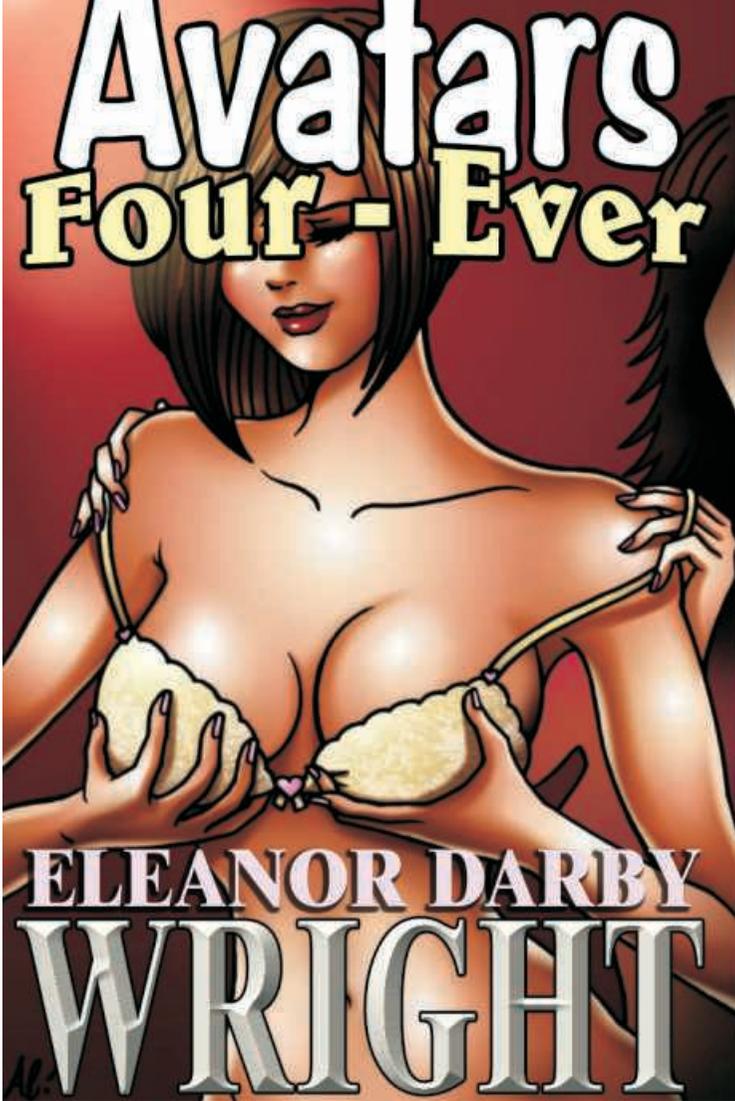


Avatars Four - Ever



ELEANOR DARBY
WRIGHT

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AVATARS FOUR-EVER!

by Eleanor Darby Wright

Why does every effing avatar experience have to begin here? Curse words flowed out of my mouth as I smelled the fetid swamp again. The young man, roped into the line in front of me, fell, dragging down a couple of the men in front of him and almost pulling me down as well.

A tall, pointy-eared warrior appeared as if from nowhere from the foliage making a couple of the men, also pointy-eared and green-tinged like me, men whom I was roped to, jerk fearfully and retreat. Having been through this 'paradise' a couple of times in other avatar 'experiences', I didn't try to back off. The young warrior just grinned at me. He cut loose the fallen youth,

looped another rope through my bonds and linked me to a fearful, sweating man, one of those who had been dragged down.

Another almost nude, painted warrior appeared on the pathway, a firestick in his hands, and quite a surprise to me. I must have shown that surprise because the blue and red painted warrior pointed at me. The second warrior reached into the thin belt about his loins and took out a paint stick. I was daubed with a red color as the two almost naked warriors laughed at me. I cringed back but cursed them at the same time.

"She's dead?" asked the second man after he had marked me. He pointed at the male figure lying face down in the mud. The green-tinted warrior drove the point of his long, thin spear, the throwing spear of these savages, through the back of the neck of the man on the ground. There was very little blood.

"Is now," laughed the young killer, seeming to revel in the fear that the other men were showing.

