



Sasha White

TRANSPLANT



MAVERICKS OF SPACE

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By Sasha White

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Breathing hard, adrenaline flowing, and heart pounding, Max Cooper eyed the incensed alien in front of him. Her petite height and delicate features might fool *some* people into underestimating her, but not him. He saw the controlled tightness of her lean muscles as she slowly circled him; her eyes darkening and her skin glowing almost silver and he knew she was preparing to spring.

At least she wasn't wearing her usual assortment of weapons.

Then again, the weapons never distracted him as much as the perky breasts and ripe nipples that were on display right now. The second he glanced at them again, he knew he'd made a mistake. Before he could blink, she was on him. Literally.

Firm thighs wrapped around his waist and damp heat rubbed against his belly. He caught hold of her tiny waist and stumbled. Turning, he stepped forward and pinned her to the inner wall of the spaceship, his body instantly going from fight mode to fuck mode.

"Mine, Max," she growled. "You are mine, and I am not willing to share."

"Yet you expect me to share you. It doesn't work like that, Tyla." Gripping her ass cheeks, he hefted her higher and pressed his forehead against hers as he fought for control. "If you want me to share you with other transplants, you have to accept that other Tritons will want me, and I have no reason to say no to them."

"You have the right to say no to anyone!"

"But if you're having sex with others, why shouldn't I?" He tangled one hand in the dark curtain of her hair and tugged back her head so he could meet her gaze.

Her bright green eyes flashed with fire, full of turmoil and passion.

“But I am Triton! I am used to sexual freedom!” Her thighs tightened around his waist, pulling him so close that the only thing keeping him from entering her was the flimsy material of his drawstring pants.

“So what?” The strength of his emotions surprised Max. “I’m human, and I agreed to stay on board this ship, and be transplanted on a whole different planet—*for you!*”

The flare of jealousy when he’d seen one of the other transplants put his hands on Tyla had been like a knife to the heart. It hadn’t mattered that it had been a Durian and he knew she had absolutely no interest in sex with one. All that had mattered was another man had put his hand on her, and instead of cutting it off at the wrist like she should have, she’d just smiled.

He’d never been a possessive man before. Then again, he’d never been in love before.

Unable to handle the new emotions that had been rumbling around inside him for the last month he’d done what any normal guy would do -- he’d ignored them and tried to distract himself by flirting with the nearest female. Most normal guys, however, wouldn’t find themselves instantly transported to the captain’s quarters of a spaceship to face off with a naked and angry alien, Captain Tyla Natori.

His abductor.

His sponsor.

The woman he’d agreed to give up life on Earth for.

Strange and new emotions crowded into Tyla’s brain as she struggled to control her primal need for Max. All she could think about was having him inside her, connecting with him and feeling the way only he made her feel.

Intent on the need raging through her, she ignored his words, the wall at her back and everything else surrounding them. She reached between their bodies, gave the drawstring of his

trousers a sharp tug, then reached in and wrapped her fingers around his hardness. This was what she wanted—and what she didn't want any other to have.

“Oh, God,” he groaned when she possessively squeezed and stroked his cock. “This conversation isn't over, Tyla.”

He felt so good in her hand, so hot and hard and throbbing to a beat that matched her heart. Tightening her legs around him, she hitched her hips closer, and the head of his cock breached her entrance. She clutched his shoulders and dragged her tongue from his collarbone to his ear, then sharply nipped his earlobe while writhing in his arms.

“I want you, Max.” Tyla panted the words, unable to catch her breath and not caring. She scraped her nails down his back, feeling him shudder in reaction. Clasping his ass cheeks in her hands, she squeezed the muscled globes and growled into his ear. “I want you deep inside me, where you belong. Now!”

With a hoarse cry, he thrust into her hard and fast, cursing her as his hips pistoned, giving her just what she'd demanded.

“If the only way I can win a fight with you is to use my cock, then that's what I'll do.”

Tyla heard his words through a haze of pleasure. No one had ever made her feel the way Max did. She threw back her head, glorying in the sensations that swamped her body. A fire spread through her, coming from him and seeping into her. His hair-dusted chest rubbed against her smooth front, her nipples becoming pinpoints of pleasure. Every nerve ending tingled, and every inch of her skin became sensitized almost to the point of pain.

