Power and Pleasure

Carol Jordan struggled to remain at attention as she waited to receive her decoration. The courtyard of the imperial palace was filled with over ten thousand potentates from all over the galactic Dynasty that was about to honor her with the highest award for bravery and dedication that the Dynastic government had to offer. It was not the crowd that caused her nervousness. It was the fact that she was about to meet the Emperor, the Dynasty’s ruler.

Nathaniel Trent had been an officer in the Old Federation before it had fallen due to its own bureaucratic excesses and complacency. It had become too sure of itself and was slow to adapt to change. Faced with external pressure and internal decay, it had fallen ten years ago. Trent had rallied the remnants of the Old Federation’s military and police forces, formed an alliance with the powerful Andrian Confederacy, and fought to stem the chaos that had filled the power vacuum that followed the Old Federation’s fall. He had been twenty-three years old at the time. After years of fighting the Dynasty had one quarter of the galaxy under firm control, approximately one quarter belonged to the Andrian Confederacy; the rest was held by enemy governments or was unexplored.

Emperor Trent governed from the solar system he had dubbed “Triumph.” Each solar system that was part of the confederacy elected its own leaders, and made its own laws, but each paid taxes to the Emperor, submitted to certain laws concerning commerce and extradition for crimes, agreed to the abolition of slavery, and contributed to the general defense. Dynastic territory was divided into twelve sectors each protected and administered in the Emperor’s name by one of the Dynastic Archdukes. The Archdukes were all comrades from the Emperor’s War Against Chaos and answered only to him.

The Emperor’s title was hereditary, meaning it would be passed to one of Trent’s children. (This was also true of the archdukes.) Each system elected its own officials, but the Royal family would assure a political continuity the Old Federation lacked. Jordan forced her hands not to shake. The Emperor himself would be decorating her in a few minutes.

She was to be the first person awarded the Emperor’s medal of Valor. The honor had been earned through pain. She had been hospitalized for three months and undergone six operations recovering from her last battle. She still had nightmares about the fire engulfing her. She remembered the heat itself searing her flesh even through her fire -resistant space fleet uniform. She remembered dragging three injured crewmen from the flame-filled bridge. She could still see the crewmen she could not save. She remembered the burns that covered her from head to toe. She remembered endless hours in regeneration tanks and the how the itching of the skin grafts had nearly driven her man. And, of course, there was the pain; the incessant, relentless pain that no drug could moderate.

That pain had already earned her a promotion, her coming decoration, and a personal dinner with the royal family. The royal family consisted of the Emperor, his fifteen wives, and their children. He had adopted the Andrian custom of plural marriage, and many other parts of Andrian culture. The Emperor’s wives helped him govern his dynasty; overseeing his fleets, his armies, the Dynastic economy and all the various departments of government. There was much speculation about what went on behind the closed doors of the royal palace and how one man could keep so many beautiful and powerful women at his side and in his bed. Rumors abounded that Jordan herself would become his next wife and be given a position on his ruling council. Would she be asked to join the royal family? What would she do if she was?

Trumpets sounded and the crowd stilled. The imperial wives entered the courtyard. They were followed by the ten children of the Imperial household, six servants who attended them, and a platoon of heavily armed and armored guards. The wives were seated near the podium where Jordan stood. All of them were beautiful, elegant, and regal. Jordan though it silly that any one would believe that the Emperor would want her when he had such women already.

Shayal Atrava, the Emperor’s first wife and his designated Empress sat in a chair that occupied a platform a meter higher than where the other wives sat. The Empress was a Princess of the Andrian Confederacy; the daughter of its current monarch, Galayen Atrava. It was through marriage to Shayal that Trent had allied himself with the Andrian Confederacy. She was young, slim, and carried herself with perfect poise that came from a life time of training. Her hair, like most Andrians, was lustrous and inky-black. She wore it at shoulder length and slightly curled. Her eyes were the lightest blue and shined with intelligence and wit.

She was dressed in a flowing ankle-length white dress made of silk; or something like silk. It was trimmed in gold with a neckline that plunged nearly to her navel, showcasing cleavage that was perfectly proportioned to her body. There were slits on both sides of the dress that ended just above the knee allowed ease of movement. It was backless down to the base of her spine. A necklace comprised of dozens of gemstones adored her throat; a single grape-sized, sapphire hung between her breasts. Jordan found herself jealous of the Empress’ beauty and grace. She was still almost mesmerized watching her dance like walk and the flow of the exquisite dress about her ankles.

Jordan thought she should look at the other wives. She did not want inadvertently snub one of the Imperial family, but she seemed compelled to memorize every detail of Shayal’s appearance. Jordan gasped when the Empress looked directly at her and smiled. It was a pleased, knowing smile. It also seemed to be a welcoming smile. It made Jordan feel like she was, or was about to be, a part of an exclusive club.

