

Testing Jayla



Here's the final draft of TESTING JAYLA, complete with nasty art. I made some changes in the pacing to improve the flow of the story. Hope you enjoy it!

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Her skin seemed to burn, too tight, too hot, her nipples fiercely erect on the full globes her breasts had become. The ache between her thighs was so maddening she could only twist helplessly on the medical bunk's sheets. She craved Eric Gray's big, hard body like a drug. To hell with his rank and hers, too hell with his vampirism, to hell with everything but need. She imagined how he'd look, how he'd feel as he drove his cock into her creaming sex, all that feral male strength and ruthless hunger finally turned her way. Just as she'd always dreamed.

Unable to resist the clawing demands of her changed body, Jayla Carstairs buried two fingers into her pussy with a strangled yowl. The slick, luscious sensation drove her to stroke deeper, faster. As she pumped her hand, a faint whimper escaped her lips. It sounded more like shame than pleasure. She ignored it, too focused on the incredible feelings that were so much more intense than anything she'd ever felt before.

But deep in her mind, a small voice wailed, What have I done to myself? Why the hell did I listen to that

bitch bloodslave? The thought was quickly drowned in a hot wave of sexual hunger as her stroking fingers shot her toward the climax her body demanded. The cool intellectualism she'd always prided herself on didn't stand a chance against the overwhelming lust raking her mind.

As she collapsed panting in the aftermath, images flashed through her brain: Captain Eric Gray, ironwood blade in one hand as he fought the pirates who had tried to board the Starclipper last week, his strong body big and hard and tempting....



One week earlier

As the wave of pirates poured into the docking bay from their own vessel, every man, woman and alien on the Clipper grabbed the nearest weapon and ran to drive them back. The entire deck became a roaring mass of shoving, straining bodies. Gray was in the lead, plowing into the invaders with blinding speed and vampire strength. His eyes glowed with a burning, black rage that anyone would dare try to seize his precious startrader.

Tanaka Jones was right behind him. Showing his fangs in a snarl, the executive officer drove a punch into the nearest pirate's skull, killing the man instantly. Kerre Farr fought at his side, her exotic mocha skin gleaming with sweat, gold eyes blazing like a berserker's as she punched and kicked any enemy that came into her path.

Jayla herself was a science officer, not a fighter, but she'd picked up a stun stick like everybody else and pitched in to help repel the pirates. Instinct kept her at Gray's heels. Not only was it the safest place to be, but she felt a gnawing need to see that he was safe.

Jabbing at a pirate with the slick gray rod, she listened to the howls as it jangled her victims' nervous systems. He swung at her, desperately trying to stop the pain, but she ducked his wild attack and kept the stick planted in his ribs. Finally the man's body could take no more, and he collapsed on the deck.

Jayla looked up from him just in time to see a strange vampire, an ironwood knife in his hand, closing in on her captain's broad, unprotected back. Gray had his hands full with a pair of aliens, and didn't see his new attacker. Yelling a warning, she threw herself at the pirate, driving the stun stick at his face.

He whipped around, his big fist arching toward her head. There was no time to duck. Her last thought before the lights went out was, Damn, the captain's going to be pissed...



Jayla regained consciousness an hour later in the Starclipper's sickbay. The ship's med tech cheerfully informed her the pirates had been routed. Half of them had fled back to their ship, while the rest were locked up in the brig. The captain had killed the vampire who'd knocked her out, and the comp techies were working to plug the hole in the computer systems that had allowed the pirates to disable the Clipper's defenses and board in the first place.

The captain came by soon afterward with Farr, who needed to have a wound in her thigh sealed. As the med tech worked over the security officer, Gray gave Jayla a royal chewing out, his black eyes hot and snapping in his handsome, angular face.

"Whatever happened to yelling, 'Look out!'" he demanded, while she tried not to stare helplessly at his sensual mouth. "You're a tech, Carstairs. You're not equipped to go one-on-one with a vampire."

A tiny, impish voice in her mind whispered, Maybe, but I'd love to try.

"If any vamps need killing, I'll take care of it," the captain continued, rocking back on his heels as he glared at her. "But I'd better never catch you doing anything that damn stupid again."

She listened to him growl for several minutes more, thinking dryly that there must be something seriously warped about her to find anything sexy about a man who was telling her off so vehemently. Pitiful, Carstairs. Her infatuation with Gray was really getting out of hand.

At last he whirled and stalked out, gesturing at Farr, who trailed in his wake with one last long, cryptic look at Jayla.



That night, after the med tech finally released her, Jayla returned to her quarters to find Farr standing in the hall beside the door. That cryptic expression was back on the bloodslave's golden face, a curl of secret amusement in the set of her wide mouth as she stepped to meet Jayla. "May I have a word?"

Astonished but working to hide it, Jayla summoned her manners and invited her visitor inside. Something about Farr's lush, overwhelming presence made her quarters feel even more cramped than usual. Quickly scooping a stray uniform tunic off her desk chair, she gestured for the bloodslave to have a seat. "What can I do for you?" She wondered if her curiosity showed. She'd served on the Clipper for two years now, and Farr had never paid a visit. In fact, as far as Jayla knew, the security chief didn't socialize with anyone but the captain and Jones. And she maintained a professional distance even with them, at least in public.

What she did with her two vampire masters in private was something Jayla tried very hard not to think about.

"The captain has granted us all a month's leave," Farr said, sitting back to cross her endless legs the black skinsuit that slicked over every curve. "He's decided the Clipper's computer system needs a complete overhaul, and that's going to take time. We'll be docking at Langella in two days."

"I'm sure the leave will be welcome," Jayla said politely, instantly resolving to spend the time exploring the planet's large and thriving vampire community. There weren't many worlds where so many blood-drinkers would be welcome, but Langella had been founded as a vamp colony to begin with. "But I'm a little curious as to why you felt it necessary to drop by and tell me personally."

Farr shrugged her elegantly muscled shoulders. "I wanted to let you know I'll be leaving the ship at Langella. My contract's up, and I plan to find another ... employer."

Jayla blinked, two thoughts flashing through her head simultaneously: Again, why tell me? and What will the captain do?

"Captain Gray, will, of course, begin looking for another bloodslave." Farr studied her with calculation,

tilting her lovely head to one side. "I thought you might want to do something about that."

Jayla's brows shot up. The term "bloodslave" was a misnomer, of course; they weren't true slaves. Paid submissives, they served a given vampire under a standard two-year contract, providing him with the sex and blood he needed to survive. With a metabolism that mirrored that of the vampires they served, bloodslaves could withstand repeated feedings that would have killed a human. And their hyper-intense sensuality made the feeding more satisfying to their vamp dominants. And, no doubt, to themselves.

Jayla couldn't imagine what she could offer Gray that could compete with that. "Me? Why?"

Farr laughed shortly. "Please. Don't insult my intelligence. I may be human on paper, but my senses are vampire. Whenever you're in the same room with Gray, the scent of desire rolls off you in waves."