The warrior who had tagged me looked a little annoyed with his young companion. "Catch them up," he snapped at the younger man, jerking the fallen men to their feet. They had been trying to rest a little against grassy, muddy hummocks beside the path.

We left the body of our dead companion to sink into the mud, the men behind complaining as they had to tread on him as we were all made to run to catch up to others who were further ahead than I was.

I recognized the clothing of the men I was with. I'd seen the 'stranger' tribe after I had been captured by the Aravee. I shivered as I thought about that. I had been captured and all captives, Perella and her brothers had let me know, were women as far as the Aravee

were concerned. So, I had been dressed and treated as a woman. I had been Aralla, the husband of two men, Perella's brothers.

The strangers had also captured me, thinking me a woman. When the captain, making love to me as his 'lady', had found out that I was a man, it hadn't bothered him at all. He had called me a 'hourie', and said that he'd had many a hourie on a long sea voyage when he was 'below decks'. I took that to mean that the captain was a man who had risen through the ranks.

All that had been in the past, on one of the other two visits I had been forced to make in an avatar experience on this world, wherever it was. Smith had said that they couldn't control these experiences as they could others. Who knew what would happen to me? A new avatar had to start here on the ET 'holodeck', if that was what it was. Perhaps the ETs who had sent out the transmissions that had led to successful avatar research were trying to teach us their history. I'd heard techs discussing it but Smith wouldn't deny or confirm that was what it was.

It might seem like days but it would only be hours back in the Avartech facility in London where I was really lying, I knew, in a casket, connected to the machines that allowed me into an avatar. Just why did we have to start here all the time? And why was I a bare-footed captive, the mud oozing between my toes, wondering what I had done to deserve this again?

It was as bad as I feared it was going to be. There must have been six trees of warriors in the encampment into which we were marched and all were holding firesticks, a kind of rifle, that they must have stolen from the stranger tribes. I could remember Perella's brothers helping to offload cannons, ammunition, and

firesticks from the ship we had allowed to run aground, the ship I had been the 'lady' on.

Perella, supposedly my maid, had poisoned all of the crew. Her reward had been to have me, even though I was dressed as a woman, impregnate her so that she could stay with the Aravee as a woman of that tribe and not be traded off or sold to another tree. A pregnant woman could not be stolen. Theft of women was the way that the southern trees obtained their new wives.

It all made sense in a convoluted way. Genes got spread around and so the tribes were all genetically healthy. I had also overheard that the 'thefts' weren't as terrible as I had first thought. They were 'arranged' so that while I, as a woman in one avatar experience, was being captured and married to a strong warrior, the tribe that took me was also raided and one of its daughters taken off to some other tree as I replaced her.

What was happening in the rough encampment where several tribes were meeting was nothing like that genteel capture at all. It was nothing like the changing of me into a woman, either, by the Aravee, who had massacred, so I gathered, the men of the Merebo raiding party I had been with, leaving me the lone captive and a 'woman'.

The thirty men who had been taken with me this time were being divided up into groups and handed over to the women, armed with short firesticks similar to those that the men possessed. The women were laughing as they stripped the stranger men of their clothing, casting it on an evil-smelling, smoking fire.

The men I had been with seemed dazed. One tried to talk to me and it all came out as gibberish. A woman

was coming down the line of captives, forcing us all to drink from her pail. "Quinna!" I gasped and the woman nodded as she made me drink as well.

I should have used my release word right then when the thought hit me. I tried but only craziness came from my mouth.

"That one must have been captured by one of the Trees before," said the young, grinning warrior, coming down the line and cutting me loose. "I claim her for the Perisho."

"You should have told me," said the girl, swinging her tush suggestively in the skirt wrapped about her as she went back down the line, marking each of the men with me with a color. "I wouldn't have doused her with so much quinna."

An older warrior, a group of other warriors gathered alertly about him as if he was an important leader, was helping a couple of red-haired girls; all the girls had red hair, of course, as it was a custom of all the trees that only women dyed their hair that way. "Too many captured women," the old man complained to the younger who was prodding me to follow the other men who had red paint marks on their faces.

