



Gemini Rising 1: The Reluctant Concubine

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Chapter One

“Great, this is just what I need,” Callie Randall mumbled to herself as the sky opened up to release a torrential downpour. She absolutely hated driving in the rain, but it couldn’t be helped.

One of her babies was sick, so she’d risk a hurricane if that’s what it took to get her little one to the doctor. She hoped her neighbor would be all right with Paris while she was gone. Taking a quick look in the rearview mirror to check on London, Callie smiled.

The little girl was sleeping without an apparent care in the world. Sometimes Callie wished she could be two all over again, with no cares or worries, instead of being an unwed mother with twin daughters, a heavily mortgaged house and struggling dance studio.

Though she didn’t regret having her beautiful daughters, she often wondered what might have been if she hadn’t fallen for Terrell’s bullshit. She’d believed that he’d stick by her, but the minute he learned of the pregnancy, he couldn’t dump her fast enough. On top of that, he was living out her dream in Europe with the dance troupe she’d worked so hard to be a part of.

Life wouldn’t be such a struggle if he occasionally sent child support, but that sorry bastard always had an excuse. He’d only seen his daughters twice in the two years since their birth and then completely disappeared from their lives.

When she found herself alone and pregnant, Callie had left New York to go back home to the small North Carolina town she’d grown up in, only to hear her parents say they told her so. The first year had been a struggle, but when she got a small inheritance from a distant relative, she used it to get her own place and open up a dance studio. She had a few students and hoped she’d eventually have more, but until business really picked up, she moonlighted as a waitress on the weekends.

Breathing a sigh of relief when she pulled into the doctor's office, she shut off the engine. Once she got an umbrella out and shrugged back into her raincoat, Callie walked to the rear passenger side to unbuckle London. "Baby, we're here."

London opened her big brown eyes, a dazed expression on her face, before she started to cry. "Hurts, Mommy," she whined, cupping a small hand over her ear.

Callie suspected her daughter had an ear infection. Paris had had the same problem just a couple weeks before. "I know it hurts, baby. That's why we're here at the doctor's office. Now hold onto Mommy's neck while I lift you up."

"Do I get a lollypop?"

"Only if you're really good. Can you be Mommy's big girl today?"

"I want a red lollypop." London nodded, her pigtails bobbing.

"We'll see."

With her daughter in one arm and her umbrella in the other hand, she raced to the big stone building, trying not to get wet. Once it was London's turn to see the pediatrician, it was just as Callie had suspected -- an ear infection.

Not only did London get her red lollypop for being such a good girl for the doctor, she got a blue one to take home to Paris.

Callie felt a lot better once she and her daughter were back in the car, although the rain hadn't subsided a bit. London sat strapped in her car seat, happily licking her red lollypop while gripping the blue one tightly in her other fist.

When Callie had suggested putting the extra lollypop in her purse, London adamantly refused, wanting to be the one to give it to her sister. London was the younger twin by ten minutes, but she was the nurturer of the two, always making sure her sister was taken care of and content to let Paris take the lead.

Paris was the more assertive twin, but just as sweet and caring. Callie didn't realize she could love two people as much as she did her twins. People often asked why she chose to name them after European cities, but in her mind, they seemed to be the most logical choices. After all, had she not gotten pregnant she'd be in Europe, dancing. She might as well have the next best thing, and Callie knew she wouldn't trade her little treasures for all the trips to Europe in the world.

Callie couldn't wait to get home to see Paris.

When she was away from her kids, she always missed them. Halfway home, she decided to take a shortcut on a back road. Just then the rain let up. "That's good at least," she muttered to herself. It was getting dark and driving at night was bad enough without the slashing of water on one's windshield.

"How are you doing back there, London?" she asked, looking into the rearview mirror again to check on her daughter.

"Good," London answered between licks. Callie glanced over her shoulder to make sure London wasn't making a mess. When she looked straight ahead again, she was surprised to see a blinding white light. It was so glaring, in fact, she couldn't see where she was going and ended up swerving off the road. Panic sliced through her as she lost control of the vehicle. The more she tried to right the wheel, the more out of control the car went. In the backseat, London began to cry, obviously sensing her mommy's plight.

"Hold on to your seat tight, baby."

Just as she got the words out, she felt a falling sensation. Callie didn't know exactly what had happened, but as the little economy car landed with a loud crash, she thought about her beautiful baby girls.

* * *

Callie woke up with a pounding headache and lights shining in her eyes. She winced as she turned her head away. Where was she? Her last coherent thought had been that she was a goner, but somehow she was alive. Or was she? Had she died and gone to heaven? For some reason, she didn't expect heaven to be quite like this. And what was that funky odor?

When her eyes finally adjusted to the light, they widened in surprise and fright.

Standing over her were two creatures that looked like they'd stepped out of a horror movie, with their orange skin, green tentacle-like hair, and large teeth that stuck out like a wild boar. Their faces were covered in blue dots, and instead of noses they had snouts. What the hell? This had to be a nightmare!

The problem was, a dream never smelled quite like this.

It was a pungent cross between sweaty feet and ass. London was nowhere in sight. Where was her baby?

Shooting to an upright position, Callie tried to slide off the metal table, but large hands pushed her back down. One of the monsters began to make slurping and snorting noises. She wasn't sure if he was trying to communicate with her or eat her.

"Where's my daughter?" she screamed, panic starting to take over.

Again, the creatures grunted and made those strange noises. She nearly passed out when one of them put its forehead against hers, its green eyes starting to glow. Fright stilled her movements, but only for a moment. Struggling against the hands that held her tight, Callie's maternal need to be with her daughter overrode any fear running through her.

"London!" she yelled. There was no response.

She prayed to God that her daughter had survived the crash. The thought of losing her child made her shudder. The orange men grumbled. When one of them pulled out what looked like a piercing gun and placed it against her arm, she screamed.

The creature pulled the trigger, and it felt like receiving a tetanus shot. What had they just done to her? Had they just infected her with some alien disease? Would the anal probing come next? She clenched her ass for self preservation.

"Stop struggling, human, and you won't be harmed."

To hear the deep foreign sounding voice stunned her. What the hell? The creature still made those strange grunting noises, but this time she understood exactly what he said. Licking suddenly dry lips, Callie trembled.

"What... what do you want from me? Where's my daughter?"

"Any questions from here on out will be asked by either Rzxie," the apparent leader said, pointing to his companion, "or myself. I am Theki and you will address me as Master until you're sold to a new Master. I expect obedience in all my slaves. As for the young one, she's resting. She'll remain unharmed as long as you're cooperative."

"What have you done to her? Slave? Are you kidding me? Wait a minute... I understand you. How..."

Theki rolled his eyes, a look of impatience on his face.

"At least the language implant chip is working. As I said before, you will be silent and speak when you're spoken to, or I'll make sure you'll work in the teriulium mines." Callie wanted to protest, but what she had to say was halted with the stern look Theki shot her way. If this was a nightmare, she wished she'd wake up from it.

"Do I make myself clear, human?" the alien asked. She could only nod, her mind racing a mile a minute. Theki's beady eyes narrowed to slits.

"I don't read minds. Do I make myself clear?"

"Y-y-yes," she stammered.

"Yes, Master!" he roared, making her jump.

"Yes, Master," Callie obediently repeated, though she was seething inside.

The creature turned to his companion. "Rzxie, this one is feisty. Her mouth says one thing, but the eyes say another. Perhaps we should keep her for ourselves and break this spirit of hers."

"Theki, stop trying to frighten the child."

It surprised Callie to hear a feminine voice emitted from her second captor's throat. On closer inspection, she realized the one called Rzxie was shorter. Her slender build was graced with gentle curves. Other than this, she looked exactly like Theki. What were these things?

"You know as well as I that human women are highly sought after in Thorzak, especially the exotic ones. Look at her dark skin and eyes, and this hair." Callie had to hold herself tightly so as not to flinch when Rzxie reached out and touched her hair. "It's so soft. This one will fetch us a high price indeed."

"I'll have no more of her lip. I must see to the rest of the cargo. Tend to her wounds and see that she's fed," Theki instructed his partner before turning back to Callie. "I had better not hear of any more transgressions, or you'll regret it."

Then, without another word, he swept out of the room, leaving her alone with Rzxie.

Callie didn't realize she'd been holding her breath until she released a long sigh. Did she dare speak to Rzxie? She certainly didn't seem as stern as her counterpart. Thoughts of her daughter gave Callie the courage to voice her fears.

"Please, could you tell me what's happened to my daughter?" The alien gave her what looked like a smile.

"She's sleeping now. I gave her a light sedative to calm her down. When your vehicle crashed, you got a pretty nasty bump on your head. But because the little one was strapped tightly in the back, no harm came to her. She was crying when Theki and I came upon you. Don't worry about her. She's been fed and well taken care of."

"How can you tell me not to worry when you won't let me see her and plan to sell me? And what the hell is that damn smell?" Callie could contain her curiosity no longer.

This question seemed to amuse the alien because she laughed. "We're Adieaen. I suppose our scent would probably take some getting used to as you're human. Thirty-three percent of our make-up is sulfur."

Rzxie claimed only a third of their bodies was made of sulfur, but Callie's nose said one hundred percent. She tried desperately to keep the bile from her throat, but found herself gagging. As though sensing her predicament, Rzxie handed her two small white balls.

"Here, put these in your nose and the scent shouldn't bother you so much."

"This is going to work?" Callie asked, eyeing them suspiciously.

"Of course they work. I'm wearing them now. You humans smell awful, but don't feel bad. It's the preservatives in the foods you eat on your planet. Once you've been detoxed, the odor won't be as offensive, and you'll garner a high price on the auction block."

She stunk?

Callie didn't know whether to take issue with that or laugh. She supposed to these Adieaens she was the strange one. Taking Rzxie's offerings, she stuck them up her nose and, within seconds, the air seemed more bearable to breathe.

"That's much better, thank you. I need to see my baby and make sure she's all right."

Rzxie shook her head. "You're going to have to take my word for it. She's being well taken care of and, as Theki said, it will remain that way as long as you cooperate."

"Where are you taking us? Why are you doing this? I need to get back to Earth. I have another daughter waiting for me to get home. She'll be worried. Please. Is there anything you can do? I'll give you all the money I have, if that's what you two want."

"Don't be silly, human. Your money is no good to us. I may not yet be a mother myself, but I can understand the concern you have for your little ones. Unfortunately, we can't go back. We've already crossed over the threshold of our universe and should reach Adlene shortly."

"But I want to go home -- need to go home. My baby is back there. I can't just leave her."

"That can't be helped. You belong to Theki now, and it's his decision what to do with you."

"But have you no say? Can't you help me? I don't think you're evil."

"Of course I'm not. I'm just doing my job."

"And your job is kidnapping innocent people to sell them?" Callie challenged.

Rzxie's lips tightened and her snout flared. "Watch your tongue, human. I may be a little more lenient than Theki, but modulate your tone with me."

"You and your friend must be out of your mind if you think I would just sit here calmly when you tell me that you've taken me away from all I know and love, and plan to sell me to God knows who. Hell, aliens aren't supposed to be more than a figment of a bunch of sci-fi authors' imaginations."

"I can understand your anxiety, but there's nothing we can do about that. I can assure you, however, that if you behave, you'll be well taken care of, as will your child."

"Why?" Callie asked, trying to make sense of this entire mess.

"It's what we do. Theki and I are Hunters. We scour the different planets for slaves to sell on the market. At the moment, Earthlings have become a hot commodity in our universe. Humans are one of the few species who are sexually compatible with most of the beings in Thorzak."

"Sexually compatible? I'm not sure I follow you." Rzxie sighed, as though she were trying to explain a simple matter to a small child.

"Let me think of a way to put it in terms you'll understand. You know how your kind has different antigens in your blood?"

"Huh?"

"Type A, B, AB blood, that kind of thing."

"Oh yes, of course."

"It's my understanding that humans can donate blood to each other, but it has to match. Am I correct in that?"

"Yes, but I don't know what that has to do with anything."

"Most blood groupings can only donate to those with the same type. However, O negative carriers can donate to anyone. Humans are like type O negative blood. Not only are you equipped to mate with most species in our universe, you can also successfully carry their children. On the planet Tetian, for instance, chemical warfare has left many women barren. Couples wishing to have children take human females as slaves to bear them children. On Gusitivus, it's forbidden for women to go to their mates as virgins. To learn the art of pleasing men, the girls are trained with human males. There are a handful of other planets that use humans for many purposes. And there are even some beings that look humanoid in appearance. Perhaps your new owner won't look much different than the men on Earth. A beauty like you normally has no problem finding a good home. On many planets, concubines are treated like queens."

Callie's mouth gaped open as she tried to take all of this in.

Was this for real? These aliens had kidnapped her for the sole purpose of selling her on a slave block like a piece of meat. At this point she would have preferred the anal probing. At least that way when they were finished with her, she'd be free to go home and pretend this was all a bad dream.

“Are you telling me that I’ll never be able to go back home? You’ve taken me and my child against my will, just because you can?”

“That’s not true. We’re taking you because you happen to fit what we’re looking for. Dark-skinned women have increased in popularity on the auction block. For some reason, their look is in style right now. Perhaps in another year or so fair-skinned women with pale hair will be the rage once again. For now, we go with what will bring us the most money. You’ll fetch us a pretty penny -- you and your girl child.”

A tear seeped from her eye when Callie thought of the possibility of never seeing her precious daughter, Paris, again.

Chapter Two *One Month Later...*

“Want Paris, Mama.” London sobbed into her mother’s neck. Callie was very close to tears herself. How could she possibly explain to the two-year-old what was going on when she was still trying to make sense of the entire mess herself?

With each passing day on this Godforsaken planet, her hope of going home and seeing her other precious baby dwindled.

“I know, sweetie. I want to see Paris too.”

