Voluptia's suite, it was spacious and decorated with polished cherrywood furniture. A thick pink carpet covered the floor. Despite the lovely murals on the walls depicting outdoor scenes, Silky couldn't help

feeling trapped. She couldn't imagine what life must be like for these harem boys, forced to live in this dungeon year after year without a breath of fresh air or a hint of natural sunlight.

Sighing deeply, she headed toward an arched wooden door across the room. She guessed it led to the bedroom and bath.

When she entered she gasped in surprise to find Shawn naked and bound spread eagle on the bed. A red blindfold covered his eyes and a black silk gag filled his mouth. Silky hoped he hadn't been gagged since the experience in the petting zoo. Along with the metal cuffs on his wrists and ankles attached to the chains on the bed, he wore a gold collar embellished with pale gray jewels around his neck.

Silky approached the bed and untied the gag. Wrinkling her nose, she tossed the saliva-soaked silk into a nearby trash receptacle.

Shawn let loose a vile string of curses that Silky ignored as she concentrated on untying his blindfold. She removed it and he stopped shouting. Blinking against the bright light in the room, he took a second to focus on her.

"Whatever happens, I'll do everything in my power to make this the worst night of your life," he said.

She admired his spunk. A smile tugged at her lips, but she didn't allow it to spread across her face. He would take it as an expression of contempt. "Nothing is going to happen unless you want it to," she said.

He curled his lip. "Yeah. Right."

"It's true."

"Nothing out of a woman's mouth is true. You and Princess Bitch might think I'm a dumb object, but I've got ears. You think you can tame me, right? This is a little game to you. Well, lady, I'm not playing."

"How about some music?" Silky rose from the edge of the bed and glancing around the room. The place must have a media unit. A little background noise would interfere with any intercom system Voluptia might be using to monitor her room.

Despite their "friendship" she didn't believe for a moment that Voluptia trusted her fully with this secret harem.

She found the media unit on the dresser along with a crystal tray containing a variety of lubes, oils and flavored ultra-thin condoms that modern Amazurnians used only to avoid messiness. Near the tray rested a small, round chip -- the key to Shawn's bonds. She picked it up and curled her fist around it.

After turning the music to a loud setting, she returned to the bed. Shawn stared at her warily. "You don't need all that noise," he bellowed. "Even if someone screams around here, no one cares." His words disturbed her. Apparently he thought she wanted the music to drown out his cries, like a killer concealing his crime. She shuddered to think about what these prisoners had endured.

Silky sat on the bed again and leaned toward him. The guards must have bathed him because he carried the scent of herbal soap. Her lips brushed tendrils of his damp hair before she swept them aside to speak into his ear. "I want the music so we can talk. I'm not sure if the room is monitored. Do you know if it is?"

He stared at her with a look of confusion and annoyance, but didn't reply.

Again she spoke close to his ear. "I know you don't trust me, but I swear I don't want to hurt you."

"Then send me back to my cell."

From her position, half draped over him, the warmth of his body seeped into her. Her palm rested against his steely chest and she felt the rhythm of his heartbeat. Silky drew back just enough to look into his thickly-lashed gray eyes.

"How long has it been since you've enjoyed sex?" she asked.

He narrowed his eyes. "What?"

"Sex. How long since you've enjoyed it?"

"Are you for real?"

She nodded.

"Lady, I don't remember what it's like to have sex. Drugs I understand. Rape I understand."

Silky lightly caressed his face and said, "I'm sorry."

"Bullshit. If you're sorry, why am I chained to your bed?"

"If I let you go will you try something stupid?"

"Like strangling you?" he said with a twisted grin. "Lady, I wouldn't get out of here alive. Come to think of it, maybe that's my ticket out of here after all. I never thought I'd be beggin' for execution."

Fear shot through Silky. It hadn't occurred to her that he might truly want to die. If he no longer cared about his own life, then nothing would stop him from venting his anger on her.

Shawn wasn't your average, fragile Amazurnian male. He was a gladiator, trained to kill. He had been too big, strong and dominant to live in normal Amazurnian society. That's why he'd been banished to Alpha Island East.

"I don't want you tied here," she said. "But you're not giving me much incentive to set you free."

"Tell you what, lady. Turn down the fuckin' music and I'll be a good boy," he said with another curl of his chiseled lips.

The longer Silky looked at him, the more exquisite he appeared. A man this gorgeous and spirited didn't belong in chains. She recalled how he'd looked in the arena -- a whirling mass of steely muscle tempered by technique so elegant it enraptured fighting enthusiasts.

Silky rose from the bed and did as he asked, relieved as well to be rid of the loud music.

"Much better," he said, gazing at her with hooded eyes, his voice soft and husky. "Now come here."

She approached, this time staring at him with the same wariness as he'd looked at her just moments ago.

"What's the matter, lady? Afraid of me?" The way he said "lady" differed greatly from the reverent "My Lady" of Goldpole. At first he'd flung the word at her like an

insult, now it sounded like an invitation. "I'm still tied up. You can hurt me more than I can hurt you."

How could a man's voice be sexy and sarcastic at the same time? She straddled him. Bracing a hand on either side of his head, she whispered against his lips, "I already told you I don't want to hurt you. Now the question is, if I let you go to prove it, will you behave?"

"Behave? Lady, that's not in my dictionary."

"My name is Pearlann."

Tilting his head slightly to the side, he said, "That's kind of nice."

She stared at him. Looking into his eyes, she'd almost slipped and told him her real name. That could have been disastrous at this point, especially if Voluptia had the room bugged.

"She can hear us," he whispered.

For a long moment they stared at each other. Silky nodded slowly before lowering her body onto his and whispering in his ear, "If you don't give me a chance, you'll never know if I can be trusted or not. I want to free you."

Though his eyes gleamed with defiance, the stiffness of his cock between their bodies proved anger wasn't the only thing he felt toward her. Or perhaps not. He might be drugged again, but his eyes were clear and his breathing normal. "But you don't know if you can trust me," he said.

"Exactly."

A wicked grin spread across his face and his intense gray eyes fixed on her in a way that made her shiver with desire and a hint of apprehension. "There's only one way to find out."

The key still held tight in her fist, she studied him for a moment, then rose to her knees. He was the prisoner -- a man helpless in bonds, but strangely he had the advantage. Here and now Silky had the most to lose. If he truly no longer cared whether he lived or died, then he could kill her and be none the worse. Yet if he still

cared, if emotions other than hatred and rage hadn't been driven from him completely, the only way she could reach him would be to gain his trust.

Without further hesitation, she placed the key in the slot on the band securing his left wrist. The cuff opened and his hand dropped. He flexed his fingers and closed his eyes.

Next she freed his left leg, then his right. Crawling all over his naked body aroused her. She'd admired him from a distance for so long, but never imagined being this close to him.

Straddling him, she slid the key into his right wrist cuff. No sooner did his final bond open than he grasped her waist, pushed her onto her back and covered her body with his. Steely legs held hers captive and his hands pinned her wrists to either side of her head.

"You call this behaving?" she said, sounding much calmer than she felt. Her heart skipped a beat, but she met his intense gray gaze without flinching.

"I call this justice. You don't think for a second I trust you. Whatever your game is, lady, I'm not a player."

"I'm not playing any games, Shawn."

"You asked how long it's been since I've enjoyed sex," he drawled. One of his legs slid between hers and he pushed her thighs apart. "It's been a long time, but I think I can learn to like it again."

"Rape is the same for a woman as for a man."

"What would you know about it?" he shouted in her face.

Silky squinted from the sheer volume of his voice.

"You've never been tied down or drugged. You've never been forced into anything. Lady, you give it but you don't take it."

"You don't know anything about me."

"I know you're a friend of Voluptia and if you're here, you're not just a casual friend. You're a pervert like her."

What else could he think? Yet he couldn't be further from the truth. "Will forcing me make you feel better?" she asked.

He stared at her, grinding his teeth visibly. Then he shook his head. His eyes closed for a few seconds and an almost defeated look passed over his handsome face. "No. It'll only make me feel as dirty as you." He rolled off her and lay on his back, his muscular arms folded behind his head and his gaze fixed on the ceiling. "Do what the fuck you want. You're going to anyway."