"They only fired their weapons once and they surrendered," said the young Perisho warrior. "We killed enough of them to sate even you, Brash. I even killed a straggler on the trail. I couldn't kill any more. If you want to take over and change the law, you have my support!"

The older man snorted, taking a knife. I thought he was going to begin killing all of us prisoners. But all that he did was to cut the clothing away from each of

us so that we were as naked as the enja lizard, and frankly, just as ugly.

“Chassa!” called Brash then. A woman appeared at the entrance to a huge tent. “Six more women for the tree!” he called. One of the younger men with me, a stranger to this land like us all in the lines, had been trying to get his hands down to conceal his manhood. Now he keeled over in a faint which brought a crowd of women out to look him over, to make ribald comments about his manhood, and to cart him off into the communal women’s tent. There, the women prepare themselves as women and no men are allowed at all.

I was fifth of the six to be brought in, knowing from what had happened to me before what was going to happen to me again. I would become a woman, sort of. The scented, scalding mud was spread all over me by young girls, so much younger than the avatar I was occupying.

Ahead of me, the girls were all laughing and pointing at whoever it was who was trying to fight back at the way he was being womanized. Suddenly, there was a crash as whoever it was, landed in the wide bath tubs that the northern tribes used. Whoever it was began to struggle and then the struggles abated. Quinna will do that, making you lose control of your limbs as well as your tongue when given in a large dose. I could see a panicked face reaching up above the surface of the water. I remembered being thrown into an outside pool by my future husband and fearing exactly the same thing, that I was going to drown.

“We should let that one stay under,” said one of the red-haired women, her necklaces and bracelets proclaiming her status as a priestess of some kind.

“Or save her for the Garithee,” murmured the younger woman, with herb pouches attached to the belt of her dress. “They like feisty women, or so they are always saying.”

The older woman smiled and looked me over. “So,” she began. “What do we have next, another feisty woman?”

I tried to say that I wasn’t any kind of a woman but my tongue didn’t work. I had really only been lightly dosed. I was pushed into the warm waters as the man in front of me was hauled out, coughing and half-drowned, several of the younger women covering him with cloths and hauling him further into the dim interior of the tents.

I knew what was going to happen and there was no use fighting against it. My body hair and facial hair were removed. A kind of strap was lashed around my genitals to hold them back and padded panties were placed about me. I had to lie then in front of a sink while my hair was dyed and what might have been called hair extensions were added to my locks, creating a mass of waved hair at my neck.

I lay as quietly as I could while a breast band, padded again, was put about my squeezed, taped chest. Finally, I was wrapped into a woman’s dress, dark red in color. Young girls came to me and laughed as they painted my toenails and then shaped and painted my fingernails. I received many arch comments on my womanliness but I think that they were only teasing me. I couldn’t have reverted back to femininity that quickly, could I? Only women painted their nails as was being done to me as they were shaped femininely as well. Only women had their earlobes pierced and had tasselled earrings placed in them.

I had five companions, four of whom I could hear, their voices so full of fear. They only spoke in gibberish which showed that there was no point in talking anyway. We were women now as far as these Perisho were concerned. As soon as I could get my voice back, I intended to whisper my key release words and get the hell out of this new ET 'avatar' experience.

I tried to ignore the sobbing of the last captive, the one who had fainted. She, looking at my companion, I had used the female pronoun, had been dressed in a golden dress, her hair festooned with flowers and her face already made up. A Perisho woman talked to 'her' and called 'her' Balanya, or something like that. I had been dressed in gold when I had been married to my husbands. Both had made love to me that very night in the back of a wagon. It looked like the same fate awaited Balanya.

The Perisho woman got up and gracefully glided over to where the one of the captives lay as if dead. She and another woman rolled over the red-haired figure and began to paint the masculine face that looked up at them.

"Egry!" whispered an agonized voice to me then and I looked back at the golden dressed figure, who had been the lad who had fainted. Whoever had chosen this one to be his bride had chosen well. The full, wavy, red hair and the painted face, in a padded dress just like mine, made me believe that this was a female figure roped to the bed just as I was. "What have they done to me? What they have done to you?"