More trumpets sounded, and Jordan finally forced her eyes away from Shayal. The Emperor came into the courtyard flanked by a twenty-being honor guard consisting of ten men and ten women. He was dressed in military uniform that shared the color-scheme of the Empress’ gown. He was tall, broad-shouldered, and graceful in stride. His face was sculpted and confident, and his hair was a sun-lightened brown. It was cut short but was thick enough to blow slightly in the wind. Carol had always thought he was too handsome to be an Emperor. Rulers as effective and attractive as Nathaniel Trent only existed in fairy tales. But this was no fairy tale. The Emperor was only a few meters away, and his nation was prospering despite the efforts of more than a few enemies.

The Emperor strode onto the podium, now only a meter or so away from Jordan. The wind carried the scent of his cologne to her nostrils. The scent was unique: sweet and almost unbearably masculine at the same time. The Emperor was giving an address to the crowd. Although he was speaking about her and recounting the events for which she was being rewarded, she was barely aware of his words. They seemed distant and unintelligible. What she could hear was the tone of his voice. It was deep and melodic and seemed to have physicality to it. It seemed to enter her brain through her ears and caress her mind. Added to this was a kind of vibration that seemed to emanate from the Emperor’s body. (Vibration was an inadequate word, but she could think of none better.) A delicious tension began to build in her body. It was as though a lover had just indulged her in hours of expertly performed foreplay.

Jordan blinked and the Emperor was standing before her; only half a meter or so from her. She had been lost in whatever power surrounded him, and had not realized that he had finished speaking. He was speaking directly to her now, holding her medal. Dimly, she realized that he was congratulating her on being decorated. She heard herself thanking him but she was not consciously forming the words. He placed the medal around her neck; lifting her shoulder-length brown hair to place the purple ribbon the medal hung from beneath it. The sensation of his fingers running through her hair made her sigh very softly. The Emperor smiled knowingly and drew his hands down Jordan’s neck after the medal was in place.

Jordan was in another world. Just being in the Emperor’s presence had made her burn with desire. The feel of his hands on the bare flesh of her neck had almost overwhelmed her. She was grateful that her knees had not buckled or that she had not pressed herself against the Emperor’s body. Whatever power had seized her had seemingly rendered her incapable of movement. She felt as though she was being held in place by this odd erotic energy.

The Emperor moved away, and Jordan came back to her senses slowly. That is, she could think clearly again, and she could move, but her body was still highly energized. It was not simple arousal; although that was a component of this what she was feeling. She was invigorated mentally and physically. She was simply feeling good!

The feeling stayed with her through the reception that followed. Jordan spent the next few hours being imaged for the various press agencies, posing with various government officials and showing the people of the Dynasty their newest heroine. She tried her best to live up to the people’s expectations and not to think about her upcoming meal with the royal family.

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Jordan studied herself in the full length mirror. After she had returned to the opulent, spacious quarters she had been assigned within the Royal palace, she had bathed, changed into a fresh uniform and was assuring herself that it she was now perfectly attired. She had gone to the extra effort of having this uniform custom tailored. It consisted of a blue tunic and slacks with gold braids and trim, with the jacket worn over a white blouse. It displayed six years worth of service ribbons on the right breast. Regulations gave female personnel the option of wearing slacks or a skirt, but Jordan always opted for slacks. The standard issue black shoes had been shined to a mirror finish. She fashioned her hair into a loose pony tail, and completed the ensemble by placing her Medal of Valor around her neck, closing her eyes at the memory of the Emperor’s hands caressing her neck.

She regarded herself one last time. She had never considered herself beautiful, but she was proud of her body. A daily regimen of swimming, yoga, and martial arts practice had given her a slim waist, well toned arms and legs, and tight shapely butt. She liked the way the tailored uniform made her look. She had even had one of the palace servants help her with her makeup. After all, one didn’t share a meal with the royal family every night. Besides, she had to admit to herself, she wanted to be beautiful for the emperor. It was a silly thought, she knew. She could never hope to achieve the beauty and grace that the Empress had displayed earlier that day. There was no reason for the Emperor to give her more than a passing glance. Yet, he seemed to have deliberately caressed her neck, and seemed to be aware the effect he had had on her.

The door chime sounded and Jordan was pulled away from the mirror. “Enter.” She said.

Two members of the Emperor’s personal guard entered. Both were both young women. One was very tall with red hair. The other was shorter with deep-black hair. Both were well muscled and moved like cats. “Emperor Trent is ready to receive you, Commander Jordan; if you would follow us please?” The taller guard said.