Jayla knew she must be turning bright red. "I..." Realizing she was about to stammer, she gathered her self-control and lifted her chin. "I doubt I'm the only one."

This time the laugh was genuine. "No, you're not. You are, on the other hand, the only one whose lust is returned."

Jayla blinked. "What?"

"He wants you," Farr said bluntly. "He's wanted you for months. But you're human, and he's funny about humans, so he's kept his distance. Too, you're crew, and his sense of honor won't let him poach on his own people. But he wants you anyway."

"You're out of your orbit." Rising restlessly to her feet, she paced away from the bloodslave, trying to ignore the crazy bloom of hope that Farr was right.

"I know after he chewed your little ass out this afternoon, he fucked mine hard and deep," the security chief said crudely. "And I can tell you, he wasn't thinking about me while he did it. It wasn't the first time, either."

"Yeah, well, he's never given me the slightest indication that he's interested." Jayla stiffened, her eyes narrowing as a dark suspicion occurred to her. She turned to stare at her visitor. "This is some kind of nasty little joke, isn't it?"

Farr gave her an offended glare. "I don't play those kinds of games."

"So why tell me? If you're leaving because you're insulted by his interest in me, why the hell would you do anything to help us get together?"

The bloodslave sighed and leaned back in her chair. "Look, I don't really hold you responsible for the way things shook out. The chemistry was never that good between us to begin with. I shouldn't even have taken the job; I knew going in that I'm not submissive enough for him, and he's too dominant for me. But at the time, I needed work." She crossed her ankles and stared, brooding, at the tips of her boots. "In the two years since, I've gotten fond of Gray, despite our differences. I'd like to see him happy for once. There's a sadness about him.... I don't see any reason he should go on wanting you the way he does, with you wanting him just as much, when you could be together so easily. It offends my sense of ... order."

Jayla felt her heart begin to beat a little harder. Maybe Farr wasn't playing with her after all. Maybe Gray really was interested. "Okay, so I'll ask him."

The security chief shot her an impatient look. "And he'll tell you I've got a bug in my hard drive. Gray isn't going to take you no matter how much you want each other - unless you have the procedure."

Her eyes widened in astonishment. "You're suggesting I become a bloodslave?"

"Didn't I say so to begin with? You can't tell me you're not dying to do it. You've got a sub streak a kilometer wide. That's one reason you fascinate Gray, bull dom that he is."

Jayla shook her head with a laugh she knew wasn't the least convincing. "You really are off your orbit."

Farr stood up with a snort of impatience. "Look, do whatever the hell you want. But I'm telling you, if

you don't go down there and get it done, you're going to regret it while you lie in that cold, narrow little bunk of yours. Because I can assure you, Gray's not going to go without another bloodslave for very long." She reached into a slit in her skinsuit and pulled out a small plastic disk. "This is an ident chip for the broker he uses. Get in contact with her when we dock at Langella. She's a friend of his. Ask her what he thinks of you."

Farr flipped her the chip and stalked out without a backward glance.



During the rest of the trip to Langella, Jayla debated mentally about what Farr had told her. Yet the more she thought about becoming a bloodslave, the more the idea tempted her.

Unfortunately, that meant she'd first have to endure the process that would transform her body. She'd be injected with a modified form of the vampire virus which would give her the healing ability and strength she'd need to better serve her new master's hungers without injury. And Jayla knew from her research that the transformation wouldn't be a pleasant process.

Nor would it be cheap. If Charit Moore agreed to change her, the broker would receive a cut of whatever Jayla made as a bloodslave until the cost of the procedure was paid off. She was nervously aware she'd be in debt for years.

Yet she also knew it would be worth it. Farr was right; she'd always fantasized about belonging to some gorgeous vampdom who'd do everything to her she'd secretly dreamed about. In fact, she'd seen more than her share of simmies with that very theme, particularly after meeting Gray and falling under his sensual spell. Hell, that was why Jayla had signed on with him to begin with when so many humans wouldn't even serve under a vampire captain.

She'd been secretly disappointed when he'd maintained the same cool, professional distance with her he had with the rest of the crew. So she'd hidden her interest behind her own professional mask, even as she spent her evenings with a vibrator watching pornographic simmies of bloodslave getting bound and fucked by well-hung vampires.

Now she'd had enough. She was sick of never going after what she wanted, sick of never taking a

chance.

She'd do it.

Yeah, maybe Gray would turn her down, and she'd end up with a crushed and broken heart. So be it. She'd just have Moore find her another vampdom and rebuild her life with someone else. Better that than pining hopelessly after a man who not only did not return her interest, but who was aware of it and didn't care. Jayla hadn't forgotten Moore's mocking comment about smelling her desire; she knew with stinging shame Gray was just as aware of it as the bloodslave was.

So when they'd made planetfall at Langella and Jayla had received permission to take leave, she'd hailed the first skycab that came along and took it to Moore's brokerage house.



Charit Moore, herself a vampire, was licensed to perform the bloodslave procedure on those who qualified. She also provided a sort of compatibility service, matching up bloodslaves and vampires based on their psyche profiles. Jayla had heard Gray speak of her even before Farr had mentioned her; she was apparently a good friend of his.

The question was, would she tell Jayla that Farr had played a very elaborate, very ugly practical joke?

Well, there was only one way to find out.

Heart hammering, Jayla paid the cab off and started up the walk.

Whatever she'd expected a bloodslave brokerage house to look like, Moore's wasn't it. The long, low building was built of some glowing white stone that was probably quarried locally. Something about its elegant columns reminded Jayla vaguely of an ancient temple. Swallowing, she gathered her courage and approached its soaring wooden door, which swung silently outward at her approach.

A woman in a long, flowing gown stepped out to meet her. A cyberserver unit, judging from the iridescent shimmer of her eyes.

Jayla explained her business. The cyberserver hesitated -- probably listening to instructions through an internal com unit -- then ushered her inside down a long hallway to the broker's office.

Moorestood with a professional smile as she walked in. Sizing one another up, they exchanged polite greetings. The broker was short and delicate of build -- a result of having been born centuries before, in a time when nutrition wasn't as good. Her eyes were wide and velvet brown in her ageless, heart-shaped face. She wore a red skinsuit that revealed every impressive curve as she gestured Jayla to one of the thickly padded armchairs that stood before her desk.

"When the cyberserver relayed your name, I was a bit surprised," Moore said. Her fangs flashed between her lush, smiling lips as she spoke. "Gray speaks of you often."

"Positively, I hope." Sinking into her chair, Jayla looked around. An aura of sensuality hung over the room, from the intricately carved wood of the desk to the marble fireplace set in one wall. Flames leaped merrily from the logs. Back on Earth, such a waste of natural resources would have been frowned upon, but out here in the colonies, it was expected.

Moore smiled. "Of course. He thinks a great deal of you. Cafa?" She walked to a sideboard and reached for an intricately engraved silver pitcher that stood between two cups.

"Yes, please." It would give her something to do with her hands.

After Moore had returned to her seat and they were sipping the sweet, steaming beverage, Jayla gathered her courage. "I want to have the procedure done, Ms. Moore. How do I go about it?"