"Yebbrutohnm," I said to the bride, the quinna having worn off me enough that the 'yes' at least communicated to her.

Panic spread over the feminized features across from me. "You, you're an officer," hissed the bride at me. "Tell me what to do."

What was that old message that Queen Victoria was supposed to have been given about her wedding bed and the consummation of her marriage? Lie back and think of England? I tried to say it to whoever knew me and called me Egry, whoever that was, but I still didn't have control of my tongue.

The Perisho women worked their way around the tent, the man on the other side of me completely unconscious as they giggled and painted his face, making his lips a bright, bright red as I had seen that the bride wore as well.

"This one didn't fight us," said the woman who might have been the one who had poured the scalding mud all over me.

"She knows what's best for her," laughed the other woman.

"Let her sit up," said the first woman, staring at me. She drew out one of the firesticks while the other woman untied me. I was able to sit up, the dress tight around my legs and making me feel so feminine. It wasn't, of course, a feeling that I didn't enjoy and wasn't used to.

"You've done this before," said the woman as she applied the makeup to my face, arching my now non-existent eyebrows.

I babbled back at her, feeling my tongue sort of unlocking then. Oh, I wasn't going to let them know that. I didn't want another dose of quinna and find myself as helpless as two of my companions obviously were.

“Marinya has done this before,” said the woman, naming herself then as Chassa and her companion as Davanya. “Were you ever a bride before, Marinya, like our pretty Balanya is going to be in a very short time?”

I could have nodded my head, “yes”, to the women, but it would have been the wrong gesture. I had my hands free and so I clasped them in front of me and the woman behind me gasped.

“Don’t give this woman any more quinna,” said Chassa. “We must find out the tree she belongs to and the name of her husband. She must join us in the women’s circle as well as she is a woman. That is true, is it not, Marinya?”

I clasped my hands properly in assent and tossed my long, red hair back over my shoulders. I heard the bride beside me begin to gasp.

“Egry, help me!” exclaimed the ‘girl’ beside me and Chassa sighed.

“Give a little quinna to that one,” she said to her companion. “I will send guards to bring this lovely pair out to the ritual. I can hear that the Morikee have already begun to marry off their new women.”

There was no point in not trying to merge in with the women of the Perisho. Several looked at me in astonishment as I swayed in the dance circle just like them, the familiar perfume they had flicked all over my chest and shoulders bringing back so many memories of me being forced, as Balanya was, to swing her hips and tush as a woman should and dance, in high-heeled slippers that women of all the northern tribes seemed to wear.

Balanya looked absolutely terrified as she was swished around the circle. I could see her looking fran-

tically for me, but I had been garlanded with flowers when I left the women's hut and so I was indistinguishable from all the red-haired women, their earrings, necklaces and bracelets swinging about them just like mine were.

The warrior who seized Balanya then was the muscled, younger warrior who had marked me along the trail. Poor Balanya didn't know what to do when this ardent young man seized her about her waist, stroked her tush with a strong hand and then lifted her up to kiss her fiercely before the priestess of the tree. Chassa intoned a brief ritual that I had heard before when I was married to Sebo and then to Nothan and Grish.

"Egry!" cried Balanya, trying to fight off her would-be husband. "Help me!"

There was nothing I could do. The muscled warrior lifted his bride easily, swirling her and showing us all that she wore the gold panties of a bride beneath the noisy, golden petticoats of her bridal dress. She was sobbing as she was hauled off to a small tent, the marriage tent where she was about to be made into a woman and a wife. Chassa would soon go in with chosen companions and would witness that consummation had taken place. Then Balanya would be welcomed into the Perisho tree and fed the drugs that would slowly change her into more of a woman, with breasts, legs and hips like a girl so that she could please her husband more and be indistinguishable from the rest of us women.

"What about her?" asked one of the older women, pointing to me when the bride and groom had left us.

"Marinya is a woman of another tree," said Chassa. "When she can talk again, Brash and I will find out who she is and what we can do with her. We won't

give her over to the young men and visitors, not just yet.”

