

BARBARIAN

Kate Douglas

## Chapter 1

“You gave drugs to young women, some of them barely out of childhood. Drugs that brought them to a sexual peak and left them there...screaming, begging for release. Then you sold those poor girls, profited off their innocence and pain. How does it feel, Barbarian? How does it feel to hang there, your body screaming? Do you enjoy the *ultimate* pleasure? Does this please *you* ?”

He groaned, fighting the drug that had kept him hard for more hours than he could remember. Drugs alone that would have been bad enough, but she'd touched him, stroked his hard shaft, wrapped her small hands gently around his balls in a parody of lovemaking. Brought him to the edge of orgasm over and over again—to the edge but not beyond.

His balls had quit aching hours ago. Now completely numb, they merely pressed against his body in a futile attempt to escape the pain and pleasure of her touch. Goddess...he'd hated her just hours ago. Now he craved her. Craved her touch, her voice. Why?

Barbarian? She called him Barbarian. His name? An epithet? It didn't matter any more. All that mattered was release, the end of this sensual, tactile torture.

Release only she could give.

He opened his eyes, blinded by the light focused narrowly on his immobile body. His hair hung wet and matted against his shoulders and he could smell the stink of pain and fear on his own carcass. His arms ached, tied over his head with soft leather straps anchored to an iron ring in the ceiling. The bindings cut into his wrists, though he held tightly with both fists to relieve some of the pressure. His ankles burned from the shackles holding his feet apart.

His cock...hell, his cock had become his entire being. All sensation focused on that damned organ, swollen now well beyond a normal erection. Hard as stone, hot as a furnace, throbbing with each gentle caress his jailer bestowed.

He couldn't really see her, not the way she remained in the shadows, but he'd learned to beg for her touch, learned to thrust his hips forward each time she stroked him. Her lips had caressed him, once only and for much too brief a time, but the feel of that soft mouth encircling the tip of his cock had been fire added to an already burning pyre. If only she would give him release!

She stroked his hips, his belly, touching him gently as a lover might. His cock responded, damned traitor that it was. Suddenly she ran her fingers around his ass and penetrated him quickly, roughly. He jerked, clamping his lips together, fighting the need to beg. He would not beg. Never.

“My sister was a sex slave. Was she one of yours?” Something else entered his ass, something big and hard and cold. “She didn't survive. She died under the *gentle* tutelage of her first patron.”

She thrust savagely but he welcomed the exquisite combination of pleasure and pain, his mind wrapping itself around her words. *Sex slave*. He knew about sex slaves. He let his mind go blank, unable to think beyond the rhythmic thrusts to his ass, the throbbing erection that had become an integral part of his existence.

“She was only eighteen.”

Eighteen. So young. So many young women. He opened his eyes, squinting against the glaring light. “Sorry,” he mumbled, wondering what part, if any, he had played in a young girl’s death. He barely recognized his own voice. “So sorry.”

Whatever his captor thrust inside him was suddenly withdrawn. She moved into his field of vision, stepped within the circle of light, and stared at him.

She was a tiny thing, barely over five feet tall, her hair a mass of honey brown curls spilling over her shoulders, her eyes wide and green as the sea. Her mouth was wide, her lips compressed in anger. Breasts small and round and so perfect. So very, very perfect.

She clasped a wooden baton in her hand, the same one she’d violated him with only moments ago. “Sorry won’t cut it, you bastard! Not until you suffer like she did. Not until you pay.”

She stepped closer, tossing the baton aside and grabbing his cock. He groaned as she stroked him, her fingers gentle now in a parody of lovemaking, teasing him closer and closer to climax. He moaned and thrust his hips forward, praying for the long awaited release, the release he knew she would deny him once again.

A door slammed. Her fingers tightened, squeezing down on the base of his cock, then turned him loose. He sagged against his restraints.

“Captain! What the hell are you doing?”

“Teaching this bastard a lesson.” Her voice was ragged, harsh with unshed tears.

“Do you know who he is?”

“Yes, dammit! He’s the Barbarian. The most notorious sex slaver in this quadrant. I’ve been after him for almost two years. I’ve got him now and he’s mine.”

“No, Captain. He’s ours. He’s one of our operatives. Good Goddess, woman. You’ve captured one of the World Federation’s top agents. If you’ve harmed him, if you’ve blown his cover...shit. I can’t believe this. Turn him loose. Now.”

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“And that’s how I lost my commission. Not only did I blow the cover of our top field operative, I kept him shackled for over 15 hours while in a state of arousal.”

“Good Goddess, Bry. The same man I told you about? He was one of ours?”

“You got it. I did everything right, just the way we planned.” Bry stared at the ring of condensation

spreading out around the bottom of her glass, ran her fingers through the moisture. What she'd done with those hands, the harm she'd caused... she blinked her eyes quickly then raised her head and looked directly at her friend. "Yep. Drugged his drink at a bar and hired a couple of thugs to carry him to my ship. Marty, looking back, I can't believe I did what I did. It was one thing to plan his capture over a couple of drinks in a bar, but I used drugs on him, I restrained him against his will, I touched him inappropriately..."

"Like there's an *appropriate* way to sexually torture a prisoner?" Marty shook her short cap of dark hair, rolled her eyes and snorted. "C'mon, Bry. You didn't know who he was."

"I should have, dammit. We both should have. You, at least, had the sense not to participate in my stupid scheme."

Bry McKenzie clutched her drink in both hands, unwilling to look at her companion. Taller, stronger, her self-assurance and sloe-eyed, dark-haired looks a polar opposite to Bry's, Marty had been the one to point the Barbarian out to her. They'd both believed him to be exactly what they thought—the leader of a sex slave cartel.

"It's illegal to treat a prisoner the way I treated this man...do you have any idea what the penalty is when you do it to your own field operative?"

"I heard you lost your commission—the Nautilus?"

"Yeah. Actually, I resigned. I didn't want to give them the chance to can me. Goddess, how I loved that ship, but I was lucky. I could have spent thirty years in the brig..." She bowed her head. "That's the worst of it. He refused to press charges. Said he understood."

"I heard about that." Marty spun her glass between her fingers, then glanced sideways at Bry. "Do you know why?"

"No. I have no idea." She hung her head, still sickened by the sense of shame she carried with her. "I can't get him out of my mind. His face haunts me. As much as I hated him, something happened between us while I held him captive. He was absolutely beautiful...dark hair, dark eyes. His body was gorgeous. Marty, I looked at this man and *wanted* him!"

Bry glanced at her hands, realized they were shaking and clasped them tightly together. "It's sick. I believed him to be evil incarnate, a man who sold young women from all over the galaxy as sexual slaves, the most depraved soul on the face of the earth, yet while I was hurting him I was aware of some dark sexual satisfaction of my own."

She wrapped her arms around her middle, felt the hard ridges of her ribs, realized her entire body trembled. She'd sweated clear through her skinsuit so that the fabric clung even tighter, and she shook all over like she had some sort of palsy. *Damn*. The memories still ruled her life, destroyed her dreams.

Aroused her.

She clenched the muscles between her legs, unable to ignore the lush sense of need. Her body shamed her, responding to images of torture and degradation. Grew wet and ready when she remembered. Bry forced herself to relax, placed her hands, palm down, on the table and willed them to be still. She took a deep breath, let it out.