His hand wrapped in her long hair and tightened. “Look at me, Tyla”

She opened her eyes, saw the ferocious passion in his, and whimpered. Lust was riding her to the point where she was unable to form real words.

“This is for you,” he grunted. He slowed his pace, making each thrust of his hips hard, deliberate and deep. “I am here for you. If you share your body with others, I can, too. We’re partners, equals—you promised.”

“Yes.” She forced the word past her suddenly tight throat. The swells of an orgasm built, gathering strength. “Yes, Max. Equals. Yes.”

She clapped both hands around his head, pulling him to her for a kiss. Their tongues dueled for a brief second before she sucked his lower lip between hers and played it between her teeth. Dragging her mouth from his, she clamped her lips on the muscle between his neck and his shoulder and bit down as the climax burst from her core and overtook her.

Max gave a hoarse cry as his fingers dug into the backs of her thighs and he thrust home, keeping her pinned to the wall. Short minutes later, his grip on her thighs gentled, and he pulled back from the wall, cradling her in his arms. He strode across the room, where he sat on the edge of the bed with her on his lap, their bodies still joined.

Tyla gazed into Max’s eyes as he cupped her cheek in a rough palm, his thumb rubbing her bottom lip. Her heart swelled so much she was surprised it didn’t burst from her chest. In such a short time Max had become more than just the solution to her political problems on Triton. He’d surpassed all of her expectations, and all of her hopes. He’d become the male she loved.

When she’d first set eyes on him, she’d known he was the answer to her problem. Her mother, Queen Sharla, had send her a missive confirming that Tyla was indeed going to be forced to marry the Durian prince to satisfy their need for an alliance with his people when she returned to Triton. And as much as she loved her home planet, Tyla detested the idea of marrying instead of fighting to keep it safe.

But until she’d seen Max, she hadn’t known how to get out of it.

Max Cooper was strong and handsome and confident. And human. She'd wanted him, and she'd taken him. After his initial shock, he'd adapted well to space life. During the last month on board Ghost, every day taking them farther from Earth, they'd grown closer than she'd ever thought possible. Yet, monogamy wasn't something she'd really considered.

There were so few males on her planet that the women rarely worried about sharing. Disease was non-existent due to the advanced healing chambers they'd developed decades ago, and pregnancy was always a welcome result of any sexual encounter. The Triton race had difficulty procreating, so they'd learned to not care who had fathered an offspring. Everything, name, title and properties, were handed down through the female line.

She'd never before felt the need to make a Transplant strictly hers. She was an independent woman born of an openly sexual race, and she'd enjoyed all the options and freedom that offered. Her intense reaction to seeing Max kiss another female, however, had shocked her into reacting without thinking.

Now, as Max's hand fell from her cheek, she could literally see him pull back into himself at her silence. Yet, she still couldn't bring herself to give him the promise he obviously wanted.

Max was an adventurous guy, but nothing had prepared him for travel through deep space on a ship named Ghost with a bunch of aliens from different planets. Never mind that one of them was his lover and soon-to-be wife. And despite the fact that he'd spent the past month in classes learning about the culture and lifestyle on the Triton, nothing had prepared him for actually seeing it with his own eyes.

Barely resisting the urge to scrub his eyes and try to blink away the image, he spoke softly to the woman at his side. "That's Triton?"

"Sather, the Capital City. What do you think of it?" Tyla's voice was smooth and confident, but he'd learned much about his fiancée in the past weeks and recognized the hint of uncertainty in her brilliant green eyes. She was still concerned that he'd regret choosing to stay with her, and he didn't know how to ease that worry. How could he ease it when he wasn't a hundred percent sure he didn't regret it himself?

"It's...different," he said, eyeing the landscape below.

The terrain was rough and uneven, with high mountains and sharp cliffs surrounding the city. The earth was packed sand, and the buildings ranged from small square huts to the columned palace on the hill in the city's center. He'd expected something futuristic, maybe

hovercrafts and space stations. At the very least he'd expected modern buildings and vehicles. Instead, Sather looked more like how he imagined Ancient Egypt would.

"But I've dealt with 'different' before." Fighting the urge to hug her to him in reassurance, he shot her a wink and headed for the exit. "I'm going to join the others on the Observation Deck. I'll see you once we've landed."

"Ghost, please—"

"No, thanks," he said, interrupting her. "I prefer to walk, babe."