"Ohhhh," the vampire said, leaning back in her seat to study her with speculation. "Does Gray know you're here?"

Jayla met her dark eyes coolly. "I wasn't aware I needed his permission."

Moore blinked. "No, I don't suppose you do. But ... he does talk about you. I just wasn't sure..." She shrugged. "Well, the whole point's moot until we see the results of the psyche tests anyway. I can't change you if you don't qualify for the procedure."

As her mouth went dry, Jayla nodded. "Yes, I gathered that from my research."

The vampire nodded briskly. "Then let's find out, shall we?"



Moore took Jayla into a small, white-walled cubical that looked far more clinical than anything else she'd seen in the building. After fastening a cyberband around her head, Moore dimmed the lights and left her alone.

No sooner had the door closed behind her than the device's computer began flooding Jayla's brain with images so dark and erotic she was soon squirming. Women, bound and gagged in various positions as well-hung men tormented them with wicked, erotic skill. Fangs and cocks sinking into flesh, gasps and moans, pleas for mercy and cries for more. Jayla barely managed to keep her hands out from between her thighs, so powerful was the need to relieve the sexual tension the images created.

When the test finally ended, she collapsed in her seat, blinking and pressing her thighs together. A few minutes later, Moore walked in and dropped into the opposite chair to study her with raised brows. "Well, well. You're definitely a candidate."

Fighting not to squirm, Jayla forced herself to meet the vampire's appraising gaze. "And that surprises you?"

"Oh, I thought you might be - someone like you wouldn't be here otherwise. I just didn't expect the results to be so positive. According to the computer, you've got some of the highest sub ratings I've ever seen." She smiled slightly. "I sure as hell won't have any trouble finding a master for you. I've got several vampdoms on a waiting list for somebody with your stats."

Jayla swallowed and crossed her legs. "I don't suppose one of them is Captain Gray?"

The smile became a grin, white teeth flashing against dark skin. "Now that you mention it, he's been on the list for a couple of years. Eric likes his bloodslaves with a deep submissive streak, and you certainly fit that description."

"So you think he'd be ... interested?"

The vampire laughed. "He's been 'interested' in you for months."

Her heart gave a lovesick thump. "Oh?"

"He hasn't come right out and said anything, but we message back and forth a good bit, and he mentions you somehow or other in every communicate. What project you're working on, something you've done to piss him off. Whatever. He wouldn't do that if he wasn't damned interested."

Jayla hesitated, the hot images she'd just seen wheeling through her mind - this time with herself and Gray in the starring roles. "He's never given me any indication he'd want me that way."

"He wouldn't. Gray has a ... complicated history. Something happened a century or so back. I'm not sure what, but it scarred him somehow. He keeps his distance, even from the bloodslaves he contracts with. This latest one was a good example." She shook her head. "I told him Farr was too emotionally distant for him, but he said that's what he wanted. I knew it wouldn't end well, and I wasn't surprised when it didn't."

Jayla studied her. "So why haven't you gone after him yourself? You seem to have a good relationship."

Moore laughed shortly. "Honey, I tried. He wouldn't let me get close. Besides, he's a little too dominant for me. And since then I've found a bloodslave of my very own." Rolling her eyes, she moaned in mock lust. "Oh, baby. Built like an Arabian stallion and handsome as sin. Possessive, too. I think it'll be a load off his mind when I get Gray settled with some hot little sub girl. And you'll do nicely."



Which was how Jayla ended up in a medbed that night. The machine injected her body with a modified form of the vampire virus. Over the next few days, the virus altered her cell structure and DNA to give her the enhanced healing ability, senses and strength without quite turning her into a vamp.

It wasn't an easy change. In pain, desperately sick, Jayla suspected more than once that it was killing her. By the third day of the process, she prayed it would.

While she cursed the obsession with Gray that had brought her to this, the medbed also sculpted her body, giving her a lusher, more voluptuous shape and packing additional pleasure receptors into her erogenous zones even as it upped her natural hormone levels to make her more intensely sexual.

But all that biological tinkering combined with an effect she hadn't anticipated: brutal, mind-stealing lust.

On the night of the fifth day, Jayla lay on the medbed, her vampire-sharp senses reacting to every sound, every scent. The room was dark, but it seemed bright as day to her eyes. Worse, her body ached and burned with tormenting need.

Moore had pronounced her ready for an encounter with Gray, and she'd gone to set it up. The thought of the captain's big body made Jayla moan in hunger. God, she hoped he'd agree to this, or it was likely she'd rape him, vampire or not.



Eric Gray walked into his quarters with a mental sigh of relief. As the door slid closed behind him, hiding him from the eyes of any watching crew, he allowed his shoulders to slump. It had been a rough day. The Langella techs had done their best to screw up the new computer install, and he'd had to ride them hard all day to make sure the job was done right. He was damned if he'd let them put his people at risk with a half-assed job.

For a moment an image slashed through his mind - turning just in time to see that bastard vamp pirate backhand Jayla, the sight of her small body slamming into the bulkhead to collapse into an unconscious heap. He'd thought she was dead.

In a blind, fear-fueled rage, he'd gutted her attacker.

Gray sat down on his bunk and slumped, resting his elbows on his knees as he let his head hang. He wondered when this inconvenient obsession he had for that girl would fade. You'd think since he never touched her, and she thought he didn't give a damn.... But the attraction only got stronger. It didn't help that she wanted him right back. Hell, even when he'd been chewing her out after she'd scared the life out of him, he could still scent the rich, heady musk of her desire.

He wished Farr hadn't quit. At least he'd be able to relieve the physical part of his craving with a hard, deep fuck. Not that the sex had ever really satisfied either of them.

Moore, as usual, had been right. They really hadn't been a good match.

The computer announced an incoming call with a series of liquid notes. "I'll take it," he told the machine, and lifted his weary head just as a three-dimensional projection of Moore's face appeared. He smiled in genuine pleasure. "Hey. I was just thinking about you. Is this call business or pleasure?"

She grinned. "Both, of course." Her acute gaze searched his face. He forced himself to straighten and smile. She must have found him a new bloodslave. He had no idea why that thought made him feel less anticipation than emptiness.

"So what have you got?"

"The girl of your no-doubt highly kinky dreams, boyo. Practically cherry - one of those repressed types who's finally yielded to her darker fantasies. Hollander rating of - get this - 196. And considering your dom rating is damn near a perfect match...."

He forced a smile. "Sounds like the ideal playmate. I'll be down to check her out in half an hour- I'm done here, so I guess I can take a little leave."

Mooregrinned wickedly. "Want me to put her in the Dungeon so you two can get... acquainted?"

"Why not?" Maybe he could work off some of his tension. Judging by that Hollander, the bloodslave would probably love anything he did to her.



What the hell is this?" Jayla asked, staring around at the room Moore had called the Dungeon. Naked and uneasy, she shivered at the sight of the stone walls with their jutting, phallic torches. Two columns stood in the center of the room, a pair of chains dangling from them. By the door stood a wooden table covered in a wide array of sex toys - clamps and crops, ball gags, dildos. The whole place looked as if it had popped right out of one of her darker fantasies.