I hadn't been a woman of the Merebo, nor of the Aravee, long enough to be a comfort woman. Perella had told me that I should have been one, not a bride. I had gathered that women who broke the rules and had to be punished were sent to certain tents where any man could visit. Young men, like the warrior who had claimed Balanya, learned how to make love by visiting such tents. Guests, visiting emissaries from different trees, a great practice in the north, had access to such women to 'give them comfort' when they were away from their own wives and women. The only way out of such tents was to become pregnant, Perella had told me, laughing at me as I realized then that a prisoner, considered to be a woman like me, could never be pregnant, never stop being a comfort woman.

Four ugly, graceless women were introduced to the Perisho then. “Who'd want to lie with her?” asked a slim, busty woman beside me, indicating a stunned woman with scars that not even makeup had hidden.

“Give her a year,” said an older woman. “Chassa will change her face and figure. You see the women in the comfort tent when the Morikee came to visit yesterday. Remember how they looked a year ago and more. The Morikee did not object at all, did they? And you enjoyed the party as well, Ranyassa.”

“The one who danced the pleasure dance really was pleasing to the eye,” murmured another woman, smiling at me. “Did you not see the Morikee fighting over who was going to sleep with her?”

An arm took mine. “Come,” said Chassa to me. “Walk in front of me, woman, to that tent.”

I knew that Chassa wanted to check me out. She wanted to see me walk like a woman in high heels on the boardwalks that the northern tribes lay down for their women. Little did she know how short a time it had been that I had been sashaying down the runway for Yuri and his fellow players at a charity event put on by soccer wives and girl friends.

I sashayed in front of her towards where Brash was standing, a firestick cradled in his arms. I heard the grunting and babbling as my four companions, Balanya otherwise engaged, were herded past us into the comfort women's tent. The woman who opened the flap to them looked so graceful and shapely as she welcomed them in.

That couldn't be the one that they were just talking about in the woman's circle, could she? She looked so astonishingly real, her breasts definitely wobbling in her red dress as she put her arm about the shortest prisoner. She was looking past him at Brash as she kissed the short prisoner's cheeks, looking avidly at me as she led the others into the comfort tent. The poor, short sap looked so pleased and relieved, even in his long, wrap-around dress. He had a lot to learn about being the captive of the Perisho.

"Seen enough?" asked Brash, reaching out and taking my chin in his hand. I was forced to look at him, which, as a woman, I should have done automatically.

"Marinya has been a woman before," Chassa said from behind me. "She knows how to walk in high heels and how to move her tush as you men like."

Brash smiled, not taking his eyes off me. "The quinna must have worn off by now," he said. "Speak to me, woman."

“Mike, Michael, Douglas,” I said huskily. “Michelle, Dee, Yuri, Smith, Cindy, Grant.”

Brash’s eyebrows went up. I stood there, in front of the comfort tent, listening to the shrieks and laughter, a revel clearly going on inside, and shivered. Nothing happened to me. Nothing worked.

“What is it?” asked Chassa sharply. “A stranger language?”

“I think it’s magic words, a spell,” said Brash, staring at me. “She’s supposed to fall down and not even seem to breathe. Then, in a while, even weeks from now, she revives but she isn’t who she was any more. The Morikee think it is the gods and goddesses at play with us! You’ll see. She’ll seem like another woman entirely when she awakens from her time with the goddess.”

I felt as if I had been struck by a bolt of lightning as I stared at the older man in front of me. He bowed mockingly to me.

“You were speaking words,” said Brash, reaching out and caressing the earrings that stretched down onto my shoulders. I don’t know which was worse, the casual way he treated me as if I was a woman or the casual way that he revealed how much he knew about avatars in this ‘savage’ encampment.

“Such lovely tassels,” Brash murmured. “They really suit a woman as lovely as you, Marinya.” He indicated for me to sit on a plank bench in front of the comfort tent. Completely flustered, I did so, only to receive a smack on the back of my head from Chassa.

Chassa smiled at me as I turned to protest. “You sat like a man,” she said. “Now, show the Hunt Leader that you know how to sit like a woman, Marinya.”

I knew that I was being mocked. I knew that I was being taught my place by these two. My heart was beating furiously as I tried to calm down then and smooth what there was of my skirts beneath me and sit gracefully. I knew that I had to cross my legs in the skirt as well, as women did, but never the men. At least, that had been the custom among the Aravee.