She edged closer, draping a leg over his and placing a hand on his hard, warm chest. It was very smooth, yet she had remembered him having a decent amount of sexy black chest hair. She noted his legs were also smooth. Only his wiry pubic hair remained untouched. Many women preferred their harem boys hairless, so most likely Shawn and the other slaves waxed regularly. Or perhaps Voluptia had forced him into permanent hair removal. Silky hoped not. She was a rare woman who found a little rough hair on men arousing.

Hair or no hair, Shawn oozed masculinity like so few Amazurnian men did. She knew from his fight stats that he wasn't a full-blooded Amazurnian, but half Taurothish. That not only explained his physical stature, but his aggressive nature.

Again she whispered in his ear, "I want you to take pleasure in me, but only if you want to."

He turned to her and after several heartbeats cupped her face. Narrowing his eyes, he said softly, "I don't understand you. You surprised me in the petting zoo and you're doing it again. Is this a joke to you? Do you want to use kindness to break me because cruelty has not?"

Silky tried to tell him with her eyes that she wasn't like the others. Saying too much put them both in danger.

"That's it, isn't it?" he said, then gave a snort of humorless laughter. "What the hell? I get pain anyway. I might as well take pleasure any way I can get it. All right, lady. I'll fuck you. It's been a long time since I've done it my way."

He moved onto his side, grasped both of her wrists in his and held them above her head. With his free hand he caressed the tops of her breasts visible above her black bra. "You don't look like most Amazurnian women," he said.

"No. I'm the runt of the litter."

He gave a little laugh -- this one genuine.

Most Amazurnian women were tall and voluptuously built. Silky stood only five foot six and was slender by popular standards. Though she had an hourglass figure, her breasts and hips weren't pronounced enough to be considered beautiful on Amazurn.

"I like runts," he said and covered her mouth in a kiss so hot and deep that Silky forgot about everything except the taste and feel of this magnificent man. His lips felt wonderful against hers, and every stroke of his tongue sent a jolt of passion through her. Moaning softly she arched her back, pressing closer to him.

Shawn pushed down one of her bra cups and her breast popped into his hand. His calloused palms caressed her soft flesh and teased her nipple to a straining peak. He broke the kiss only to nuzzle her neck. His tongue tickled her collarbone, then he took her earlobe between his teeth and nibbled gently.

"Oh, Shawn," she whispered. Every kiss and caress sent waves of passion through her. Thoughts of the harem and her assignment faded and she lost herself completely in this magnificent warrior.

In a world where woman controlled everything, she longed for a dominant man. The vile princess had tried to emasculate him, but now more than ever he lived up to his name, Shawn-Dan "The Master" Dawn.

He released her hands to open the front clasp on her bra and Silky wove her fingers through his thick, wavy hair. With her breasts free, she shifted her position slightly to shrug off her bra. Shawn took it from her hand and tossed it aside, then he gently pressed her breasts together and ran his tongue across her nipples. The wet, tickling motion drove her wild.

Again he kissed her deeply. A big, warm hand cupped her and stroked her through her panties. She arched against him, thrusting against his palm and hoping to satisfy the desperate ache in her swollen clit.

Shawn moved away only to kneel beside her. He tugged down her panties. Silky watched him through half closed eyes. The smoldering look in his eyes and the faint yet arrogant smile on his lips turned her on so much that she could scarcely wait a moment longer.

Tonight this gorgeous hunk of gladiator belonged to her, and, even better, she belonged to him. He brushed his fingertips over the soft, springy hair covering her mound, then he slid a long finger inside her and explored.

"Oh!" Silky gasped and thrust toward him.

"Is this what you want?" he purred, sliding another finger inside her. He rubbed her soft, wet pussy, then withdrew his fingers and rolled them over her clit.

Silky tingled all over and her heart beat out of control.

"Is it?" he asked.

"Yes," she breathed.

"I'm going to fuck you, Pearlann. Fuck you like you've never been fucked before."

Her eyes opened wider and a twinge of fear darted through her. Had he, after all, decided to take his revenge on all women through her?

"Do you want it?" he said, his voice rough.

Silky's gaze darted to his cock that stood out as stiff and hard as when he'd been drugged in the petting zoo. "Yes," she whispered.

"I can't hear you." He rubbed her clit a bit faster, pushing her to the edge of orgasm.

"I want it!"

"Good." Without another word, he hoisted her legs over his shoulders, grasped her ass and covered her clit with his mouth.

Chapter Four

Silky moaned and thrashed beneath Shawn's skilled tongue, but he held her snugly. He tongued her clit, slowing and speeding his rhythm, keeping her in a state of almost unendurable arousal.

"Shawn! Oh, Shawn!" she gasped, clutching handfuls of his hair.

He slid his tongue over her clit then licked the ultra-sensitive nub with upward strokes that sent tremors through her entire body. Just when she hovered on the brink of a mind-blowing orgasm, he released her and stood abruptly. Panting, she raised herself on her elbows and stared at him.

"Teasing isn't so much fun now, is it?" He smirked, strode to a plush chair across the room and sprawled in it. "You want pleasure, lady? Finish yourself."

His words struck her like a blow. Frustrated and feeling used, she glared at him.

"How could you --"

"No, how could *you*?" he snapped. "You never think about how we feel. No one gives a fuck about our basic desires. Hell, you wouldn't even care about our basic needs if you didn't want to keep us healthy to serve you. Actually, the part about keeping us healthy is a lie too. What's healthy about sex drugs that destroy our bodies?" He stood abruptly and strode to the silver tray on the dresser. He selected a bottle of purple liquid and approached her. "Two drops of this and you'll need to fuck all night. Notice I say *need* not *want*. You know what I'm tempted to do? Pour it down your throat."

He approached the bed and Silky's heart pounded, no longer from desire but from fear. Though she knew basic self-defense, she was no match for this gladiator.

Now she realized that in her eagerness to uncover evidence, she had acted too quickly in setting him free.

"Even if Ironess and her bitch squad are monitoring this room and are on their way in now, I'll have this down your throat before they break in," he said and lashed out a hand to grasp her hair. His grip close to her scalp, he tilted her head back.

"Why vent your anger on me? I haven't hurt you."

"Yet. I don't know what game you're playing, but I'm sure no friend of Voluptia has my comfort in mind."

"Poison me and you'll never be sure. Life could be easier for you around here, Shawn."

"But I'm the one making it difficult, is that it?" Rage glistened in his eyes and she knew she'd said the wrong thing.

"You're certainly not making tonight easy."

A smile of disbelief and amusement tugged at his lips. Slowly he released his hold on her and placed the bottle on the night table. Silky rubbed the back of her head and continued watching him warily. "I wanted you to enjoy tonight," she said.

"Then send me back to my cell."

"You mean you'd rather spend the night behind bars than share my bed?"

Their gazes locked and the intensity in his gray eyes nearly took her breath away. "Yes."

"All right." Silky rose and walked to the wall communicator where she summoned the guard on duty. Then she turned back to Shawn. "I'm going to put your restraints on."

"Are you?" he said, a look of challenge on his face.

"Either me or the guards. I'm probably the better choice."

He drew a deep breath that expanded his gorgeous chest, then he nodded, looking more resigned than defeated. Slowly he approached the bed and lay on his back. When Silky neared to refasten his cuffs, Shawn grasped her by the waist and pulled her on top of him so they lay breast to chest, their lips almost touching.

"Shawn," she whispered. "Don't fight this. I know they'll hurt you if they think you're acting out."

"Why do you care?" he said, this time also in a husky whisper.

"Give me a chance," she said in his ear. "Please." Again they locked gazes. The door buzzer sounded. "Stay?" Silky asked.

He nodded curtly. Silky brushed his lips with a kiss before he released her. She tugged on her robe and walked to the door. Outside, a pair of towering guards armed with stun pistols stood.

"I'm sorry, but there's been a change of plans," Silky told them. "I'm going to keep him for the night after all."

The women glanced toward Shawn, who stretched out on the bed, his head resting against one of his muscular arms. Something that could have been a grin or a sneer touched his face and he offered the guards a little wave.