Jordan followed. Her quarters were in the wing of the palace reserved for VIP guests. They had consisted of three rooms, and included a personal hot tub and spa, and a large fire place. The furniture was posh and soft, and the palace servants had responded to even her slightest whim. Compared to the four meter by four meter quarters on the cruiser she had served on, the luxury she had lived in over the past week seem shamefully decadent. Once they passed into the Palace’s royal wing, however, her quarters seemed quite spartan.

Paintings, statues and various works of art lined the hallways. Marble columns held up vaulted ceilings. Polished floors made exotic woods were underfoot, and guards adored in ceremonial swords and armor stood posts every twenty feet. Finely carved hardwood doors were inlaid with gold and silver, and windows five meters long were spaced at intervals. This all served to make Jordan’s nervousness return. Her hands were shaking again as she approached the double doors that led to the Royal Family’s apartments.

The guards opened the doors and stepped aside so Jordan could enter. Upon stepping over the threshold she was greeted by the Empress herself. Jordan suddenly felt overdressed. The Empress was dressed in simple pale-blue frock and was barefoot. She touched Jordan on both shoulders and smiled broadly. “Carol, welcome to our home,” She said, taking Jordan by the arm and leading further into the Imperial quarters.

“Thank you Empress.” Jordan Stammered.

“Call me Shayal.”

Jordan surveyed the room she had been led into. It was obviously the primary living area. It was round and was two tiered arranged in concentric circles. The lower tier was reached by descending five steps from the upper tier. It was furnished with four semi-circular sofas arranged in a circle facing each other, two large crescent-shaped hardwood coffee tables in front of the sofas, and several richly padded reclining chairs. A large circular fire place dominated the center. The upper tier was surrounded by a panoramic window that provided a view of the palace’s gardens. There were several sets of luncheon tables and chairs where one could dine and view the gardens, as well as six lounge chairs and a massage table that were placed where the sun would shine on them for most of the day. The surroundings were certainly comfortable, but they lacked the opulence of the corridors Jordan had just walked through.

The Emperors wives all rose to greet Jordan. They were dressed for comfort as Shayal was. “Carol, this is Sandra,” Shayal said gesturing to a tall blond woman wearing a dark blue silken robe that just covered her knees. “Sandra is Field Marshal of all Dynastic armed forces.”

Jordan knew what rank Sandra held, but was grateful for Shayal’s reminder. It allowed her time to deal with her growing confusion “Nice to meet you Ma’am,” Jordan replied.

“Sandra,” Rittenhouse said. “There are no ranks or formalities in this household. It is our home and should be comfortable and welcoming.”

Jordan was introduced, in turn, to the other wives. Each was quite beautiful and each held a key position in the Emperors government. They were wearing various loose fitting, light clothing and were all barefoot as was the Andrian custom when at home. She realized that she herself was over dressed. She had assumed that a dinner would be a formal affair and had dressed accordingly. She felt the flush of embarrassment come to her face.

“I apologize Emp…Shayal; I thought dinner would be a formal affair.” Jordan explained.

“How would get to know each other that way?” Shayal asked. “You are a guest in our home and we want you to be at ease.”

“The uniform has to go.” Another blond woman said. She was slightly shorter than Sandra, and her hair was a lighter, almost golden, shade of blond. An ultra sheer toga-like gown obscured, but did not hide her body. Jordan recognized her as Auril: the chief of the Dynastic Intelligence and Security service. “She’ll never relax in that.”

“I think we can find something for her to wear,” a voluptuously built brunet said stepping forward. She was dressed a sheer black robe that extended to her mid thigh. “I’m Kalin,” the brunet said taking Jordan in a sisterly embrace. “Let’s get you into something comfortable.”

Within a few minutes Jordan found herself in room that was stocked with hundreds of fine dresses and gowns and equipped with several dressing tables. Kalin and some servants helped her change into a loose fitting pale-blue dress made of satin. It left her shoulders and most of her back bare and was secured only by a thin strap around her neck, and gold-inlaid rope belt. It left most of her cleavage open to view; barely covering her nipples. The hem ended millimeters above her knees. No shoes were offered.

Kalin carefully looked Jordan up and down. “There, now you can enjoy the evening.”

In truth, Jordan felt a bit self-conscious. The dress was attractive but very revealing. She said nothing, however, not wanting to seem ungrateful for her host’s hospitality. “Thank you General.”

“Call me Kalin. When you are in the family’s quarters, always use first names, and that includes Nathaniel.” Kalin said, touching Jordan on both shoulders. She looked at Jordan and smiled. “Nathaniel will love you in this, and your medal is the perfect accessory,” she added, placing the medal back around Jordan’s neck.

Kalin led Jordan over to a full length mirror. “Look at yourself; beautiful, just beautiful.” Kalin prompted. “We know you have endured much pain, but that is over now,” she said kneading Jordan’s shoulders gently from behind. “You are tense and tired, but we will soon fix that.”