"That was prettily done, sweet Marinya," said Brash. "So speak to us in a woman's voice, and tell us how you come to be free of the tree that trained you to be a woman."

"Smith, Grant, Michelle Dee, Yuri Kuznetsov," I babbled, praying for greyness to descend about me, followed by the relief of blackness as I found myself in the casket in which I knew that I was encased.

"She doesn't learn," said Chassa, touching me, snapping the breast band around my chest.

"No," said Brash with a smile. "I always love teaching a new comfort woman the role she must now play for the males of the Perisho." He undid his belt then, smiling at me, reaching down to squeeze the maleness in his long pants. I could almost see it beginning to bulge outward by the second.

"I, I was taken by the Aravee," I gasped. Chassa clouted me again.

"You didn't speak like that among the Aravee, whoever they are," Chassa said from behind me still, Brash putting his hands on either side of my face. His fingers were like steel bars pressing down on me. I knew that I would soon be doing whatever he wanted me to do for him, so strong and hurtful were his fingers.

“Now you must have me,” sighed Brash, leaning forward and pressing his lips on mine, his mouth quickly all red with my lipstick. “Mmm, I liked that, Marinya. Yes, Chassa, this woman has been kissed by a man before and she knows how to respond. If she doesn’t convince us that she is a wife to an Aravee warrior, I think that we should put her in a golden dress and I shall marry her myself at the circle tomorrow.”

“You old hanga,” snorted Chassa, referring to an animal that I thought resembled a goat. “You’re too much of a leader to take this one. All of your strikers have been looking at this one already, you know that. She won’t be short of partners from now until we break camp. Every man, married or single, wants to try out pretty Marinya.”

I know it was said to intimidate me and it did. I only had Perella’s words to go by but she had told me how lucky I was that I had married her brothers. I only had two men making love to me on my wedding night, after all. And on the following day, I just had the captain inside me! Oh, how lucky I had been!

You should be fucked all night long as I was, I thought angrily at Perella, and see how lucky you think that you are. But didn’t dare to say it, as she was the sister of my husbands. I knew that they would believe any story, true or not, that she told them rather than the words of the captive wife whom they shared.

“If you had gone to the comfort tent,” Perella had laughed at me, fondling the manhood so long ago, her hands in my panties until I could stand it no longer. I had had to roll her over, in the lean-to we had made to await my husbands, and drive my throbbing erection into the moist cavity between her legs, “you could have had all the men who massacred your hunting party.

You really aren't good for much else, are you, Aralla, except taking a big, strong man inside you!"

The only way that I had been able to stop all Perella's mockery had been by kissing her, which of course she loved me to do, saying how much she always loved kissing other girls in the women's tent. I tasted and smelled just like a girl, of course, as she had to point out constantly, demanding her turn on top of me, as if she was the man as she pulled so strongly on my breast bands and kissed my tiny nipples as if I was a girl.

"The first ship I was on sailed along the coast from Neret," I said, speaking to Brash and Chassa as if I was Michelle Dee, the feminine person I had become in London. I wasn't supposed to tell them anything about my previous incursions as an avatar into this world. I knew that. But that was when I was told that these 'primitives' knew nothing about avatars and visitors from other worlds here in this one.

"The Aravee woman we captured poisoned all the crew except for me and she took me as a captive," I told them. "Her name was Perella and she called me Aralla and made me marry her brothers."

There was no response from the older man in front of me. I would have thought that the capture of a great ship by the Aravee and their allies, the first I had heard of the trees ever co-operating, would have been a story known to everyone. The Aravee and the Irikee, a neighboring tree, had used throwing spears and bows and arrows as their main weapons at the time. Now Brash and even the women had firearms and seemed to know how to use them as well.

"What's a Neret?" Brash wanted to know.

I'd only heard that it was a settlement of some kind. I had thought that it was a port and a base for the stranger tribe. I envisioned that they had crossed some ocean to trade with the Aravee and the Irikee for drugs and precious stones. They'd been the ones to have fire-sticks, cannons, huge ships, elaborate clothing with lingerie and cosmetics for women.