“Wanna go home.” Callie stroked London’s soft curls.

“So do I. Remember what Mommy said? As soon as I find a way, I’ll get us home where we belong.” Even to her own ears she didn’t sound very convincing, so it was no surprise when her child glared at her.

“Mean Mommy! Wanna go home,” London screamed, kicking and flailing wildly. Normally Callie didn’t tolerate temper tantrums, but how could she scold London when she so desperately wanted the same thing?

She estimated they’d been on this world the Adieaens called Adlene for about a month now. From the moment she woke up until she went to bed, she was trained in the art of pleasing men. At first she’d rebelled against the teachings, trying instead to find ways to escape, but she soon learned that if she didn’t obey her trainers, she couldn’t see London. They kept her daughter sequestered in the nursery section of the training building with the rest of the children.

For good behavior, Callie was rewarded with a visit to the nursery, and lately they had been fewer and farther between.

She shuddered as she thought of all the things she'd been subjected to, but those moments with London were one of the things that gave her the will to live.

"Honey, I'm doing the best I can. I promise you'll see her again. I'll do whatever it takes."

Unable to hold back the tears any longer, Callie pressed her forehead against her daughter's and cried at the futility of the situation. A month ago she hadn't believed aliens existed. Now she was in another universe, about to be sold like a piece of meat on an auction block.

She'd overheard Rzxie and another Hunter discussing her fate. When she asked what would happen with London, no answer was given. Callie didn't think she could survive if she were parted from this daughter as well. Her heart just wouldn't withstand the pain.

"Mama, I sawee." London gave her a kiss on the cheek and patted her hair. A slight smile touched her lips. She looked into her baby girl's big brown eyes, so like her own.

"I love you so much. I just want you to know that if anything happens to me, Mommy loves you."

The door burst open. Callie's head shot up. A feeling of dread washed over her when Theki strode through the nursery doors, a fierce expression on his face. At least she thought so. It was so hard to tell with his species.

"Your time is up. Let's go. The buyers are outside and ready to bid. We don't have very long to prepare you."

"I'm... I'm being sold today?" Callie gasped. She thought she had more time.

"We feel your training is adequate. Now let go of the child and come with me."

"No," she whispered, her eyes blinded by tears. Theki stepped forward.

"I must have heard incorrectly because I know you didn't say no to me. Now come along or I'll have to use the stunner." Her grip tightened on London, causing the child to cry out.

"Too tight!"

"No. I can't leave her. She's all I have left."

Even as the words tumbled from her lips she saw Theki reaching for the weapon he used to keep the slaves in line. Callie didn't care. They'd have to pry her child out of her cold, dead arms.

"I'll give you one more chance, human. You can come with me, or you can feel the sting of this." He pulled out the stunner. "I guarantee it will hurt."

As though sensing her mother's anguish, London wrapped her arms around Callie's neck and started to cry again. "No, Mama. Don't go!"

Callie couldn't remember crying so hard before. She knew Theki meant business, but letting go of London was something she couldn't do. "I'm not going to leave her. I won't!"

"You've been warned."

The blast to her arm sent a large electric shock through her entire body. Falling to her knees, she still didn't let go of her sobbing daughter.

"I won't leave her. You'll have to kill me first."

Pain rocked her entire being, but all she could focus on was that this monster was trying to separate her from London. Another blast hit her, this time temporarily paralyzing her. Theki spoke into his communicator.

"I'm going to need some assistance in the nursery."

Callie couldn't move, but she was still aware of everything going on around her, London's tears, Theki's pacing, and the sense that her life was about to change forever.

When the nursery door opened again, two more Hunters stepped inside. "What would you like us to do, Commander Theki?"

"Separate her from the brat, and then send her to the women so she can be prepared for the auction," Theki ordered.

If she could have, she would have fought the two Adieaens as they pulled London out of her grip.

"Mama! I want Mama!" her daughter screamed. As one of the men carried her out of the room, her will to live slowly ebbed away.

* * *

“Two thousand kwazars!” an overzealous participant shouted.

“Two thousand and fifty!” someone else yelled.

Theki chuckled. “Two thousand fifty kwazars! Do I hear two thousand five hundred? This fine specimen hails from Earth, and she’s eager to please her new master or mistress.”

Standing naked before a crowd of leering aliens barely registered in her mind.

Already the worst had been done to her. Being separated from her daughter was one of the most painful experiences she’d ever had to face. She didn’t even flinch when Theki fondled her breasts.

“Her body is nice and ripe. She’ll provide hours of pleasure for any lusty male or female, if they’re so inclined.” He then turned her body until her bare ass faced the crowd. Callie bit her bottom lip when he palmed her ass. “This backside was meant for riding. Have you ever seen such a well put together female? And look at all this wonderful dark flesh.”

Callie had never been so degraded in her life, but all she could think about was her babies. She willed herself not to cry because she wouldn’t let these bastards know they’d won.

“Three thousand kwazars!”

“Fifty!”

A hush fell over the bidding participants. She had no idea what a kwazar was worth, but judging by the look of pure delight on Theki’s face it must have been a lot.

“Mother of the stars, I knew you’d bring us a handsome sum, but I didn’t expect so much. I think I may have to find more women like you the next time we venture to Earth.” Theki turned her back to the crowd.

“Fifty thousand kwazars. Do I hear fifty five? Going once, going twice. Sold to the Thibian couple!”

Callie gazed out to see a man and a woman who looked human, but not quite.

Their skin seemed to have a glow to it, and their hair was whitish blond. They were a tall, handsome duo; however, they both looked rather fierce. Whoever they were, she vowed they'd get no pleasure from her.

Rzxie stepped forward and led her behind the auction block, throwing a robe around her body.

"You've done well, human. Much better than we expected. I'm... I'm sorry about the little one. I can imagine how you feel."

Callie glared at her. "Don't you dare offer me any of your false sympathy. You have no idea how I feel. You and Theki took me away from my other daughter, and now you're doing it all over again. You both deserve to rot in the fiery depths of hell."

"Please, try and understand --"

"Oh, I understand, all right. I understand that you're heartless creatures who live off the profits of selling innocent people. I'd appeal to your sense of shame, but I doubt you have any. To separate a mother from her children is probably the most despicable thing in the world."

"Like I said, human, I do know how you feel," Rzxie insisted.

"Oh, and how could you possibly know?"

If Callie didn't know better, she would have thought that the alien was blushing, a secret expression entering her beady eyes. "I recently learned that I'm with child."

"Congratu-freakin-lations." Callie felt more bitter than before.

"I just wanted you to know that I do understand. I feel this baby growing in my womb, and already I love it more than life itself. I would be devastated to go through what you are, so... I... I'm going to see if your new owners will accept your little one."

"Do you think they would allow me to take her with me?"

"I can't make any promises, but I will see."

"What will happen to her if they don't want her?"

"We raise the children until they are of an age to be sold. I can't make you any promises because your little one is another mouth they'd have to feed. I'll do what I can."

"Would Theki allow it?"

"Leave Theki to me."

For the first time since London was ripped from her arms, hope blossomed in her breast. She touched the Adieaen lightly on the arm. "Thank you. This would mean a lot to me."

Rzxie smiled, and the women shared a silent moment of communication, coming to an understanding of sorts.

Just then Theki approached. "What is taking so long? Isn't the human ready? Her new owners are waiting."

"Theki, I thought of a brilliant idea. Why not allow her new owners to take the little one as well? After all, they were quite generous."

Theki frowned. "Have you gone mad, woman? Why would I just give them the child when she will bring us a lot of money in the future? I placed her genetic information in our system. Twenty years from now she'll be even more beautiful than her mother. Do you think I'd easily part with such a nice profit?"

"But that's twenty years from now, and didn't you say that it was getting expensive keeping all these children? What's one small child?"

"She's one child that will make us a lot of money."

Callie watched with bated breath as the argument went back and forth. She silently prayed that things would end the way she wanted them.

"Throw in the child for goodwill. The Thibians are our best customers. If word spreads of your generosity, more will come and spend more money."

Theki gave his mate one long, hard look. "Why is this so important to you?"

Rzxie sighed. "I just think it would be a good gesture."

"And what makes you think they'd even want to take the child? I refuse to reward this human for her defiant behavior."

"Then don't do it for her. Do it for me." Rzxie patted her belly and gave Theki a meaningful look.

"Does this really mean that much to you?"

"Yes."

"All right. I will talk it over with the Thibians. Now that I think about it, this just might be a good idea. If the child is as headstrong as her mother, she may be more trouble than she's worth. And you know what? She may be a tool the Thibians can use to control this defiant human. Yes, you are very wise, Rzxie. I will go talk to them about this."

When Theki left them alone once more, Rzxie turned to Callie wearing a wide grin. "You see? I knew it would work out."

A humorless smile touched Callie's lips. "It would only be perfect if I had my other baby with me. Not a day has gone by when I haven't thought about her and what she must be feeling. I wonder if she's safe and if she's being taken care of."

Rzxie nodded. "Yes, I see your dilemma, but I can only do so much."

Callie could have pointed out that she wouldn't be in this predicament had they not captured her in the first place, but thought better of it. It wasn't long before Theki returned, the two Thibians following closely behind him.

The tall, pale-skinned male stepped in front of her, and she instinctively took a step back. He looked over at Theki. "I see what you mean. She does have spirit, but she's also just what our king desires. He wants someone... different, and there aren't any women like her on Thibius. Come, slave, and let me put this collar on you," the man ordered.

Callie took another step back. Would her humiliation never end? To be sold naked on the auction block was one thing, but putting a collar around her neck degraded her on a whole different level.

Rzxie came up behind her and gripped her arms. "Hold still and do as they say, you fool, unless you want Theki to change his mind," she whispered.

If she wanted London with her, she'd have to play by their rules. She forced herself to remain still while the blond placed the metal collar around her neck.

When he pulled out a chain to clip to the hook, she wanted to pull away but managed not to.

"I am Darus, and this is Tuk." He gestured to the gaunt-looking woman. "We're emissaries for King Blaze, and you are now his property. It is an honor to be a part of his harem."

She was to be in a harem? Would this nightmare ever end? She shot Rzxie a questioning look, but the alien merely looked ahead.

"We understand there is a child. We're willing to take her if you can guarantee us your complete obedience."

Callie nodded her head vigorously. "Yes."

Darus studied her dispassionately for a moment before nodding, seeming satisfied. "All right, Theki, you may bring the child out, and then we must leave for Thibus."

Callie's heart raced with anticipation.

She wouldn't lose London after all, but what kind of life would she have living as a member of a harem? The thought was unsettling.

Chapter Three

"I promise, Sire, that you won't be disappointed with the latest member of your harem. She's quite different, just as you requested."

King Blaze's lips tightened as he remembered his last concubine. He hadn't been impressed. "I hope for your sake that she is, Darus. I would hate to find you spent my money on someone I'll grow tired of within a matter of days." He brought the cup of wine to his mouth and took a healthy swig.

As usual, the meal before him had been expertly done, but now he wanted entertainment. This portion of his evening was normally his favorite part, when his harem would dance for him. Lately, however, he felt a sense of boredom he couldn't shake.

Since the Great Treaty of Bruan, Thibius had been at peace. With no war to train for, he had more time to visit his subjects and to oversee his land. This should have pleased him, but it didn't. After all, none of the women in his harem excited him like they used to. Even the newer ones couldn't hold his attention longer than a span of a month. Perhaps it was time to start looking for his queen.

"Shall I bring the harem out now?" Darus asked.

"Yes. I'm in the mood to be entertained."

Darus clapped his hands together, signaling for the musicians to start playing. Tuk, the keeper of his harem, walked into the dining hall first followed by the twelve usual women. Where was the thirteenth that Darus had raved about earlier? He frowned and turned to his servant. "Where is the new concubine you spoke of?"

"She should be with the rest of them, Sire. Ah, there she is."

Blaze looked toward the entrance to see a woman dragging her feet behind the rest, almost as if she didn't want to be there. His eyes widened with surprise.

He'd had a human once before and had found the experience enjoyable, but she hadn't looked like this. This one had creamy dark skin, eyes that slanted up just a tad, and a mouth so lush he couldn't help but wonder what it would taste like.

She was one of the most gorgeous creatures he'd ever set eyes on. Her slender body was encased in the traditional gear worn by the rest of his harem, but it looked like it had been made especially for her.

Blaze's mouth watered, his gaze clinging to her face, drinking in her every feature. His cock stirred with awareness. In that moment, he realized he had to have her.

"What do you think of the new concubine, Sire?"

"She'll do," Blaze said, trying to convey a casualness he didn't feel.

His eyes followed his new concubine as she began to dance with the rest of the harem. She moved with a fluid grace that kept his dinner companions riveted.

Something told him she wasn't quite giving it her all, but she outshined every single dancer on the floor. It was as though she were made for this.

His balls throbbed with the need to be inside of her. He turned to his advisor and good friend, Radien, to see the other man's gaze gliding up and down the woman's body with apparent lust. An unexpected wave of jealousy hit. How dare Radien ogle what was his without permission! "Do you see something of interest, Radien?" Blaze asked tightly.

"That dark one. Is she an Earthling?"

"Isn't it obvious?"

"The Remarkes are similar in appearance, but they don't have skin hues quite like that. She's magnificent. How much do you want for her?"

Blaze tried desperately to hold on to his temper. He knew he'd look foolish if he punched his friend out for no apparent reason. It took him a moment to calm down sufficiently enough to answer. "That one is not for sale. She's new."

"Yes, but we both know how quickly you get bored with your women. I understand you want to sample the goods first, but when you get bored with her, as I'm sure you will, I'll offer a fair price."

Blaze bit the inside of his lip to keep from saying what was really on his mind.

His eyes flew back to the dark beauty. The way she arched her back as she danced and the movement of her rounded hips made him want to carry her to his bedroom now. Images of her beneath him with his cock buried deep inside her cunt were driving him insane.