Time seemed to stop as Kalin’s skilled hands worked the tension out of Jordan’s neck and shoulders. After what seemed like all too brief a time receiving such attention Jordan’s solace was interrupted. “That was wonderful.”

“I’m glad to have helped,” Kalin replied. “When Nathaniel tends to you tonight, you will feel as though you are floating on air.”

“The Emperor will tend to me?” Jordan asked, her voice week with a mix of confusion and anticipation.

“Oh yes,” Kalin said running a hand down Jordan’s bare right arm. “You have served his Dynasty well, and endured a great deal of pain on his behalf. Nathaniel will want to help you heal.”

“But I’ve already been cleared for duty by medical.” Jordan remarked.

“Your body has healed most satisfactorily, but what of the mind? What of the spirit?”

Jordon was silent. Did they know about the nightmares and the flash backs? Did they know she saw the crewman she failed to save as the bridge burned lurking in the shadows and waiting to punish her failure? Did they understand the guilt she felt at having survived the destruction of her ship? Could they all see how weak she truly was?

“Come,” Kalin urged. “We will have some wine and talk. You need to get to know the family.”

The wine was very good. Jordan soon found it hard to believe that she was surrounded by the most powerful women in the Dynastic government. She found herself speaking freely about her past and family. She listened to tales told by the Emperor’s wives. The environment was easy and jovial. She was at ease among friends and laughing heartily after hearing a tale of Sandra’s time as a fleet cadet, when the Emperor arrived.

“Wait until you hear how she got herself out of that mess,” Nathaniel Trent said as he entered the room. He was dressed in an ensemble that seemed like a cross between silk pajamas and a karate gi. It was sleeveless with the front of the tunic open enough to expose the front of his torso from his neck to a point just above his naval and tied with a black sash. The top was white and the pants were black. Jordan made no attempt to hide admiration. He was regal and handsome. His smile was open and genuine. He was well-muscled and his muscled formed smooth graceful curves as the flowed into one another. He had just a hint of a sun tan and the slightest, barely visible, sprinkle of hair on his chest. The word magnificent came to Jordan’s mind.

The wives all rose and gathered around him; each received a kiss and a hug in greeting. “Hello Carol,” the Emperor said as he moved to greet her, his eyes holding her gaze in a way that seemed very intimate.

Jordan realized that she should rise to meet the monarch, and just managed to push herself up from the sofa she had been sitting on. By the time she had stood up fully, the Emperor was standing just half a meter in front of her. He took her hands lightly in his and kissed the back of each hand. His eyes still locked on hers. “Welcome to my home.”

Jordan drew a breath and fought to keep it from turning into a raspy sigh. “Thank you Sire.”

“Nathaniel.” He reached behind her head and freed her hair from the elastic band that held it in the ponytail. His fingers combed through her hair until it was falling loosely about her shoulders. He caressed the sides of her neck again, making her recall her experience on the podium earlier that day.

“Nathaniel,” she finally managed to say, forcing her mind to clear slightly.

“Let’s eat,” The Emperor pronounced, leading Jordan down a corridor into a tastefully decorated dining room. He ushered her to a chair on the left side of the table’s head, then seated each of his wives before taking his seat at the head of the table with Jordan at his left and Shayal to his right.

The meal was sumptuous and perfectly prepared. In minutes Jordan was again at ease. The conversation seemed to revolve around family issues that would be spoken of at any family’s dinner table; if the table included a dozen or so co-wives and ten children of various ages. At the end of the meal the Emperor rose to make a toast.

“To Commander Carol Jordan: may she find peace and love.” The Emperor raised his glass as his toast was repeated.

Jordan was silent. She tried to accept the honor graciously, but it seemed to be an oddly familiar sentiment for the occasion. All she could do was accept it, though. As open and approachable as they were, they were still the royal family. Questioning their hospitality would be the height of impropriety.

Later, the group had returned to the living room. The Emperor saw each of his children off to bed before settling onto one of over-wide sofas where he was joined by Shayal and Sandra who snuggle next to him. The other wives found seats about the room but remained close to one another. They were constantly holding and caressing each other. Jordan had not expected the atmosphere of the royal household to be so loving. She had seen the Emperor as a warrior who had held back chaos by force arms and force of will. Now she saw him as a loving husband who was loved by his wives in return. The wives even seemed to love each other. There was no hint of jealously.

As the evening progressed, the wives changed positions; each spending time cuddled with the emperor. The women took turns rubbing one another’s shoulders and temples and the emperor tended to several of them in the same way. Jordan found herself at ease again. Occasionally, she would become slightly uncomfortable when the Emperor or one of the wives said something or looked at her in a way that suggested that she was part of the family’s intimacy, but those feelings faded quickly. She kept up her part of the conversation, and found herself speaking more freely than thought wise. Hours passed, and Jordan was becoming quite tired. She was wondering what the protocol was for excusing herself from the gathering. It was then that the Emperor stood, approached Jordan, and extended his hand to her.