“At one point, I actually forgot what I was doing. Marty, I went *down* on him! The minute I tasted his cock, a little bit of sanity returned, but I wanted him as much as I hated him. I kept thinking of the Barbarian as a fallen angel, that it was my duty to punish him. The more I hurt him, the more I wanted him...and the angrier I got at myself.” She shook her head. It still seemed unreal. “I took it out on him...my own depravity. Goddess, Marty...he had to be lowered to the ground. His legs wouldn’t support him. His cock was swollen and his balls were hard as rocks. When they tried to lay him on the stretcher, he screamed.”

Marty nodded as if she understood and briefly covered Bry’s hands with one of hers. “You’ve never struck me as a cruel person, Bry. Do you have any idea why you went to such extremes?”

Bry rested her head in the palms of her hand. “I must have snapped! When Janie died, I saw the coroner’s report. I knew what they did to her. The Barbarian’s cover was so good, so thorough, I thought he was part of the cartel that kidnapped my sister. I had no idea he was working against them. I blew his cover and put a good man through torture.” She shook her head, the tears falling faster than she could wipe them away. “I’m sorry to dump on you like this, but I had to tell someone. I can’t forgive myself. I tried to find him to apologize, but he’d disappeared again. They wouldn’t give me his real name. I needed to tell him I was sorry, that I would do anything to make it up to him. Now I can’t.”

Bry choked back a sob. “I don’t think I can get through this.”

Marty put a comforting arm around her shoulders and squeezed. “You’re tough. You’re a survivor. You’ll be okay.”

“Not without his forgiveness.” She turned to stare at her friend through tear-filled eyes. “I left my humanity behind when I did those things to him. I gave away a part of what makes me who I am. I want *me* back, Marty. He is the only one who can give me back that part of myself. That part I lost over two years ago.”

“Then find him.”

“It’s too late. He’s dead.” She stared at the stains on the barroom table. “I blew his cover and they killed him.”

## Chapter 2

One week later...

Jacob Hart kept to the shadows, nursing his third brandy of the night. He watched the young woman with the mass of tawny curls, just as he’d watched her every night over the past week.

She was drunk—again. Sloppy drunk and a danger to herself, should she leave the bar alone. He could only protect her just so much without blowing his cover. Tonight would be tough. Two star cruisers had docked and the bar was filled with predators. Men too long alone with one another, searching for an easy piece of feminine ass.

Maybe, though, it was time. He'd waited now for two years. Two very long years. Marty'd said Captain McKenzie was in bad shape. Jake wondered if the captain knew her best friend not only worked for internal affairs, but that Marty was also assigned to her case? He hoped not. Bry's self-esteem was already shot.

She stood up, swayed a moment, then caught her balance. *Damn.* Frowning, Jake tossed his brandy down his throat, threw some credits on the table and followed her to the door.

Three other men appeared to have the same idea.

He gauged their size against his own, decided surprise and his skill would have to make up for the difference in weight, and quietly fell into step behind them.

The woman walked slowly, head down, feet stumbling. Jake drew his eyebrows together, watching her. She'd lost even more weight. She looked almost childlike, a skinny little wraith moving slowly away from the bar. The pattern of her footsteps altered and she cursed. The atmosphere on this mining outpost was thin but breathable, and sound carried oddly, magnified by the iron-rich ore that made up the bulk of the planet.

Jake paused, slipping into the shadows, keeping the figures ahead of him in sight. The three men waited until the woman was far enough from the bar that no one would hear anything, then grabbed her and dragged her behind an old shack.

She didn't scream. As far as Jake could tell, she didn't even try to fight them. He stepped around the corner, whipped out his high intensity light and flashed them. He knew they'd be momentarily blinded, surprised by his quiet approach.

She was already naked from the waist down, the top half of her filthy skinsuit ripped away exposing her thin body, her breasts marked with red welts from grasping fingers. There was no fear on her face. Merely a look of resignation, of despair.

It was the despair that tipped Jake over the edge. He kicked out with his left foot, catching one of her captors between the legs. The bastard went down, clutching his balls and screaming. The other two cursed, shoved the woman roughly to the ground, and charged. Jake grabbed one man by the throat and stopped him in his tracks. At the same time, he threw a punch with his right fist, catching the other assailant in the nose. That one dropped like a rock, without a sound.

Jake tightened the fingers of his left hand around the last man's throat and slowly forced him, gasping unsuccessfully for air, to his knees. He held on just a bit longer than necessary, then released his hold. The man fell to the hard-packed ground, gurgling and retching.

The one he'd kicked in the balls lay curled up in the fetal position, moaning and hugging his crotch. A dark stain spread along his inner thighs.

Shrugging off the adrenaline, Jake turned and grabbed Bry out of the dirt and threw her over his shoulder. He planted his hand firmly against her ass to hold her steady, sliding his palm over the

slim-fitting skinsuit and slipping his fingers into the warm crease between her legs. He told himself he was merely trying to get a solid hold on her, but *damn*, she felt good.

He tightened his grasp, imagining her wet and needy, then bit back a growl. Like he didn't know needy? *Shit*. Gritting his teeth against the sudden ache in his balls, Jake took off at a slow trot for the docks, jamming his fingers tightly against her crotch as he headed back to his ship. She didn't react when he groped her, merely hung limply along his back, arms bouncing off his buttocks and her hair swinging behind him as he carried her back to his ship.

He knew there was nothing waiting for her at her room. Nothing but memories and hopelessness. He had his own memories to heal. Memories of her soft hands on his cock, her fingers teasing him, violating him, leaving him unsatisfied and unfulfilled.

He took a deep breath and readjusted her small weight on his shoulder. Marty said the captain wanted his forgiveness. Well, he wanted something from her, as well. The orgasm she'd denied him when she'd held him prisoner over two years ago. Two Goddess-be-damned years.

He hadn't been able to come in all that time.

### Chapter 3

Bry awakened slowly, squinting against the morning light. Her mouth was dry, but the foul taste she usually associated with a hangover was missing. Her hair felt damp, as if she'd actually remembered to shower last night...

Last night? Men...three men, grabbing her, squeezing her breasts, their boozy breath in her face, one fumbling with his pants to...

Heart racing, adrenaline surging, she jerked herself fully awake. Entirely aware that...

...Someone had bathed her, washed her hair, brushed her teeth...and tied her naked body very securely to a bunk. Not her own bed. *No. What the hell...?* She jerked her head from side to side, arms and legs flailing against the restraints, panic rising like bile in her throat. Air whistled through her flared nostrils.

Gasping, fighting panic, Bry drew on her training, forced herself to observe, banked her spiraling hysteria to a manageable level. She swallowed, then swallowed again and took a deep breath.

Okay. You can do this. Breathe in, breathe out, in...blinking, willing a calm she didn't feel, she looked around her, shocked when she realized the familiar lines and angles of the room meant she was on a small space ship, a Class Three Falcon, similar to her own beloved Nautilus.

Her ears popped with a slight pressure change and she swallowed back a new level of fear. Whoever had imprisoned her must have just left the meager atmosphere of Argon 9. A klaxon sounded, the ship shuddered and steadied, and Bry's body tingled with the passage into hyperspace. The captain of the ship would most likely go to autopilot any minute. She stared at the closed door, eyes wide, blood pounding in her ears, waiting.

After what seemed like forever, footsteps sounded just outside the cabin, paused, and the door slowly opened. Air rushed into her lungs, her heart seemed to stop in mid-beat. Lips parted on a gasp, vision narrowed to a single shaft of impossible light, she stared into the eyes of a dead man.

The Barbarian...her fallen angel, alive.