He glanced at the timepiece on the dining room wall. It wouldn't be proper for him to call a halt to the evening until the harem was finished entertaining. Each one of the women took turns standing in front of him, gyrating and moving sensually so he would choose her for his companion of the night. They could all move as suggestively as they wished; his choice was made.

When it came time for the new concubine to come forward, his heart pounded as though it would burst from his chest. Anxiously he waited for her to approach, but when she merely remained where she stood he found it difficult to hide his disappointment. What was the meaning of this? Why wouldn't she step forward?

Signaling to Tuk, he pointed to the newest addition to his harem. His servant nodded in understanding and grabbed his concubine by the arm. The exotic beauty lost her balance and stumbled forward.

When she fell flat on her face, Blaze made a move to get up and help her but remembered his place. How would it look for him, the king, to go out to a mere harem girl? She was the one who was supposed to come to him.

She wobbled to her feet, adjusting her silver bra top that barely covered her nipples. He could see a delectable sliver of areola peeking out on one side. Blaze longed to run his tongue around it and suck on it until she begged for mercy.

Her dark eyes locked with his momentarily before her gaze slid away.

As though she'd become conscious of the music, she began to dance. He wanted her closer, but she remained where she was.

"It seems this one likes to tease," Radian laughed. Blaze had never wanted to punch someone in the mouth so much as he did now. With each twist of the wrist and shimmy of her torso, he wanted her. Custom be damned. He wanted her now and refused to wait a minute longer. Standing up, he clapped his hands together, signaling the musicians to stop playing. Darus scurried over to him.

"Is everything all right, Sire?"

"I wish to retire for the night. I want the new concubine ready within a half hour and do not keep me waiting."

"Yes, your Highness." The slender servant bowed his head and scurried off.

"I haven't seen you this eager since Malenda," Radian observed.

Blaze shrugged. He didn't feel the need to explain his feelings to his friend. There was something about the new woman... Why did she seem reluctant to dance for him? There had never been a woman who wasn't eager to serve him. It was a high honor to be a member of his harem.

No matter. He would have her.

* * *

"If you pull a stunt like that again, human, I will make you regret it," the woman called Tuk hissed as she arranged Callie's hair.

She knew she'd made a critical error when she didn't step up to the king when she was supposed to, but something in the way he looked at her made her legs too heavy to move. She wasn't sure if she liked the unbridled lust glistening within the depths of his dark green eyes. Callie realized that playing dumb would probably be the best way to handle this situation.

"How was I supposed to know what was expected of me? You told me to dance and I did."

"Don't be a fool. I told you to take your cue from the other women. You're fortunate the king chose you for the night despite your defiance. Now you'll remember what I told you. You will let him do whatever he wants with you, however he wants -- or else."

Callie was under no illusions about what that 'or else' meant.

Had Rzxie really done her a favor allowing her to bring London along to this Godforsaken planet? She rarely saw her baby, and when she did, it was only for a few brief moments. They kept her child in the servants' quarters.

She had to admit, though, that London seemed well taken care of. People seemed to dote on the small child, but Callie could tell how unhappy her daughter was without Paris.

Paris.

Would she ever see her other precious angel again?

She flinched when Tuk unclipped the sorry excuse for a bra Callie wore.

Her arms immediately covered her breasts. The cool gust of recycled air made her nipples pucker. Having been a dancer, she was used to wearing revealing costumes, but the 'uniform' they'd given her was absolutely obscene. She couldn't move without worrying whether a boob would pop out.

Now she was to go to the king who'd watched her like she was some juicy morsel he wanted to devour. There was something very unsettling about him, and she didn't like it one bit.

Tuk grabbed her arms and forced them to the sides.

"Don't make this harder than it has to be, human. Stick out your chest."

"I have a name, you know. I wish you'd stop calling me 'human'." Callie balled her fists and bit into her lower lip to prevent herself from punching Tuk in the face as the servant rubbed some kind of clear gel over her breasts. The cold gel made the sensitive tips tingle.

"You are the property of King Blaze, and it's his right to name you as he sees fit and if he wants to call you dirt, then dirt you shall be."

"My name is Callie," she argued through gritted teeth.

Tuk glared green daggers at her. "If you have a care for the little one, you'll keep your thoughts to yourself, human. Now spread your legs."

The bitch had to be out of her damn mind, but what choice did she have?

Reluctantly, Callie let her thighs slide apart. Holding herself rigid, she let her mind wander to happier times as Tuk rubbed the gel over her clit and inside her channel. She thought of being back home with her twins and dancing.

Tonight had been the first time she'd danced in front of an audience in months, but it wasn't the kind of dancing she wanted to do. Hell, she might as well have been a stripper on a pole, for all the gyrating and booty shaking she had to do for some bored king.

Don't think about him.

Don't think about him, she chanted to herself, as images of King Blaze entered her mind. When she'd first seen him, she nearly stumbled over movements she'd been taught. He had to be one of the most stunning men she'd ever laid eyes on.

She wouldn't call him handsome, but it was difficult to look away from him. His eyes were the deepest, clearest shade of green she could remember seeing. And the way he'd stared at her almost seemed like he was looking into the depths of her soul. His features were strong and blunt, from the high cheekbones to the firm mouth that had an appearance of being carved from stone. Long platinum hair was combed back from his forehead revealing a deep widow's peak. He had the same almost shimmering skin of his people, but he was different. There'd been an air of command about him that even she couldn't help noticing.

She could imagine the plans he had for her. Callie's only hope was that he'd tire of her quickly so she could have more time with her daughter.

The rub of cold metal around her neck sent goose bumps along her arm. She hated this fucking collar. When Tuk connected a chain to it, she automatically pulled away.

Giving her a warning look, the Thibian scolded, "Don't let King Blaze see you do that. He likes complete obedience in his women."

King Blaze can kiss my black ass. Once again Callie had to bite her lip to stop herself from saying it.

Pulling her by the chain, Tuk forced Callie to follow. The king's servant towered over her. Everyone on this kooky planet had to be at least six feet tall, making her 5' 8" seem insignificant.

As Tuk led her out through the main room, where the rest of the harem members shot her resentful glares, fright overtook her. Why was she so nervous about seeing one man? It wasn't as though she was some vestal virgin being led to slaughter. She was a grown woman of twenty-five with two children and more life experience than most people would see in a lifetime.

Through a corridor and down another hall, Callie noticed her surroundings becoming more grand, which signaled to her that they were getting closer to where the king resided. When they stopped in front of large ornate silver doors with jewels encrusted over the edges, her belly began to rumble with butterflies.

Tuk knocked on the door.

"Come!" What an arrogant ass. Callie shook her head, only to receive another angry glare from Tuk.

"You will behave yourself."

The two women entered the king's chamber. Tuk bowed her head reverently.

"As you requested, Sire, your new concubine is here and most pleased to serve you."

Callie kept her head down, not wanting to be captured by those incredible eyes again. To her surprise, he stepped in front of her, practically sizzling with an invisible energy that made her more nervous than before.

She couldn't be attracted to him. No way. No how. He grasped her chin between his fingers, forcing her to meet his intense gaze.

"Beautiful," he muttered, more to himself than to her.

A jolt of awareness shot through her like nothing she'd felt before. Why did he have to look at her so intently? Callie tore her chin from his hold and looked away.

"Funny, but she doesn't seem very eager, Tuk. What's the meaning of this?" He spoke softly enough, but Callie could hear his anger just under the surface. She'd made a crucial mistake and knew she'd pay for it later.

Tuk bowed again. "Sire, I can imagine how this must seem, but this one is shy. I know she's eager to please you. What woman wouldn't be?"

"What woman indeed. You may leave us now."

With a worried expression on her face, the servant inclined her head before ducking out of the room. When the door closed, Callie's fear intensified. Now what? She held steady, waiting for him to do what he wanted to her. It was just too bad that she was finding herself attracted to him.

What was wrong with her? Was there some kind of mind controlling ingredient in that gel Tuk had rubbed on her?

"So is it true? Are you shy? Do you really want to please me?"

It took her several seconds to find her voice. Could she appeal to his better nature? Did he have one? Would he release her if she explained her situation?

Deciding to take a chance, she said, "You're an attractive man..."

"I sense a 'but' coming."

Callie lifted her head again. "I... I had a life on Earth, a home, a family, my studio, and it was all gone within the blink of an eye. If I hadn't tried to go a different way home, the Adieaens would never have brought me to this universe. I'm sure, as Tuk has pointed out, it's an honor to serve you for the night, but please try to understand that I need to get back home."

His face went positively stony, and she knew then what a big mistake she'd made. Abruptly, he turned away from her and began to pace the room in long purposeful strides. She wished she could tell what he was thinking.

Damn, why did she have to open her big mouth? Maybe she should have dealt with whatever he tossed her way and thought of ways to escape later. She had a feeling things wouldn't go well for her.

When King Blaze turned to her, his eyes flashed green fire. "So you want to go home?"

Callie could only nod. What was the point in lying? Her grave was already dug.

"You do realize that this is now your home, don't you? After all, what does your prior life have to do with me? You belong to me," he said, stalking back over to her. Yanking her by the arms, he hauled her against him, crushing her breasts against his chest.

The minute her nipples touched his skin they grew incredibly hot, and Callie knew then what the gel was for. She didn't want to respond to him, but her traitorous body had other ideas, especially when he brought his mouth down on hers. It was hungry and seeking.

Stubbornly she kept her lips sealed tight when his tongue tried to push past them. Grabbing a fistful of her hair, Blaze yanked her head back, taking advantage of her slightly parted lips when she gasped. She placed her hands against his chest intending to push him away, but he wouldn't budge.

His tongue forcefully explored the depths of her mouth, seeking, tasting, and tantalizingly, leaving her breathless. Her hands, balling into fists, gripped his shirt tightly as she opened up to his kiss.

Molten lava flowed through her veins, sending bursts of sensation like she'd never felt before. Her pussy was on fire.

The few lovers she'd had before had not prepared her for such delirious pleasure. His hands roamed down her back until they cupped her bottom.

"You're so perfect," he whispered, lifting his head and then pressing heated kisses over her face. He kneaded and shaped her rear in his palms, sensuously massaging her heated flesh. Why did his hands have to feel so good? Why couldn't she pull away from him? Blaze's gaze locked with hers making her shiver. She looked away. She knew if she let herself, she could easily become lost in his eyes.

"This is how I imagined you to be. What did they call you on Earth?"

"Callie," she croaked. Her throat was parched.

"Callie," he said as though testing it on his tongue. "What does that mean?"

"I'm not sure, but it's short for Calliope. My parents were going through their Greek Literature stage when I was born."

"Hmm, I like Calliope. It seems more majestic. Yes, that is what I shall call you."

He kissed her again.

This time it was less urgent, but just as intense. A searing heat shot through her, threatening to incinerate them both. She didn't realize he'd lifted her off the ground until she found herself on the center of his bed, Blaze's body covering her. His erection pressed against her, and it felt huge.

"I want to be inside of you, now. I've wanted it from the moment I first laid eyes on you. After this, I want no more talk of you going home. Thibius is your home, and you belong to me. You're mine."

His possessive words were like a bucket of cold water being thrown on her. Though her body still tingled all over, she was now in full control of her mental capabilities. "No! I don't belong to anyone but myself."

Blaze chuckled, throwing back his long blond hair. "That's where you're wrong, little Calliope. You belong to me just as surely as the stars belong to the midnight sky."

"No! This isn't right. You can't own people, and you most certainly do not own me."

His mouth tightened. Anger flared within the depth of his eyes. "You're mine and I'll prove it to you. Your body knows I'm your master. It's only your stubbornness that prevents you from admitting it."

Pulling back just enough to stand on his knees, he ripped off the metallic panties she wore, leaving her completely naked to his gaze. Then he tore off his top in one erratic movement. Once again, fear seized her. Did he mean to rape her? She knew in his mind it wouldn't be because he believed he had the right to take her at his leisure, but if he actually went through with this, she'd hate him forever.

He shaped her breasts in his palms kissing each tight tip in turn. Callie willed her body to remain completely still. She'd be damned if he knew that she burned on the inside. With each kiss he pressed against her skin, she fought harder not to succumb.

When he moved to kiss her lips, she turned her head. This served only to infuriate him. Grasping her face in his hand, he held it still and kissed her with what seemed like everything he had. She remained absolutely still. After what seemed like hours, he lifted his head and pulled away abruptly.

"Damn you. I don't find it necessary to rape my women." Rolling off the bed, he strode over to the wall and pressed a couple buttons. "Tuk!" he roared.

"Sire? How may I serve you?"

"Come get this concubine now and bring me Nihira."

"Is everything all right? Is the new slave not to your liking?" Tuk's voice trembled through the communicator.

"Are you questioning me?"

"No, Sire. I'll bring Nihira right away. My apologies that you've been displeased."

"Just see that it's fixed." Blaze turned to Callie, an unreadable expression on his face. "Do you not wish to be in my harem?"

This question took her by surprise. What was she supposed to say? That she enjoyed what he did to her body but refused to be owned by him? She could barely make sense of these feelings herself. She tilted her chin defiantly.

"I never wanted to be a part of your damned harem. I'd rather be scrubbing the floors than be degraded by you for another second." Now why the hell did she say that?

Blaze's eyes narrowed. "So be it."

Gulping, Callie knew she'd sealed her fate in that moment.

Chapter Four

"Oh, King Blaze, your cock feels soooo good. Fuck me faster! Harder!" Casiela squealed as she bounced up and down on his cock.

Her generous blue-green breasts bounced with each motion. The feel of her scales rubbing against his skin created an erotic friction that normally drove him wild. Her juicy cunt was warm and wet, just as he knew it would be. He grasped her generous hips guiding her over his length, gritting his teeth, trying hard to come.