“Will you walk in the garden with me?” He asked as though he was actually unsure of his answer. How could she not want to walk with him?

She took his hands and he helped her to her feet. This brought her to within millimeters of his body. Her body tingled, her breath quickened, and she felt abruptly hot. “I’d love to Nathaniel.” She had used his first name without thinking. Being so close to him, it seemed silly to call him by an impersonal title.

He slipped and arm around her waist; his hand sliding against her bare back as he did so. Jordan shuddered at his touch then settled contentedly against his side and put an arm around him. He led her out of the living room and down a flight of stairs. At the bottom of the stairs two guards opened a set of double doors. The scent of flowers flowed through open portal. Jordan breathed in the sweet smells. The scent seemed to penetrate her whole body. But when her feet hit the grass she was startled a bit and looked down abruptly. Lush green grass was under her feet and protruding between her toes.

“Is something wrong?” Nathaniel asked.

“No, it’s just that the grass feels funny under my feet,” She answered, a bit embarrassed.

“You’ve never walked barefoot on grass?” He inquired caressing her face.

“No, I was born in space,” She answered, leaning her face into his hand. “I didn’t set foot on any planet until I was eight years old, and the part we landed on was scorched desert. I’ve spent my whole life on one starship or another, so barefoot walks weren’t high on the agenda.”

“You’ll really enjoy this then.” He took her lightly around the waist again and began walking slowly. “You can just let yourself smell the flowers, feel the breeze, and the grass beneath your feet. If you don’t think too much the garden will embrace you, and take all your cares away. You’ll just feel them drain into the ground through your feet. That’s why the Andrians don’t wear shoes when they are trying to relax. They believe that the ground can draw negativity out of your body through the feet.”

“Do you believe that?” Carol asked.

“I don’t disbelieve it.”

“It is beautiful here,” Carol commented, looking up at huge moon which cast soft light over the garden and unconsciously curling her toes in the grass. “The moon is so large here.”

“It’s three times the size of earth’s moon, but a little over twice as far away as Earth’s moon is from Earth,” Nathaniel explained.

“You’ve surrounded yourself with beauty,” Jordan observed.

Nathaniel pulled her a bit closer. “Yes, I have.”

They walked and talked for nearly an hour. Carol felt as though she was on a date with suitor. She realized that was exactly what was happening. The rumors were true: the Emperor wanted her. However, what was more important to her was that Nathaniel Trent wanted her. That realization pleased her. It also frightened her a little. Could she be one among many wives? Could she put aside her own jealousies and insecurities? At that precise moment, with the scent of thousands of flowers in the air, pale moonlight softening the night, and Nathaniel’s body warm against her, the answer was yes. But what would happen when the mood was not so romantic?

Nathaniel had stopped walking. It was as though he had known what she had been thinking. His arms came around her waist from behind and pull her against him. Her back settled against the front of his body. The flesh left exposed by the v-shaped opening of his tunic was warm and smooth against her bare back. His arms held her very gently, but she could feel great strength lying dormant in the sculpted muscles. She felt safe as she melted into him. She felt as though she was enveloped by his strength; his power. It was a flowing masculine energy that drew out all of her feminine energy, joined with it and made it flare to life. “What is happening?” She asked softly; forcing her brain to work despite her overloaded senses.

“Nothing you don’t want to happen,” Nathaniel replied before kissing her lightly on the side of her neck.

She swayed slightly in his arms. “What are you doing to me? This feels different.”

Nathaniel nibbled her right ear. “What does it feel like?”

“Good,” Carol said through heavy breath. “But I’ve never felt this way before,” Her hands caressed his forearms.

“Do you want me to stop?” Nathaniel asked her.

His power faded and her head seemed to clear at that moment. She was still highly aroused, but the euphoria she had been feeling was gone. Whatever power Nathaniel had been using on her, he wanted her to be able answer his question with a clear head. His power was not encompassing her anymore, but his arms were still around her, his breath was still warm against her neck, and her body was still firmly against his. Did she want him to stop? “No, Don’t stop.”

He turned her to face him. For a moment he looked into her eyes as his finger stroked her spine. “God, you have beautiful brown eyes.”

He kissed her then. His arms coiled around her hold her against him with the perfect amount of pressure. His tongue slipped into her mouth, teasing hers into ardent response. Her hands coiled in his hair; holding his lips to hers. He had not begun using his power again. The kiss was incredible all on its own.