She closed her mouth, opened it again, and tried unsuccessfully to swallow. *It can't be!*

She narrowed her eyes and willed her body to find its center, praying her heart would beat, her lungs continue to function, that he not discover what was in her mind...or her heart. She studied him, calming herself as she searched out the subtle differences from the memories she carried. He was still darkly beautiful, but there was no anger in him, no outrage. Instead, she sensed about him a deep and unrequited sadness, like a ghost trapped on the wrong astral plane.

"You're dead." Her heart skipped, then settled. Tugging lightly at her restraints, projecting a calm she didn't feel, Bry licked dry lips and frowned. "They told me you were dead."

He shook his head. When she'd seen him last, lying on the stretcher in agony after they'd cut him down, his hair had been black and matted, stringy with sweat, his face darkly shadowed with a day's growth of beard. Now his face was closely shaved and his hair hung smooth and shining to his shoulders, a deep chestnut brown that matched his dark eyes.

He took a step closer. She searched for the anger she fully expected. There was none. His expression was bland, almost disinterested. "I only wanted to die. You did that to me."

The room was small. His massive body made it even smaller. Bry felt vulnerable, but, for some reason, no longer afraid. The calm she'd searched for descended on her like a protective blanket.

"You owe me," he said. Again, there was no expression, no sense of what he felt. What he thought. His voice was deep, rumbling up out of his chest without threat. He merely stated a fact. "I've decided it's time to collect."

Bryony sighed, accepting the truth. He was right. She did owe him. Maybe, once her debt was paid, she could get her life back. She licked her lips and nodded. "I know. I was wrong. What I did was cruel and unforgivable." She swallowed again, forcing the memories away. "Why did they tell me you died?"

He seemed to relax with her question. "It was part of my cover. It allowed the Barbarian to return, to finish what he'd started. The slave cartel no longer exists. We rescued what girls we could. It was too late for many of them, but your capturing and torturing the Barbarian actually aided my cover."

She thought about that a moment. It explained even more why the WF hadn't put her in the brig for the rest of her life. She'd actually done them a favor. No matter. It didn't change the terrible things she'd put this man through.



She studied him, recalling his pride and arrogance. He'd been unbelievably handsome then. He was even better looking now. His face reminded her of pictures she'd seen of Native Americans from Earth—high brow, wide cheekbones, a strong, slightly hooked nose. A fairly new scar creased his chin, slashed across his jaw.

Desire for him coiled, hot and needy, deep inside her. *Not now. Dear Goddess, not now!* She squeezed her thighs, unable to press them as close as she wanted because of the restraints, well aware of the thick fluid warming her pussy, dampening the coverlet beneath her.

No. She didn't want this, couldn't want... this. Her question sounded breathy, hopeful even to her own ears when she asked him, "What are you going to do to me?"

She wouldn't fight him. She owed him compliance. She...

Oh, hell and Goddess be damned! You want him. Admit it. You've wanted him for the past two years.

"You'll find out when it happens." His voice, though deep and gravelly, remained soft and even, the words spoken with very little inflection. A slight tick in his left eye was the only sign of any emotion, any sense of feeling. "I've had over two years to think about revenge. Two years of remembering."

Remembering. Were they both so warped by their memories? Bry composed herself, meeting his eyes without expression. They might have been carrying on a conversation over tea. "I had two years, as well. Janie died two years before I captured you." Bry looked away. She kept seeing him, tied against the bulkhead, his huge cock outthrust, his face twisted in agony. Her composure crumbled. "I'm sorry. I had no idea you..."

"It doesn't matter. Not anymore. What matters is that I take back what is mine. What you stole from me."

Once more she noticed the tic in his eye. Nerves? Why would he be nervous? It didn't make sense. What he said didn't make sense. "I stole nothing. I didn't take anything of yours."

He knelt down next to the bunk, mere inches from her face and placed his hands on her, one at her shoulder, the other resting on her thigh so that his fingers barely touched the tawny curls on her mons. His dark eyes flashed and his strong jaw clenched tightly. She felt his breath lift the scattered tendrils of the hair at her nape and sensed the raw emotion he'd been hiding so well. His deep voice rasped in a very personal, harsh whisper, the words meant for Bry and no other.

"Oh yes you did, my dear Captain McKenzie. You stole something very important. You have taken my manhood, and I want it back."



Stolen his manhood?

Bry fought her first reaction, to stare at his crotch and see if he meant what she thought he meant. Instead, she concentrated on his touch. As if of their own volition, his long fingers lightly moved over her sensitive flesh. Gentle strokes across her shoulder, the occasional foray to her inner thigh. He wasn't looking at her, though. He was staring off into the distance with a thoughtful gleam in his eye, as if he recalled the hours of torture she'd put him through.

"Do you have any idea what it is like for a man to remain aroused for hours on end?" He looked at her then, his coffee colored eyes narrowed with intensity, his harsh whisper tickling her senses. The tic in his left lid quickened. His fingers never slowed their rhythmic caress of her skin. She felt tiny prickles of pleasure following each stroke.

Pleasure heightened by a frisson of fear.

"Imagine, if you will, silently begging for the release that never comes? It starts as a pain in the groin, an ache in the testicles that increases with each moment. Your cock is hard, harder than it's ever been and you want to thrust it deep into a hot, wet welcoming place. You want to keep thrusting and screwing until you come, until that pain and ache and pressure explode in the most exquisite pain of all, a pleasure that encompasses all of you, your body. Your mind. Your soul."

Tears prickled behind her eyelids at the gentleness of his touch, the painful reality of his words. "Will you ever forgive me?" The harsh sound of his voice, the knowledge of what she had done, burned deeper with each lazy sweep of his fingers. Without conscious thought, she arched into his caress.

He pulled his hand away. Folded his fingers tightly into his palm and pressed it against his thigh. He stared at her, his eyes dark as obsidian.

"At some point during the fifteen hours you held me, I lost touch with myself. Where I should have hated you, I somehow bonded to you. The anger I felt was turned inward. I found myself questioning my own sanity, questioning my assignment. Had I hurt those young women or had I actually helped them? It was all wrapped up in you, in your touch that brought me so close, promising but never allowing completion."

He glanced at the silver watch on his left wrist. "I began timing when you regained consciousness exactly twenty-three minutes ago. You are mine, to do with as I please, for the next fourteen hours and thirty-seven minutes. I will not kill you. I will not do anything that will cause you injury, nor will I use drugs to enhance your sensations."

He looked at her, his dark eyes like empty pools beneath his thick lashes. "I will, however, use implements. Tools to heighten your experience, to magnify both your pleasure and your pain. To remind you of the fifteen hours I spent in your care."

He paused, then stood beside the bed, looming over her. "The one area where our experiences will differ is that, at some point during this time, I will find release within your body."

He turned away, but Bry was almost sure of his soft whisper, not meant for her ears.

"Maybe then, I'll find myself."

She watched, aware of a sense of almost total detachment, as he opened a closet and removed a soft leather bag. There were items inside, some things she recognized, others unfamiliar. He held a pair of clamps up in front of her. They were metallic, attached to each other by a light electrical wire and what appeared to be a battery pack.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, he leaned over and suckled her left nipple into his mouth, biting gently with sharp teeth against the turgid flesh until it rose into a taut peak. She arched her back and moaned, shocked by her body's immediate response to his touch. He carefully placed one of the clamps on her nipple. She felt a sharp pain that eased into a dull ache.