What the hell was wrong with him?

This was the fifth night in a row this had happened. He thought if anyone could really get him going it would be Casiela. The Reptialarn women had little hairs inside their pussies that created the most sensational feeling, making a cock ultra sensitive. Tonight, however, Blaze had a hard time just staying erect.

Burying his face in his concubine's neck, he closed his eyes and an image of a dark human beauty popped into his mind. It was all Calliope's fault! She'd brought him to this point, and he couldn't take it anymore. Just as she'd requested, he instructed Tuk to remove her from his harem and give her the hardest and most laborious tasks. Most of the tough jobs were done by Cetarians and robots, but according to Tuk, she'd found plenty for Calliope to do.

Blaze hoped that a day of hard labor would show her how easy she had it as a member of his harem, but five days had passed and the stubborn wench had not given in. Five whole miserable days! Fine! Let her scrub the floors, if that is what she wished. What did he care? There were plenty of other women in his harem, eager to fulfill his every wish. What was one stubborn Earthling? Let her suffer and think about what she'd passed up.

He rammed his cock further up Casiela's cunt, all while wondering what it would be like to be inside Calliope. How wet would her pussy get? Would that lush ass jiggle if he took her from behind? Would she scream his name, or would she softly moan?

Just thinking about it gave him the extra push he needed to peak as he shot his seed into his concubine's thirsty cunt. It took him a moment to catch his breath.

When he did, Blaze tried to push the clinging concubine off, but she clung like a limpet.

"Enough."

"Am I being punished?" Casiela pouted.

"What do you mean?" He frowned.

"Usually we go all night. Have I done something to offend you?" she asked. Her liquid brown eyes looked sad. He pushed a stray lock of red hair from her face and gently cupped her cheek.

"You could never offend me. As always, you've pleased me. I just have a lot on my mind right now."

"Perhaps if you let me suck your cock, I can get you ready again?" she asked hopefully.

The offer sounded tempting, but he didn't think he'd be able to get it up again even if he wanted to. Normally the offer of her forked tongue wrapped lovingly around his shaft was enough to make him hard, but he just couldn't drum up enough enthusiasm.

Giving her a kiss on the cheek, he gently disentangled himself from her grip.

"As alluring as that sounds, I'll have to pass. Now get off so I can call Tuk to fetch you."

She looked like she wanted to cry but wisely didn't press.

He felt bad for hurting her feelings, but he didn't need the pressure of her persistence either. After calling for his servant, he threw on a pair of pants and paced the room, ignoring the softly weeping concubine. His temper grew with each passing second, not at Casiela but the situation.

The disastrous night with Calliope had only been the beginning. He thought some time with Nihira, one of his favorite women, would erase the human female from his mind. Blaze, however, found that he was wrong. Terribly wrong.

His cock barely stayed hard enough to fuck her. It had been humiliating, and it put him in a foul temper.

The next night was Jaet, a Thibian like himself. Her beautiful golden looks usually stirred him beyond reason. Again, nothing. Tatal, Falen, and Mariya the subsequent nights failed just as miserably in bringing him to a satisfying ending.

He'd even tried two at once, but that didn't excite him either.

Did he dare try any of the other women? No. Nothing would do. The truth of the matter was that he wanted Calliope, and her rejection cut him to the quick. He'd been so sure that she felt the same way.

When Tuk entered the room, she gave him the customary salute and hooked the chain around Casiela's collar.

"You may wait out in the hall for me while I speak to the king," she instructed the still weeping concubine. "Sire, could you please tell me what's wrong?"

"Nothing. I had no further need for her," he said, trying to hold on to his last droplet of temper.

"But something has been going on these past few days. Have the girls not pleased you as they should?"

"It's not them!" he roared louder than he should have. "Just do as I ask, and don't question me again. Perhaps you should do a better job at picking members for my harem." This comment seemed to take his usually unflappable servant by surprise. She turned a deep shade of red. The minute the words were out of his mouth, he knew he'd gone too far.

His servants worked very hard to please him and see to his every need. That he would yell at Tuk, one of his most faithful workers, shamed him.

"I'm sorry," he said gruffly. The damage had already been done, however. Curse that woman for driving him to this.

Bowing her head, Tuk turned abruptly. Just as she was walking out, Radien walked in and stopped her. "Are you all right, Tuk?"

She nodded but didn't speak.

"Hmm, it seems the king is in rare form again today. I'll find out what the problem is. Don't worry," Radien assured her.

Tuk merely nodded before scurrying off.

"What do you want?" Blaze glared at his friend, not willing to listen to yet another lecture.

"To see if everything is all right with you. I could hear you yelling at poor Tuk from down the hall. What is wrong with you? You've been in a foul mood for days. The servants tiptoe around you, and you snap at everyone without provocation. Hell, at dinner tonight you barely said two civil words before you got up to leave."

"If the way I've been acting bothers you, then why are you here now? I didn't ask for your company."

"Don't play the mighty king with me. We grew up together, and I think I've earned the right to speak freely to you. You're being an ass. Whatever it is that's upsetting you, fix it. The servants don't deserve it. Your concubines don't deserve it, and neither do I."

Clenching his fists at his side, Blaze reined in his temper. Radien had a point. It wasn't the servants' fault that he was frustrated, and, furthermore, he had to stop acting like a child who couldn't get what they wanted.

Releasing a heavy sigh, he looked at his friend. "You're right. I have been unbearable lately. I can hardly stand it myself."

"What's wrong? You can tell me anything."

"I... do you remember that concubine? The human one?"

Radien frowned.

"I'd wondered what had happened to her when she didn't appear to entertain us with the rest of the harem. I thought perhaps she'd displeased you in some way, but..."

"But what?"

"I thought it was rather odd that she'd be cast aside so soon, especially when I don't ever remember you looking at any woman like that before. Don't get me wrong, I realize you enjoy all kinds of women, but for some reason, I thought this one was different."

"She is, although she told me she'd rather scrub floors than be my concubine."

Blaze wished he'd have handled things differently. At first, Radien looked as though he didn't know what to say, but then he broke into loud, guttural laughter.

"What's so damned funny?" Blaze demanded.

"Are you trying to tell me that the great King Blaze was rejected by a woman in his own harem? This is too much!" Radien laughed even harder, holding his sides. He was so caught up in his mirth that he didn't see the fist shoot out.

Radien hit the floor. That stopped the laughter. Rubbing his jaw, he slowly got to his feet, eyeing Blaze warily. "King or not, that's your one time to strike me like that without retaliation. I'll put it down to your frustration, but don't let it happen again."

"You shouldn't have laughed," Blaze muttered stubbornly.

"Maybe I shouldn't have, but keep your damned hands to yourself next time. So this concubine has rejected you? She's your property. You can do whatever you want to her, and there's nothing she can do about it."

"That's where you're wrong. She may belong to me, but I refuse to take a woman who doesn't want me. If I were to take advantage of a person less powerful than me, what kind of man would I be? And what kind of king would I be? I'm supposed to lead by example. Bending people to my will outside of war is not the kind of ruler I want to be."

He took pride in the fact that in most circumstances he was approachable to his people, seeing to their needs and welfare.

Even those who served him he treated with respect because, from an early age, he'd been taught by his own sire that to get respect, you had to give it.

"I have more pride and dignity than that. Besides, there are plenty of women begging to be in her position."

"Yet you don't want any of those other women," Radien aptly pointed out.

Damn his eyes for being so right. "Yes, that's true. I want her like mad, but she's not interested. I've never been in this situation before, and I really don't know how to handle it. She's like no other woman I've been with."

"But have you actually been with her?"

"I'm not talking about being with her in that sense. Stop thinking with your cock, damn it. What I meant was, when she is near, her spirit calls to me."

"You're getting very poetic here. Are you telling me you have feelings for one of your harem girls? Have you even had a conversation with her beyond trying to get her into your bed? Perhaps you may be thinking of making her more than just a concubine?"

"Well, no, but do you really have to talk to someone to know you really want them? I'm not saying I'm in love with her. When I take a queen, I can't allow matters of the heart to influence my decision. I'll choose my mate based on their breeding and ability to handle the people."

"Don't let what happen to your father harden you. I don't know much about matters of the heart, but I know that you shouldn't live your life based on what happened to someone else."

Blaze's lips tightened as he thought of King Tayler and Queen Maige, his parents. He'd loved them both very much, but theirs had been a self-absorbed kind of love that had excluded all others. They were good parents and loved him the best they could, but when the two of them were together, they gave the impression that no one else existed.

During the Great Thorzak Lunar War, a chemical agent had been dropped on their planet and poisoned several thousand inhabitants, his mother included. It had saddened him when she died, but it had destroyed his father.

Day by day, Blaze took on more of the royal duties while his father pined away for his lost mate. King Tayler slept very little and ate even less until he wasted away to nothing.

Some people said it was the effects of the chemicals, but Blaze knew his father had died of a broken heart. He couldn't subject himself to that for the sake of a woman.

It wasn't as though he had a problem with the fairer sex, but he couldn't let anyone make him feel an emotion so strong that it could kill. No, he preferred his harem. When he chose his queen, he'd get rid of them out of respect for her, but he wouldn't let his heart become involved.

"I won't let that happen to me," he finally said.

"Sometimes those things sneak up on you before you know it. When the time comes, it might not be your choice."

"As if you'd know."

Radien shrugged. "Perhaps I'm no expert, but I do have eyes. I warn you, my friend, you'd better get your act together and do something about this reluctant concubine of yours because if you don't, you'll have a full fledged rebellion on your hands. I'll leave you alone while I go calm down Tuk."

Blaze only nodded as he watched his friend exit the room. He knew what Radien had said made sense.

He had to do something about Calliope, but he couldn't beg her.

How would that look, having to beg for a night with a member of his own harem? Damn, she was frustrating.

What if she never came to him willingly?

Could he deal with this?

Something told him he'd have a rough time trying.

* * *

Callie wiped beads of sweat from her forehead. It had to be at least a hundred degrees in this oven they called a kitchen. Scrubbing pots, however, was preferable to spending a night with the king. It wasn't that she found him repulsive. On the contrary, she found herself drawn to him, and therein lay the problem. She didn't want to be attracted to her 'owner.'

God, she hated that word. The thought of someone owning another person as if they were cattle didn't sit very well with her. Yet the way he'd looked at her sent shivers down her spine. When he'd touched her, she nearly burst into flames.

That wasn't supposed to happen.

Callie took another swipe at her brow and pulled at the sack-like dress she'd been given to wear. In the past five days, she'd lost weight. She was given meals like the rest of the servants, but Tuk worked her so hard, she'd been too exhausted to think of food. The best thing about living in the servants' quarters was seeing more of London.

Each morning before she was put to work, she visited her daughter's room where she slept with a kindly older maid who treated London like a much loved granddaughter. Those were the only moments she could escape without Tuk breathing down her neck.

That woman had it out for her in the worst way, making Callie scrub floors, walls, windows, even if they were already clean.

She suspected the king's servant was trying to break her, but she'd be damned if she let that woman see her crumble. Putting away the final pot to dry, she breathed a sigh of relief to be finished.

"Don't think you're off the hook, human. Those pots are still dirty," Tuk's voice said behind her, making Callie jump.

The woman had the most unsettling ability to sneak up on her without making a sound. "I finished them all."

"I said they are still dirty."

Callie picked up one of the pots she'd just scoured. It looked spotless. She was quite sure that one of the worker robots couldn't have done a better job.

"This looks fine to me."

To her surprise, Tuk grabbed it from her hands and tossed it on the floor. Then she slid her arms along the counter and dumped all of Callie's hard work back on the floor. "This is what you get for your impertinence. Now pick that up!" the woman screamed, rage turning her face bright red.

Callie was two seconds away from whuppin' that bitch's ass, her fist balled and ready to strike, and then she saw the malicious gleam in Tuk's pale green eyes.

She stopped herself. Striking her tormenter would only harm her in the end. She lived for her time spent with London. She wasn't about to give her tormenter a reason to take that particular privilege away.

Instead of doing what she really wanted, Callie bent over and began to pick up the mess Tuk had made.

"It's all your fault!" the woman screamed. Callie chose to ignore this statement, instead concentrating on the task at hand.

The other woman would not be ignored, however. Grabbing one of her long braids, Tuk yanked, forcing Callie to look up at her.

"You think you're something special, don't you?" *What had she done this time to earn such rage?*

"I have no idea what you're talking about, but I'd appreciate it if you let go of my hair."

"You have no idea what you've caused, do you?"

"Again, I don't know what you're talking about. I've done everything you've asked me to do, without complaint I might add. I'm not sure what I've done to deserve this."

"Oh, you're a cool one, aren't you? You've failed to do the one thing you were brought here for in the first place."

"Everything you've thrown my way I've done," she argued.

"Except please the king." Laughing nervously probably wasn't the best reaction, but Callie couldn't help it.

"I'm just one woman. The king has a harem of women eager to please him."

"I don't know why, but the king has his heart set on you." Tuk's eyes narrowed to an angry glare.

She would have thought she'd been all but forgotten by now. After all, with thirteen women constantly vying for his attention, he surely would have moved on. Now why the hell did that bother her? She shrugged, trying to project a nonchalance she didn't feel.

"I still fail to see what I can do about that since I'm no longer in his harem."

"If you're telling the truth, which I suspect you aren't, then you're a bigger fool than I thought. Have you no idea the honor it was to be chosen on your first night dancing for him? There were women far more experienced than you performing the Dance of Seduction, some of them much prettier than you, yet our good king chose you. Then you threw that honor back in his face as though you were above him. You! A lowly slave."

Callie's mouth opened and then closed.

What did the woman expect her to do?

It wasn't her fault that she didn't want to be used like a piece of meat.