"A playroom," Moore told her. "Gray wants to give you what we'd have called a test drive a couple of hundred years ago." She frowned. "I'm not sure I did the right thing in not telling him who you are, but I was afraid he'd refuse to come."

Jayla stiffened. "I thought you said he wanted me?"

"He does. Unfortunately, Gray has a tendency to deny himself anything he wants that badly. Particularly if the desire is sexual." She shrugged. "Whatever happened all those years ago really did a number on him. I hope he's not going to be pissed." Her eyes slid to Jayla's cold-stiffened nipples. She smiled wickedly. "Though I'm sure one look at those will put him in a better mood even if he is. Let's get you ready."



By the time Gray landed his personal shuttle on Moore's pad, he was in the mood for some very dark games. The thought of Moore's mystery bloodslave and her 196 rating had awakened the Hunger, and it was more than ready to be fed.

He hadn't played really hard in a couple of years; Farr hadn't been the type. Her Hollander had been 82, barely high enough to qualify for the procedure. As a result, some of the pleasures Gray liked to enjoy with his partners didn't do a damn thing for her, so he'd foregone the roughhouse in order to do whatever would get her off.

Next time, he'd damn well listen to Moore's advice.

She met him personally at the door with her usual sisterly kiss, but he thought she seemed oddly nervous. "So where's this new bloodslave you found me?" he asked, partly to put her at ease, partly because the Hunger was snarling.

If anything, Moore looked more nervous. "In the Dungeon, just as you requested."

He held up the long, thin pack he'd brought. "I need to change before I go in. I want to set the mood, but I didn't want to scandalize the crew in the process."

Her grin was fleeting as she eyed the pack. "Something in leather, I imagine."

"Or a reasonable facsimile thereof, anyway."

She led him to a dressing room and he changed into the psudeoleathers. He felt just slightly silly in all that gleaming hide, but given the Hollander ranking, he knew the bloodslave would probably love it.

When he was dressed, he strode down the hall, his bootheels clicking on the marble. Moore trailed after him, coming as close to fluttering as he'd ever seen her. He eyed her warily. "What's with you, anyway?"

Moore glanced away. "I just want you to like this girl."

He grunted. "With that Hollander, I'm sure that won't be a problem." The thick wooden door swung open with a theatrical creak at their approach. He stepped through, already hardening with anticipation.

The bloodslave stood in the middle of the room, her lovely arms chained over her head to the pair of pillars she stood between. Dancing torchlight lit skin the color of cream, glowing on the high, full curves of her breasts and an endless satin length of thigh. Her nipples were tight, rosy buds that made him think of the clamps in his pocket. The scent of her desire filled his nose and mouth with the taste of raw sex. Some nuance in that sweet musk told him her Change had been very recent. His cock jerked in lust; the little bloodslave would be desperate to be ridden. He wondered why Moore hadn't mentioned that delicious detail.

As Gray started toward her, he finally looked into her face - and stopped dead in shock.



Jayla swallowed, staring at her captain with a mix of terror and desire. She damn near hadn't recognized him. In place of his usual staid blue uniform, he wore tight gleaming leather pants and thick, knee-high buckled boots. His massive chest was bare, all its magnificent muscle on rippling display. She'd had no idea he was so intensely beautiful. In one big hand, he carried a riding crop he tapped restlessly against his booted ankle. His dark eyes glowed vampire red as they tracked up her body, pausing at her pussy and breasts.

Then they reached her face. For an instant, they widened with delighted lust...

Then the delight faded, replaced by rage. He wheeled toward Moore, who took an instinctive step away. "Change her back!"

The broker blinked in shock at his rough, grating tone. "You're kidding."

His lips peeled away from his fangs as he gritted each word. "Change. Her. Back."

"She just Turned, Eric...."

"And she can Turn back," he spat, almost vibrating with fury. "I'll pay for it, if that's what's worrying you. Hell, I'll pay for both procedures. Just...."

"No." Jayla blinked, surprised at the low, threatening growl in her own voice.

The captain spun, his eyes narrowing. "What did you say?"

Some part of her gibbered in shock at what she was doing, but the new Jayla was in control, the one that had been born from the vampire virus and two years of helpless need. She lifted her chin. "I chose to become a bloodslave. It's what I want to be, and I'm not going back."

He actually sneered at her. "You want my cock that bad? Tough. You're not getting it." He looked at Moore. "Cure her."

"If you don't want me, fine. There are other dominants." For a moment, Jayla wondered what devil had seized her vocal cords, but as she listened to the words coming out of her mouth, she realized she meant them. She looked at Moore. "Please com the next male vampdom on the list."

Gray stiffened. "What list?"

Moorebit her lip. "The one for the high Hollander subs."

He recoiled. "Jayla, any vamp on that list would have a Dom rank to match - which would make him damn near a sadist."

She lifted an eyebrow at him. It felt good. "Aren't you on that list?"

Gray's eyes narrowed. "As a matter of fact, I am." He studied her, a dark calculation entering his gaze.

Moore shifted uneasily. "Gray...."

He ignored her, focused totally on Jayla as a feral masculine hunger grew in his glowing eyes. "Maybe I should give you a little taste of what you could expect if you decide to go through with this." His laugh was just slightly sinister. "I'll have you begging Moore to turn you back in fifteen minutes."

"Anything you can dish out, I can take," Jayla flung at him, something dark and hungry unfolding deep in her at the thought.

"I really don't think this is a good idea, Gray." Moore said. "You...."

"Get out, Charit." He started toward Jayla with predatory grace. "Don't come back until she screams for you."

Moore stiffened. "Jayla...."

"Go, Ms. Moore," Jayla said, staring defiantly into her captain's eyes. "You won't be needed."

When she still hesitated, Gray whirled on her, snarling like a tiger warning a rival away from his meal. She fled. With a nasty little smirk of satisfaction curling his lips, he turned and stalked toward Jayla again, looking her up and down. Her eyes widened, arousal curling and tightening low in her belly.

He didn't stop until the crisp curling hair of his chest was a whisper away from her nipples. She stared up at him, knowing he was trying to intimidate her by looming over her like that, emphasizing his male width and muscle against her smaller, lighter body. His glowing crimson eyes mocked her, his wide, lush mouth curling in a taunting grin. "So you've got a little crush, and now you think you want to be a bloodslave."

She lifted a brow, determined to give the mockery right back to him. "I haven't had a crush on a man since I was fourteen."

"Bullshit, baby." It was the first time she'd ever heard him swear, and despite herself, her lips parted in surprise. "I've known you were hot for me since the minute I let you sign on. You and your collection of vampdom simmies." At her indrawn breath, he laughed nastily. "You think you could smuggle something like that on my ship without me knowing about it? I don't think so."

While she fought an instinctive rush of shame, he began to circle her like a drill instructor reaming out a particularly stupid cadet. "You're thinking, what? I'm gonna tie you up with silk scarves and recite poetry to your rosy little nipples? You don't need a vampdom, girl, you need a fucking boyfriend." He packed that last word with so much scorn it was all she could do not to squirm.