"If he's being difficult, we can punish him for you," said one of the guards. "Afterward he'll be cooperative."

"That's not necessary," Silky replied.

"I suggest you put his bonds back on," said the other guard. "He's one of our worst. Unruly and dangerous."

"Thank you for the tip." Silky nodded and closed the door before the guards walked away.

Shawn's gaze lingered over her as she discarded her robe and tossed it onto the chair. She approached the bed and stood for a moment, gazing down at him and wondering if she was a fool to give him a second chance to harm her. Yet he hadn't actually done anything to hurt her, unless major sexual frustration counted, and by the look in his eyes now, he was about to make up for that.

He placed a hand on her hip and caressed it, then trailed a finger over her clit. Silky's heart skipped a beat. She reached out a tentative hand and stroked his stiff cock with her fingertips. "After our experience in the petting zoo, I know you can do better than that," he said.

Taking her bottom lip between her teeth, she slid onto the bed and knelt between his legs. He spread them wider, staring at her with such intensity she thought she might burst into flames.

She caressed his thighs, fascinated by the length and hardness of his legs. Every part of this man was like tempered steel. As she stroked his legs, she stared, fascinated, at his thick cock. She wanted to feel its length deep inside her drenched pussy, but first...

She clasped the base of his cock and took the head between her lips. Shawn drew a sharp breath and his hips shifted slightly. She glanced at his face and his expression of raw desire roused her passion once again. Her tongue flicked the underside of his cock head, then she sucked it into her mouth and swirled her tongue around it. For several moments she tasted and teased him.

Out of sheer stubbornness he remained silent and fairly still, but she knew by the tension in his powerful body and the rasp of his breath when he neared his breaking point.

Finally he moaned and wove his fingers through her hair. This time his touch was surprisingly gentle. In his state of arousal, she'd expected him to hold her hard, similar to how he'd grasped her hair just a short time ago. She lapped the underside of his cock head while stroking his cock and kneading his balls.

With a groan that was almost a growl, he pushed her away. Silky looked at him in question. "You'll finish me," he said.

Smiling, she said, "That's the idea." She pushed closer and lapped his shaft, then sucked his cock head until he pushed her away again. This time he pressed her onto her back and covered her body with his. Tasting him had turned her on so much that she once again hovered on the brink of orgasm.

He braced his forearms on either side of her head and stared into her eyes. Ever so lightly he caressed her hair. "Ready for me, lady?"

"Is this another tease?"

He offered a slightly lopsided but very masculine grin. The tip of his thick cock pushed against her slick entrance and he eased his way into her soaked pussy.

"Shawn..." she breathed, closing her eyes and arching her neck. He kissed her throat and she caressed his hair.

Buried to the hilt, he stopped moving and said in a gruff whisper, "Look at me."

Silky met his gaze. Those beautiful gray eyes seemed to reach into her soul. He moved in a steady rhythm, rubbing her in all the right places. Moaning, Silky wrapped her arms and legs around him, surrendering completely. He was so big and powerful. She loved his scent and the way his breath caught in his throat as his excitement grew.

All her life she'd longed for a man like this, though she'd never dreamed that she and the gladiator Shawn-Dan Dawn would share a bed. "Oh yes!" she gasped, hovering on the edge. A few more thrusts and she exploded, her entire body pulsing. She clung to him so hard that her limbs ached and she thanked heaven for his Taurothish half. Even with her relatively small frame, she probably would have hurt a typical Amazurnian male with this death grip, yet it was beyond her control.

Shawn provided her with an orgasm as powerful as he was. Still throbbing with pleasure, she felt him stiffen and come hard. "Pearlann, ah! Fuck!" he gasped, his breath warm against her ear. He pulled out of her, but lay close, his body half draped over hers.

Finally summoning the strength to speak, Silky asked, "Do you want to join me in the shower?" She didn't suggest this purely for pleasure, but because she hoped they'd be able to speak freely since the water would interfere with Voluptia's eavesdropping devices.

Her gaze dropped to the collar around his neck. She stretched toward one of his cuffs, which was still tied to the bed, and removed the key.

"Roll over so I can see if this fits in your collar," she said.

He did as she asked and flipped onto his stomach. The key fit into the lock on the back of his collar. "This will have to go back on before you leave," she explained.

"I figured." Shawn sat up and tugged off the collar.

Silky reached for it and his fingers lingered over her hand as he passed the gold and jeweled collar to her. Everything about this man turned her on. For so long he had been an icon -- intriguing and untouchable. Now that she'd met him, seen him as a flesh and blood man instead of an image on the large screen above the gladiatorial arena, he fascinated her even more. Most of all, she wanted justice for him. He deserved the freedom he'd fought so hard for, but a cruel, spoiled princess had stolen it from him.

As if sensing her feelings for him, Shawn turned away from her and rose. He headed for the bathroom and with a sigh Silky followed. This assignment grew more complicated with each passing moment. She had expected to uncover evidence to aid a friend and expose crime. Falling in love wasn't part of the deal, but it seemed unavoidable.

Shawn was her best chance of finding the evidence she needed. It seemed he alone had retained the will to rebel against his captors. Not that she blamed the other men for conforming.

In the bathroom, Shawn had already adjusted the water in the oversized pink marble shower. He hadn't stepped in yet, but stood with a hand braced against the pale blue wall. His sultry gaze swept her, lingering on her rose-tipped breasts. With a faint smile, he gestured toward the shower. "After you."

She stepped past him, her shoulder brushing against him, and stood under the stream of warm water. Shawn followed close behind her. He wrapped his arms around her and nuzzled her neck.

Silky turned in his arms and stared into his eyes. When she spoke, she kept her voice just above a whisper, "Shawn, I want to ask you something. Did you know a young man in this harem named Bluejewel?"

Drawing a deep breath, he narrowed his eyes and said, "He's dead."

"Yes, but I want to know how it happened."

"Will the sick details turn you on?" he asked in disgust.

Placing her hands on his chest, she stared at him intensely. "No. That's not why I'm asking."

"Then why?"

If he had been another sort of man, she would not have trusted him with information that might be used against her, but he clearly felt no loyalty to the princess or any other woman in this harem.

"I heard he died of natural causes," she said. "Cardiac arrest. I thought that was strange, considering he was eighteen years old and in perfect health. No illnesses or physical defects." Silky had been drawn into this assignment when Bluejewel, the brother of her close friend, Sylvia, had died after joining Voluptia's harem eight months ago. Two months after his arrival, his family had been informed of his death. Bluejewel had been a lovely young man with a sweet disposition, just the sort wealthy women coveted for their harems.

Sylvia and her parents had been devastated by Bluejewel's death and suspected foul play. Sylvia had visited Bluejewel a month after he'd come to live at the palace and she said he'd changed greatly. Rather than his usual cheerful personality, he'd seemed withdrawn and listless. She'd had reason to suspect abuse within the harem, but Voluptia allowed no one except close friends to visit her men.

Shawn snorted in disgust and stepped away from her. "There was nothing natural about what happened to Bluejewel."

"What happened?"

He turned and stepped so close to her that she moved back and bumped into the slick marble wall. Placing a hand on either side of her head, he pinned her there, staring at her. "I can't figure you out," he said. "What the hell do you want? I mean really."

"I want to know what happened to Bluejewel."

"Why?"

Silky stared at him in silence.

"I get it. You want me to risk my neck telling you what I know, but you won't answer my questions."

"Regardless what you tell me, can your situation get any worse?" she asked. "Shawn, I know you have no hope of escaping."

He opened his mouth as if to retort, then changed his mind and shook his head. "What's the point? Around here I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't. I don't know if you're jerking me around or not."

"If what happened to Bluejewel means anything to you, if your freedom means anything to you --"

"Freedom?" He glared. "I fought for my freedom and that was a lie too." The pain and anger in his eyes struck at her heart.

"Shawn, I know you've been hurt. I wish I could change what happened to you, but I can't. All I ask is that you answer my questions and trust me."

He closed his eyes for a moment and touched his forehead to hers. "You women are experts in cruelty."