"Tuk, I'm not really sure what this angry diatribe of yours was for, but I have a lot to do." She looked pointedly at all the pans she now had to redo.

Again the other woman glared. "I'd slap you if I didn't think it would leave a mark. Instead, I'll give you a little word of warning. If you don't come to your senses soon, the little one will suffer."

Callie gasped. "Leave my baby alone. She's innocent in all of this."

"I will gladly leave her alone if you do what you're supposed to. We could always resell her, you know. She is the king's property after all, and he has no use for her."

"You can't do that!"

"One word from me and she's gone," Tuk finished with a satisfied smirk.

Callie believed her too. What wouldn't these crazy zealots do to please their ruler? She grabbed the other woman's arm, gripping it in a vise. "I can't let you do that."

Tuk smiled humorlessly. "Then I guess you know what you have to do."

Callie didn't have to ask for specifics to know what was implied. As much as she hated the prospect of pleasuring that arrogant king, she knew she had to. Or she'd lose London.

* * *

"Why do you look so smug, Tuk?" Darus asked, leaning casually against the wall in the servants' hall.

"I have single-handedly solved our dilemma."

"You've convinced the human to rejoin our Sire's harem?"

"Yes, and not only that, she'll make sure he's satisfied for as long as he wants her."

Darus's forehead scrunched together as though in deep contemplation. "How did you manage that? The stubborn woman has been unbending, even when you've given her the most demeaning of tasks."

"We had the means all along to control her. The child you so adamantly wanted to leave with the Adieaens is the key."

"Aw yes, the little one. Your soft heart wouldn't allow a mother to be separated from her child. You do know we weren't authorized to bring her back with us."

"But she came as part of the deal. As long as we keep her out of King Blaze's way, there should be no problem."

"I suppose, but I want you to know that if he does come down on us, I'll tell him how it came to pass. Now tell me what exactly you said to the human."

"I implied that we could sell the child if she doesn't rejoin the harem."

A look of comprehension crossed Darus's face. "Aw, now I understand. Would you actually follow through, or would your conscience do you in again?"

"Despite the way I feel about the mother, the little one is starting to grow on me. She's been a delight to have around."

"That doesn't answer my question. Do you or do you not plan on sending her back to the Adieaens to sell?"

"I really don't know, and I don't think it matters as long as the human thinks we will."

"You don't like her very much, do you?"

"Do you?" Tuk challenged.

"I can't say I'm happy with the way she's put our king in such ill humor, but I reserve judgment."

"Well I, for one, hate her for what she's done to him. He goes around the palace snapping at everyone without the slightest provocation. And did you see that bruise on the side of Lord Radien's face? It was unseemly. I've never seen the king lose his temper this way before, and it's all her fault."

It was true. Tuk knew from the moment she spotted her on the auction block the woman would be trouble, but Darus thought the human would make a good match for their king. Tuk thought of her king as more than just a ruler, but like a surrogate son. It was she who had seen to most of his needs after his parents died. There wasn't anything she wouldn't do for him, even if it meant resorting to a little blackmail.

"I see your point. I guess it wouldn't hurt to show her that we're the ones in control."

"Exactly. I do feel a little guilty about threatening her child, but she's the one who drove me to it."

"What did the king decide to call her?" Darus asked after a long pause.

"Calliope, but I won't call her by a name until she's earned the privilege," Tuk said adamantly.

"So after tonight we'll have no more problems from the human?"

"None at all. She's been incredibly stubborn up until now, but I know she cares deeply for the child. If she feels the little one is at risk, she'll do what we say." A

slow smile touched her lips. "And you were the one who said it would be pointless to bring the child along."

"I stand corrected."

Tuk began to laugh.

Chapter Five

"Do you think you can at least stay through the entire performance tonight? Or will you stomp off as you've been doing these past few days?" Radien asked just before the harem came in.

"Shut up," Blaze muttered, not wanting to look at his friend's face, letting Radien see that he'd hit the mark.

He still felt shame that he'd hit his loyal and most trusted friend over some woman. It wasn't going to be easy, but he'd get over her the best he could.

Maybe he'd try three women tonight, one to ride his cock, one to suck on his balls and the other to ride his face. That was something he hadn't done in awhile.

Yes, that's what he'd do.

He tried to look interested as his women stepped into the dining hall. On the verge of taking a sip of wine, he dropped his goblet from nerveless fingers.

Walking through the foyer at the rear of the line was Calliope. She strode in like a queen, her head held high. Had she finally decided he was preferable to scrubbing floors?

As much as Blaze wanted to ignore her for the insult she'd given him, he just couldn't look away from her. Tonight the harem did The Dance of Seduction.

He'd thought Calliope graceful when he first saw her move, but this time she was flawless. Her eyes locked with his, an intense liquid brown that seemed to be sending out an invitation.

This time when she dipped and swung her hips, he knew it was for him. Just for him. Tonight the harem was naked to the waist and wearing sheer, layered skirts that barely missed the floor.

Their bodies were dusted with diamond dust making them sparkle and shine. It made the most startling contrast against Calliope's skin.

His cock strained painfully within the confines of his trousers. Licking his lips, he eyed her dark nipples, remembering how they'd tasted when he suckled them.

He wanted to do it again.

Tonight.

She gyrated, dipped, twirled and jiggled. Unable to help himself, Blaze began to slowly rub the front of his pants, trying to relieve the ache building in his balls.

This time, when each of his harem members did their solo number, Calliope stepped forward. She actually took it one step further, approaching to a distance closer than protocol.

When Tuk made a move to pull her back, Blaze held up his hand to halt the servant's progress.

"No, it's all right," he said softly, but still with enough authority to convey his word was law. "Come closer, Calliope," he whispered.

For a brief second she faltered, but then swayed over to him, her breasts mere inches from his face. With other diners surrounding him, he knew he couldn't touch her, but damn, he wanted to.

The scent of her exotic perfume was enough to make his cock even harder. It was the same fragrance used by all of the women in the harem, but mixed with her own unique smell it was heady. How could he get through the rest of the performance without hauling her over his shoulder and carrying her to his bedroom where he could fuck her into submission?

It only seemed like seconds, but it must have been longer before she backed away, giving the next girl a chance to dance before him. He barely spared the woman a second glance, his eyes following Calliope's every movement. Could his pride allow him to choose her for the night after she'd crushed him?

His head told him to teach her a lesson, but his cock would not allow it.

He had to have her. Damn her.

How he made it through the rest of the evening was beyond him, but he did, just barely. Once the dance was over he beckoned to Tuk.

"I'll have Calliope tonight. Take her straight to my chambers. I'd like her there waiting for me when I enter."

"Of course, Sire, and might I be so bold to add that she will not disappoint you this time?"

"I should hope not."

When Tuk led the harem out of the hall, he turned to Radien. "If you'll excuse me, I have something I must attend to. Make any pardons for me."

Radien chuckled. "I can just imagine what that something you have to do is."

Blaze ignored his friend's obnoxious comment. He made it to his bedroom in record time but paused in front of his door to calm himself. The last thing he wanted was to appear too eager. Maybe he'd make her beg a little.

With his heartbeat under control again, he opened the door. Blaze's breath caught in his throat when he saw her standing in the middle of the room, arms wrapped around her gorgeous body. Her beauty was constantly on his mind, but every time he saw her, it was still like the first time.

Taking a deep breath, he crossed his arms over his chest and casually walked to where she stood. He studied the top of her head to the delicate curves of her feet.

"So, you've decided to rejoin the harem after all? Did you find that your life would be much easier being a member of my harem?"

She lifted that stubborn chin of hers defiantly. "I'm not afraid of a little hard work but..."

He lifted a brow. "But what, Calliope?" he asked, once again savoring the way her name rolled off his tongue.

Blaze wished his pants weren't so tight because they made it difficult to hide his straining erection. Right then, he wanted nothing more than to throw her on the bed and spear her with his cock.

"But... I would rather be in the harem so I can be with you." She didn't look at him when she spoke.

Why did her words seem so stilted and forced? "Look at me when you speak, Calliope."

Slowly she raised her head until their eyes met. It was a mistake to ask her to look directly at him because his heart began to beat out of control again. Taking a step back, he decided putting a little distance between them would probably be best, or he wouldn't be able to stop himself from grabbing her.

"You made it clear to me you didn't want me before, even though your body said otherwise. What makes you think I want you back?"

She bit her lip, a look of uncertainty crossing her face. Then she raised that stubborn chin again. "Because I saw the way you looked at me tonight and heard the way you spoke my name."

"For someone in your position, that's an arrogant statement to make."

"But it's the truth, isn't it?"

She was right, but he would let her sweat it out just a little bit longer. He circled her again taking in each delectable curve of her body.

When he stood behind her, Blaze palmed her ass. "Nice and firm, yet so round. I don't think I've seen an ass like this before. It would be perfect for riding," he whispered against the back of her head.

Calliope shivered, but it was the only indication he had of her desire for him. He wanted more, but he could wait no longer. "Admit you've come back because you want me too," he commanded softly, yanking her arms to her sides, and then cupping her breasts.

"Yes, I want you."

"And you want to serve me."

"Yes," she whispered.

"And you want to please me."

"Of course... Sire."

"Blaze."

"Huh?"

"Call me Blaze."

"King Blaze," she whispered.

It wasn't protocol for anyone besides family members or his close friends to call him by his given name without his title attached, but he wanted to hear her say it. Needed to hear it from her lips. "No. Just Blaze."

"Blaze." She said with a hint of breathlessness. Dropping his hands from her small mounds, he walked around to face her.

"Prove it. Show me how much you want me."

Her mouth fell open slightly, a dazed look in her dark eyes. If he wasn't mistaken, that look was desire. Good. He'd affected her.

Blaze stood still, waiting for her to make the first move. For a moment, he thought she'd just stand there, but instead, she began to dance. If he thought her movements seductive in the dining hall, the way she wiggled her body now was positively scintillating. Calliope's hands slid over her body as though inviting him to touch.

When he took a step back, she took two forward, rubbing herself against him.

His gaze dropped to pointed dark nipples sticking straight out and begging for his hands and mouth. Blaze's breathing became ragged each time she touched him. She rubbed her tempting bottom against his crotch, and he very nearly grabbed her hips then. *I must stand firm.*

She turned to him and slowly undid the ties on his shirt before discarding it. Soft lips pressed against his pecs as her hands fumbled with the fastening of his belt.

When she stuck her pink tongue out to circle his nipple, he couldn't help releasing a groan. He buried his hands in her hair. The texture was new to him, but he liked its incredibly soft feel.

When she licked the flat brown disk, waves of pleasure shot through his body.

He couldn't remember when someone's touch had felt quite this good. She looked up at him with a gentle smile on her lips before turning her attention to his other nipple.

Blaze's hands roamed down her back as he deeply inhaled the fragrant scent of her. Did he catch a faint whiff of her pussy? It smelled delicious, and when he had her flat on her back, he would taste it.

She ran her tongue down the center of his chest until she reached his navel. Still fumbling with his belt, Calliope dropped to her knees. Her hand grazed against the front of his pants making him shudder.

"Your cock feels so big," she whispered.

"Remove my clothes and see for yourself," he groaned, eager to feel her mouth around his pulsing member.

When she slid his pants down his hips, his cock sprang forward, finally free of its restraints. Damn, he ached.

Hurriedly, he stepped out of his pants and she cupped his balls. Calliope seemed to hesitate, but only for a moment before massaging his swollen tissue, as though she were familiarizing herself with the contours of his sac.

"It is big," she said, her voice full of wonder. She caressed his length with the tip of her finger. This woman would be the death of him if she continued to torture him this way.

"Take me into your mouth," he ordered hoarsely, practically dying to feel her lips around him.

Releasing his balls, she wrapped her small fingers around his cock. Doing as he'd commanded, Blaze grunted with pleasure as she took him in inch by inch, slowly and sensuously. Looking down at her, he felt pulses of lust skid along his nerve endings. She looked so beautiful kneeling before him, her mouth full of his cock.

"That's it, Calliope, suck it. Yes, just like that." Grabbing the sides of her head, he guided it along his cock, gently fucking her mouth.

She wasn't the most skilled concubine he'd ever had, but certainly she was the one who turned him on the most. He didn't know what it was about this particular woman that made him feel this way, but he'd analyze those feelings later. For now, he just wanted to savor the sensation of her erotic ministrations.

She moaned around his cock as her head bobbed back and forth. His hands tightened in her hair, moving her head faster. Any minute now he knew he'd explode in her mouth if she continued with this frenzied pace.

"That's it, Calliope, suck my cock. Show me how much you want me."

Again she moaned, creating a humming sensation over his shaft. She raised her eyes to him beguilingly, and it took everything within his being not to thrust his cock deep down her throat.

"You have no idea how long I've wanted you here like this. I've imagined you doing this to me, feeling your hands and exploring you," he groaned.

Her eyes cut away from his.

She brought a hand up to fondle his balls again and his knees nearly gave out on him. Blaze realized he wouldn't be able to hold out much longer. He wanted to come in her mouth but didn't know how she'd feel about that.

It was his right to do as he wanted to Calliope, but what if it repulsed her? The last thing he wanted was to spend another unsatisfying week. She had him so twisted on the inside, he didn't know if he was coming or going.

He was riding a wave of rapture he wished would never stop. Concentrate on the pleasure and not the other feelings, he inwardly scolded himself. Letting any other emotion come into play would be a disaster.

Damn, she could suck a cock. The buildup in his balls was nearly more than he could take. Calliope whimpered when he suddenly pulled back, ripping his cock from her mouth.

"I'm going to come."

"Then do it," she whispered, "I want to taste you. All of you." Taking him into her mouth again, she rubbed his aching sac in her hands as though trying to milk it.

That did it.

His world suddenly exploded. Lights danced before his eyes, as he shot into her mouth. She sucked and slurped his come in earnest.