Ghost had the ability to transfer things –including people with special implants - from place to place on the ship in a second. While fast and efficient, the funky feeling of being transported through time and space at the speed of light was one Max just couldn't get used to. "That transferring thing is still a bit too freaky for me."

With that, Max hastened toward what looked like a blank wall, only to have it blur and slide open for him. Once the door closed behind him, he slowed his steps and tried to absorb the events of the past twenty-four hours.

He pondered his possessive reaction to seeing another male's hands on Tyla, and the ultimatum he'd issued before he'd had a chance to reflect. What the hell had he been thinking? He knew the way her race lived. He knew she wanted to marry him, when she'd never before taken a transplant as her own.

But it wasn't enough. For the past month he'd focused his mind on learning about and preparing for his new life on Triton and pushed aside the growing feelings he had for Tyla, but he couldn't deny it any longer. He wanted to look at her, touch her and kiss her. He wanted to fight with her, make up with her, cuddle with her and cherish her. For the first time in his life, he wanted a woman to be his and his alone, and he desired no other female. His letting another woman kiss him had been pure injured pride. He knew that now. But it was too late, because he'd told Tyla he wanted only her but she hadn't returned the sentiment.

A fist tightened around his heart. Could he live with that? Hell, it wasn't like he had a choice, really. The chance of him ever seeing Earth again was a pretty far stretch.

He entered the Observation Deck. The other guys all stood before the enormous picture window, getting their first look at the planet that would be their new home.

Only Jason turned to greet him. "Max! Can you believe this place? It almost looks like—"

"Ancient Egypt? Yeah, I know." He clapped a hand on Jason's back and they moved to a nearby table.

"I was going to say Ancient Greece, but yeah...Egypt fits, too. Who knows exactly, history was never my strong suit."

Both men dropped into chairs and Jason kept talking excitedly. "Even though the girls said their culture was hedonistic, and they certainly behave that way, I never really thought it was real." He gave Max a sheepish grin. "You know?"

"I know," he said and sighed. "There's no denying we've fallen down the rabbit hole now, is there?"

Jason had been the first person Max had seen when he'd woken up on the spaceship naked and completely unaware of where he was or how he got there. And while their first meeting had ended with Max putting Jason in a restraint hold and using him as a hostage, they'd gotten past that initial misunderstanding and become friends.

There were twelve Transplants, himself included, the maximum number a ship the size of Ghost could carry. The vessel was really a battleship, and Tyla a military captain, although she used Ghost to do runs to other planets for Transplants when their world was at peace. The only reason Triton was at peace now was because Tyla's mother, the queen, had promised one of her daughters in marriage to the Durian king's son. The alliance would guarantee that Triton would remain safe from attack from their strongest foe, the Durians themselves.

But with Max accepting Tyla as his sponsor and soon-to-be wife, she was safe from having to marry the Durian prince. It sort of worked out well for him, because he'd fallen for the fierce warrior woman...and for her, she didn't have to marry a male of the species she found abhorrent.

"Everything settled between you and the captain?"

Max eyed his friend, debating on how best to wipe the smirk of his face. By now, everyone on the ship had heard the story of how he'd let another crew member kiss him in the leisure room the previous day, only to have himself transported immediately out of her arms.

Not wanting to think about how Tyla had left his demand hanging, he let Jason's question pass with little explanation. "Everything is fine."

"That was one furious female you had on your hands. Mind you, when she looks that good, a bit of a temper is worth putting up with." Jason chuckled and nudged Max with his elbow. "I bet she's wild in the sack, eh? I wonder if she'd care to sponsor me, too?"

Anger flooded Max's body. His fists clenched at his sides. He turned his head slowly and glared at Jason, who barked laughter and slapped him on the back. "I was just kidding! Relax, man. Everyone on the ship knows you and the captain are inseparable. I was just wondering if you knew it yet."

Yeah, he knew it, but it seemed Tyla hadn't figured it out yet.

What would he do if she never clued in?

Ghost touched down on terra firma and the group of Transplants— seven other humans and four Durians—lined up to exit the spaceship and head for the palace. They'd been instructed in what would happen next. They were led off the ship and herded a short distance down the main road toward the palace, where they would be displayed for the queen's viewing before being taken to the Silver Wing of the palace. The men would be kept there until they could go on

the market in hopes of finding a sponsor. If no Triton female chose to sponsor a male, he would become a *Shen*, a single man that would live within the palace as part of the queen's harem. Even though the Triton's didn't call it a "harem," that's what it was; the unsponsored males basically became the studs for the queen's social gatherings and guests.