Instead she stiffened her spine and forced herself to look him right in those mocking red eyes. "I know exactly what I need, Captain, and it's not a boyfriend. And I am definitely not a 'girl.' I'm a bloodslave, and I've got the Hollander to prove it."

He shoved his face an inch from hers. "If you had a single brain cell in that pretty little skull, you'd want me to see you as a girl. Because darlin', I'm a predator, and right now you look a hell of a lot like prey."

Jayla blinked, startled. He took a step back and looked her up and down. This time when he began to circle her, he reminded her of a tiger contemplating a staked gazelle, lazily deciding where to take a bite.

"Charit did a good job on those tits," he purred, his tone shifting from captain-dealing-with-idiot-subordinate to a menacing masculine rumble. "Round and firm, with nice long nipples. You know why bloodslaves have long nipples?" He smiled slowly, wickedly. "So they can take a clamp better."



Suddenly he lifted a broad hand and stroked his thumb across one tight, hard pink crest. The sensation was so intense she gasped. She'd forgotten the way her bloodslave nervous system felt pleasure more acutely.

"Sensitive, too. I wonder what kind of clamps Charit's got over on that table back there?" He caught the peak between thumb and forefinger and pinched gently. Leaning down, he murmured in her ear, "I'd like to put you in a pair of old-fashioned alligator clips and watch you squirm." Moving closer until her naked back was pressed against his broad, hairy chest, he cupped her newly full breast in his left hand and began to squeeze and stroke. Still holding the crop in his right hand, he ran the smooth, hard shaft down over her belly, then between her thighs to press against her clit. "Then, while your pretty breasts are still aching, I'd take my crop to that perfect rump and give it a half-dozen pink stripes. By then I'd be rock hard and ready for my meal." He leaned closer and gently bit her earlobe and licked the straining cord of her throat. "Ever taken it up the ass?"

"No." The word emerged as a squeak.

He purred. "Perfect. I'd grease you up and force my big cock right up that tight little backside while you whimpered for mercy. Then as I reamed you hard and deep, I'd sink my fangs in this soft, white throat and drink your sweet blood."

Gray stepped back and smiled down at her tauntingly. "So. Do you really want to be at the bottom of the vampire food chain?" Despite his dismissive tone, his eyes blazed crimson with heat, and his cock was a long, thick shape behind the tight leather of his pants.

Sensing her moment, Jayla lifted a mocking brow. "You talk a good game, Captain. Are you actually going to do any of that? Because you've got me creaming, and if you're not really going to play, I think I'll ask Charit to call someone who will." Recklessly, she sneered. "You can jerk off while you watch."

The old Jayla mentally wailed at saying such a thing to her captain, but the new Jayla watched defiantly as Gray stiffened. One big hand shot out to encircle her breast, long fingers curling around the soft flesh. She winced in expectation, and he smirked, eyeing her with calculation as he gently toyed with the velvety globe. "I had no idea you had such a mouth on you, Carstairs. I'm tempted to shove my cock between those rosy lips and teach you something else to do with it. But there are a couple of other orifices I want to explore even more, so I guess that'll have to wait." He deftly slipped his hand through the loop attached to his crop handle, and let it dangle from his wrist as he reached into his pocket to pull out something that gleamed silver in the torchlight. His left hand squeezing her breast so the long pink nipple jutted, he extended the little silver thing toward it.

The object was a clamp, Jayla realized, and braced herself.

Its tiny jaws closed over her stiff flesh with a force just short of real pain, and she closed her eyes and arched her back at the rush of hot sensation. Gray started playing the clamp skillfully, opening and closing it several times so that it nibbled on her hard nipple until she writhed.

"Oh, yeah," he purred. "You do like that, don't you? Want the other one?"

Unable to speak, she could only moan. He grinned and pulled out the second clamp to apply it to her other breast. She bit down on her lip and whimpered.

"Mmmm," he rumbled. "I do love that sound. There's something about a woman moaning helplessly that makes me hard as a rock. I start imagining what kind of arousing little noises you'll make when my prick begins reaming your tight little ass." He gave her a dark, taunting grin and leaned down to whisper in her ear, "It's going to huurrrrt, Jayla."

She licked her lips and made herself give him a stare that mixed sensuality with I-dare-you defiance. Even as she taunted him, Jayla was acutely aware of the way her wrists were chained over her head, putting her utterly at his mercy. "If you expect that threat to scare me into running, you really don't know me very well."

Gray circled around behind her, his head still lowered to a spot just above her pulse as he moved. "You'd better be giving it some thought, pretty prey. Because the time when I'll let you run is rapidly running out."

One big hand stroked down her sensitive spine and slipped between the round globes of her cheeks. She stiffened in a combination of nervousness and arousal as one long finger sought her anus, found it. Penetrated slowly.

Jayla sucked in a startled breath at the sensation. His finger felt three times as thick as she knew it to be as it entered the tight channel.

"Mmm. Too bad, darlin' -- I think your window of opportunity just closed," Gray said with a low laugh. "You won't be walking out of here a virgin after all. Your asshole is just too tempting." He caught her earlobe between his teeth and gave it a gentle bite as he rotated his hand, screwing deeper. "My cock is twitching at the thought of stretching it nice and wide. And since I'm going to ream you, I might as well enjoy some of my other favorite pleasures too."

She gasped. "Pleasures?"

"Oh, yeah." He chuckled, dark and rumbling. "I never feel I've really fucked an ass unless I put a dozen pink stripes on it first."

Licking her lips, she quivered helplessly in arousal and alarm. Oh, God, what have I gotten myself into?



Gray stared down into Jayla's wide, dark eyes as he savored the sensation of her tight bottom clamping around his fingers. He couldn't wait to mount her and ram deep.

The part of his mind not drowning in the Hunger sent up a rumble of protest. He knew he had no business indulging himself with Carstairs like this. She was far too delicate to withstand the dark side of his nature. Hadn't Jane proved what happened when he ignored the vulnerability of innocents?

And yet ... she was also stubborn as hell. If he let her go now, she'd just find another vampdom who wouldn't take her innocence into account - who would, in fact, enjoy despoiling it. At least if Gray took her, he would let her go when she cried off.

At least, I will once I'm finished. I don't know if I can turn her loose now, admitted a voice in the back of his head. She was too tempting, too hot, and he wanted her far too long.

Hell, he thought recklessly. Might as well teach her a lesson - and enjoy myself thoroughly in the process.



"Before I indulge, I'm going to have to prepare you," Gray said, withdrawing his thick finger from her anus. She shuddered in dark arousal.

As Jayla watched with a blend of desire and fear, he strolled over to the table Moore had set up along one wall. He contemplated the selection for a long, nerve-wracking moment. "Not that one, I think. Don't want that delicate little channel scraped up before I enter it. That's not long enough. That one? No, too thin. Ah."