Sliding her arms around him, she said, "Not all women."

He drew back slightly to look at her again. "What have I got to lose? All right. I'll tell you what happened to Bluejewel."

Chapter Five

Silky waited in silent anticipation for Shawn to continue.

"Bluejewel was one of Voluptia's favorites. She used him on a nightly basis. He was young and energetic, but that wasn't enough for her. She liked to drug him and a few other guys then watch them do each other. One night he had a reaction to the shit she gave him and he died."

Silky nodded and swallowed hard. What a horrible end for a sweet young man. Worst of all, once Silky got out of this dungeon, she'd have to tell Sylvia and her parents what happened.

"Do you want to know something else?" Shawn asked.

"What?"

"I don't think it was simply a reaction to the drugs. It wasn't accidental. Voluptia wanted to get rid of Bluejewel."

"Why?"

"Because of his family. Most of the men here have little or no contact with their families. Most of us don't have any connections at all. Bluejewel was different. His family kept pushing to contact him. They even managed to get a message to the queen, who arranged for his sister to visit him here at the palace. Shortly after that meeting, the accident happened."

Silky didn't doubt his suspicions were correct. Still, she decided when she spoke to Sylvia, she would omit this part of their conversation. Bluejewel's family had already suffered enough.

"I don't know why you care about any of this. No one else does," he said bitterly.

She wished she could tell him why she cared, and that other people did too. Once she exposed this dungeon --

But how? Voluptia kept this place well hidden. If the queen knew about it, she wouldn't condone it, but why would she take Silky's word over Voluptia's? The princess was a vile bitch, but she was still her daughter. The queen would protect her not only due to maternal instincts, but because she wouldn't want to cause a scandal.

While some women still enjoyed mistreating men, most others agreed they deserved certain rights. Abuse of males was no longer politically correct on Amazurn.

"You still haven't told me why you're so interested in Bluejewel," he said.

"I can't. Not right now."

He nodded slowly. Understanding dawned in his eyes. "You're not what you appear to be, Pearlann, but I don't know if that will be beneficial to me or detrimental. In the meantime, I'm going to enjoy what I can." He covered her mouth in a deep, slow kiss while cupping her breast. His thumb rolled over her nipple and Silky moaned and held him tighter. The sensation of his hot, wet body against hers roused her passion. Apparently he felt the same because his cock swelled between them.

Silky reached down and ran her fingertips up and down the length of his shaft. Then she curled her fist around it and pumped, intermittently sweeping her thumb over the tip.

He broke the kiss only to nibble her ear then say in a husky voice, "I'm going to give it to you again, lady."

"I like it when a man takes control."

"Good."

He grasped her chin firmly, though not painfully, and kissed her again, then he turned her to face the wall. Bracing her hands against the marble, she tilted her head to the side so he could kiss and lick her neck.

Shawn slid one of his long, muscular legs between hers and spread them, then he slid his arms around her. One hand fondled her breasts while the other caressed her soft

mound. His fingers rubbed gentle circles over her clit, then dipped inside her and explored.

Moaning, she arched her back, thrusting her ass against him. His cock pushed against it and he chuckled deep in his throat. He grasped her hips and caressed them while nipping her shoulder and slowly filling her with his cock.

"Shawn, this feels so good," she breathed.

He grunted in reply and began pumping in a perfect rhythm. "You're beautiful," he said, reaching around to fondle her clit.

In her entire life no one had ever called her beautiful. Hearing those words from the virile, sexy gladiator she admired so much meant more to her than a thousand other men telling her the same. "So are you," she panted.

"Taurothish men aren't beautiful."

"What then?"

"Handsome. Rugged."

"Oh yes. You are," she said. Heavens, he embodied those words.

A few more thrusts and she came, gasping and writhing. Her fingers tightened on the slick marble and if he hadn't held her, she would have melted onto the shower floor.

A few seconds later, he came, gasping and groaning. For a few moments they rested, his big, warm body pressing hers to the wall. Despite the danger of the situation, this was the most sexy, romantic moment of Silky's life.

* * *

Silky spent the night in Shawn's arms, but in the morning before breakfast Captain Ironess and two guards removed him from her room. He'd allowed Silky to place the bonds on him before they arrived. The guards had expected a fight and entered with their stun pistols drawn, but Shawn left quietly, though not before meeting Silky's gaze. The expression in his eyes cut her to the quick. She knew he believed their night meant nothing to her. Even after sharing such intimacy, he didn't trust her. Yet why should he? Women had only lied to him and caused him pain.

Voluptia invited Silky to her chamber for breakfast. Once Goldpole had served their meal at the delicate gilded table, he stood off to the side. The princess ignored him as she would a piece of furniture. "I'm impressed that you were able to handle our most notable ruffian," Voluptia said.

"He prefers a gentle hand, Your Highness."

"You spoil him."

"Yes," Silky said with a smirk. "Even so, he performed remarkably well. I don't think I've ever enjoyed a man as much as Shawn."

"Still, we can't let him think he's entitled to such pampering. We must keep him on edge, lest he grow soft, no pun intended."

A sinking feeling broke over Silky. "What do you mean?"

"This morning I ordered a session of punishment with Captain Ironess. But don't worry, dear. He'll be checked over by my personal medic and returned to your room in excellent condition. His session should be over by the time we finish breakfast so he can amuse you when you return."

If Silky could get away with murdering this despicable excuse for a woman here and now she would do it in a heartbeat.

"I'm afraid I won't be able entertain you until later this evening," the princess continued. "My mother has summoned me and my sisters to a meeting and she's usually quite long-winded. I trust you won't be bored here?"

"Not at all."

"Excellent."

Silky glanced at the splendid breakfast spread before her, but she didn't feel like eating, not while Shawn was being punished because of her.

"Pearlann, you must eat more," Voluptia said. "You're pathetically thin, dear. If you plan to enjoy that half-Taurothish gladiator, you need to keep your strength up."

Forcing a smile, Silky reach for a slice of buttered toast. When she swallowed it almost got stuck in her throat. Breakfast finally ended, and Voluptia left to meet with her mother. Silky walked to her room.

Passing the harem boys' main room, she heard grunts then screams. She recognized Shawn's voice and hurried past the guards. The other servants sat or stood around the room in silence. In one of the cells, Shawn stood tied to a large board. Gleaming with sweat, his body jerked uncontrollably. Nearby Captain Ironess used a control monitor on the wall to shock him with painful currents. If he hadn't been tied so tightly, he would have fallen to the floor. Silky gritted her teeth and winced, certain that he'd pull his arms from their sockets from the sheer force of his spasms.

"Captain Ironess!" Silky bellowed and strode toward her.

The hulking woman turned to her sharply and curled her lip. "Is breakfast over already?"

"I want that man brought to my room immediately," Silky ordered. "The princess assured me he would be waiting when I got there."

Ironess flicked a switch that stopped the shocks and Shawn sagged in his bonds, his head bent toward his heaving chest and his eyes closed. "My apologies, Lady Pearlann." The captain bowed her head, but her slightly mocking tone was anything but respectful. "I'll have him cleaned up and checked over by the medic first."

"Clean him up in my room. Have the medic sent there."

"But he'll be of little use to you right now --"

Silky sneered. "That's what drugs are for."

The captain looked slightly surprised, then she laughed. "I think I might have been wrong about you, Lady Pearlann. Just remember, this session was rather intense. Give him a little time to recover, or else you might just kill him."

"I'll keep that in mind. Now bring him to my room."

"Would you like me to send a harem boy to clean him up?"

"Please."

The captain raised a hand and snapped her fingers. "Lovebuck. You will see to Shawn's needs in Lady Pearlann's room. Go there immediately. I'll have the guards bring him to you. The medic will be there directly."

"Thank you, captain," Silky said.

"Is there anything else, My Lady?"

"Not at the moment." Silky turned on her heel and strode out of the torture chamber and back to her room.

Moments later, Lovebuck arrived. The slender young man's face was flushed and though he kept his gaze averted, she didn't miss the rage in his eyes. Perhaps Shawn wasn't the only man around here whose spirit hadn't been broken.