It was so hot when they stepped off Ghost, Max wondered where the camels were kept. But as he looked around, he noticed no animals at all. As he walked with the group, Max observed the people making their way over the unpaved roads of Sather. About thirty-five percent were male— most of them human, but there were a couple of slim, dark skinned and very feminine looking men that he wasn't sure of — and all of them were shirtless, dressed only in drawstring pants similar to his own.

For the most part, the Tritons wore filmy robes and wraps in every color of the rainbow. But as he scanned his surroundings, his natural self-preservation instincts came to the fore.

There were women stationed on several rock ledges above the city, on rooftops along the main road, and strategically placed along the streets that were dressed like Tyla and her crew. Skimpy leather armor barely covering their firm, athletic bodies, while the straps that held on their armor acted as belts for various knife sheaths and holsters. Some had swords, others had laser guns, and a few had both.

All had blank expressions on their faces as they kept their hands on their knife hilts or gun handles as they eyed the newcomers. They were clearly warrior class, just like his woman.

The entourage started up the steps and entered the spacious hall of the palace. Cushioned benches with soft, fluffy pillows lined the walls. People in various states of undress and closeness lounged indolently on the benches. At one point, Max passed a couple with the female lying back and a guy kneeling before her, his head buried between her spread thighs as he worked on her energetically.

There was no conversation amongst the crew or the Transplants as they walked. The hallow sound of their footsteps cut through the murmurs of the spectators.

If Max's first sight of Sather had made him think, just for a second, that he'd gone back in time a millennium or two, what with the hard-packed sand, the unpaved streets, the unbelievable heat, then the sight of the Grand Room in the palace cinched the feeling. He felt as if he'd just stepped into the pages of a history book.

The Grand Room in the palace was exactly that...grand. Circular and large enough to rival a three-story parking garage on Earth, it had a high-domed ceiling with several round air holes spaced across it. Hyper aware of the increase in the heat and humidity since entering the palace, Max found it ironic that the Tritons had advance technology on their ships, yet no air conditioning in their dwellings.

At Tyla's signal, the group stopped in the center of the room. The low murmur turned to complete silence.

What the hell?

His gaze landed on the woman on the raised dais in front of them. There was no denying the woman was Tyla's mother. They could've been sisters, twins, except the queen lacked that almost magical spark that moved Tyla beyond pretty, to beautiful. In fact, she looked more like an Ice Queen than an alien queen.

Tyla steeled her nerves and strode to the front steps of the dais. She climbed them and gave a small bow, kissing the back of her mother's outstretched hand.

"Welcome back, daughter." The queen's voice was warm and pleasant, happy to see her first-born home, safe and sound. They'd battled when Tyla had made it clear she'd wanted to enter the Space Academy instead of following the same dutiful path her sisters had, but Tyla had never doubted Sharla's love.

“Thank you, Mother,” she replied. “As you can see, our mission was successful. I’ve eleven new Transplants to put on the market tomorrow.”

Her mother scanned the twelve males in the group, then her sharp gaze snapped back to Tyla. The time had come to tell the queen about Max.

Tyla turned and motioned him forward. A light sweat caused his muscles to gleam in the light as he moved forward and she didn’t bother to try and control her heart rate, or her skin glow. She wanted everyone in the room, her mother included, to know how much she desired him.

Dragging her gaze from Max’s form, Tyla faced the dais. “I present Max Cooper, from planet Earth. I’ve chosen him to be my husband.”

Max bent at the waist in the formal bow he’d been taught, but the tribute did little to ease Queen Sharla’s frozen expression.

“My suites. Now!” She rose swiftly from the throne and swept out of the room.

Tyla turned to Seera, her second in command. “Take the males to the palace keeper, and escort Max to my dwelling.” With a tight smile at Max, Tyla followed the queen, dread coiling in the pit of her stomach.

Tyla fumed as she stormed out of the palace. Those that saw her quickly looked away, not wanting to meet her gaze for fear her wrath would find its target in them. Seeing their fear she fought to rein in her temper, only to realize she wasn't angry so much as scared. Hurt and scared.