I was no help at all to the Hunt Leader, who stroked me and fondled me the whole time as he sat beside me and questioned me in my long dress and beaded hair. I couldn't tell him anything about the ship I had supposedly been on this time, what we had been doing in Truce Lands, as he called them, or why we fought so poorly. "These women let themselves be captured," complained Brash to the woman who had covered me with her short pistol all the time.

"It's because they have heard of the magnificent cocks that the Perisho have," said Chassa, so deadpan then that I thought she was serious. "These women want a taste of you, Brash my love. They surrender so easily because they want to lie under you while you fill their insides with your honeyed essence. I think that they are disappointed that they haven't yet been able to become mothers of the tree."

"Is that right, Marinya?" asked Brash with a quick grin. "Well, feel this, darling woman. Isn't that what a woman like you has been longing for all of her life?"

Chassa insisted that Brash take me inside the comfort tent if he was going to have me. She waited outside while terror closed in on me again as Brash did just that, angry, he said, that I wasn't telling him anything at all that he could understand.

We entered the long tent to an incredible sight. There seemed to be every possible luxury I had ever

seen on this world before. The lamps throughout the long tent were being dimmed by striking looking women in shimmering dresses and long-flowing hair. They were smiling as they were drawing men into alcoves, separate tents where curtains, real curtains, and tables of food and liquor were set out. Whatever laughing events had caused such mirth at the far end of the huge, main tent had subsided as the sounds we heard now were of girlish giggling, curtains being drawn and the creaking of beds as men and women drew closely together, indulging themselves in whatever fantasy worked for them.

The most beautiful woman we had seen before came sashaying to the front curtains that Brash had lifted to push me into the tent. "Oh, darling Ebo," the woman cooed to the man holding me in his iron grip. "You promised me that I could comfort you on your next visit here. And, just for you, my love, I am already fragrant with the Garithee scent that you liked so much on your visit to their tent!"

"A new comfort woman, Marinya," said Brash, introducing me to the stunning woman. "Some day, Surassa, she might be your equal."

Surassa pouted girlishly while I quivered and felt the blood pounding through my veins as I looked at this so lovely woman. "I will enjoy teaching her all the tricks that she must know if she is to rival me as a woman, darling Ebo," she said, actually batting her eyelashes at the warrior, sliding her arms around his neck and pressing her bouncy, womanly body into his. No wonder that Brash let go of my hand and went off with her to one of the canopied beds that had curtains on the sides that could be let down for privacy.

Not that many of the men and women in the dimly lit tent availed themselves completely of the privacy curtains of the comfort tent. And I could see why as two men got up, stretched and then changed places to go with new partners who reacted with delight as if they really wanted to have a new man to be instantly on top of them, demanding to be fondled and awakened to another round of lovemaking. Then, it occurred to me, slow learner that I am, that the smiling, submissive girls, opening their legs for the men who lay on them, by what I could see, weren't girls at all.

An old woman came forward and took my hand, leading me to one of the empty canopied bed areas where she had me sit on a soft, cushioned sofa while she looked critically at my hair and my makeup.

"A rush job?" she asked while I could look over at a laughing girl whose man twisted her so that he could ride her as he would have ridden a riding mount. She had a full, rounded tush, so white against her black panties. Her rider lowered the panties slowly as she wiggled and laughed. Then I could see that she had a penis as well, at least the same size as the warrior who was leaning over her to stroke her breasts as he really tried to ride her as if she was a bucking bronc.

I couldn't believe how she was laughing and calling for him not to stop and go harder, harder, harder. Ugh, I didn't think that I could do that. I didn't want to do that. I just wanted to get out of this place, on with what Smith wanted from me, and then get back to my love, Yuri. I shivered, watching the comfort 'woman' and her man.

Well, yes, I would let Yuri do me like that if he wanted to do me like that. I hadn't ever stopped my darling Yuri doing me in any way that he wanted. And

I don't think that I ever would. Hmm, that girl had started shrieking just like so many others up and down this huge, long tent. She really seemed to be enjoying herself and her man was as well.