Gray chose something black and shiny and retraced his steps, examining it as he came. "This should do. It'll stretch you for me by degrees. And it's got its own lubricant." He held up the four-inch long object, which began to shine as drops of oil appeared on its black, slick skin. "Let's see, what setting should we start out with?" He pressed something on the base of the dildo, and it expanded between his fingers. "That'll do, I think." His gaze shifted to meet hers, and he smiled wickedly. "I'll expand it little by little until I'm ready to fuck you."

She swallowed nervously. "It looks pretty thick right now."

His laugh was deliberately sinister. "But not nearly as thick as I am."

Involuntarily, Jayla's eyes tracked to his crotch. The bulge under that tight black leather was indeed much broader than the menacing little dildo.

Gray stepped around behind her and crouched. She felt strong fingers part her ass cheeks, then the press of the cool, rounded head of the butt plug. Slowly he began to insert it. Feeling her muscles protest, she squirmed helplessly and moaned. It was wider around the middle than it was at either end to make sure it wouldn't slip out.

As he pushed the dildo deeper, the sense of being stretched increased, and she arched her back and gasped. "You have no idea how arousing you sound," Gray purred. "That's the thing with fucking a predator. The more helpless you feel, the hotter I get."

Suddenly two strong fingers stroked the lips of her sex and eased between them to slide deep into her creamy pussy. The stark pleasure of that penetration contrasted deliciously with the discomfort of the dildo. "Ooooh!"

"I see I'm not the only one getting hot," he rumbled. "Damn, but your cunt is almost as tight as your virgin ass. It must have been awhile."

Two years. Not since she'd come aboard the Starclipper and become infatuated with her handsome captain.

The hunger that had retreated into confusion in the face of his predatory lust suddenly blazed into life. God, she had to have him. "Fuck me, Captain!" She rolled her hips against his hand, humping his fingers. "For God's sake, don't make me wait anymore! I'm going crazy!"

"Eric, goddamn it. My name is Eric." He stood in a rush of snapped control and stepped around to face

her, unsealing his pants with a single, impatient pass of his fingers. She gasped in joy as he swooped her into his arms. Her breasts hit his hard chest. The nipple clamps went flying as big hands closed over her thighs and dragged them wide.

Before she could suck in a breath, Gray drove his thick, hard cock all that way into her slick cunt. She threw back her head and yowled in pleasure.

"Oh, yeah," he rumbled. "Like fucking a buttered vise."

He withdrew, the slick sensation of his shaft sliding along her channel wringing another delirious whimper from her lips. "You feel so incredible," she gasped. "You're so thick, so long....Oh, God!"

Gray laughed. "Wait until I take your ass." He lunged deep, sending a corkscrew of pleasure twisting up her spine. The dildo picked that moment to expand, stretching her rectum and rubbing against his cock through the thin membrane separating the two channels. She convulsed helplessly in his arms.

"I've fantasized about doing you," he said in her ear as he rammed hard into her cunt. Each stroke was delicious, a ravishing assault on her nervous system so intense she found herself hanging helplessly in his arms, unable to move as he pounded her. "I tried not to, but whenever I'd see you bend over your station, I'd imagine what it would be like to walk up behind you and take down those tight uniform pants. And fuck. And feed. Your pussy. Your ass. Your throat."

"Yes," she said, and quivered.

His long, strong hands dug convulsively into her thighs, holding her pinned against him as his powerful torso rolled, shafting her over and over. "God, I wish I could keep you," he gritted between his teeth. "I'd tie you to the bunk so I could have this creamy pussy whenever I want. Keep your tight little ass greased too. You wouldn't be able to walk by the time I let you go."

"God, yes!" Jayla gasped, wildly excited. Starbursts of light exploded behind her eyes as he lunged against her. She curled her calves against his muscled rump as her thighs began to twitch with the climax that built with every ruthless thrust. Squirming helplessly, she fought to get that last little bit of stimulation on her hard clit.

Then the dildo expanded in her backside again, and the rough pleasure kicked her over. She threw back her head and screamed. "Eric!"

"Yesss," he snarled. "Now you're mine!" His mouth clamped over the throbbing pulse in her throat as the tips of his fangs pressed her skin. Then he bit deep, sending a sharp, quick pain radiating up her spine as he began to drink in greedy swallows.

The startling sensation drove another spike of dark delight into her overloaded nervous system, and Jayla screamed again as her orgasm spiked even higher, even harder. She jerked and twisted in his arms as he feasted, his powerful hips shafting her without mercy.

Until at last he stiffened, growling against her throat as his cock began to jet cum deep in her clamping cunt.



By the time he drew his fangs from her throat and his dick from her delicious pussy, Jayla hung limp in her chains. But energy zinged through Gray's system, and he realized he wanted more.

More being her ass.

"Hmmm," he purred in her ear. "That was a nice appetizer. Just nice enough to take the edge off."

Her eyes snapped wide.

A grin tugging at his lips, Gray set her on her feet, instinctively steadying her when she swayed. When he sensed she could stand on her own, he dropped back into vampdom mode and stepped away to smirk down at her. "After that, I ought to be able to give your asshole just what it deserves."

She gulped, her eyes dropping to his sated cock. Lifting a brow, she grinned impishly. "The spirit may be willing...."

He laughed. "Oh, the flesh will be hard." Deft with long practice, he caught the crop that still dangled from his wrist by its strap and lifted it. "Especially once I put a half-dozen pink stripes across those pretty cheeks. Nothing puts me in the mood to ream a slave like watching her squirm under good caning."

This time he actually heard the gulp.



The expression on Gray's face was downright diabolical as he walked around behind her in a slow, panther-silent stride. Watching his big body move, his cock hardening with every step, Jayla felt her head grow light. His shaft looked so brutally long and powerful.

And he was going to drive it into her ass.

Stepping in close behind her, he reached out a hand to give her bottom a testing squeeze. "Mmm. Nice and firm. Just begging for the crop."

Between her cheeks, the plug chose that moment to expand, stretching her tight hole and reminding her just what her fate was to be. She bit down on her lip as arousal spread through her in a hot, honeyed tide.

Jayla twisted her head to watch in spiraling fear and desire as Gray stepped into position like a dancer, one big hand bringing the crop back. Even in her instinctive fear, the play of muscles in his chest and powerful arm struck her as beautifully erotic.

The crop whistled as it snapped forward and landed with a snap. She bounced onto her toes with an instinctive shriek.

"Oh, come on, Jayla!" Gray said, laughing. "I barely hit you."

And he hadn't, she realized. Her flesh stung lightly, but that was all. Even as that perception penetrated, the crop swished again, painting another stinging line across her butt. She jerked and shot a look over her shoulder at him.



His grin was broad and hungry, showing the full length of his fangs. His rock-hard cock jutted from his open fly, and his glowing eyes were locked on her ass. He stepped forward in a ripple of muscle....

WHAP!!

She sucked in a gasp. This blow had been a little heavier than the others, but still well within her ability to withstand. Yet something about it, about what he was doing, the wild, dark hunger in his eyes made her hotter than she'd ever been in her life.