“Follow me,” Nathaniel said, leading her by the hand. He led her back to the palace, but he used a different entrance than they had earlier. After a short walk through palace corridors, he took her into a suite of apartments similar to the royal quarters. “These will be your quarters.”

“My quarters?” Carol asked. The walk had given her time to clear her head.

“Sit with me for a while,” Nathaniel said, gesturing toward a piece of furniture that seemed to be part sofa and part bed. Carol sat and Nathaniel maneuvered to sit behind her; his legs on either side of her thighs. His hands touched her shoulders and ran down her arms so gently it was almost imperceptible. “Kalin was right. You are tense.”

“I don’t feel tense.” Carol purred, even without his seductive energy affecting her; his touch was enough to excite her.

“But you are. You’re a bundle of knots.” His hands moved to her lower back and stoked up to her neck with his palms. She leaned forward slightly so his hands could more easily do their work. He repeated this stroke several times in a slow rhythm. She felt the muscles in her back lose tension she hadn’t been aware of. His thumbs made circles on either side of her spine, working from its base to the nape of her neck. Carol found herself lost in his skilled touch. His hands soothed muscles and nerves clouding her mind in a fog of sublime sensation.

“I want you to join my family.” Nathaniel said softly as his fingers did something incredible to the nerve clusters on the sides of her neck. “I want you be my wife and my chief of staff.”

Carol was thoroughly enjoying Nathaniel’s touch. But she could still, with great effort, think. “You don’t even know me,” she said I a seduction-softened voice.

His hands made circles on her sides just behind her breasts. “I’ve been watching you since well before you were hurt saving your shipmates. I know that you will be a perfect addition to my family and to my staff.”

“I don’t know you,” Carol said.

“Yes you do,” Nathaniel said. “You’ve seen me tonight. You’ve felt who I am. You know me on a level that is more important than intellect.”

“Yes,” Carol agreed. She did know him, she thought. She knew his heart.

“Do you want to make love to me?” His hands were now rubbing her arms.

“Yes,” Carol breathed; the last bit of resistance carried away on that breath.

At the same instant Nathaniel’s hand slipped under the sides of her dress to cup her breasts and his sense expanding power flowed through her. She moaned from deep within herself. His fingers glided over her taught nipples and then his hands massaged the mounds as he had massaged her back. She was floating on a sea of sensuality.

“Relax Carol, just relax,” Nathaniel whispered in her ear. “Give in to what you’re feeling. Let that energy flow through you. You can let you mind drift. Your body is what matters now. Listen to your body; surrender to it.”

“Surrender,” Carol repeated. As she spoke the word her mind seemed to switch itself off. It was as though the volume of her conscious mind had been turned all the way down. She could feel Nathaniel’s hands as the skimmed her body and removed her clothing. She could hear his voice which seemed to stroke her mentally as his hands did physically. It told her to relax, to trust him, to give into what she was feeling, to let his wonderful energy flow through her. The words soaked into her mind as Nathaniel caressed every inch of her.

“Carol, can you hear me?” Nathaniel asked. Her head was resting in his lap, and he was massaging her temples.

“Yes.” Her voice was distant and sleepy.

“Do you know what I’ve done to you?”

“In trance,” she replied with a pleased smile.

“How do you know that?” He pressed.

“I took psych class in the academy, volunteered for a hypnosis demonstration. It wasn’t as much fun as this.” Her voice was temptingly sleepy. She had gone into trance deeply and quickly and Nathaniel would use that to please her and help her heal.

“How do you feel?” Nathaniel asked her, continuing stroking her temples while he admired her naked body. Her nipples were hard and protruding, the neatly trimmed hair between her legs was already moist, and her lips were lush and full.

“Relaxed... safe... warm.”

Nathaniel smiled. He sent more of his power through her. “Carol I want you to take a deep breath and hold it.”

Carol obeyed instantly. Nathaniel let her hold the breath for a few seconds. “Carol when I tell you to exhale all of the tension that’s left in your body and mind will flow out with that breath and you will be twice as relaxed as you are now.” He looked at her tranquil face for one more second. “Exhale.” She let the breath out and she seemed to sink deeper into the couch. She sighed and then was still accept for her deep, even breathing.

“Alright Carol, I’m going to give you some suggestions.”

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Carol woke up on the sofa with a pillow supporting her head. She was naked, accept for her medal of honor around her neck, and felt better than she could remember feeling. She looked up and saw Nathaniel looking down at her with hungry eyes. She locked those eyes in hers. She remembered his slow seduction but could not real going to sleep. It didn’t matter.

She got up and stood in front of him. Holding the metal in one hand and looking at it. “Why did you leave this on?”

“It’s what brought you to me,” He said, grasping the ribbon and using it to pull her closer.