Broken. After the torture she'd witnessed, she wondered how much longer Shawn could hold out against such cruelty. The buzzer sounded and she opened the door for the two guards who half dragged, half carried a semi-conscious Shawn into the room. Though obviously too weak to struggle, he was still bound by his wrists and ankles.

"Where do you want him?" asked one of the tall, muscular women.

"The bed."

The guards exchanged glances and lascivious grins. The longer Silky spent in this dungeon, the more she despised her own sex.

"We hosed him down to wash the urine off," said another guard. "A courtesy from the captain."

So was the fact that he'd pissed himself in the first place. Silky would like to strap Ironess to her own torture device.

The guards dumped him on the bed then left the room. Lovebuck sat on the edge of the bed and gently cupped the older man's face. "Shawn," he said softly. "Can you hear me?"

The gladiator moaned, but didn't open his eyes.

"Where is the medic?" Silky demanded.

Lovebuck glanced at her over his shoulder, a look of hatred in his eyes. "Even after the medic sees him, he'll need rest."

Silky approached and held the youth's gaze. "Why do you think I brought him here?"

"I *know* why you brought him here."

"I want to make sure he's properly cared for."

The young man reached for a towel and gently dried Shawn's face. Silky watched carefully, noting the affection in Lovebuck's expression. This guy obviously had strong feelings for Shawn. In harems and other predominantly male areas such as the Alpha Islands, male-male relationships were fairly common. Perhaps Lovebuck and Shawn --

No. From the way Shawn made love to her, he obviously enjoyed women. Yet he might also like men.

Shawn's eyes opened partway and he groaned when Lovebuck touched his shoulder. It appeared to be dislocated.

Another buzz at the door announced the medic. She stepped inside, and Lovebuck and Silky moved away from the bed while the medic examined Shawn. She adjusted his dislocated shoulder, then used laser treatments to repair several muscle tears.

"He'll recover quickly. Taurothish people have an amazing constitution. I don't recommend vigorous activity for the rest of the day, but by tonight he should be able to perform. If necessary, use one or two drops of a sexual enhancer."

"That's all?" Silky said.

"Any more than two drops could cause serious damage."

"I mean is that all you can do to make him comfortable now?" Silky said, a hint of annoyance in her voice.

"Yes. If you require me again, don't hesitate to call." The medic collected her treatment kit and left.

Shawn had regained full consciousness by now, but lay quietly. His gaze shifted from Silky to Lovebuck, who still stared at him with liquid blue eyes.

"How do you feel?" Lovebuck asked. "Do you need anything?"

"I'm all right," he said, though he still sounded a little weak. After what he'd gone through, she wondered how he could speak at all. "Thanks, Love."

"I'll get you a drink of water," the youth said and stood.

"Disposable cups are in the bathroom," Silky told him.

While Lovebuck retrieved the water, Silky took his place on the edge of the bed.

"Shawn, I'm so sorry this happened. I had no idea that --"

"Save it. I should have known better than to think last night would go unpunished. Not around here."

"I had nothing to do with it."

"Maybe you didn't or maybe you did."

"Shawn --"

Lovebuck returned with the water and held it to Shawn's lips. He took a few sips then relaxed back onto the pillows and closed his eyes. "Get some rest." Silky said.

"Will you let him?" Lovebuck demanded.

"Love, don't," Shawn commanded.

The youth's slender chest rose and fell with agitated breathing.

"Don't take it so hard, kid," Shawn continued. "Get out of here. We'll talk later." Lovebuck hesitated, then did as ordered. Once again alone, Shawn and Silky exchanged a searching look. "Lady, even if you are trying to help, Voluptia won't let it happen," he said. "A morning of hell will follow a night of kindness. That's how it works around here. Why do you think so many harem boys commit suicide?"

She caressed his cheek and he closed his eyes. "Just sleep," she said.

"I didn't think you brought me to this bed to sleep."

She didn't reply, but continued stroking his face until his even breathing told her he'd fallen asleep.

Chapter Six

Silky spent the next few hours in her room, thinking about her situation and watching Shawn sleep. She'd intended to spend some time up at the main palace today, but feared leaving Shawn alone. If she did, would Ironess torture him again?

Sooner than later she would need to leave the palace. Though her wealthy friend, Pearlann, lived off world on her own private moon, the longer Silky assumed her identity, the greater the chance of Voluptia or someone else uncovering the truth.

If that happened, Silky would never be able to help the men because she'd most likely spend the rest of her life in prison for treason. Not to mention Pearlann, who knew about and supported her plan, was still an Amazurnian citizen and would be considered an accomplice.

Near dinnertime Voluptia summoned Silky to her chamber.

Silky glanced at Shawn, who still slept deeply. She lightly touched his hair, then left the room. When she arrived at Voluptia's chamber, she found the princess in a rage. Goldpole stood in a corner, looking frightened. Silky didn't blame him. Whatever Voluptia's problem, she would most likely vent her anger on one of her slaves.

"I cannot believe her!" Voluptia snapped as soon as Silky approached. She turned to Goldpole and pointed to the door. "Out! Now!" The servant nearly tripped over his own feet to carry out her order as quickly as possible, probably glad to escape her wrath. Once the door closed behind him, the princess continued, "My mother has gone mad!"

"What's wrong?"

"She wanted a meeting with me and my sisters to tell us that in the near future she intends to take another consort."

"Is that a problem?"

"It is if the man she's chosen is the one I suspect. She clearly dotes on Satin Hood." Voluptia curled her lip in disgust. "He's a *slave* and has no right to rise above his station."

Since the death of her consort and the father of her heirs, the queen hadn't disguised her favor for her chief harem boy, Satin Hood. Though an older man, he was fit and handsome and he had served the queen since his eighteenth year.

"Are you certain?" Silky asked. Surely even the queen, who often showed lenience toward men and kindness to her servants, wouldn't risk scandal by marrying a harem boy.

"She didn't mention him specifically, but she hinted enough."

"How do your sisters feel about it?"

"Not as offended as they should be. Marka even likes the idea. She's said many times that she likes Satin Hood and thinks he's a better match for our mother than our father ever was. Pearlann, how can I stop this catastrophe? She'll bring shame upon our family and lose credibility with our people."

"Perhaps not," Silky said, hoping to calm the nearly hysterical princess. "Many women support men's rights nowadays."

Voluptia snarled. "That's the problem with this world. Women are getting too soft. If they ran their households like I run this dungeon... Oh, what's the point in talking about it. Until I assume the throne, there's little I can do. Or is there?" An evil smile spread across Voluptia's face. When she spoke again, it was more to herself than to Silky. "Satin Hood is a harem boy and should be treated as such and my mother needs time away from his masculine wiles so she can see how foolish she's acting. Pearlann, leave me for a while, please."

"Of course. Would you like me to leave the palace?" Perhaps this was the chance Silky needed to escape while she could without having to make an excuse that the princess might or might not believe.

"Oh no, dear, of course not. You've only just started to enjoy my secret harem. I'll handle this little issue and then we'll be able to spend time together like we planned. In the meantime, feel free to do whatever you like. There's a lovely heated pool down here and a variety of rooms to explore. Of course if you want some sun you can go up to the main palace and use any of my men in the upstairs harem. Just remember not to mention this place. Men so love to gossip and we can't risk Mother discovering our secret."

"Heaven forbid. That would be --"

"Disastrous. Now go, dear. I have plans to make."

Back in her room, Silky found Shawn awake and seated on the bed. "How do you feel?"

"How do you think I feel?"

"Shawn, I never intended --"

"Please. The last thing I need is more kindness from you. Now I see you're playing one of Voluptia's favorite games -- good mistress, bad mistress. I admit, though, most aren't as talented as you are. For a while I almost believed you might be different."

After this morning, trying to convince him would be a waste of effort. Silky had too much on her mind. She needed to think and couldn't while trapped in this room with the rightfully jaded man.

Voluptia had mentioned a pool. Maybe a swim would relax her enough to sort out her situation. So far she had just one plan and without solid evidence, not simply her word, it would probably fail.

If she had been able to smuggle in a recording device, that would have been something, but since the Nipplonia scandal, security of the rich and royal had tightened and no one, not even female guests, were allowed into the princess' wing without a thorough check.