"Jumilla," said the old woman with her grey hair in braids about her neck. "Yes, you should study her, my girl. She really knows how to get into it with a man, doesn't she? They fight over her, you know."

"I don't want to be like," I didn't have to say 'her' as we watched Jumilla roll under her partner and begin to kiss him, hugging him tight to her body, her legs lifting about him and crossing tightly to hold the young man down. He buried his head between Jumilla's ample breasts.

"That's what they think we are," said the old woman, leaning forward to whisper to me. "They call us the stranger tribe and make us all into houries but they call us women. Is that what you want to spend your life as, Marinya? It can be glorious when you are young and pretty and the drugs take over and change you, making you even more pretty and desirable until you end up like Jumilla, or even better, Surassa."

"I, I want to get out of here," I whispered to the old woman. She smiled at me, her red-painted lips turning down in a sad grimace.

"Here," she said and, in a sleight-of-hand trick, a knife appeared between her hands. "Here is the only sure way out, Marinya. I've been here for forty years since the trees overran Neret and extinguished five thousand souls. I was a lucky one. I was small. I was dosed with fellaya and lady's grief and became a prize of the Chelladee. I've been traded ten times from tree to tree when I have pleased a visitor and they have bought me. Till here I am, watching Brash, who prom-

ised me he'd be my husband and that his sister would have children for me and make me a mother. Now, I just wait until he notices his Preesha again and comes close to me one day. Then, Neret and *Sunspawn* will be avenged."



The knife was held there for a while as my heart beat faster and faster. Jumilla was giggling in the background and her bed began to bounce as the young man she had with her began to bark like a dog. She giggled some more but I couldn't see any humor in what he was doing to her then, making her manhood get firmer and straighter as he lifted her legs over his shoulder.

"Oh, don't drop me," giggled Jumilla, twisting this way and that as the young man gobbled on her male-ness, his hands caressing her tush. Then he was penetrating her again as she gasped and panted heavily as I had always done when I was faking it as I'm sure she was.

"You were captured on the plains?" murmured Preesha, the old woman. "Don't tell me that the Kings have finally realized that the only way to beat the savages is by cutting off their trading for grain across the grasslands. How many foragers are there on the flat lands?"

"The others have been talking," I muttered, covering up I hoped that I didn't know what this old woman was talking about.

"Not just your companions," murmured the old 'woman', flicking back her hair, so pink and lovely in the dim light. "Troden, a Garithee, came by. He loves making it with Surassa and I heard him telling Chassa that they let their new women watch the older comfort women of Morikee serving Morikee warriors in their daintiest roles. The Garithee promised their new women that they wouldn't do that to any of them who told them all about the new stranger forts and settlements, and why they were there."

"You can't blame them for telling all," I said with a shudder, feeling my earrings shaking along my shoul-

ders then. I went to uncross my legs but Preesha stopped me. A naked man bounded past us and took a large earthenware jug from a stack near the front of the tent into his hands. He stopped when he saw me.

“A new woman?” he asked, leering at me, making me shudder all over. He took a deep swig from the jug, the smell of liquor almost turning my stomach.

“Brash’s,” said the old woman. “He’s enjoying Surassa before Marinya will be his.”

The drinker pulled a face. “Brash will have nothing left after trysting Surassa,” he laughed. “Send Marinya down to the new women’s quarter, Preesha. Corro and me are turning that big, ugly woman into a girl. She’s learning to like taking us, and to have us take her in both directions at one time.”

“Does she have any choice?” asked Preesha quietly and the man laughed.

“None at all,” laughed the naked man. “Marinya makes a prettier woman from the start, so send her to me, Preesha. Brash is old and she’ll enjoy two young men much better than an old hanga like him!” He bounded off down the aisle, slapping at women’s bare legs and tushes where he could as he was yelled at and threatened by different men as he disappeared into the gloom of the far tent.

What am I supposed to do here, Smith? I thought, the hysteria rising in me, but then a graceful figure came down the tent, clinging to an older man. Only when she came into our lighted spot could I see that Surassa wore only skimpy, tight panties that didn’t cover much of her wide hips. But my eyes nearly popped out of my head as I couldn’t see where ‘she’ was hiding what she must have been hiding.