For several seconds she peered into his eyes without touching him. Then she kissed him. The kiss was deep and slow. His hands slid down the skin of her back until they cupped her bottom and squeezed gently. She could feel his arousal though his pants and involuntarily ground herself against it; loving the feel of the silk against her womanhood. Every touch seemed to be amplified. Every caress was more pleasurable than the last.

Nathaniel smiled with satisfaction as he touched her face, and Carol sighed with pleasure. His suggestion to her while she was in trance had obviously worked. He had suggested that his touch would be twice as pleasurable as the touch of any other man she had been with, and that each touch would feel better than the last. He rubbed the nape of her neck and she seemed to lose herself in her pleasure. He cupped her ample breast in his hands and kneaded them as he kissed her. Her moan melded with his when their mouths met. She put her hands on top of his and held them to her breasts. He kissed and fondled her for a long time before she moved her hands to the knot of the sash that held his tunic closed grazing his abdomen with her fingernails as she did so.

She looked him in the eyes as she untied the sash and pushed the tunic off of his shoulders. Her hands flatted against his bared chest and she placed a soft, wet kiss on its center. Nathaniel’s eyes fluttered closed as she kissed a line down his chest and abdomen, then up again. She untied the drawstring to his pants and pushed them down. Absorbing the image of his naked form and imprinting it on her memory. His proportions were perfect, and his skin was taut and smooth. She admired his arousal standing firm and ready; proud that she was responsible for that readiness. She took him into her hand and stroked him gently. His head drifted back and a long breath left him.

Then there was another kiss. This time there was bare flesh against bare flesh. Carol tried to press as much of her as she could against him. Without, breaking the kiss, he put her arms around his waist and pressed her hands against his buttocks. Twisting her torso so her nipples rubbed against his chest; loving the feel the bit of chest hair against them. Nathaniel bent forward and caused her to lean backward until he was supporting nearly all of her weight. He held her tightly as he kissed her left nipple and rolled his tongue around the areola. Carol moaned again and her head drifted backward as her arms moved to hold him to her bosom. He switched from one breast to another until he ended his ministrations there by pulling lightly on each nipple with his teeth. Carol wondered if it was actually possible to pass out from pleasure.

Nathaniel stood up; bringing her yielding form with him. He turned her in his arms so her back was again to him. He swept her hair back and kissed the back of her neck, nipping at the skin there very softly. A great sigh came from Carol. “That’s so nice.” She rasped. Nathaniel kissed her there again and brushed his lips back and forth of the same spot. Carol writhed in his arms. The second suggestion he had given her while she was in trance was as affective as the first. He had notice that she reacted pleasurably when touched there when had massaged her earlier, and had reinforced that response while she was entranced. He continued to kiss and nuzzle her neck until she turned and kissed him again. This kiss was demanding.

She filled her hands with his hair a pulled him into the kiss, moving her hips suggestively. He sent his power through her. She released his head and looked at him with surprise. He had somehow calmed her urgency without ruing the mood. She was still incredibly aroused, but he had soothed her back into an even, slow-burning passion. He kissed her softly then; barely touching her lips with his. His finger stroked her spine in long, petting strokes and she snuggled as close to him as she could. She laid her head his chest as his hands explored her body. He had created a lull in their passion. The pace was slowed so the pleasure would continue instead of ending before either of them wanted it to.

He held her for several minutes until her breathing had slowed and her heart had ceased to pound. Then he drew her into another kiss: a soul-searing kiss. His power surged through her again as their tongue fenced with each other. The energy he exuded made her slightly euphoric. Her thinking mind retreated further into the background. She became a creature of sensation; of sensuality. She was drowning in pleasure. He led her by the hand into the suites bedchamber.

She perceived only the most general features of the room. She knew that the bed was large and that the room was lit by many candles. Then Nathaniel was kissing her again and nothing else mattered but her growing need for release. She was sure that she would have an orgasm soon if Nathaniel continued the foreplay for much longer, even if they didn’t actually have sex. He had expertly prepared her body and mind for making love. What she was experiencing verged on spiritual. She felt as though everything negative within her had been driven out by the power of the pleasure she was feeling.

Nathaniel sat on the edge of the bed and brought her breast to his mouth again. This time he sucked gently on the sensitized nipples while his hands moved up and down her back recreating the massage he had given her earlier. She reveled in this attention for a time before she put her hands on his shoulders and guided him to lie back on the bed. He allowed her to place his hands behind his head and kept them there as she kissed and sucked on his nipples as he had hers. He sucked in a sharp breath as she tended to each nipple.

“You like that,” she said. It was not a question.

When she had extracted all possible sensation from his nipples she slowly lowered herself onto his member. He filled her completely and she shuddered with that fullness. She settled with his shaft deep within her and did not move. For long moments only their combined breathing brought motion to their joining. Carol was committing this moment to memory. It was a perfect memory of pure pleasure.