"I'm going to the pool," she said, opening the top drawer of her dresser and removing a backless one-piece bathing suit. "You can stay and rest."

"I've had enough rest."

She glanced at him over her shoulder. "Then come with me. You can show me where the pool is."

Shawn leaned back against the headboard and watched Silky tug off her shirt.

Her arms folded across her breasts, she asked, "What are you doing?"

"Enjoying the view."

His look -- bold and sexy -- aroused her, but she wasn't mentally prepared to make love with a man who considered her the enemy. Last night had been different, but Voluptia had destroyed any progress Silky had made with Shawn. "Why don't you get us some towels?" she suggested.

He stared at her for another long moment before rising and heading to the bathroom. Silky finished undressing, then pulled on the bathing suit. Shawn stepped out of the bathroom, a towel wrapped around his lean waist and another in his hand.

"Would you like to get bathing trunks?" she asked.

He shook his head. "We're not allowed any. Princess Bitch likes us to swim as nature intended."

The pool was located in a section of the secret pleasure house off limits to the harem boys unless they were requested by the princess or her guests. Two guards blocked the corridor leading to it. The blond Silky recognized from that morning, but the chestnut haired guard she had never seen before. Silky and Shawn paused in front of the guards.

"I'd like to use the pool," Silky said. "Shawn will accompany me."

"Very well," replied the blond. "One of the harem boys is cleaning the pool. Would you like me to order him out?"

"No, let him finish his work. We'll relax in the meantime."

The blond gave a snort of laughter, her gaze raking Shawn from head to toe. "He looks none the worse for wear." She motioned for Silky and Shawn to pass.

They walked to the end of the corridor and stepped through an archway. The vast room had an enormous rectangular pool accented by marble statues of ancient goddesses. Artificial plants and flowers lined the walls painted to resemble a springtime garden.

The beauty of the room would have fascinated Silky if not for the horrible sight overshadowing it. A slender blond haired slave floated face down in the pool. Before Silky could react, Shawn dove in and grasped the slave. He swam toward the edge of the pool where Silky knelt to help lift the younger man to safety.

Lovebuck.

Shawn hoisted himself out of the water, naked since his towel had fallen off in the pool. He and Silky began revival techniques. Moments later, Lovebuck coughed. Shawn guided him onto his side where he vomited.

"I'll get a medic," Silky said, leaping to her feet. She raced out of the room and down the corridor toward the guards. When she returned, Shawn knelt with Lovebuck in his arms.

"He tried to kill himself," Shawn said and nodded toward a nearby stone bench upon which rested an empty vial. "He stole that from the medical supply unit. I guess this morning after he left your room a couple of guards fucked him again. He can't handle it anymore."

Silky knelt beside them and rested a gentle hand on Lovebuck's shoulder. The youth jumped at her touch. He glanced at her with bleary eyes before turning back to the comfort of Shawn's broad chest. "I told you, kid, you can't give up," Shawn said.

"No, you can't," Silky added.

Shawn shot an angry look in her direction. "Stay out of it, Pearlann. You women have already done enough damage."

She wanted to protest, but arguing with him wouldn't help their situation and would probably upset Lovebuck more so she remained silent.

The medic stepped into the chamber followed by the beastly blond guard. "Ah, he's awake," the medic said. "Bring him to the examination room."

When the blond bent to grasp Lovebuck, Shawn edged her away and stood with the slender young man in his arms. "I'll take him."

"You'll do what your mistress orders," the guard snapped.

"Let him take the boy," Silky said with a wave of her hand. "I'll accompany him, then take him back to my room. I'm no longer in the mood for swimming."

A short time later, after leaving Lovebuck in the medic's care, Silky and Shawn returned to her room. "I almost don't blame him for trying to end it," Shawn said. "I talk about not giving up hope, but the best we can hope for is death."

"Don't talk like that," she said softly and stepped closer to grasp his arm.

He turned to her and for the first time she noticed a defeated look in his eyes. "Why not? It's true. Freedom is an illusion, at least for men like us."

Silky took his hand and tried to tug him toward the bathroom, but he remained rooted firmly, his face like stone. "Please," she whispered.

With a sigh he joined her in the bathroom where she turned on the water in the shower and the sink to interfere with Voluptia's monitors. "Shawn, listen to me," she whispered close to his ear. "Don't lose hope. Some people care about what's happening here. I came here to find out what happened to Bluejewel and to uncover evidence of abuse in the royal harem, but I never imagined anything this terrible."

"Are you with the authorities? A spy?"

She shook her head. "I'm an undercover reporter. I'd hoped to collect evidence, but I don't believe it's possible, not with all Voluptia's security. The best I can do is go public with my story and hope it will rile men's rights activists enough to force the queen to investigate."

"Will your news channel present a story like this on your word alone?"

"Maybe. I hope so. If they don't I'll find another way to expose this torture pit. I promise."

He narrowed his eyes. "If you're telling the truth, you're putting yourself in danger. If Voluptia even suspects what you're doing, she'll have you killed."

"That's why I'm going to leave as soon as I can. Tonight if possible."

He stared at her for a long moment, then cupped her face. "Even if everything goes as you plan, I might never see you again."

Reaching up to place her hand over his, she said, "I hope that's not true. Shawn, when I get out and write the story, I'll include Wildbush. You were manipulated, framed and robbed of your freedom."

"I want to believe you, Pearlann."

"If you don't, I understand, but I wanted you to know who I am and what I'm doing here."

"If you're going to leave, then there's one last thing I want to do."

"What?"

"Make love to you again."

Silky's stomach fluttered and her heart skipped a beat. If she didn't succeed, at least she'd have this -- a piece of heaven in the middle of hell. "Please, Shawn," she murmured against his lips. "Whatever happens, part of me will always belong to you."

He kissed her again, his firm lips moving tenderly against hers. The tip of his tongue traced her lips, then thrust between them. Her tongue met his, tasting and exploring.

Shawn tugged her bathing suit down to her waist, freeing her breasts. He cupped them then swept his thumbs over her nipples. Moaning, she pushed her bathing suit down to her ankles and kicked it aside. Then she wrapped her arms around him and pressed close to him. Trapped between their bodies, his cock swelled. Silky reached down and curled her fist around it.

"You're so beautiful, Pearlann," he said, nuzzling her neck. "You smell so good and feel so soft." He lifted her breasts and bent to kiss the plump tops before taking her nipple into his mouth and rolling his tongue over it.

Silky arched her neck and moaned, enjoying every moment. "I want you, lady," he said in a husky whisper.

"You too, Shawn. I need you so much. I want --" she paused and dropped to her knees in front of him. Claspings his cock, she dipped head toward it and rolled her

tongue over the plump tip. Slowly she slid him between her lips and sucked him until he moaned.

While she sucked and licked, he caressed her hair, his hips rocking gently as his desire increased. She flicked the underside of his cock head with her tongue and he panted and groaned. "That's enough," he said, gently grasping her hair and tugging her away.

She tilted her gaze up to his, enraptured by the passion in his eyes. His fingers still threaded through her hair, he guided her to her feet and kissed her harder than before, not enough to hurt her but enough to show her that even in this prison, he was in control.

"Take me, Shawn," she breathed. "Oh, please, I want to feel you inside me!"

His big, warm hand cupped her soft mound and he stroked her while claiming her mouth with another passionate kiss. "Come here," he said, tugging her toward the sink and hoisting her onto it.

She locked her legs around him, her hands stroking and kneading his powerful shoulders and back. The tip of his cock eased into her and his thumb flicked her clit. Silky cried out and clung to him harder, her tongue dancing with his.

Shawn slid his hand beneath her ass and lifted her. He pumped her on his shaft and Silky's desire shot off the scale. This man was so fucking strong! She let her gorgeous half-Taurothish gladiator take total control.

"The door," he ordered, walking toward it. She reached down and opened it and he walked to the bed with her and fell upon it so that he could pump into her hard and fast.

"Oh, Shawn! Oh, fuck!" she gasped and trembled all over. Silky doubted she'd ever wanted an orgasm so badly in her life.