He repeated the process on her other nipple, clamping it firmly, checking the wires, then slowly turning a small dial. Bry gasped as a sharp jolt of electricity burned through her nipple and left it tingling. It was followed by a continuous series of shocks, alternating one breast, then the other. Her nipples tightened beneath the clamps. She felt the shocks all the way to her pussy. The man studied a monitor on the battery pack and adjusted the current lower.

She was still concentrating on the sensation, trying to decide if it actually hurt or merely stimulated, when she felt him touch between her legs.

She was already slick and wet. His fingers opened her, slipping in and out for a few exquisite strokes before inserting something large, cold and smooth inside her. She was still adjusting to the size when she felt another sharp jolt. She choked back a cry. Her hips arched off the bed. Without a word, he once again adjusted the current.

The shocks no longer hurt. They were so mild she barely felt them, but she narrowed her eyes and concentrated on the sensation. What in the name of the Goddess was he going to do next?

His fingers moved over her body. More wires, more current, the electrical shocks all occurring in a linear fashion, one after the other. Left breast, right breast, pussy. He fashioned the next clamp directly to her clitoris, and that bit of flesh joined the others, all connected by the cycle of tiny sparks of current.

His large fingers probed her ass, and she clenched her jaw, remembering the baton she'd raped him with. There was no other way to describe what she'd done. The shame she felt overwhelmed any fear she might have of him, of what he intended.

She deserved this. Deserved whatever he might do to her. Relaxing the muscles around her anus, she concentrated on the sense of fullness as something cold and smooth slipped inside her.

Another link joined the cycle of electrical shocks. She closed her eyes, concentrating on the sensation. Her body tingled, each nerve and fiber sensitized by the mild current.

He no longer touched her. Bry sensed that he had moved. She opened her eyes just in time to see him with his hand on the door. "I hope you enjoy your evening." He glanced to his right, at something mounted on the ceiling. It looked like a camera of some sort. "That's so I don't miss anything," he said. "I'll be back later."

He stared at her a moment, his brows knit in a thoughtful frown, then walked back across the room. He picked up a black silk scarf that was lying over a chair and quickly blindfolded Bry, locking her away from the light. She felt his lips on her, felt his tongue testing the seam she quickly parted for him. Hot and sleek, he plundered her mouth, tangled his tongue with hers, stroked the sensitive flesh at the roof of her mouth. He drew her tongue between his lips, suckling her hard and fast, filling her mind with his scent, his

taste, his heat.

Then he was gone. Lips still parted, Bry felt suddenly, unexplainably bereft at the sound of the door closing, the sense of his absence. It felt as if he'd taken the very substance of the air with him, leaving Bry alone with her body, this body that felt so detached and foreign to her.

The current continued, unchanging, a steady rhythm of shocks coursing lightly along its chosen path. Her nipples remained taut and pointed, her vaginal muscles tightly clamped around the cylinder inside her as if they anticipated each tiny shock. She was just as aware of the fullness in her ass reminding her of the object inside. Her clitoris reacted with each tiny charge, barely responding to the current.

If this is torture...?

Her nose itched. She wanted to scratch it, but of course her hands were still bound. Unchanging, the current continued its rhythmic course. Time passed. Her skin began to tingle, the sensation subtle at first, but growing as the minutes slowly crawled by.

The tingling, crawling sensations grew stronger, the subtle tremors over her body more intense. Her womb contracted with each pulse of current, her breasts felt swollen, the warm gush of liquid from between her legs soaking the bed covering beneath her.

She tried to hold her body still, tried to ignore the rhythm of the current, but soon her hips writhed with each passing jolt, lifting in anticipation of the orgasm that hovered just beyond.

She tried not to think of the sensations coursing through her body, thought instead of the camera just over the bed and wondered if he watched her. She tried to picture him, sitting in his captain's chair on the bridge, staring at a small monitor, probably beating off as her naked body twisted and shuddered in his bed.

The image should have disgusted her. Instead, she imagined his big fist encircling his swollen cock, the long fingers wrapped tightly along its length, stroking slowly from base to plum-colored head as his passion built.

It was so wrong! Her fingers should be on him, her hands stroking his thick length, slipping over the satiny tip, bringing the first drops of fluid to her lips. She groaned, awash in his taste, his scent, his touch. The tiny shocks practically buzzed through her body and she arched her hips in a desperate plea for release. Goddess, but she needed him. Needed that cock buried deep inside, needed to feel him stretching her, filling her until she couldn't take anymore. She was ready, so damned ready for him.

Her pussy clenched tightly, almost frantically around the metal cylinder. Her nerves stretched taut as piano wire—the pressure of orgasm denied was a scream without sound, trapped in a body no longer her own.

He hadn't been kidding when he said he'd make her pay.

Practically sobbing in frustration, Bry pictured him as he'd been two years ago, then replaced that image with the beautiful man who held her now. Who was he? She'd known him as the Barbarian, a man who never existed. Still, he'd been part of her thoughts, her fantasies, her nightmares and daydreams for the past two years.

She moaned, forcing her thoughts into other patterns, trying to ignore the increasingly sexual sensations,

the need for a climax that hovered beyond her reach. Moaning again, she twisted her hips, fully aware of the futility of begging, of pleading with him.

She had done this and more to the Barbarian. He had a score to settle, one she couldn't, in good faith, deny him. Did he want her to plead? Was he hoping she would beg?

He hadn't begged. He'd only said he was sorry. Sorry for what? For Janie? For those other girls? How long had he searched for her? Bry hadn't told him who she was, but still he'd found her.

Of course. Legal would have told him. They would have offered him the chance to press charges, let him know who the idiot was who had captured and tortured him.

Bry'd been out of the service now for almost two years. She wondered how he'd tracked her down to Argon 9. It was such a miserable little outpost, but it had been the perfect place to spend her time in Purgatory following her resignation from Fleet. She deserved nothing better than this Goddess forsaken planet.

Nothing more or less than whatever he planned for her.

## Chapter 5

Jake watched his captive on the small monitor near his chair on the bridge, feeling each writhing twist and turn of her body, experiencing the same sexual need that must now be burning in her gut. It killed him to hurt her, but he knew, deep within his own tortured soul, she'd never be free without suffering for her mistake.

When had his need for revenge become a desire to heal, both Bryony and himself? He'd followed her for the past two years, sometimes literally following her in the shadows, more often relying on Marty's reports, as they both watched Bry's slow descent into hopelessness. Thank goodness for Marty's last, in-depth visit. It hadn't been purely an accident that his sister had been assigned to ex-captain Bryony McKenzie's case.

When Marty'd contacted him last week, though, he realized immediately he had to act on the fantasy that had sustained him for the past two years. He had no idea his captor had been snared by the same desire as he had, no idea her life had been destroyed every bit as much as his own by her torture of an innocent man.

What goes around, comes around.

He had suffered and paid. So had she, but neither of them had been able to fulfill the secret desires created on that lonely outpost two years ago. He must make her suffer again, this time with the knowledge she was paying her debt to him, personally, finding forgiveness for the unforgivable acts she'd committed against him.

Absentmindedly, Jake stroked his erect cock through the light fabric of his skinsuit. The bastard was hard more often than not, a fact not lost on the women he'd slept with shortly after his torture. It had taken a very talented whore to convince him what he'd already feared—he could get an erection and sustain it until exhaustion forced him to sleep or he wore his partner out, but he couldn't come. The beautiful young captain's torture had stolen his humanity and forever denied him the ultimate pleasure of climax.