As the youngest of three daughters she'd pretty much been left to do as she wished her whole life. Layla, her oldest sister was heir to the throne, and had been raised accordingly, with the knowledge that she would often have to do things she didn't want to, for her people. The middle sister, Anya, was the quiet one, and on the surface she'd always followed the rules and done as a good daughter should, but in the dark, she was always eager to sneak out and be daring with Tyla. It wasn't fair that the daughters had stuck with their roles and built their own lives, only to have it all fucked up because some Durian thought his desires were more important than proper protocol.

When dealing with interplanetary politics, proper protocol was above everything!

And therein lie the fucking problem.

The door to Tyla's house swung open and she stormed into the room looking fierce and fiery. Max jumped from the cushioned bench and braced for another fight.

He'd been waiting for more than an hour since Seera left him alone, and the tension was getting to him. But instead of coming after him, Tyla circled the room at a clipped pace, muttering beneath her breath. "She can't do this. She promised. You can't let someone be something their whole life, and then expect them to change. She can *not* do this to me!"

He'd have to be blind to miss the restrained rage clear in every delineated muscle. Not to mention that she was glowing from the inside out, not with a translucent light like she did when excited or aroused, but with a blazing red glare that actually burned his eyes.

He'd thought she'd been mad when she'd seen him kiss another woman, but that was nothing compared to this.

Uncertain what set her off, and what to do to calm her down, Max took a deep breath and stood back. Soon, the furious words spewing from her luscious lips started to make sense, and his heart began to pound deep in his chest.

"How could she? She's a queen! She can't go back on her word. She said a daughter—it doesn't have to be me. She has other daughters. Two more, in fact!" Tyla stopped in the middle of the room, her glow diminishing slightly as she met Max's gaze. "I won't let her do this. She said if I found a mate of my own on this trip that I wouldn't have to marry the Durian prince, and I refuse to let her go back on her word!"

Keeping a tight rein on his own rising emotions, Max held out his arms. "Come here, babe."

The hot glow emanating from her diminished and he saw her lips tremble for a second before she pressed her firm little body flush against his, and tucked her head against his chest.

He leaned down and whispered in her ear. "Tell me what happened."

"She said I couldn't have you." A shudder racked her body and her fingertips dug into his back as her grip tightened. "That I had an obligation to the people to marry Unger, the Durian prince."

“Was there anyone around when she told you that you could choose your own husband if you found a suitable male?”

“It was over the com-link when I was on Ghost. Ghost will have a record of it, but that’s not the issue. She knows she promised, and it doesn’t seem to matter. And I can’t openly confront her with a record of the communication without starting a rebellion.” She looked up at Max, her despair obvious. “How can I go against her?”

“It’s okay, babe. I told you...partners, remember? We’ll find a way.” He cupped her cheek in his hand and lowered his mouth to hers. “Together.”

Their lips met in a tender kiss and Max felt his heart kick in his chest. Bending slightly, he lifted Tyla against him and carried her to the nearby lounge. After laying her down, he lowered his body on top of her and continued to show her his love in a way that needed no words.

He placed a gentle kiss on the corner of her mouth, on her jaw line, along her neck and across her collarbone. His hands skimmed across her body, smoothly divesting her of her leather and weapons. When he had her completely naked, he cupped her small breasts in his hands and worshipped first one mound, then the other, his loving pebbling her nipples.

Small whimpers filled the room. Tyla twisted and undulated against him. He dragged his body along her core until his shoulders kept her knees apart. Continuing his slow, lazy loving, he kissed and nibbled at her lower belly and inner thighs. With his thumbs, he spread her swollen lips and inhaled the smell of her arousal before swiping his tongue along the bounty before him.

Ignoring the need that made his cock twitch and dance against his belly, he went about thoroughly loving Tyla until her fingers dug into his skull and her cries echoed throughout the house.

Tyla sat stiffly on the low bench to the right of the dais, watching the bidding for the new Transplants take place.

Under her mother's watchful gaze, she picked and played with the food on the plate in front of her. A comforting hand landed on her thigh, and she turned her head to look into Max's calm eyes. His lips lifted in a small smile, and for a brief moment, everything in her world felt right again.

How could she ever have thought she'd want anyone but him?