Two more thrusts and she came so hard she thought she might faint. Instead of joining her, he kept pumping, then went still. His breath rasped and little tremors coursed through him too. Opening her eyes, Silky smiled and met his smoldering gaze. "Shawn," she whispered, caressing his face.

He kissed her, his lips open and tongue thrusting into her mouth. She welcomed it. Once again he pumped, this time with long, slow thrusts. Every sweep of his cock into her pussy rekindled her passion and soon she hovered on the edge of another orgasm.

"Please, Shawn. I want it. I want --" She cried out, overcome by the breathtaking pulsations of another fierce climax.

Shawn's powerful body stiffened and strained into her as he came. "Pearlann! Oh fuck!"

Pearlann. What she wouldn't give to hear him shout her real name in ecstasy.

Chapter Seven

That night when Silky arrived at the princess' suite for drinks, she announced that she needed to return home briefly to inspect renovations she'd ordered for her home.

"That's such a shame," Voluptia said. "We've scarcely been able to spend any time together. Do return as soon as possible."

"It should only take a few days to conclude my business at home," Silky said. That would be more than enough time to write her story and send it to her news channel. If hers wouldn't accept it, she'd find a channel that would, even if she had to go off world and start a galaxy-wide rumor.

"I'll make sure your pet gladiator is well rested for you."

"Thank you. I'm looking forward to using him again."

Voluptia smiled. "I'm sure. Now you have time to enjoy a drink."

Unable to refuse lest she rouse the princess' suspicion, Silky sat near Voluptia on the couch, sipping wine while harem boys massaged their feet. Only when she left the palace and arrived at her hotel room did she relax the slightest bit. Already she missed Shawn, but this was the only way she could help him and the other men trapped in Voluptia's dungeon.

She spent the entire night and the following day writing a story that detailed the horrors of the princess' secret harem. The next evening she contacted her news channel.

At first her editor rebelled against the notion of accusing a royal princess without adequate evidence, but Silky argued persuasively. "All someone needs to do is investigate the palace," Silky said.

"You need the queen's order to conduct that kind of investigation," her editor said, then added, "With the situation at the palace, the queen has better things to think about than whether or not her daughter has a secret harem."

"What situation at the palace?"

"Silky, aren't you right there in the capital city? What kind of reporter are you? Don't you watch the news?"

"I've been writing nonstop since I left the palace. Just tell me what's going on."

"The queen's chief harem boy, Satin Hood, is missing. He rarely leaves her side and no one at the palace has seen or heard from him for two days."

Silky's gut clenched. If what she suspected was true, then she knew exactly where Satin Hood was. "Listen to me. Have my story announced on the news channel tonight. By then I promise you I will have all the evidence you need to back it up."

"Silky, it's not only our jobs on the line, but the entire channel. The queen could have us shut down entirely for a story like this."

"She won't. Not if what I think turns out to be true."

"What do you think?"

"Trust me on this. Please. Have I ever let you down?"

Her editor sighed deeply. "All right. I'll run the story, but you better produce the evidence to back it up."

"I will."

Silky ended the communication and dressed in Pearla's aristocratic clothes. When she arrived at the palace, the captain of the queen's personal guard, a woman called Bunique, immediately recognized her as a friend of the princess.

"Would you like to see Voluptia?" she asked.

"No, but I must speak to Queen Pussyanna immediately."

"I'm sorry, but the queen is taking no visitors tonight."

"Tell her this is regarding Satin Hood. I know where he is."

Captain Bunique studied Silky carefully, then said, "Come with me."

Silky's heart pounded as she followed the captain to the elevator that brought them to the floor of the queen's chamber. "Wait here," the captain ordered and Silky stood in the corridor while Bunique buzzed the queen.

Seconds later the door opened. Bunique stepped inside, leaving Silky alone, her thoughts running wild. A moment later, Bunique motioned for her to enter the chamber. Inside the richly decorated parlor, Queen Pussyanna sat with Voluptia and her youngest daughter, Marka.

"Pearlann, what nonsense is this?" Voluptia demanded, glaring at her friend. "How dare you come here with such a story when you know how deeply my mother cares for Satin Hood."

"Since when do you care about Mother's feelings?" Marka demanded, shooting her sister an irritated look.

"Silence, both of you!" Pussyanna commanded. A tall, well-rounded woman with dark hair and a full, pretty face, the queen usually made a striking figure. Tonight, however, she looked drawn, with shadows beneath her eyes. Clearly she worried about her lover and with good reason. "Pearlann, what do you know about Satin Hood?"

"I believe Voluptia has taken him to her secret harem."

The queen and Marka exchanged stunned looks, but Voluptia merely laughed. "Secret harem? Pearlann, have you been drinking too much wine again?"

"It's true, Your Majesty," Silky continued. "And my name isn't Pearlann. It's Silky Overstar. I'm an investigative reporter and have been working undercover to prove that abuse and even murder is occurring in this palace. Voluptia has a secret harem where men are held against their will --"

"Mother, surely you don't believe her," Voluptia said, looking innocent.

"Your Majesty, just go to her wing. In her chamber there's a secret passage leading to what was formerly the dungeon. Go there now. Please."

"Bunique, I demand you take this woman away!" Voluptia said. "She's upsetting my mother."

Indeed the queen did look upset, and angry. She drew a deep breath and rose from her cushioned chair. "Bunique, we will investigate."

"Mother, no!" Voluptia shouted, tears in her eyes. "How dare you trust this... this madwoman over your own daughter!"

"Your Majesty, if I'm lying, you can have me punished for treason," Silky said. She curled her cold hands into fists. "But if I'm right, you'll find your chief harem boy."

"You bitch!" Voluptia flew at Silky, her hands like claws stretched toward her face. Captain Bunique caught her in a restraining hold before she reached her mark. At Bunique's call, two more guards entered the chamber, their stun pistols drawn.

"I think I've heard enough," the queen said, staring in disgust at Voluptia. "Bunique, bring my daughter. We'll go now and see if this secret harem exists."

Bunique and her guards accompanied Queen Pussyanna, Silky and Marka to the East wing. Silky located the hidden door in Voluptia's chamber and led the way downstairs.

Captain Ironess and the blond guard greeted them with stun pistols, which they sheathed upon seeing the queen. Their faces drained of color. "Ironess," Bunique stated. "So this is why you requested a transfer from the queen's guard to that of the princess." She then ordered her guards to relieve Ironess and the blond of their weapons and secure them with handcuffs.

"Here we rule as women should," Ironess stated.

"You will be silent," Queen Pussyanna commanded in a deadly voice. "On Amazurn only one woman rules and I am that woman. Bring me to my chief harem boy. Now!"

Ironess led the way down the long stone corridor. She paused in front of an iron door at the end of it. Bunique unbolted the door and opened it. Inside the tiny, dark room a hulking male stood against a wall, his well-muscled arms chained overhead.

Though a man of late middle age, he had an athletic physique and a ruggedly handsome face. With his dark hair, streaked with gray at the temples, and gray eyes that now blinked against the light, he reminded Silky of Shawn.

"Satin Hood," the queen breathed. She stepped toward him and placed a hand to his chest. "My love."

Voluptia made a disgusted sound. The queen turned to her, her hand lashing out in a slap so quick and hard that it left a red imprint on her daughter's cheek.

"Well this proves what I've always believed, *mother*. You prefer this *whore* to your own flesh and blood."

"No, this only proves that I've overlooked your cruel, vindictive nature out of maternal love," the queen said, then turned to one of the guards and said, "Free my faithful servant and have him examined by my medic immediately."

"I'm fine, Your Majesty," Satin Hood replied in a deep voice.

"No argument, my love," she said, turning to him with a look of affection. Then she focused her attention on her captain of the guard. "Bunique, see that my daughter is secured in a guest room while I have this dungeon emptied. Also, have more guards report here. I want every guard down here arrested and held for questioning. And most importantly, see to the needs of the men."

"Your Majesty, there's a gladiator down here called Shawn-Dan Dawn," Silky began.

The queen's brow furrowed. "Why does that name sound familiar?"