The next few hours would prove whether or not his theory was correct. Bry McKenzie held the key. If he couldn't find release within her body, he would be forced to accept that nothing more could help him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lost in her darkness, consumed by a desperately overwhelming, seemingly endless need for sexual release, Bry knew the moment he entered the room. She'd given up hours ago. Her mind had become a dark world of fearful imaginings—she knew he would leave her here, let her writhe and twist in carnal agony well beyond the time he claimed she owed him. Could she expect sympathy? Should she? Over-sensitized, over-stimulated, her body reacted to his presence with a tangible shudder that rippled across her flesh.

He touched her breast with his fingers. She bit back a scream and arched her back. "Your fifteen hours are over." His deep voice washed over her. Suddenly, the tantalizing current stopped and she collapsed back on the mattress, gasping for each breath. She felt him removing the clamps and probes, leaving her body a throbbing, humming mass of sensation.

He untied her blindfold, then, surprisingly, the restraints holding her hands and feet. She hadn't expected him to release her, had in fact expected some even more devious torture. She lay there a moment, whimpering softly, caught in the final tremors and shuddering spasms that had wracked her body. Finally, still trembling and weak, she sat up and rubbed her ankles.

"You may use the facilities. I'll know if you touch yourself, if you try to find your own relief. Leave the door open."

Bry suddenly realized just how much she had to pee. Her full bladder protested every movement, overwhelmed even the powerful, all-consuming need for sexual release. The open door to the head couldn't stop her. She finished her business, washed her hands in the small lavatory, then walked cautiously back into the room.

His skinsuit was open to the waist. His boots sat beside the bed. He nodded at her, jerking his head in the direction of the bed. She sat on the edge, her skin almost rippling with the lasting sensations from the current passing through her body. She watched him as he slowly undressed.

His body was beautiful. Powerful and strong, the dark hair on his chest following a narrow pattern over taut abs to spread out at his groin. His cock was as erect and hard as it had been when she held him captive. She practically salivated, imagining that hard flesh in her mouth, following the length of him, drawing his balls between her lips and suckling each egg shaped organ into her mouth.

Licking her lips, she forced her gaze away from his cock and tilted her head to look into his dark eyes. "You said I'd stolen your manhood. If that's all that's left..." She bit back the nervous laughter that almost choked her.

He grasped her chin between his thumb and forefinger. "Oh, you've taken something very important from me. Something I fully intend to get back. Right now, though, I want you to suck it. I want you to take it in your mouth and make me come."

If this be torture...

Her thighs slick with fluid, pussy clenching in frustration, Bry went to her knees in front of him and slowly, carefully, pressed her lips around the huge, plum-colored tip. His size stretched her mouth wide. She slid her lips along his huge penis, taking as much of him as she could inside her mouth.

Swallowing all of his cock was impossible.

She sighed and lay her cheek against his hair-roughened thigh. Goddess, but she could almost come just from the taste of him!

She suckled for a moment, then nibbled the length of him, drawing first one, then the other testicle into her mouth. He spread his legs wider, allowing her more access, but it was awkward, kneeling here, wanting so much more.

Clasping her hand around his cock, she guided him to follow her as she lay back on the bunk. He crawled over her body and raised up on his hands and knees, his huge cock pressed against her cheek. Her pussy throbbed at the close proximity of his mouth, but he lay his head on her thigh and avoided touching her between the legs.

A soft sigh escaped her lips. She concentrated on his pleasure, suckling his cock, licking the hot length of him, nipping at his balls and drawing them completely into her mouth, one side at a time. All the while, her hips swayed, back and forth, silently pleading with him to touch her, to use his mouth, his hands, anything on her.

Anything to give her the release her body craved.

His cock grew harder still, but he seemed to have no problem at all controlling himself. Bry licked and suckled, finding his persistence more of a challenge than she'd expected. Her own frustration grew, knowing his mouth was right there, that his tongue was so close, his big hands grasping her thighs, his long fingers mere inches from her weeping pussy.

Suddenly she felt him, the lightest flick of his tongue against her clit. Arching her hips, she almost bit down on his cock, so intense was the sense of pleasure from that mere whisper of touch.

Silently begging for more, she increased the suction on his cock, kneading the taut muscles on his butt with both hands as she held him against her mouth.

His tongue flicked over her clit once more and she bucked her hips. Her low moan vibrated against the head of his cock. Frantic now, dying for his touch, she found the tight little puckered ring of his anus. She worked her fingertip back and forth, until she finally found entrance. The muscled ring clenched against her finger and he thrust his hips forward, almost gagging her with his cock.

She pushed her finger deeper. His hips jerked. She wrapped her fingers around his cock and tugged lightly at his balls with her lips. He had to be close to coming.

Bry knew she was ready to scream, her orgasm just out of reach, her pussy clenching and pulsing with frustration and need, her senses all twisted up in his taste and musky scent. She moved her finger, probing further in his tight passage, finding exactly the right spot to apply pressure.

He didn't come, not yet but...*dear Goddess*, he found her pussy with his mouth! Bry's world narrowed to two diverse points in her own, personal universe—the space where the Barbarian's lips now covered her clit and the huge cock filling her mouth.

So close! Her climax hovered just at the edge of darkness. His cock strained against her lips, his hips bucked against her intrusive finger but still he didn't come.

And somehow, somewhere deep inside, Bry knew she couldn't either. Not until she'd given her captor his release.

Sighing, silently admitting defeat—for now—Bry pressed a kiss against the crease where his thigh met his groin and moved his hips aside. He rolled over to his back, one arm flung over his eyes, his cock erect, glistening wet and slick from her mouth.

"This is what you meant... what I did to you. Right?" She crawled up to lay beside him on the narrow bunk. "When was the last time you climaxed?"

"The night before you captured me." Once more his voice was flat, without inflection or emotion of any kind. He turned and stared at her, his dark eyes shadowed, the scar across his chin and jaw more pronounced. "Since that time, I've been unable to find release with any woman...hell, even with my own hand." He laughed, a short, angry bark that cut through Bry like shards of glass.

"That's what you did to me. What you took from me."

"I know you hate me, and you've got every right, but I promise I'll do whatever I can to..."

His sad smile almost broke her heart. "I don't hate you. What you did was wrong, but...I lost a sister in the trades, too. She was about the same age as yours, disappeared a few years before Janie. Her body turned up right before I took the assignment. I do understand your anger, comprehend why you believed you were doing the right thing. Understanding, however, and getting my life back don't necessarily go hand in hand."



Bry showered first, then the Barbarian took his turn. Dressed in light robes, they ate a small meal together, his revenge apparently forgotten. Her captor had grown more silent. His erection had finally subsided, but there'd been no release for either of them. For Bry, the residual effect of the electrical stimulation and the man's touch left her squirming in her chair. It was only her personal code of honor that kept her from touching herself between the loose folds of her robe and taking her own pleasure.

She didn't think the Barbarian cared enough to stop her. Bry realized she cared enough for both of them. She'd heard of it happening, of course. Heard of victims falling in love with their kidnapers, developing a strong emotional attachment to the one who intended them harm. She looked at this man and knew she felt love for him, or at least some deep emotion masquerading as love.

Did he somehow feel the same for her? Was that convoluted tangle of emotions holding him back?

"What's your name?" She held her fork in mid air and wondered if he'd answer.

He stared at her for a long moment without blinking. Then he sighed and lowered his own fork. "Jacob...my name is Jacob Hart. I'm 34 years old and a commander in the World Federation Special Ops division. Or I was. I'm not sure if I'll re-enlist or not."

He was beautiful, masculine and strong, and totally messed up. Bry sighed and set her fork down next to her plate. "Jacob, if you'll trust me, I think I can help."