The notion of having sex with another male, of any race, left her completely cold. The males currently on the block were all attractive and virile, yet none of them made her itch to be touched the way Max did. Even on the journey home, stuck on Ghost for weeks on end, not one of them had even tempted her. Not once she'd set eyes on Max.

How had she been so blind? Why had it taken her mother telling her she couldn't marry him to make her realize that she couldn't not have him, and only him?

"What are you thinking?" Hot breath floated over her ear and she leaned into the heat of Max's nearness.

She gazed deep into his eyes and let the rest of the world fall away. "I'm thinking that I want you, and only you, for the rest of my life."

His jaw dropped, and for a moment, they just looked at each other. Tyla saw the recently erected shield drop from his eyes, and love and acceptance come shining through, easing the tightness that had bound her heart.

"I—"

The clash of symbols, followed by the steady beat of a drum, cut off any more chance of conversation. In anticipation, everyone in the Grand Room turned toward the entrance.

Prince Unger of Duria had arrived.

The last of the marketable Transplants stepped off the block and moved to the edge of the main floor with his new sponsor, leaving Tyla's view of the entrance clear. The Durian prince strode arrogantly into the room.

The drums stopped when he came directly in front of the dais. "I am Prince Unger of Duria, here to claim my bride, Princess Tyla."

Disgruntled murmurings could be heard. Every muscle in Tyla's body tensed at the statement. Prince or no prince, to speak to the queen that way, without even the smallest of formal greeting, was insulting, never mind the fact that there was no way in space Tyla was going to marry him!

"Prince Unger," her mother melodically spoke. "I promised your father one of my daughters to you in an alliance. I did not specify which one."

Tyla schooled her features, struggling not to let herself believe her mother had changed her mind.

The Durian prince let his gaze roam over her sisters before settling on her. Tyla boldly met his eyes, suppressing a shiver and refusing to show her antipathy.

"Princess Tyla is the one I want."

Before the queen could speak, Max's lazy voice echoed in the room.

"I'll fight you for her." The words were out of his mouth almost before they entered his head, but he didn't regret saying them. He'd known, from the moment his lover had told him that the queen was balking at their deal, that he would do whatever he could to keep Tyla as his. And that was before she'd finally agreed that he was the only one she wanted.

With a lizard-like twist of his neck, the Durian prince faced Max. "I've no need to fight for her. She was promised to me."

“She wasn’t.” Max steadied his breathing and met the man’s emotionless gaze. Keeping his voice soft but firm, he continued. “A daughter was promised. There are two others from which to choose. Tyla is mine.”

Prince Unger dismissed Max and turned to the queen, who had been silently watching the exchange. “Take control of your court, Queen Rhea, and instruct your daughter’s love slave to show me due respect. You are risking war if you let this insolence continue.”

Max waited with baited breath for the queen’s rebuke. His gut tightened, and his temper started to boil. But before he could say something he would regret, the queen spoke sharply...to the prince.

“I have complete control of my court, young highness. Max is not my daughter’s Shen. He is her choice of husband, and he has the right to challenge you. If you want Tyla, you must fight him for her.” She paused. “If you lose, you will accept whichever of my daughters chooses you. There should be no risk of war involved. Your father and I made a deal, and I am holding up my end of it.”

The prince gaped at her before shrugging and turning to his entourage. “This will take but a few moments.”

Max slipped from his position on the lower dais next to Tyla and stood in front of her. “I need you to tell me what to expect.”

Being a true warrior woman, Tyla didn’t fuss or fret. Instead, she rose up on her knees and drew her captain’s sword from her hip.

“You’ll need this.” She presented the shiny weapon to him. Her hand trembled minutely before she placed it on his chest. “Protect your heart, and your throat. He’ll go for the targets that will hurt you the most.”

She removed a wicked-looking dagger with a six-inch curved blade from her thigh and strapped the belt around his hips, tying the scabbard around his thigh. “You’re not good enough

with the sword to beat him, so you'll need to get in close and use the dagger." She glanced at her mother, then back at Max. "Try to subdue him, but not kill him. We'd still like to avoid a war, if we can."

She cupped his face in her hands and rested her forehead against his. They'd trained and fought together many times over the month on Ghost, and he knew it was killing her to let him fight what she surely saw as her battle. Max now knew without a doubt that she loved him, and she was trusting him to take care of the matter for them both.