Then Calliope lapped the tip of his cock, getting every single drop. His rod should have gone flaccid, but he was harder than ever. He wanted more, but this time he wanted some pussy.

Hauling her off the ground, he carried her over to his bed and dropped her on the center before falling on top of her. This was the moment he'd dreamed of since he'd first laid eyes on her.

Chapter Six

Dear Lord, what had she just done? Had she sucked his dick and liked it? No, that couldn't be her, Callie tried to convince herself.

But it was.

When Tuk had threatened to sell her baby, she knew she had to do what she could to prevent that from happening, even if it meant fucking King Blaze. The problem was, she wasn't supposed to like it so much.

Left alone with him, she knew she'd have to do her best to convince him that she really wanted to be with him, but when he looked at her so appreciatively, her body had heated up. She didn't know if the gel was the reason or Blaze himself.

She closed her eyes tight as she started to dance for him, losing herself in the movements. Dancing had always been her escape, but she couldn't remember a time when she'd danced so hard or so diligently for anyone. She'd given it her all and had become lost, especially when he began to touch her. Then all reason fled.

As she touched, licked, and caressed him, Callie found herself enjoying it more than she should have. His long, thick cock had been a delightful mouthful that she couldn't get enough of once she'd gotten her lips wrapped around it.

What had they done to her to make her body respond to this man she was supposed to hate?

Now, as she lay beneath him, Callie trembled with anticipation, wondering what he would do next. His body pressed hers into his soft mattress, but he merely stared at her, his intense green gaze seeming to penetrate to the very core. She wiggled beneath him involuntarily.

"If you keep that up, when I take you, it won't be gentle," he said gruffly before softly caressing the side of her face.

She'd expected him to tear off her skirt and slide between her lips. His tender touch confused her, and she wished he'd fuck her and get it over with. The longer he dragged this out, the harder it would be to explain the strange feelings she felt bubbling at the surface.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" she finally broke down and asked.

"Why shouldn't I look at you? Your beauty leaves me speechless."

Her lips parted with surprise. Why did he have to be sweet when she was supposed to hate him? "Thank you," she murmured, feeling shy all of a sudden.

"I'm sure you know how beautiful you are." She knew she was an attractive woman, but her looks weren't something she obsessed about.

"I don't really give it a thought." Callie wanted to change the subject now. This conversation was getting dangerous.

"Don't you want me?" Batting her lashes as seductively as she could, she wiggled her hips beneath him. The hardness of his erection pressed deliciously against her thigh. Her pussy was on fire and only he could douse it. Blaze chuckled.

"It pleases me that you're so eager, but since you've pleased me, I think it's my turn."

"Please, fuck me, Sire. My pleasure doesn't matter. I'm only here to please you," she said, not wanting his gentleness or his kindness. He grasped her face in his hand and brushed his lips against her slightly parted ones.

"I told you to call me Blaze. It's just you and me, Calliope, and I wish to hear you say it."

"Blaze," the word tore from her throat.

He pressed his lips against her cheek this time. "Very good. I like the way you say it. Did you know that you're the first concubine I've allowed to use my untitled name?"

Why was he telling her this? Why couldn't he just do what he had to do? With each passing second, she was losing her will to reason properly. She merely shook her head to his question.

"Your body heat gives you away. You want this too, don't you?" Again she nodded.

"Good, because I've been crazy for you these past few days. I'm glad you've come to me," he admitted.

Making one last attempt to get him to take her immediately, Callie spread her legs. "Fuck me, Blaze."

"I will, my flower, but I like to play with my women a bit first."

The mention of his other women brought her to her senses. She stiffened, trying to fend off the flames of desire licking at her body. No! She didn't want to feel like this. Callie needed to remind herself that she wasn't one of his women.

All thoughts of resistance flew out the window, however, when he pressed his lips against the pulse at her throat, and then slid his tongue down her body, stopping at the valley of her breasts. Her body felt like a quivering bowl of gelatin.

Blaze nipped the side of her breasts, making Callie yelp with delight. He teased and tortured the taut mounds with his teeth and lips before taking a tight nipple into his mouth.

Unable to help herself, she dug her fingers into his silky blond locks. Moisture formed at the juncture of her thighs. She was ready for his cock, but Blaze apparently had other ideas. Lifting his head, he transferred his attention to her other nipple, taking as much time with it as he had with the other.

Just when she thought she couldn't take anymore, he slid down her body. Callie expected him to remove her skirt, but instead, he yanked it up her thigh until her pussy was exposed to his gaze.

"I like the way this looks against your skin," he said, rubbing the sheer material between his fingers. He slid the cloth over her skin, the friction creating yet another sizzling reaction within her. "Open your legs wide for me. I want to see all of you."

She didn't think to disobey him. Biting her bottom lip, she spread herself as far as her legs would go. She looked up at him expectantly, wondering what he'd do next. So far, his movements had been unpredictable. Blaze swiped his fingers at her damp entrance, not quite sliding in.

"Please," she pleaded, although she wasn't really sure what she was begging for.

"Do you like this, my flower?" He lifted one fair brow.

Closing her eyes against the smug expression on his face, she nodded. "Yes."

"Do you want me to stick my fingers inside of you?"

"Yes, please," she answered breathlessly.

"And I want to do that to you too." When he bent his head to place a kiss against her trimmed cunt, Callie thought she'd climax right then and there. The anticipation was nearly too much for her to take.

"You have a pretty pussy, Calliope. I wonder if it will taste as good as it looks and smells."

Her eyes opened. "Well, there's one way to find out," she challenged, not knowing where she'd gotten the courage to say that to him.

"There is indeed, flower." Settling himself between her thighs until he was eye level with her pussy, he slipped two thick digits into her waiting channel.

Callie gasped with pleasure, lifting her hips at the wondrous ministrations of his fingers. When his tongue brushed against her clit, she moaned and wiggled more fervently.

Blaze belted out that wonderful guttural laugh of his. "Hold still, my flower. I know you're eager, just give me this." He captured her clit in his mouth, sucking gently.

"Blaze, that feels so good," she sighed.

A sultry wave of passion tore through her. She moaned, raking her fingers over his broad, muscled shoulders. As he sucked her hot throbbing button, he eased his fingers in and out of her. She moved against them, delirious with desire.

He made grunting noises as he feasted on her cunt, as though he couldn't get enough of her taste. Blaze licked, nibbled and slurped for what seemed like hours, but she knew it couldn't have been that long. Afterwards, he licked her with long broad strokes, removing his dew soaked fingers. There wasn't a part of her pussy he didn't explore, running his questing tongue from her clit to the crack of her ass. He circled the tight, puckered hole, and then licked her all over again.

Callie couldn't recall a time when she'd had her pussy eaten so thoroughly. She felt like a smorgasbord spread out for his consumption, and she loved it.

She was just on the edge of reaching her peak when he lifted his head. "I can't hold off any longer. I need to be inside of you, now."

Callie shook with eagerness. This is what she'd been waiting for since she'd first freed his cock. She wanted to feel that thick shaft slamming into her body and filling her.

Blaze pushed himself to his knees and positioned his cock at her entrance. "Part yourself for me, Calliope," he whispered hoarsely.

Slipping her hands between her legs, she separated her outer labia to accept his entrance. She was already dripping from the sensational things he'd done with his mouth and fingers.

He pushed the thick mushroomed shaped cock head into her and paused.

"More!" she demanded, raising her hips to receive his entire length.

He seemed bent on taking things slow, however. She looked up at him. His eyes were closed, a satisfied expression on his face. "Give me a minute, my flower. Let me enjoy how good you feel and how wet you are for me."

If she had the strength, she'd flip him over and impale herself on his cock. She wanted him so badly she could yell.

As though sensing her need, Blaze finally slid into her slowly, an inch at a time.

"Ah," he groaned.

Blaze kept pushing until he was balls deep inside of her. He leaned over her, his arms holding him braced as he gently began to move inside of her.

Callie loved the feeling of being deliciously stretched by this powerful man. His cock was thick and long, but she was so incredibly wet that Blaze was able to slide into her with no problem. She bit her lip, trying not to shout because that would be the ultimate surrender. She wanted to hang onto her last shred of pride, but it grew harder as more time passed.

"This pussy is so tight around my cock. It's almost like it was made especially for me. I was crazy to think I could do without this. Now that I know exactly what I'm missing, I'll not let you deny me again," he grumbled, all while pushing in and out of her hot hole.

His possessiveness had caused her to stiffen momentarily, but her indignation quickly fled with each thrust of his pole. She ran her nails down his back in the heat of passion, accidentally tearing his flesh.

He grunted.

"I'm sorry," she quickly apologized.

"No need to apologize. I like it. Don't hold back with me. I want all you have to give. Moan for me, Calliope."

"Oh, Blaze," she moaned on command.

"Yes, that's what I want to hear. Scream for me."

"Blaze!" she yelled at the top of her lungs, giving herself permission to let loose.

Since he had ordered her to do so, she convinced herself that she was doing it not because she wanted to, but because she had to please him or else. Never mind that she'd been holding back that scream since he'd thrown her on the bed.

Gripping her hips, he pushed into her harder and faster, picking up the pace.

Callie allowed herself the luxury of staring at Blaze, so earnest, so strong and so nakedly erotic. Wanting to have him deeper, she twisted her legs around him, pulling him in further.

"Ah, Calliope!" With a growl he increased the pace yet again, grinding into her like a man possessed, his pelvis slapping into hers.

Fire seared through her. Climax was near. "Yes, oh, Blaze, yes!" she cried as a powerful orgasm rocked her body to its core.

Her legs tightened around him, and the next thing she knew, his seed shot up the thirsty channel of her cunt.

“Calliope!” He yelled her name, making it sound like a primal howl. Her pussy clenched around his cock, milking him of every drop of his come. When he’d emptied his balls into her, Blaze collapsed on top of her. Though he was significantly larger than she, she barely felt his weight. Instead, she welcomed it.

When she’d come to his bedroom, the last thing she’d expected was to experience something so cataclysmic. Her breathing ragged, she lay underneath him, thinking that she’d enjoyed being fucked far more than she should have. She didn’t want to think about him other than a means of getting more access to London.

Blaze rolled over on his back. The minute his weight left her, she made a move to get out of the bed, wanting to get away and think about what had just occurred.

The king, however, had other ideas.

Grabbing her shoulder, he pulled her into the crook of his arm. “Where do you think you’re going?” he asked lazily, letting one hand trail down the side of her breast.

Callie shivered. His touch was irresistible. “I... I... aren’t we finished for the night? I thought I was supposed to go back to my room.”

“You don’t go until I tell you to. And, for now, I want you to stay close to me.”

“But... it was my understanding that we don’t spend the night with you.”

“Calliope, I am the king. I make the rules. Now relax and let me hold you.”

Funny, but she hadn’t thought of him as a cuddler. There were so many things she was learning about this man that were making it hard for her to think badly of him.

The quiet between them stretched, but Callie couldn’t get comfortable enough to just lie contently in his arms. Her mind was racing a mile a minute. She thought about Paris and the last time she’d seen her. Though the circumstances made it beyond her control, she couldn’t help feeling guilty for not being there for her daughter. Callie only hoped she was being well taken care of at least.

More than anything she wanted to go home, but how could she? Even if she could escape from Blaze, how would she get back to Earth?

"What are you thinking?" he asked, breaking the silence.

"I'm thinking about home," she answered honestly. When the words were out, she realized she should have chosen them more carefully. His grip around her body tightened painfully, making her gasp, before he relaxed it again.

"I think I've already told you that this is your home. You belong to me, and you won't go anywhere without my say so," he said fiercely, pulling on her hair, forcing her to look at him.

"But what if you tire of me? What then?"

"I'm not sure I like the direction of this conversation. What are you trying to get at?"

"If only one woman could satisfy you, there wouldn't be a harem. Just from the gossip I've heard from the other women, you haven't touched some of them in months. And many have been replaced. I can't think myself so special that you wouldn't eventually grow tired of me as well. What will you do with me when that happens? Would you let me go home?"

"You are home!" he roared.

She flinched. Pushing his buttons wasn't her intention, but this was something she had to know. "I only wondered --"

"Then stop wondering. I will never let you go, so get it out of your head. What's so important back home anyway?"

"Someone more precious than you'll ever know," she muttered, her temper getting a hold of her. She didn't care if he didn't like the topic. Thoughts of being reunited with her child gave her the courage to question him.

Blaze's green eyes narrowed and his body stiffened. "Did you have a mate back on Earth? Not that it matters to me one way or the other because you belong to me now."

Tears sprang to her eyes at the offhand way he dismissed her old life. It may not have been the best life, and there had been constant struggles, but it was her life.

To hear him belittle it angered her beyond belief. She attempted to get up again, only for him to hold her until the air was nearly squashed from her lungs.

His next words surprised her. "I've upset you, haven't I?"

She pursed her lips mutinously, not wanting to say another word to him. This was beyond enough.

"If I have, I apologize." He let go of her. "If you wish to return to your own place of rest tonight, you may go."

Maybe she was a glutton for punishment because instead of scrambling off the bed as she'd originally wanted to, Callie paused.

"I think I'm the one who upset you, but we're on different sides of the issue. When I was on Earth, I had a life of my own, friends, a career, and I was free. My life changed when I was taken by the Adieaens. They told me I'd be sold on an auction block as though I were an object and not a being with feelings and thoughts. You can't expect me to forget about the life I was snatched from, and then turn around and kiss the ground you walk on. It doesn't work that way. Or at least where I come from it doesn't. If the tables were turned and you were literally kidnapped from all you know and love, would you be happy about it?"

He paused for a moment, seeming to take in all she'd said before answering.

"I can see your point, and I suppose if the roles were reversed I wouldn't be too happy either. This has, however, been the way of my people for a long time. What do you expect me to do about it?"