He looked up from his plate and stared at her. "How?"

"We recreate what caused the problem. Let me restrain you, only this time, I'll make you come. It might be against your will, but it will happen. I promise you." She pushed her chair back and stood up. "One more thing. You'll have a safe word. Merely tell me to stop. I give you my word that I will."

\* \* \* \* \*

Jake almost laughed aloud at the surrealistic sensation of finding himself tied flat on his back to his own bunk on his own ship. This certainly wasn't the scene he'd imagined when he finally decided to kidnap Bry.

He'd thought her beautiful the first time she caught him. Right now, knowing her intent was to help him, not hurt him, made her even lovelier in his eyes.

She shoved a pillow under his hips, giving her better access to him. He wondered if she'd play with his butt again. Hell, the feel of her finger up his ass had been unreal. He still couldn't believe he hadn't exploded in her mouth, but it hadn't happened.

Maybe it couldn't happen. Therapy certainly hadn't helped, and he'd been to some of the best shrinks the WF had to offer. They'd tried everything. They'd...

Her soft hands forcing his knees apart, then her fingers massaging his butt drew him back to his immediate world. He raised his head to watch her when he felt her fingers slipping up the crease in his ass, rimming the tight little ring of muscle. Hell, he'd never realized just how sensitive that spot could be.

She tilted her head and looked at him from between his raised knees. Her finger pressed his ass once more, stroking sensitive muscle, and he clenched his butt tightly against her hand. He expected her to put on some of the lubricant out of the tube she'd been using, but instead she raised up on her knees and

swept her finger between her own legs, catching some of her juices and spreading the liquid around his ass.

His cock twitched. He groaned and pressed his head down into the pillow. The visual alone should have made him come. He'd fantasized about her since she'd captured him, stayed hard thinking of her slight frame, the tangle of golden hair flowing across her shoulders, the matching tuft between her legs. She was thinner now, almost gaunt, but no less perfect in his eyes.

He expected her to touch him with her fingers, but she grabbed the probe he'd used on her, slipped it in and out between her own legs like a big dildo until it was slick with her juices, then rubbed it along the crease in his ass. It was still warm, either from the hot water she'd washed it in or its brief visit inside her pussy. The friction against his backside heated it even more.

Suddenly she twisted it enough to slip easily into his ass. There was no pain, merely the sensation of fullness. She pushed the smooth probe in and out of him a couple times, stroking his cock in the same, slow rhythm.

Shit. He'd never felt anything like this. He spread his legs as wide as the restraints would allow and lifted his hips, silently asking for more. Bry complied, fucking him in the ass with the smooth metal probe, sliding her fist up and down his cock.

So close... she almost had him there. She kept it up for a few more strokes, smiling at him as if she knew exactly how it felt, then she leaned over and nipped at his chest, licking first his left nipple, then the right into tight beads.

"I want you inside me, you know." She crawled up over his thighs, straddled his abdomen and kissed him. Her fingers teased his left nipple. Her right hand still worked the probe, slowly in and out of him.

"I want you inside me, fucking me with that huge cock of yours." Her whisper tickled his chin. She leaned over and licked the spot, dragging her tongue across his rough day-old beard. He felt her pussy, hot and wet, against his belly. His cock was trapped in the crease of her ass. Her mouth tasted lush and warm, her tongue dancing with his and he was more than aware of her gently fucking his ass.

No electrical current. She said she wanted to make him come on his own, naturally, so that he'd be able to do it again. Right now she was all warm and willing woman, the same woman who had filled his nights with frustrating, fruitless hours of fantasy. Her lips were soft and sweet, and already he felt it, felt the coil of heat building in his gut, the tight clenching of his balls, the pure incandescent pleasure of climax building.

"So, you think this will help?" He had to talk, had to say something, anything, to diffuse the slow rise of pleasure, the unfamiliar sensations coursing through his body.

Bry didn't answer. Instead, she slowly removed the probe at the same time she raised up over him, so that the sensations seemed to melt, one into the other. His cock pressed against her soft nether lips, and slowly, so slowly, she eased him into her tight passage.

Hot and wet, her muscles clenching at him, rippling over his hard cock, every bit as perfect, as lush and sensual as he'd imagined. She arched her back, driving him even deeper inside, until he felt the hard knot of her cervix, the mouth of her womb up against the head of his cock.

"More," he whispered, begging her. "I need more."

Whimpering, shivering, she began to move, sliding slowly up and down his erection, her muscles fluttering and rippling over him, her thick fluids easing the way. She was beautiful, her mouth twisted in what might have been agony, but was most certainly pleasure. Her lips were parted, eyes closed, the soft pants of breath and the sucking wet sounds as she rode him a primitive music to his ears.

Her fingers dug into his pectoral muscles, her thighs gripped his sides and he knew she held her own orgasm at bay, sensed the control she exerted over her own fevered body. Suddenly she reached behind her, stretching her fingers down between his legs to grasp his balls firmly in her hand.

Oh Goddess...

Suddenly, all sensation, doubled, tripled, expanded beyond comprehension. He ripped at the shackles holding him to the bed, but the bindings held secure. He jerked his body, fighting Bry, fighting the restraints, fighting himself. "More!" he shouted, the words tearing his throat. "Harder, dammit. If you're gonna do me, fuck me harder!"

He growled his frustration—he had to touch her, anywhere, needed to hold her, to grasp her perfect breasts between his fingers, to stroke the soft cleft between her legs. Frantic, completely restrained, he snarled like a trapped beast, arched his hips, forcing her closer, filling her deeper.

She rode his twisting, writhing hips, her mouth contorted in a painful grimace, her breathless whimpers touching his soul. Gently, a surreal counterpoint to their frenzied coupling, her fingers massaged his balls, probing and stroking, rubbing all the right places, compressing and rolling them and it was too much. *Too much*. "Oh Goddess, oh...shit, oh shit...oh fuck."

"Come for me, dammit. Fuck me! Now!" Her sobbing demand lifted him up to the edge, held him there, balanced between pain and pleasure. Eyes closed, he let go, gave himself over to Bry—to her sweet feathered touch between his legs, the hot wet muscles rippling around his cock, the conflicting emotions of need and desire, anger and fear. Passion consumed him, the emotion, the frustration, all coalescing into that coiling fire, the almost forgotten sensation of pleasure, pain and expectation.

"I said now!"

Ripping at the restraints, he arched his hips, driving into her just as she penetrated his ass with her finger, spearing him deep and hard. He shouted, an unintelligible cry jerked from somewhere deep in his gut. Then suddenly... *coming*. Good Goddess, he was coming he was... *Fuck. Oh fuck...oh...fuck*.

He bucked his hips, caught solidly in the almost forgotten sensation of orgasm. His cock jerked deep within her as she slammed down against him, riding him hard and fierce, her cry a high, keening wail, an incoherent litany of sound and soul-deep emotion.

"Damn you. Damn you. Damn..." Trembling, cursing, crying, she collapsed against his chest. He pulsed hard and strong, his cock trapped in the tight, rhythmic contractions of her climax. His chest heaved with each strangled gasp as he struggled to draw enough air into his starved lungs.

Still trembling, each breath caught on a throaty cry, Bry reached over his head and undid the shackles, then, still impaled on his cock, turned and released the restraints on his ankles. Before she had time to turn back, he grabbed her and shoved her roughly to her knees.

His cock slipped free, still hard. He wrapped an arm around her waist and slammed back into her hot

pussy. She arched her back and cried out, a shout of triumph, not fear. “Yes!”