Nathaniel’s hands drifted up her thighs and his hips began to move beneath her. She began to ride him; effortlessly finding an erotic rhythm with his movements. His hands never stopped moving as she pistoned herself atop him gliding over her skin to maximize her pleasure. He used that wondrous power of his to control the pace, prolonging the experience and allowing her pleasure to build.

Carol was amazed. She knew she was well beyond the point where she should have climaxed but had not yet felt the precursor signs of orgasm. The pleasure was more intense than anything she had known before. Nathaniel was a very skilled lover. His power had eased her mind and energized her body. She was still surfing waves and waves of pleasure.

Nathaniel’s hand caressed that spot at the base of her neck and she moaned and rode him faster. His hands found her breast again and squeezed just firmly enough. Her place quickened again. She braced one hand against Nathaniel’s chest and the other on the beds oaken headboard. She was sweating profusely and her breath was ragged and labored. Through her own joy she could hear Nathaniel’s own strained breathing and moaning. She forced her eyes open, wanting to see her affect on him. His eyes were tightly closed his head rolled from side to side, and his chest heaved has he raised and lowered his hips in time with hers. She was happy with the pleasure she was providing him.

His eyes opened and caught hers in a stare so intimate that it almost frightened her. He took her face in his hands and drew her into a kiss. Her hips continue to move as the kiss deepened and her breast rubbed against in her chest and she felt the beginnings of her orgasm. The Nathaniel said the word.

“Surrender!” He said breathily.

Carol’s hips moved even faster. Then a word drifted into her mind. “Nathaniel.” The first time was barely audible.

Nathaniel looked up at Carol as she was in the throes of passion. His third suggestion was working. When she heard him say the word ‘surrender’ she would need to say his name three times before she could reach orgasm. She could not climax until he said that word.

“Nathaniel!”It was louder this time, and she moved even faster.

“NATH… AN… IEL!” This time it was almost a scream. She spammed as her climax took her. Her back arched and her head thrashed about sending her deep brown locks flailing. When the orgasm was at its peak, Nathaniel sent a surge of power through her. She gasped and her spasms intensified until Nathaniel had to hold her thighs tightly to keep her from inadvertently pulling herself off of his manhood.

After many minutes the climaxed ebbed. Carol fell atop Nathaniel keeping his still-erect member inside her. She was speechless. Her body was pleasantly exhausted, her mind was still riding high on endorphins, and she was totally relaxed. She could feel Nathaniel within their breath causing the slightest movement of their still-joined flesh. It became important to her that she satisfy him as he had satisfied her.

She kissed him softly and the locked her eyes with his. “Keep your eyes open if you can,” she told him as she began to ride him again. “Look at me,” she added, her voice trailing off as she began to enjoy herself again. His eyes never left hers as slid her sex around him. It was eerily intimate looking to his eyes as the pleasure washed through him. He was at his most unguarded and she felt that, while they were joined, that she could see his true self and he could see hers. This intimacy opened her up to more pleasure. Even after the exhausting bout of lovemaking she had just enjoyed, she was again swept up in the feeling of his being inside her.

She kept the pace slow, so they could keep the wonderful eye contact they had established. She swirled hips as she moved up and down and down on his shaft. She loved the sounds he was making, the way his chest heaved, and the way his straining muscles felt beneath her. It was Nathaniel who succumbed to the pleasure first and closed his eyes to bask in it. Carol smiled and closed her eyes as she quickened the pace slightly. When she sensed his climax was near, she stopped moving and concentrated on controlling her inner muscles. She used those muscles to grip his manhood, and began to move her hips in a slow circle. Nathaniel groaned and seemed content to lay still and let Carol please him. She smiled as his body settled down on the mattress.

In time she felt her release coming near again. She bore down harder onto him. “Please come now Nathaniel! Please, I want us to go together.”

He came, grunting with effort as his body thrashed and his fists grasped the sheets. Carol felt his warmth spurt into her. She felt the part of him inside her pulse powerfully and this sent her over the edge. An orgasm claimed her. She clung to Nathaniel as the pleasant contractions surged through her body and she could feel him thrashing beneath her.

When they were both spent he held her closely with her head on his chest. She listened to his heartbeat as it returned to a normal pace. She was utterly content. Her body was consumed with the pleasant lethargy that only lovemaking could produce. Neither of the spoke; words seemed inadequate. After holding her for an hour or so Nathaniel touched the back of her head. She looked at him and he smiled.

He deliberately put a finger on her forehead and said, “sleep”.

The fourth of his trance suggestions took effect and Carol fell into a deep, restful sleep. He moved so he could embrace her from behind and kissed her shoulder. “Welcome to my family my love.” He pulled her a little closer and settled in to sleep himself.