Gray sent the crop whistling toward Jayla's tempting ass again, controlling the blow so it would land as an erotic sting more than true pain. This was more a symbolic caning than a real one, designed to establish dominance and turn her on.

And it was succeeding. There was a breathy quality to her gasps, and a salty tang intensifying in the air that told him she was growing richly wet. He licked his lips and laid the crop across her ass again. She jumped, the long line of her body twisting, round, beautiful cheeks flexing. Three faint pink streaks marked them as her butt began to redden and glow with engorging blood.

He changed the angle on the crop and came up with an underhand blow that bounced her onto her toes with a yelp. Her ass spread as her hips rolled up, and he glimpsed the butt-plug. Judging from the diameter, it was fully expanded, stretching her little anus deliciously.

He was going to stretch it a lot more.

The Hunger, sated briefly from his earlier feeding, roared back to life.



Jayla writhed, her backside stinging both inside and out from Gray's caning and that demonic plug of his.

"How does it feel, darlin'?" he rumbled.

"It hurts," she groaned, panting and shivering.

"Yeah....." WHAP! "But do you like it?"

"God, yes!" She was, in fact, amazed at how erotic the whole thing was. She didn't think she'd ever been this hot in her life.

"In a minute I'm going to take that plug out," he purred. WHAP! STING! "Know what I'm gonna do then?"

"Replace it with that huge cock?" Jayla writhed, squeezing her eyes closed.

"Oh, yeah. Right to the balls." WHAP! STING!

Fire shot through her bottom, and she jerked. "Damn, Eric, that hurt!"

"Not as much as it's going to when I start fucking your ass. And you're going to love every minute of it. Which is a good thing, since it's a bloodslave's job to bend over and offer her master her ass whenever he wants it."

When she glanced warily over her shoulder, she saw him take the single long, hungry stride it took him to reach her, his big shaft swaying, flushed dark with lust. She stared down at it and shivered. It looked huge.

He laughed, a dark rumble. "You'd better quiver, darlin'. It's been a long time since I've given a slave a good caning, and it's made me hot as a rocket thruster. And the fact that it's you.... Well, you may not be able to walk for a couple of days when I get through."

As his cock jabbed her butt, he reached around her body and down between her thighs. She moaned as his long fingers slid into her cunt. "Damn, you're wet," he purred in her ear, giving her a few leisurely thrusts that made her whimper in pleasure. "I pumped you full, didn't I?"

Jayla licked lips that were as dry as her sex was creamy. "Yeah."

"And your asshole's next." Gray's fingers left her cream-drenched sex and roamed around the curve of her hip and down between her cheeks. He caught the dildo and began to withdraw it. Jayla gasped at the sensation. "Oh, I think you're in trouble, sweetheart. I don't believe this little plug stretched you enough." He laughed darkly in her ear. "Especially not as hard as I am right now."

She quivered as he dropped the plug with a clatter on the stone floor and started working two fingers into her anus. Even after the plug, they felt so thick she whimpered.

"Well," he rumbled in her ear, "you're good and slick. And very, very tight. You're going to be a luscious fuck, Jayla. And after putting all those pretty stripes on this round little ass of yours, I'm definitely in the mood to ream it for you."

Jayla squeezed her eyes shut at the sensation of his long fingers twisting deep. "I'm sure you are... AH!!...you sadist."

He laughed. "Exactly." Gray released her breast and stepped back to crouch behind her, simultaneously catching her cheeks in both hands. She felt him spread them, could almost feel the burn of his eyes as he examined the vulnerable opening between them. "Damn, you are tiny. Particularly compared to the diameter of my cock."

"And I'll bet you can't wait to ram it deep," she said, shivering. God, she was hot. The idea of him invading her this way, his ruthless intentions ... It was unbearably arousing.

"Oh, yeah. In fact, let's get started." Leather creaked as he stood and stepped in close. Something hard brushed the sensitive target of his lust as he positioned the massive head of his cock for entry. The shaft settled against her, the pressure slowly increasing as he pushed hard, inexorably digging in. Fire exploded along her nerves as the tiny opening began to yield. She moaned. "It hurts!"



"I know." He sounded more predatory than sympathetic. "And it's going to hurt a lot worse. But if you concentrate on relaxing these exquisite little muscles, it'll get better. Eventually." He pushed in another ruthless inch, then another. The fire blazed higher, and she writhed helplessly.

Just when she was about to scream, he reached around between her thighs and began to play with her clit, his long fingers devilishly skillful. The pleasure melded with the pain of his tunneling cock as he continued his merciless invasion.

Until finally he was in to the balls.

"God, you're tight," he growled, circling her clit with his thumb as he stroked a finger into her cream-drenched cunt. "Damn, the idea of being your master is tempting. It'd be tough to decide between your juicy pussy and snug little asshole."

Slowly, he began to withdraw, pulling his big shaft an inch at a time back up her channel, tormenting the

tender flesh even as he fingered her cunt and clit.

Jayla whimpered. Being fucked this way was overwhelming, intense. And darkly erotic, despite the pain. He felt so damn big - his cock, the powerful body plastered against hers, torso rolling as he pulled out, then slid deep again, reaming her with ruthless, lingering strokes. "God!"

"That's right, relax," Gray crooned. "You'll start to love it soon. Any slave with a Hollander like yours discovers the appeal of a buttfuck pretty fast."

He was right. As the instinctive clamp of her muscles loosened, a strange, dark pleasure grew with every thrust. Until she could only hang in her chains and moan as he used her with delicate brutality, her body battered by pain and delight.

She'd never felt so utterly at a man's mercy, so intensely fucked. She felt like a slave, as if he was driving home his claim each time he drove his cock into her desperately stretched rectum.

And the man doing the claiming was Eric Gray, the captain she'd fallen in love with an never expected to have, the heart of so many dark fantasies.

Jayla realized suddenly she was rolling her hips back at him, taking his cock as deep as she could, impaling herself. The dark ecstasy of it surged through her, and she knew she was about to come.



She'd begun responding just as he'd known she would, meeting his thrusts hungrily, driving her asshole back onto his cock. Her moans and whimpers of pleasure were as tempting as her tight, slick flesh.

God, he wanted to keep her. The idea of owning Jayla, having her bound and ready for his use anytime he wanted her He slammed his hips forward and listened to her ecstatic yowl even as his cock luxuriated in her tight, greased grip.

Why not? he thought suddenly. She was a high-Hollander bloodslave who found his dominance wildly arousing. Why shouldn't he collar her, fuck her lushly tempting body's every orifice, feed from her throat...

Enjoy her bright wit, listen to talk about her day....

His, dammit. She was meant to be his.

Forgetting mercy, forgetting everything but the need to claim, he began to drive hard and deep, shafting her tight asshole. He heard her startled yelp at his suddenly violent possession, but there was as much arousal and pleasure as pain in the cry, so he didn't stop. Within three thrusts, she was writhing as the merciless use shot her into a climax.

Her pleasure kicked his own lust higher. He felt his lips pull back from his fangs and leaned down toward the delicate throat he'd already tasted.