He plucked at her nipples, pinching them hard between his huge fingers as he drove into her. She put her head down on the bed and raised her hips higher, giving him better access. His balls slapped against her crotch.

“Harder,” she cried. “More!”

She was sobbing now, crying so hard her breath exploded in sharp gasps. There was anger here, anger and pain and years of desperation. His. Hers. It didn’t matter. He twisted her nipples harder, ramming into her without any pretense of gentleness, but she welcomed him, begged him with every sob, every moan, every thrust of her hips to ease his way.

She twisted her neck to look back over her shoulder, saw once again her fallen angel, his dark hair hanging in sweaty tangles around his face, his dark eyes beneath darker lashes wild and angry, his lips slightly parted.

“Fuck you, Captain,” he shouted. “Fuck you.” He climaxed again, hard and fast, filling her pussy with hot seed, wringing yet another fierce orgasm out of her, out of himself. Weeping, shoulders shaking, Bry lowered her head and collapsed beneath his weight.

Slowly, he eased himself down on her, then rolled to one side, taking her with him. She wept, huge sobs tearing from her throat, shuddering with the final vestiges of her orgasm, her sweat-covered body curled tightly against his.

His own body trembled just as hard. Jake tucked her head under his chin, slowly stroking her back, easing her cries, kissing the tangled mass of curls. He held her until her shuddering eased, the tremors left her body and she fell into a deep, motionless sleep.

Sleep was the last thing on his mind. His shivering reaction eased, but his body still throbbed with the power of his release. His cock was blissfully flaccid—he felt replete for the first time in over two years. This was not the gentle lovemaking he had often dreamed of. No, this was possession and exorcism, pure and simple. Why, then, did his heart feel so full, his arms so right where they held her?

What next? Sighing, he kissed the tousled curls once more, felt his body relax, his muscles lose their tone. He held her close, kissed her again, then drifted into oblivion.

## Chapter 7

The bed was empty when Bry awoke. She sensed a change in pressure, knew the ship had once again entered normal space, and figured Jacob must be at the helm.

Jacob. He'd been the Barbarian for so long in her mind, it was hard to think of him with an average name. *Jake. Jacob*. She rolled the two around on her tongue, finding each as pleasurable as the other.

She stretched, well aware of every kink and cramp, each small bruise where he'd clasped her a bit too tightly, held her a little too long. The small pains made her smile. He'd done his best to exorcise her ghosts. Had she managed the same for him?

The sticky wetness between her legs was proof she'd been successful. He'd found his release with her. That was obvious. Were his demons gone forever?

What about her own?

Rolling to one side, Bry slid off the bunk and headed for the small shower. She grabbed a skinsuit out of the overhead storage and found her boots tucked neatly beside the door. In a matter of minutes she managed to bathe and prepare herself to meet the day.

To meet Jacob? Sighing, she stared at herself in the small mirror. What a convoluted relationship! When she thought of him, she was immediately aroused. Her addiction had begun the night she captured him, had only increased over the ensuing years.

Now that they'd finally come together, she felt more confused than ever.

\* \* \* \* \*

She found the bridge easily. After all, this ship was identical to the one she'd given up. Jacob leaned over the control panel, his hands flying across the screen as he brought the ship into orbit around a large space station.

A narrow band circled his head, holding the thick waves of chestnut hair out of his eyes. His muscles rippled and bunched beneath the shiny gray fabric of his uniform and he leaned over the control panel as if he was preparing to leap into space himself. Energy practically radiated off him, the air on the bridge crackled with an unseen power.

Bry slipped into the co-pilot's chair and fastened the harness. She glanced at Jake, but his attention was focused completely on the job at hand.

Much as he had previously focused on her.

She watched while his fingers flew over the controls, adjusting speed, angle, approach. He was an essential element—one with his ship.

As it should be.

Finally, he flipped a final switch and sat back in his chair. Bry studied his lean profile, the hawk-like nose, the full lips that had so recently tasted her in such an intimate manner. He watched their approach to the station, their tiny ship dwarfed by the huge wheel of metal floating in space.

"What now?" she asked. That wasn't what she'd meant to say at all. The words slipped past the knot in her throat, made themselves heard on their own.

He turned and stared at her, his eyes glinting with the multi-colored lights from the control panel. He looked like a stranger, a man who might have bumped into her on a street corner, apologized and moved on.

“How did you find me? How did you know who the Barbarian was?”

The question was so unexpected, Bry shook her head. “Everyone had heard of the Barbarian. His name was legend.”

He swept a hand through his hair in a dismissive action. “No, that’s not true. Someone convinced you of this, told you about the Barbarian.”

Bry tried to remember the early days of her search. She’d been so lost after Janie’s death. Angry, confused and filled with an overwhelming need for vengeance. She and Marty had met one night in a bar, running into each other accidentally after a long separation. They’d both lost sisters to the sex trades. Bry recalled the anger in Marty’s voice, how they’d fantasized what they would do should they ever capture the leader of...

“It was Marty. My friend Martine Hartsdotter. She’s a lieutenant with Fleet. Internal Affairs, I think. She told me about the Barbarian. As I recall, she’d accidentally seen a classified report. There was enough information in it to tell her he was the one responsible for Janie’s death. She knew where I could find him, even helped me get the drugs I slipped into his drink.” She dipped her head, ashamed. “Your drink.”

Jake sighed. “That’s what I was afraid of. We were set up. You as well as me.” His jaw clenched. Bry noticed the small tic had reappeared in his eyelid. “I had three sisters. Glynna, Danae...and Martine. Glynna’s a flight surgeon aboard the StarCruiser, Gull. Danae was a victim of the sex slavers...and Martine wanted vengeance. She felt my investigation was moving too slowly, my character—the Barbarian—not authentic enough in the eyes of the cartel.”

“Marty? My friend Marty is your sister?” Blinking slowly, Bry tried to bring her world back into focus. *Marty?* Jake was still talking. She shook her head in denial. *No, not...*

“She’s also an IA operative. How do you think I found you?”

Marty? A spy?

Bry suddenly recalled all the intimate conversations she’d had with her friend, the way Marty had drawn her out, finally gotten her to reveal the full scope of her torture of the Barbarian...of Jacob. She shuddered, her violation complete. “But why? You’re her brother...she knew what I planned for you.”

“Your torture of me authenticated the Barbarian. Once word got out that he had been held and brutalized by a rogue captain from the WF, no one questioned his authenticity. Before that, I was having trouble getting inside, but the cartel welcomed me once *I escaped* from you. I thought at first your treatment of me had been under orders of Fleet—maybe it was, through Marty, but I realize now it was totally without your knowledge. Until now, I couldn’t make the link between you and his...my, capture.”

A voice crackled over the intercom unit. Jake turned his attention back to his ship and the myriad details of docking.

Stunned, Bry turned the events of the past two years over in her mind. *Marty*. Her confidant, her best friend, her betrayer? Jake’s betrayer? Thoughts spinning, Bry watched as he skillfully brought the ship

into the docking bay.

She hadn't even asked him where they were.

As if he understood her unspoken question, Jake glanced in her direction. "We're at Fleet headquarters. I intend to get your commission back. You never should have resigned. I don't know if Marty acted alone or under orders from her commander, but you are a victim of this every bit as much as I was."

Bry clenched her jaw, fighting back tears. "I could have killed you. How could your own sister...?"