"Aren't you the king? You say your word is law. Change the laws."

"What laws do you propose I change?"

"The one about purchasing slaves."

"What would you know about it?"

"I know that on Earth my ancestors were slaves. Many countries outlawed the practice, and soon the rest of them followed. They did this because people realized how inhumane it is to own another human being. Maybe you could outlaw the practice of purchasing slaves and owning slaves. At least in your kingdom," she suggested.

For a minute, he actually looked as though he was considering the idea. Then his expression went stormy. "If this is an attempt at getting me to release you, then forget about it. You're just going to have to accustom yourself to belonging to me." He yanked her back to him. "I'll never let you go. Never!"

Chapter Seven

Blaze walked down the hall toward the harem's chamber. He couldn't wait for dinner tonight. Never had he been more eager for the warmth of one particular woman, but with Calliope, he just couldn't help himself. Each night their bodies joined it was just as explosive as the first time. He wasn't getting the least bit tired of her. In fact, the more he had her, the more he wanted her.

After that first night when he'd made it clear to her that there was no escaping him, she never brought the subject up again, but his conscience was pricked. If the truth were known, he wasn't crazy about the institution of slavery either, preferring the paid servants and the robots to tend to his needs.

Most of his harem members were there voluntarily. There had been many times when he'd thought of outlawing slavery on Thibius, but that was before the beautiful human came into his life. If he outlawed slavery, he'd be forced to let her go. He couldn't do it.

When she was with him, he couldn't get enough of her, and when they were apart, his thoughts were consumed with her. Everything about her pleased him, from her gentle smile to the way she'd dance for him. Every now and then she'd share little glimpses of herself with him. There was still so much she kept to herself, but he hoped she'd eventually trust him enough to open up to him.

He'd inform Tuk that he wanted to have dinner in his room and for Calliope to join him. What was the point of going through with the nightly ritual when everyone knew he'd end up choosing her anyway?

To get to the harem's room, he had to pass through the servants' quarters. As he made his way down the hall, he halted when he spotted a small child standing in the middle of the hall. Where had she come from?

As he drew closer, he took a better look at her. She had the appearance of a human child and, if he wasn't mistaken, she looked like a miniature version of Calliope. What was the meaning of this? The child eyed him warily.

Kneeling before the pretty little girl, he asked, "Where do you belong, little one?"

The child looked him up and down, then poked her lip out. "I want Mama."

"Can you tell me your name?" he tried again as patiently as he could. He didn't have much experience with children and didn't know if this was normal behavior or not.

"London. I want Mama."

"London is your name?" It was an odd name to him, but he didn't presume to know the minds of humans.

She nodded.

"What's your mama's name?"

"Mama," the child answered, as though it were the simplest question in the world.

"Oh, Sire, I'm so sorry. I hope the little one didn't get in your way." Nola, one of his servants, ran over to him and grabbed the child by the arm.

"What is this child doing here? And who does she belong to?" Nola's mouth gaped open then closed. Blaze tapped his foot impatiently.

"I'm waiting, Nola."

"Well, Tuk told me to watch her," the woman stalled.

"That doesn't answer my question. I would hate to dismiss you over something as simple as this, seeing as you've served me well."

"But you can't do that!" Nola protested and then, remembering herself, she bowed her head. "Please forgive my rash tongue, Sire, but I was only following Tuk's orders. The child came with your newest concubine. This is her daughter," the woman confessed.

His suspicions were confirmed and confusion seeped in. Why would Tuk and Darus bring a child back with them? That certainly wasn't protocol. But what bothered him the most was that Calliope hadn't mentioned her daughter.

Hurt rose within his breast. He looked down at the little girl whose resemblance to her mother was uncanny.

"I want Mama," she said again.

"Nola, what has the child been doing all this time?"

Not raising her bowed head, the servant woman answered, "Mainly she stays with me while I do my duties. She's a good girl."

"Hmm. Take her with you and make sure that some toys are purchased for her at market. I believe little girls like dolls."

"Yes, Sire. Of course. Come along, London. I'll see if cook will fix you a nice treat." She took the child by the hand and led her off.

He couldn't get to Calliope or Tuk fast enough for one of them to explain what this was all about. How dare they keep this from him?

When he burst into the harem's chambers, several of the women who'd been lying around stood up immediately and ran over to him, but he only had eyes for the woman sitting by the window, looking out of it so longingly.

"Greetings, Sire. What honor you bestow on us to visit in the middle of the day like this," Vesta, one of his concubines, cooed.

"Where's Tuk?" he demanded.

"She's gone to see to things for tonight's dinner, but she said she'd return shortly," another concubine answered.

His eyes never left Calliope who had turned her head to see him. She looked faintly surprised and rose from her spot. Not waiting for her to walk to him, he went to her.

"I wish to have a word with you... in private. Come with me. Ladies, you will inform Tuk where Calliope is, I'm sure," he said, ignoring the looks of disappointment on his other concubines' faces.

He grasped Calliope by the elbow and led her out of the room.

"They already hate me. Now they'll hate me even more," she said solemnly.

Blaze paused for a moment but continued on. He probably shouldn't have singled her out in front of the other women like that, but, dammit, he'd been so eager to see her, and now he wanted answers. Needed answers.

He led her out to the mechanical garden.

"This is nice. I think it's the first time I've actually been outside since I've been here," she sighed, then took a whiff of air. "I don't think I've ever seen flowers quite like this before."

Blaze motioned for her to sit on a long stone bench. "During the chemical war, most of the vegetation on this planet was wiped out. Almost everything that grows now is by machine. Some of the crops and flowers are new creations. They're nice, but I miss the real thing."

"I can imagine. Why did you bring me out here?"

"I believe I should be the one asking questions, Calliope. And what I'd like to know is why am I just finding out that you have a child?" A stricken expression crossed her face, eyes widening with what looked like fear.

"What would it have mattered? I do all that you ask me to do."

"No, you don't. You give me that delectable body of yours, but that's it. You close yourself off to me, never sharing any other part of yourself." Calliope looked away, eyes downcast.

"I didn't realize it was a requirement. What do you think I should do?"

"I don't want you to hold anything back from me."

"Whatever it is you want from me, I'll give it to you, just please don't send her away. She's all I have left. It wasn't Tuk and Darus's fault either. I refused to leave Adlene without her."

Blaze sighed. It was obvious that Calliope dearly loved her daughter, but something didn't make sense. He'd tried to get her to open up to him on many occasions. There were times after they fucked when he'd hold her in his arms and ask her things about herself, but his questions were usually met with one word responses or something that didn't have much to do with the subject.

“Do you think I’m such a monster that I would send her away when she obviously means so much to you? I’m not a bad person. I only wish you would have told me about her. There has been ample opportunity for you to do so.”

“I believe you made it quite clear from the first time we screwed that you didn’t want to know about my life on Earth. So why should I share anything with you just to be shot down?”

A sudden wave of shame washed through him as he remembered when he’d told her that. At the time it had been his stubbornness that had prevented him from wanting to know more about her life because if he had, he would have been forced to further examine the other things she’d told him. He didn’t want to because that would mean having to set her free.

Even now that thought pained him. He mulled it over in his head and realized she was more than just a concubine. She was a woman he couldn’t live without.

He’d fought this feeling from the moment he’d laid eyes on her, but now he couldn’t. Blaze was no better than his father, pining for a woman and letting her consume his thoughts. And there wasn’t a damn thing he could do about it. For the first time in his life, he was in love. There were no rules that said once he set her free that she couldn’t be his queen, but was it something she wanted?

“You have no idea how deeply I regret those words. If I could take them back, I would. Can we not start over again? Get to know each other better?”

Calliope laughed humorlessly while eyeing him warily. “And why would you want to do that? I’m just a slave to you to do what you want with. Now that you know about my daughter, I suppose you’ll use her against me like the others have.”

His heart pounded, threatening to burst through his chest. Surely she couldn’t be implying what he thought she was.

“Explain yourself,” he demanded, nostrils flaring.

“The Adieaens told me they’d sell her if I didn’t do what they asked. They subjected me to all kinds of humiliating things, and I did them for her. And the only reason Tuk and Darus brought her along was because they saw they could use her in the same way.”

Blaze frowned, not liking where this was headed.

"Are you saying the reason you rejoined my harem was because they pressured you, using your daughter as incentive?" Chest tight, he found it difficult to breathe. He held his breath while waiting for her response.

"I never wanted to be in your harem. But like before, I did it for London. I've endured your touch for her sake."

An unbelievable hurt like he'd never dealt with before crushed him. With her stoic confession, it felt like she'd ripped out his heart and squashed it in her delicate palms. He looked at her imploringly, waiting for her to take it back, to tell him she hadn't meant it, but instead he was met with stony silence.

She spoke of humiliation, but nothing was more humiliating than realizing you loved someone, and the object of your affections not only didn't return your feelings, but wanted nothing to do with you. He stood up abruptly and paced the garden, trying to figure out his next course of action. His pride said to let her go if she truly didn't want to be with him, but his heart and body wouldn't allow it.

No!

He couldn't accept what she'd told him. Maybe his servants had used Calliope's daughter to their advantage, but she couldn't fake her responses. When she moaned for him, it seemed like she meant it. When she told him how much she'd wanted him, that had been real too. His anger grew into a raging beast, so strong he could almost see it. Blaze wanted to scream and lash out. Instead, he stalked back over to where she sat.

"Liar!" Calliope gasped, quickly looking away from him. Her body started to tremble.

"I'm sorry."

"Not as sorry as you will be if you don't admit the truth to me. Admit to me that you want me as much as I want you!" he yelled.

Raising her chin, she looked him square in the eye but didn't say a word. So she was challenging him? He'd show her exactly who was in charge.

"So you think I'm a monster? You think I'm repulsive. Fine. I'll show you how repulsive I can be." Fumbling with his pants, he undid them just enough to free his cock which was already hard and ready for Calliope's pussy. Plopping down on the bench, he looked at her. "Come sit on my cock."

Her eyes widened. "But... anyone could walk out here," she argued.

"So what? This is my palace, and I can do what I want, where I want. And right now I want you to come sit on my cock. Or shall I have a talk with Tuk about your precious little London?" He knew he shouldn't have said it, but he'd never been angrier in his life.

She stood up abruptly. "Just as I thought," she muttered softly. Fists clenching at her sides, she stared at him long and hard for several moments. Then she started to slide her billowing skirts down her hips.

"Slower. And I want you to unhook the bra first. When you sit on my member I'm going to want to suck those firm breasts of yours while you ride me. Don't deprive me of the show this time. You so like putting on a show, don't you, Calliope?"

He didn't wait for her to answer as he noticed her shaking. Whether from embarrassment or anger, he couldn't tell. He continued to taunt her.

"Take your time undressing for me. I want to see that I got my money's worth."

Even to his own ears that sounded harsh, but he was beyond reasoning right now. He wanted to pay her back for hurting him. Were those tears glistening in her eyes? No, he was just imagining them. He had to be.

Calliope took a deep breath and slowly unclipped her bra to reveal two dark perfect breasts his palms itched to fondle. His mouth watered as he eyed the nearly black peaks crowning the gorgeous mounds.

When she made a move to take her skirt off, he held his hand up to her. "Wait, don't take it off. Lift it up and show me your cunt."

Again she hesitated but obeyed him, slowly lifting the sheer material over lean muscled legs and rounded hips.

"Spread your legs a little," he ordered.

Her eyes narrowed slightly, but she did as she was told.

"Very nice. Now come over here. No, keep the skirt up. Yes, right here," he whispered, reaching over to run his finger along her slit. "Such a pretty pussy and such a wet one. You may deny that you want me, but your body says otherwise."

Calliope turned her head away from him, gasping when Blaze inserted two fingers into her wet box, sliding them in to the hilt.

“Look at me. I want to see your face as my fingers fuck you.”

“Why are you doing this to me?” she asked, barely above a whisper, voice trembling.

For a brief second, his conscience kicked in but Blaze immediately pushed it back. He’d make her feel the pain he felt before this was all over. It could have been different between the two of them, but this was a choice she’d made.

“I won’t tell you again. Ride my fingers, Calliope,” he said tightly.

She closed her eyes and began to move up and down on his hand, her pussy gushing around his fingers.

“Damn, you’re tight. That’s it. Ride it. Move those hips,” he ordered as he slid another finger in her damp channel, stretching her as far as she’d go. A soft moan escaped her lips and he chuckled, reveling in the fact that she was getting off on this. It vindicated him to know that she wanted him to do this to her. “You like this don’t you, Calliope?”

“Don’t make me say it.”

“Oh, but that’s exactly what I’m going to make you do. Say it or I’ll remove my fingers. I’ll stop right now. Would you rather tell me what I want to hear, or would you rather I stop doing this all together?”

“I hate you,” she muttered under her breath, but he heard her loud and clear.

This only egged him on.

“Maybe you do hate me, but your body doesn’t. I think I might even prefer your hate. Your pussy has never been wetter. It’s drenching my hand, and the aroma is headier than anything you could imagine.” Pulling his fingers out of her, he brought them to his mouth and licked every drop of her from his hand, his eyes never leaving hers. “Delicious. Now come here. I need to be inside you.”

He could tell it was an effort for her to come to him, but Blaze was beyond caring. Lifting her skirt higher, she straddled his hips, fitting her pussy over his hard member. Slowly she slid over him, taking a little of his cock into her at a time until he was nearly touching her womb.

“Oh, Calliope,” he groaned, savoring the feel of her pussy clenched snugly around him. It felt like a firm wet fist.

Deep down, he wished things didn't have to be like this between them, but she'd left him no choice. How was he supposed to act when she'd made her contempt for him known? He certainly had no intention of allowing her to find out how badly she'd hurt him.