"Remember, the spikes on his spine will raise, and his skin is too tough for slicing to do any damage. You need to pierce him, not cut him. Incapacitate him, but again, do not kill him."

Max gripped her hips and pulled her flush against him, covering her mouth with his. Her lips parted, and he thrust his tongue inside, tasting her unique flavor and doing his best to tell her without words that it would be all right.

Slowly pulling away from her, he gave her a confident wink, then turned to face his opponent.

Prince Unger had removed his lightweight robe and now stood shirtless. His tight trousers and heavy boots suited his thick, hide-like skin, but not his current surroundings.

Max took a deep breath as he stepped forward, relaxing his muscles and letting adrenaline run through him, sharpening his senses. He'd been in life-and-death struggles before, but it had always been in the heat of the moment. This duel, of sorts, was different. And a bit unfair, since it was really only his life on the line. Tyla had said not to kill him...so there could be a bit of rough going.

When drums started in a slow rhythmic beat, Max and the prince began to circle one another.

"It was unwise of you to make this challenge, human."

"Why is that?" Max asked

“I can tell by the way you hold the sword that you are not used to fighting like this. You will not defeat me.”

This guy needed a lesson in trash talk. “Defeat you? I’m going to do more than that. I’m going to make you my bitch.”

The guy didn’t even blink, and it occurred to Max that he probably didn’t know what “bitch” was.

He mentally shrugged. So much for trash talk. Fuck it.

Max lunged forward, swinging his blade in a wide arc, anticipating that the prince would block the blow. But before Unger could counter it, Max raised his knee and snapped a front kick straight to the prince’s groin, nailing him in the double cocks.

Max leapt forward, using momentum and weight to body slam the Durian to the ground. He pinned the prince to the floor, taking the spinal spikes out of the game, and struggled to pin the alien’s shoulders and legs. Ignoring the heavy blows raining down on his ribs and kidneys, Max turtled over his opponent and braced his forearm across the Durian’s throat, cutting off his air supply.

Unger’s struggles grew frantic. Max felt a sharp pain pierce his side.

Fuck! The prick stabbed me!

The prince pulled out the dagger, then shoved it between Max’s ribs again. Blocking the searing pain from his mind, Max cupped the back of the Durian’s head, pulling it forward and adding more pressure to the choke-hold.

Unger’s struggles lessened. His eyes bulged, then slowly slid shut. When the body beneath him went limp, Max held on for another solid five seconds, then rolled off the still body and staggered to his feet to face the queen.

The drums stopped, and the room went silent.

“He’s not dead, My Queen,” Max said, struggling to stand upright. Blood poured from his wounds, and now that the fight had ended, his adrenaline was draining and the pain was increasing. He’d made it through the fight, beaten down the asshole, and now he just needed to stay on his feet long enough to claim his prize. “But he is defeated. Can I trust that Tyla is mine now...as surely as I am hers?”

“Yes, you may.” The queen glanced at her daughter. “Tyla, go to your mate, and get him in a healing chamber. We’ll plan the marriage later...if he survives his wounds.”

The crowd cheered. Tyla leapt from her spot and dashed across the floor to him. Max’s heart soared. Typical of his little warrior, instead of kissing and cuddling him, she started barking out orders.

“Prepare the healing chamber immediately.” Tyla slipped her arm under his good side just in time to keep him from falling face first. She held a hand to his ribcage to staunch the flow of blood. “Max! Don’t pass out on me.”

He lifted his head and met her gaze. “I might pass out, babe, but you won’t get rid of me that easily.”

She pressed against his side and he felt her heart beat against his torso. It was the same rhythm as his, and he knew they were on the same wavelength. They were on equal footing once again.

Lovers and partners, side by side. No matter what.

Sasha White is a national best selling author of erotic fiction. Gifted with a salacious imagination, her brand of *Romance with Heat, and Erotica with Heart* has earned her a very loyal following. With a voice that is called “*distinctive and delicious*” by The Romance Studio, Sasha White has published over a thirty erotic stories in multiple sub-genres’, and various story lengths.

Short Booklist:

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Novels

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WICKED (January 2008)

TROUBLE (August 2007)

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Novellas

WATCH ME; in the KINK anthology (February 2007)

From Kensington Aphrodisia:

Novels

MOST WANTED (June 2009)

PRIMAL MALE (December 2008)

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