As she came, he simultaneously buried his cock to the balls and sank his fangs deep. He heard her scream as he shot and shot....

And drank, his head spinning with the brutal pleasure of possessing Jayla at last.



Finally, Eric drew his fangs from her soft throat. Her head lolled back on his shoulder, two sets of bites marking her neck. He eyed them in satisfaction, remembering the pleasure he'd taken with each. He'd done a very thorough job of making her his. And she'd loved every minute of it, judging by the way her eyes were closed in an expression of dreamy pleasure.

Then he frowned. Something about the position of her head, the way her body hung slack in the chains....

The rough hemp rope circled Jane's throat, digging deep into the skin where his mouth had played the night before. Her eyes bulged in her gray face, tongue blackened and protruding....

Eric jerked away from Jayla with a muffled exclamation of horror and swung toward the door. "Charit! Charit, get your ass in here and prepare this girl for the surgery!"

"What?" Jayla demanded behind him, sounding like a woman jerked unexpectedly from a pleasant dream. "What's going on, Eric? You...."

"Moore!" he bellowed, ignoring her. He wouldn't have her on his conscience too.

"Do me the courtesy of talking to me, dammit!" she snapped. "I thought you understood!"

"You're the one who doesn't understand," he snapped over his shoulder at her.

"Then explain it to me! Tell me what the hell happened to you!"

She sounded so furious, so completely unlike the sweet, unassuming woman he knew, he had to turn and look at her. "Look, you may think you want to play the game, but you don't. You won't be able to deal with it."

Jayla jerked at her chains in a gesture of rage and frustration. "What the hell are you talking about? Aren't you the man that just beat and fucked my ass? At what point did you hear me beg you to stop?"

"You feel that way now, when your heat's up, but what about later?" He whirled away and began to pace. "I won't be responsible for the damage."

"The only damage I'm in danger of suffering is from your rejection." She glowered at him. "Who was she, Eric? Because I know's a woman somewhere in this mess."

He had never told anybody about Jane, but if it would help her understand.... "All right, yes. There was a woman. But it wasn't her fault. It was mine."

"So what happened, Eric? How did she fuck you up?"

His shoulders slumped. "I fell in love with her."

The anger drained from her eyes. "I thought it was something like that."

"She was so much like you. Bright mind, sensuous. Funny. Beautiful. I fell in love with her. She had learned of what I was, knew of my ... needs, had read things."

"She wanted a vampdom."

"Or thought she did. And I wanted her so badly, I obliged, even knowing that she was an innocent. And it was..." He squeezed his eyes shut. "Wonderful. I made sure she found the full extent of pleasure, as, God knows, I did."

"But she wasn't able to process it."

"No," he said, putting a hand to the back of his neck and trying to ease the knot of tension gathering there. "The guilt.... She couldn't accept what we'd done. Couldn't accept finding pleasure in it." Gray

took a deep breath, blew it out as he fought the rise of pain. "She...hanged herself."

Jayla winced. "God, I'm sorry. I can imagine how you...." She broke off, frowning. "Eric, what year was this?"

Startled, he looked up at her, not understanding why it would matter. "1972."

"Which explains a great deal, if you stop to think about it."

He frowned. "I don't follow."

"Think about it, Eric. You were there, you should know that time better than I do; I only know it from books. But from what I've read, that was an era when women were experimenting with sex, but they'd still been raised to be 'good girls.'"

He nodded. "And Jane certainly had been. Her father was a Baptist minister."

Jayla rolled her eyes at him. "Damn, what did you expect? Back then, most people thought vampires were figments of the imagination at best, or some kind of demon at worst. She killed herself the next day?"

He glowered, wishing she'd drop the subject. "Look, I would rather not..."

"Did she?"

Knowing she'd keep harping at him, Eric said reluctantly, "Yes."

"Did it ever occur to you that whatever went wrong with her had been going wrong for a long time?" She stopped as if something had occurred to her, then asked suddenly, "Did she let you tie her up?"

Gray shifted on his feet, frowning, wondering what one thing had to do with another. "She insisted. I didn't really want rough play with her, but she demanded it." He thought back. It was hard to remember those days, to think back beyond the horrifying moment when he'd found her hanging dead. "There'd always been an aura of sadness about her, a sense of some deep pain. I wanted to save her from it, not inflict more."

Jayla met his eyes and said gently, "Eric, she expected you to kill her."

"What?" He stared at her. "No! I loved her! I would never have hurt her."

"Of course not, but she didn't know that. She deliberately slept with a vampire in 1972. She didn't know you don't drain people. I'd bet money she was clinically depressed, and had been for a very long time." She shook her head. "She wanted you to end it for her."

As Jayla watched, Gray staggered to the closest pillar and leaned against it, looking dazed. "Suicide by vampire," he murmured. "In the early days, we all run into people who... I never dreamed she was one of them. But the signs.... The sadness. She had a drug problem. I wanted to help her with it, but she was Kith, and she wouldn't let me into her mind. And she couldn't beat it. I was so worried about her...."

Her heart ached. This Jane had been dead three centuries, and he still grieved for her. "Stupid bitch."

His head snapped up in shock and outrage. "What?"

"You loved her like this, and she threw it all away. Hurt you this bad. I'd give anything if you loved me a tenth as much as you do that dead idiot."

Gray laughed shortly, "Oh, Jayla, I love you a lot more than that. Why do you think I've fought this?"

She froze, unable to believe her ears. "What?"

He pulled away from the pillar and moved toward her, his eyes locked on hers. "I love you, Jayla. I've been in love with you for months. But I've shielded myself for so long....I was terrified you wouldn't be able to handle what I wanted from you."

"I'm not that fragile, Gray," she said softly. "I'm not some twentieth century virgin. I'm a ..."

"Bloodslave." The smile that curved his lips was so slow and hot she felt arousal bloom low in her belly. "Which is pretty damn convenient, since I seem to be in need of a bloodslave right now."

Jayla grinned at him as a crazy, giddy joy rolled over her. "That is convenient."

"Mmmmmmm." He shuttered his glowing eyes. "You know, I've never had a high-Hollander slave before. The possibilities are endless. Tanaka's going to be really disappointed."

Her eyes widened. She hadn't thought of his vampire second-in-command. The two of them had always shared Farr. The idea of both of them.... "Why? Doesn't he like me?"

He loomed over her, lowering his head toward her mouth. "Oh, he likes you a lot. He's told me for the past year I ought to approach you about becoming a bloodslave." He brushed his knuckles across one breast as he reached the other hand down toward her cunt. "That's why he's going to be so disappointed. Because I'm not sharing. He'll have to get his own sub. I find I'm very ... possessive where you're concerned."

She closed her eyes as he skillfully twisted her nipple. "Oh, I don't know. I might enjoy both of you at once."

He nipped her ear in retribution. "Oh, darlin' - I think you're going to have your hands full as it is." Gray smiled slowly, seductively. "And that's not the only thing that's going to be full."

"Mmmm. I can't wait."

He reached for her and proceeded to make her wait very short indeed.