He grabbed her by the hips to guide her. When she threw her arms around him, he leaned forward to capture one taut nipple between his teeth, teasing and torturing it gently. Transferring his attention to her other breast, he sucked and nipped her tight peak until it was swollen. As she began to bounce up and down on his cock, he knew he could never let her go no matter what. He'd keep her by any means necessary.

Nibbling on her breasts, he dug his fingers into her lush hips, slamming his cock into her so hard she cried out with each thrust. Torrent waves of pleasure swam through his body.

She moaned, softly at first, but as his thrusts became more frenzied, she cried out, her dark mounds jiggling seductively. Her scent and taste were enough to drive him wild with a reckless passion he could not hold. Greedy for her words of adulation, he commanded her to say his name.

“Blaze! Oh, Blaze. Your cock feels so good,” she groaned.

She rocked her hips over him and he knew the floodgates would soon open, but she needed something more. He wanted some ass, in the worst way. He had to make sure she knew exactly who she belonged to.

Lifting her up slightly, Blaze pulled his cock out. It made a slurping noise as it slid out of her pussy. Pressing the tip against the puckered ring of her anus, he pushed his hips up. His cock was so wet he knew it would be easy sliding into her lush ass.

Calliope stiffened.

“Easy, my flower. We’ve done this before. This is no different. Now relax so I can fuck this luscious ass as it was intended.”

Easing his cock into her anal tunnel, he gasped at the exquisite sensation. She wrapped her arms around his neck and buried her face in his neck. Blaze gave her a moment to adjust to him, but he found it difficult to hold back. “Are you ready for this?” he asked through gritted teeth.

“Yes,” she whispered.

Wrapping his fingers around her tiny waist, Blaze bucked his hips forward. Her ass was so incredibly tight that he knew he’d be finished within a few strokes, but he needed this. The feel of her lips pressed against his skin was enough to wreak havoc on his senses.

He was gentle at first, and then pounded into her. He branded and claimed her with each thrust. Her fingernails dug into his skin, breaking it. Blaze groaned, knowing he’d never feel like this with any other woman. Calliope had ruined him for anyone else. He should have resented her for that, but he couldn’t. He loved her too much and if she hurt, he hurt too.

She ground her ass over him, sending his cock deeper up her chute. He hissed at the scintillating sensation. Unable to hold back any longer, he exploded into her, shooting his seed up her ass.

Judging from the way she writhed and wiggled against him, Calliope was also reaching her peak. Her juices flowed from her fragrant pussy, wetting his lap.

Blaze pressed his forehead against hers, trying to catch his breath. Now that it was over, he wished he’d handled things differently instead of playing the arrogant King. He felt something damp on the side of his face. At first he thought it was sweat, but when he looked up, he saw her watery eyes. He felt like the monster she’d accused him of being.

Gritting his teeth, he gently eased out of her, his come oozing from her ass as he set her on her feet to pull her skirt down. Blaze pushed his semi-erect cock back into his pants and fastened them before pulling Calliope on his lap.

She didn’t meet his gaze. Gently cupping her cheek, he turned her head until she was facing him.

“Calliope, I’m sorry. I never meant things to be like this between us.”

“Why are you bothering to apologize to me? I am, after all, just a lowly slave. My feelings don’t matter, right?” She looked away again, her eyes glistening.

“I’m sorry I said those things to you. But I was hoping... well, do you think you could ever reach a point where you could learn to care for me, even just a little?”

“What does it matter? Regardless of how I feel, you’ll do what you want. I’m at your mercy.”

“What can I do to change your mind? Despite what you think, I don’t want you to hate me.”

She turned to look at him again, her eyes seeming to beg him. “Then let me go home. Let me and my child go back to where we belong.”

If she would have asked for anything else, he would have gladly given it to her ten times over, but that was the one thing he couldn’t do.

Sadly, he shook his head.

“I can never let you go. You belong to me, and as long as I breathe, that’s the way it shall always remain.”

Chapter Eight

"Mama!" London wailed as Callie held her tight.

"Quiet, baby. We can't make a sound." Looking around the corridor, she scrambled down the hall. If she could make it out of the castle to the loading docks, then it was possible she'd be home free.

After the incident in the mechanical garden with Blaze, Callie knew she had to find a way to escape. He would never let her go, and the longer she stayed, the stronger her feelings for him became. She wasn't sure how they'd snuck up on her like that, but one minute all she could think about was getting away and the next she found herself longing for him.

She didn't want to be in love with him. She had her daughter to think about, and she had to get back to Earth to reunite with Paris. Since that time in the garden, he'd moved her from the harem room to his chambers, making his message clear.

Callie didn't miss the other concubines.

They'd all excluded her from conversation and made rude comments when they did speak to her. The thing was, she wasn't sure if staying in his chambers was preferable. The only perk of her new lodging was that when he wasn't there, he allowed London to visit.

Once, he'd come back to his room while she and her daughter were playing a game and joined them. It was a little unsettling to her how much she'd enjoyed that, and London for some reason really liked Blaze and he her.

At night, he made Callie's body sing in ways she didn't think possible. Each time was so hot, she was sure it couldn't get any better, but it did.

The most surprising change in Blaze was that he showed her a side of him that made it hard for her to resist. She saw his softer side. Whenever she mentioned something, he'd give it to her. He seemed like an eager puppy at times, trying to gain her attention, and she didn't know why, didn't know if she could trust it or the way he made her feel when they touched.

Callie knew how easy it would be for her to grow comfortable in her situation.

That couldn't happen. As long as Paris remained on Earth, she could never stop trying to get home. The problem was how. She had no idea how to fly a ship, and she had no means to get back to Earth until she'd overheard two of Blaze's men.

Ever since he'd moved her to his chambers, he allowed her to go out to the mechanical garden with London whenever she liked, with an escort of course.

Two of his men talked about a trip through a black hole that would take them to the Milky Way. There they would study the inhabitants for an experiment.

That conversation had given her hope because she knew the only habitable planet in that galaxy was Earth, thanks to Mrs. Crowder's 6th grade science class.

Deciding that she would need to stow away, she set her plan into action.

Only minutes before, she'd made love to Blaze like never before, giving her all, heart and soul, because in her mind it would be their last. It had been so world-shattering that he'd drifted off to sleep not too long afterwards. She then snuck out of the room and ran to the servants' chambers to fetch her daughter.

Fortunately Nola was sound asleep.

Sweeping up her daughter from her tiny cot, Callie stole off into the night. She knew the ship was due to leave in the morning, and she'd have to spend the night on it in some hidden compartment. She turned around another corner and was again relieved to find it empty.

"Sleepy, Mama," London whined.

"Shh, once we get where we're going, I promise you can sleep as much as you want."

When Callie made it to what was supposed to be the loading dock, she came face to face with one large metal door with no handle. Seeing some buttons on the side of the door, she pushed. Nothing. She tried another button and that turned on a light which she immediately turned back off. God, what was the right one to push? There were so many.

Suddenly she heard footsteps, and in a panic she began to press every button she could. To her horror, a blaring alarm sounded, and orange, red and blue lights flickered on and off. London, obviously frightened from the noise, began to cry.

"It's all right, baby."

She tried to soothe London while pushing more buttons. Miraculously the door opened and she sped out. There were at least twenty spaceships.

Which one was she supposed to get on? How could she have been so stupid to come out here without knowing which ship to get on? Now she'd get caught.

The big metal door opened again. Callie turned to see two Thibians race out, followed by a handful of guards. One she recognized as Blaze's advisor, Radien, and the other, Darus. Both men halted when they spotted her.

Radien stepped forward, signaling for the guards to halt.

"What's going on out here?" he asked.

"Isn't it obvious? She's trying to escape. I knew it was a mistake for the king to trust this human." Darus glared at her and made a move to walk her way.

Radien held him back and looked at Callie. "Is this true? Were you trying to escape?"

What was the point of lying? She'd been caught red-handed. Now she wondered what they'd do to her. "I had to."

Radien frowned, his forehead crinkled. "But why? Wasn't Blaze good to you? I haven't seen him treat any of his concubines as well as he's treated you, and I thought... aren't you happy here?"

"I can never be happy here." She wasn't about to explain herself to anyone.

The slender man looked disappointed for some reason. "I see. Well, of course you know the king won't be very pleased."

"What will I not pleased about. What are you doing out here, Calliope? Why did you leave the bed?" Blaze joined the rest of them, his chest still bare.

Darus sidled up to Blaze. "We caught this ungrateful human trying to escape," the servant said, seeming to take delight in delivering the message.

Callie wanted to knock the snot out of him. Blaze turned to her, the look of hurt evident in his eyes. Her heart ached for him.

"Is that true, Calliope?" he asked softly.

She couldn't meet his eyes, nor could she answer him. It hurt too much. Oddly enough, London remained silent through this exchange.

"I see," he said with comprehension. "Radien, if you don't mind taking the child back to Nola, she looks rather tired. Calliope and I need to have a talk."

Callie shivered.

What did he mean to do to her?

Would he beat her?

Would he send her back to the harem room?

Was there an underlying threat in his words concerning London?

Would he get rid of her? That thought chilled her to the bone.

When he turned, he didn't wait to see if she would follow or not, but she knew she had no choice. Not a word was spoken until they made it back to his bedroom.

"Have a seat." Blaze gestured to the bed.

Callie sat down, uncertainty hitting her. She watched as he walked back and forth, not speaking. The waiting was killing her. "What will you do to me?"

He ignored her question and kept making circles around the room, a look of deep concentration on his face.

"Please, would you say something? If I'm in trouble, can't you just get it over with?"

He turned to her then, and her mouth fell open. Blaze looked like he wanted to cry. "What do you think I should do to you?"

Callie shrugged. She'd expected him to yell and rage at her. This was not the reaction she'd expected and it was unnerving. "I don't know."

"There's only one thing left to do. I figured that you were trying to stow away on the ship headed for Earth in the morning. If you really want to go, you have my blessing. I'm not going to keep you if you don't want to be here."

Callie didn't know what to expect, but it certainly hadn't been this. Was she dreaming? Or was it some kind of trick?

"And you'd allow me to take London with me?" she asked cautiously.

"There could be no other way. You're free."

She should have been elated, but she wasn't. In fact, she was sad. That he would let her go so easily disturbed her more than she wanted to admit. "Why?" she couldn't help asking.

Lifting one blond brow, he looked at her questioningly. "You can ask that after you just tried to escape? Isn't this what you wanted?"

"Yes. It was... I mean... is, but you were so adamant that you wouldn't let me go. Why the change of heart?"

He clenched and unclenched his fists at his side. "You won't let me have my dignity, will you? Fine, but get ready to laugh. I love you. I think I have from the moment I set eyes on you. I've tried so hard to fight it, but I can't do that any longer. I have my pride though, and I'm not going to keep you here if you don't love me back. Now laugh. I'm sure that's what you want to do."

Callie was stunned. She walked over to him and placed her hand on his chest.

"Do you mean it?"

"Do you want to rub it in? I'll allow you your victory, but don't push it. Yes, I love you. Why aren't you laughing?" he asked tightly.

"Because I love you too. I think I've loved you almost from the beginning as well."

He pulled her into his arms and kissed her long and hard, taking her breath away. When he lifted his head, a tear escaped his eye.

"You have no idea how I've longed to hear those words from your lips. Why did you never say anything?"

"You have a harem full of women waiting to do your bidding. What was I supposed to do? I was just one of many."

"That's not true. None of the other women even existed for me after you came into my life. I've thought of no one but you. Please say you'll stay with me. Be my queen."

"I'm just a slave. Can you do that?"

"I'm the king. I can do what I want. Just say yes."

She found his revelation overwhelming. Her need to get back to Earth to get her daughter conflicted with her longing to stay with Blaze. She burst into tears. It would be hard to leave him, but her child came first.

"Why are you crying, my flower? All you have to do is say yes. If you're worried about London, I'll raise her as if she were my own. She'll be a princess, with all the luxuries she can dream of."

"I love you so much, but I can't stay with you."

He gripped her shoulders and gave her a bewildered look. "What do you mean you can't stay with me? If I love you and you feel the same, what's the problem?"

"The problem is that London isn't my only child. When we were taken by the Adieaens, my other daughter was at home with a sitter."

"You have another child?"

"London has a twin. Her name is Paris. She's too young to be without me. I can't just leave her there to fend for herself."

"So that's the reason you were trying to escape?" She nodded with a sniff.

"We've wasted so much time. If only you'd told me, we could have done something sooner. Just tell me exactly where on Earth she's located, and we'll find her."

"You would do that for me?" She was touched, her heart feeling like it would overflow with love for him.

"Yes. We'll find her and bring her back. I will love London and Paris as my daughters. How could I not when they're a part of you?"

"Oh, Blaze, I don't know what to say. I never thought things could turn out like this." Though she'd never get over the way she'd been taken from her home, Callie realized that if she hadn't been, she wouldn't have met Blaze. Things happened for a reason, and she was happy he was now in her life.

"Neither did I, but I'm glad."

"Of course you know you'll have to get rid of your harem. I don't want to share you."

"Consider it done." He chuckled, wrapping his arms around her.

"But don't sell them off. They're living creatures with feelings."

"My flower, we'll handle it however you see fit. I'll find them suitable husbands if that's what would please you."

She mulled it over in her head. That was probably the best solution. Callie couldn't stomach the slave trading. "I think that's a great idea. Besides, if they're occupied with their own men, they'll leave mine alone."

"You're getting very possessive, Calliope," he said with a wide smile on his face.

"Of course I am. You belong to me!"

Eve Vaughn

Eve Vaughn has enjoyed creating characters, and making up stories from an early age. As a child she was always getting into mischief, so when she lost her television privileges (which was often), writing was her outlet.

Eve likes to read, bake, make crafts, travel, and spend time with her family. She lives in the Philadelphia area with her husband. She loves hearing from her fans, so feel free to contact her at EveVaughn@yahoo.com.