"He won his freedom in your gladiatorial challenge two years ago and has been held here against his will ever since."

"He's a rapist, mother!" Voluptia said.

"No, he was threatened to be accused of rape by the princess and her spiteful friend Wildbush," Silky said.

"We'll discuss the details later." Pussyanna waved her hand. She glanced at one of her guards and said, "Take Pearlann --"

"My real name is Silky, Your Majesty."

"Take her to find this gladiator."

A tall, lanky guard motioned for Silky to lead the way. In the main room where the harem boys assembled, Silky didn't see Shawn, but she approached Lovebuck, who sat on a red satin cushion, looking forlorn.

"Lovebuck, we're here to set you free," she said, placing her hands on his shoulders.

He jumped and shook his head, staring at her with frightened eyes.

"Yes," she whispered. "Tell me where Shawn is."

"The petting zoo," replied the boy. "He's been there since you left. They won't release him, not even to relieve himself."

Silky bit her lower lip and jumped to her feet. "Come on!" she called to the guard. They jogged down the corridor to the petting zoo.

One of Voluptia's guards waited at the door. Upon seeing the queen's guard, she looked surprised. "I'm here by order of Queen Pussyanna," stated the guard. The other woman didn't try to stop them from passing.

As Lovebuck said, Shawn was chained to the wall in the petting zoo, his wrists and ankles rubbed raw from the cuffs. Cuts and bruises marked the magnificent face and body Silky knew so intimately. A blindfold covered his eyes and a gag filled his mouth.

Silky untied the gag and flung it aside. "Get your hands off me," Shawn protested weakly.

"Stop arguing. We're trying to help you," Silky said.

"Pearlann?"

"Yes and no," she replied and removed his blindfold.

Shawn blinked after days of total darkness.

The queen's guard curled her lip in disgust. She glanced over her shoulder toward the princess' guard, who stood in the doorway. "Release him."

"But --"

"The queen has already ordered the arrest of every guard in this dungeon. Do not add insubordination to your list of charges."

The guard quickly released Shawn, who would have dropped to the floor had they not caught him. They helped him to a table where he sat, still squinting in the light.

"I told you I'd find a way," Silky said, gently caressing his bruised and bloody face.

He moistened his cracked lips. "I've been kicking my own ass because I actually believed you."

"Can't blame you for not trusting me."

"Thank you, Pearlann."

She smiled. "My name is Silky. Pearlann was just my cover."

Epilogue

Soon after Silky's story broke, Princess Voluptia was placed under house arrest. The dungeon was once again sealed off and the men released and compensated generously by the queen. Still, Silky doubted any sum could pay for what they'd suffered.

At Silky's request, Wildbush was interrogated and admitted to taking part in the threats to frame Shawn. He was immediately granted the freedom and prize money he had won in the queen's challenge two years ago. The queen also granted him a special favor, allowing Lovebuck to leave Amazurn with Shawn to live as a free man.

Shawn's request for Lovebuck destroyed Silky's hope for possibly continuing the relationship they had begun. Obviously he returned Lovebuck's feelings. After what they had endured together, they deserved a happy life and she wouldn't interfere.

After the scandal and subsequent trials, during which she was a key witness, Silky left the news channel. With almost everyone on the planet having seen the face of the woman who uncovered the princess' secret harem, she could no longer work undercover.

The news channel had wanted to keep her on, but after so many years of intense investigations, Silky wanted a change of pace. Her friend, Pearlann, invited her to live with her on her private moon and Silky accepted her offer, at least temporarily. She planned to write a book about her experiences undercover and already had several interested publishers.

Two months after moving to Pearllann's moon, Silky received a most welcome but unexpected visitor. One evening before dinner Pearllann's butler tapped on the study door and announced Shawn-Dan Dawn.

Silky's heart skipped a beat and she tingled all over just from hearing his name again. When Shawn entered the study, his intense gray eyes locked on hers and for a moment Silky forgot to breathe.

"Hello, Silky," he said in that husky voice that haunted her dreams. Not a day passed that she didn't think of Shawn. When the scandal ended, she'd wanted to look him up, but thought better of it. Most likely he wanted to forget his life in the dungeon, and that included the time spent with her.

"Shawn, how are you?" she said, rising from her desk and approaching him.

The butler closed the door, leaving them alone.

"I've been great," he said.

They stared at each other for an awkward moment before he pulled her into a snug embrace. She held him tightly, her eyes closed as she savored the feel of his rock-hard body and the wonderful scent of herbal cologne.

"I see you've got a new use for your gladiatorial skills," she said, trying to start conversation. Shawn stepped back slightly, though his hands still rested on her waist. It felt so good to be near him again.

After gaining his freedom, he had auditioned for one of the hottest shows in the galaxy, created by a former Amazurnian gladiator, Rock Lustan. The musical martial arts extravaganza told the story of the male gladiators trapped on the Alpha Islands. Rock, who had won his freedom during the queen's challenge, had welcomed Shawn into his troop.

"I caught the show two weeks ago when it played on Deer World Six," she said. "It was fantastic. Especially you. I think I like watching you perform on stage more than in the ring. It's less dangerous."

"But not quite as exciting," he admitted. "Why didn't you let me know you were at the show?"

"I wasn't sure you'd want to see me after..."

"I wish you had told me," he said. "All this time I thought you didn't want to see me."

Their gazes met again and the heat between them was undeniable. "We didn't meet under the best circumstances. I didn't want you to feel pressured," she said.

He grinned. "I work better under pressure, remember?"

"How is Lovebuck?"

"Great. He's working as a stage hand at the show."

"I'm glad you two are happy together." Though she truly wished them the best, she couldn't help feeling disappointed that he hadn't fallen for her as hard as she had fallen for him.

"What?" he asked, looking surprised.

"I'm glad you and Lovebuck are happy. You deserve it."

"How do you mean that?"

"You're a couple, right?"

Shawn curled his lip. "I'm a little insulted. After what we shared you're asking if I'm with another man?"

"I didn't mean to --"

"Lovebuck is a sweet kid and a good friend, but right now he's having a hot affair with a dancer from the show."

"I'm happy for him," she said with heartfelt honesty and a rush of new hope. Perhaps she and Shawn had a chance after all? "By the way, how did you find me here?"

He grinned. "I did some investigative work of my own. It was interesting to meet the real Pearlan when I arrived. I have to say you don't look much alike."

Silky gave a snort of laughter. "No, in body this Amazurnian runt doesn't resemble my buxom redheaded friend, but luckily we're of the same mind when it comes to men's rights."

"That's true." Shawn's smile faded a bit. "I'm grateful to you both."

"Is that why you came?" she said softly and slid her arms around his neck. "Because gratitude isn't necessary."

"I am grateful, Silky, but that's not the only reason I came."

Her heartbeat quickened with anticipation.

"Like you said, we didn't meet under the best circumstances," he said. "But we started something that I hope you want to finish."

"Oh, Shawn." She hugged him tightly and he wrapped his arms around her. "I haven't been able to stop thinking about you," he said. "All this time I focused on the show, hoping I could handle the thought of never seeing you again, but I couldn't. It's not only because you have the guts of a Taurothish warrior and I admire that, but because you got to me like I never thought a woman could."

He dipped his head toward hers and covered her mouth with a tender kiss. Silky stood on tiptoe and closed her eyes. When the kiss broke, he said in a husky voice, "This is a new start, lady."

Silky smiled and wove her fingers through his hair. "I'm looking forward to it, Shawn-Dan 'The Master' Dawn."

"It's been a long time since they called me that."

"It fits. You've mastered my heart."

"And my heart belongs to you. Always."

Kate Hill

What do trips around the world, endless nights of breathtaking sex, and a muscular, 6-foot 3-inch, brown haired, blue-eyed significant other have to do with Kate Hill? Absolutely nothing, but she can dream, can't she? In reality Kate is a single, thirtysomething vegetarian New Englander who loves writing romantic fantasies. Visit her online at <http://www.kate-hill.com>, www.myspace.com/katehillromance, or join her newsgroup at groups.yahoo.com/group/katehill. Stop by Kate's Amazon blog at www.amazon.com.