Jake covered her hand with his. "I imagine Martine underestimated your passion, your anger. She has a lot of explaining to do." He unbuckled the lap and shoulder harness and stood up. "You asked me, *what now*?" He held his hand out to her. "I don't know what will happen next, but I don't want to lose what I have so recently found."

She couldn't help flashing him a cheeky grin. "What? That missing manhood of yours?"

"No," he said, cupping her jaw in his big hand. "You."

## Chapter 8

"Good Goddess. That has got to be the longest day I've ever spent in my life. I am so glad to be away from headquarters." Bry unfastened her harness, stood up and stretched as the ship steadied into hyperspace under control of the autopilot. "I can't believe Marty would do such a terrible thing, even if she was acting under orders. I thought she was my friend."

"She was. She is. You'll see the truth in that some day." Jacob stood as well and hauled Bry into his arms. "I can't believe you turned down your commission *and* a promotion."

"It would have meant leaving you." She snuggled against his broad chest, feeling the beat of his heart against her cheek. His fingers made lazy journeys up and down her spine.

"The whole thing was so convoluted and cruel. Marty's behavior is unforgivable."

Bry still felt violated by her friend's betrayal. Jacob, however, gave the entire episode a different slant.

"It worked. The end does not always justify the means, but in this case, it might have saved my life. We know it saved the lives of a lot of young women. If I'd continued with my original plan, the members of the cartel would have discovered I was with Fleet operations. As it turned out, they accepted me as one of their own. I have to forgive her. Marty's my sister and she was doing what she thought best, as well as following orders. You can't escape blood."

He nipped at Bry's lower lip, then soothed her with the very tip of his tongue. She parted her lips and took him on a sigh, suckling his tongue deep into her mouth. She felt his body harden, knew his arousal was every bit as strong as her own, but he ended the kiss with a tiny little bite at her full bottom lip, finishing it just as it had begun.



Resting his forehead against hers, he whispered, "You, though...you, Bryony, are my love."

Love? She'd not heard that word before from Jake. She looked up, gazing deeply into those dark, fathomless eyes of his. The tic was gone, replaced by long unused laugh lines at the corners of his eyes.

"Love? Are you sure?"

He surged against her, hard and ready, and grinned. "Or as close a facsimile as I can imagine."

"It's been a rather unusual courtship." She'd never seen him laugh. They'd never really made love. They'd only exorcised one another's demons.

He brushed the side of her face with the back of his hand. "A courtship that's beginning today. What happened between us before is over. You are not the same woman. I'm not the same man. The meetings we had today with Fleet command have vindicated both of us. I'm not going to lose you, Bry. I love you." He paused and lifted her chin with his finger. "At least I think I love you. I certainly would like to take the time and explore the concept." He laughed, a deep, sexy chuckle that tickled her senses.

She decided she really liked the sound.

As he spoke, he slowly stripped her out of her flight suit, slipping the sleeves over her shoulders, exposing her rounded breasts, her flat belly, the patch of honey colored curls between her legs.

His predatory gaze devoured her. The passion in his eyes brought a rush of moisture to her pussy, raised her nipples into tight peaks, sent a frisson of sensual awareness tingling across her flesh.

Jacob's desire enveloped Bry in a tangible surge of lust. He slipped her boots off her feet, helped her step out of her clothing, then stood back and blatantly admired her naked body.

She knew her breasts were too small, her hips too narrow, her hair a frazzled cascade of tangles and curls, but she felt beautiful, sensual—lush and truly sexual—under Jacob's gaze.

He rubbed his hand over his crotch, an absentminded touch that told her just how lost he was in thoughts of their lovemaking. Taking the first bold step, she crossed the short distance between them and slowly unfastened his flight suit.

He trembled beneath her fingers. His jaw was tightly clenched and his nostrils flared with each breath he took, but he let her undress him, allowed her to touch his chest, his lean hip, to trail her fingers along his groin as she slipped the stretchy fabric over his powerful body.

His cock surged forward when she tugged his suit down his legs. He lifted each foot in turn, balancing with one huge hand planted on her shoulder, so she could remove his deck boots and pull off his pants.

Naked, they stood and faced one another. Bry had never felt this deep awareness, this blatant self-knowledge, in her entire life. Her body tingled with a snapping, splintering charge of power, power she took directly from Jake. He touched her breast and she moaned, catching the back of a chair for balance.

His fingers traced circles around the areola, teasing her nipple to a taut, almost painful point, then he leaned over and drew the flesh into his mouth, nipping her gently with his teeth. She groaned and collapsed against him, but he caught her up in his arms and carried her to the navigation table. Shoving

maps and readers aside, he laid her down on the table, her legs hanging loosely over the edge.

Kneeling before her, Jake buried his face between her legs. The musky scent of aroused woman filled his senses. He nipped the tender flesh of her inner thigh, then spread her legs wider with both hands. He cupped her bottom, lifted her up to his mouth and feasted on her, laving her streaming pussy with his tongue, lapping up the flow of moisture, then finding the hard bead of her clitoris and suckling it with his lips.

She bucked against him, but he held her firmly, his fingers grasping her full cheeks, kneading, massaging her closer to his mouth. He found her anus and slowly breached the opening with one blunt finger, sliding in and out in perfect sync with his tongue in her pussy.

She came hard and fast, arching her back with a long, keening cry. He nipped and licked her through her climax, then soothed her swollen tissues with long, slow strokes of his tongue. When her trembling had eased, he stood over her a moment, looking at the woman who had broken him, then made him whole.

Her eyes were closed, her lips parted in a satisfied smile. She whispered, very softly, "I think I'm going to like this, exploring the concept of love. I certainly think I love you, Jacob Hart." Her eyes opened and she giggled. "Make love to me. Fill me. Don't ever leave."

He growled, leaned closer and nuzzled against her ear. "I'll never leave you. You're mine." His voice dropped even lower. "Now. Forever." He slipped his rigid cock easily between her waiting folds, moving slowly to give her body time to adjust to his size. She raised her legs and wrapped them around his waist, her heels pressing firmly against the small of his back.

Jake found his rhythm, sliding his cock inside her, deep and hard, withdrawing at glacial speed, then filling her once again. The tight clasp of her hands about his neck, the even tighter clasp of her soft folds around his cock, her whispered sighs of pleasure, the tiny catch in her throat as she neared her climax—all of it. He wanted, needed, all of this.

Jake closed his eyes beneath the overwhelming sense of peace he felt, holding Bryony in his arms.

She pressed her lips against his throat, against the spot where his pulse beat strong and steady. He sighed as he loved her, his eyes half closed in pleasure, his soul, finally, complete within their love. He caught her lips with his, whispered against her mouth. "I do believe I love you. I know I will always need you. You complete me."

She answered him with her kiss, with tears streaming down her cheeks, with her bright, shivering cry as she came apart in his arms.

Holding her close, Jake finally gave up control. Thrusting deep within her rippling, clenching pussy, he filled her with his seed, crying out with the rightness of this joining. Body shuddering, gasping and dragging in great gulps of air, he rested his forehead against hers, marveling at such a twist of fate that had brought him this woman. In all his dreams, his fantasies, his hopes, Jake had never imagined his captor, his dear, sweet Bryony, a willing partner in his bed.

She was more than willing. She was his.

She touched the corner of his mouth with the tip of her finger, traced his smile. He brushed a tear from her cheek with the pad of his thumb and raised it to his lips.

He needed no restraints to hold her, no bonds, other than his love, to keep her by his side. Her sleek arms encircled his neck, her lips found his, marked him, forever willing...

Her captive.