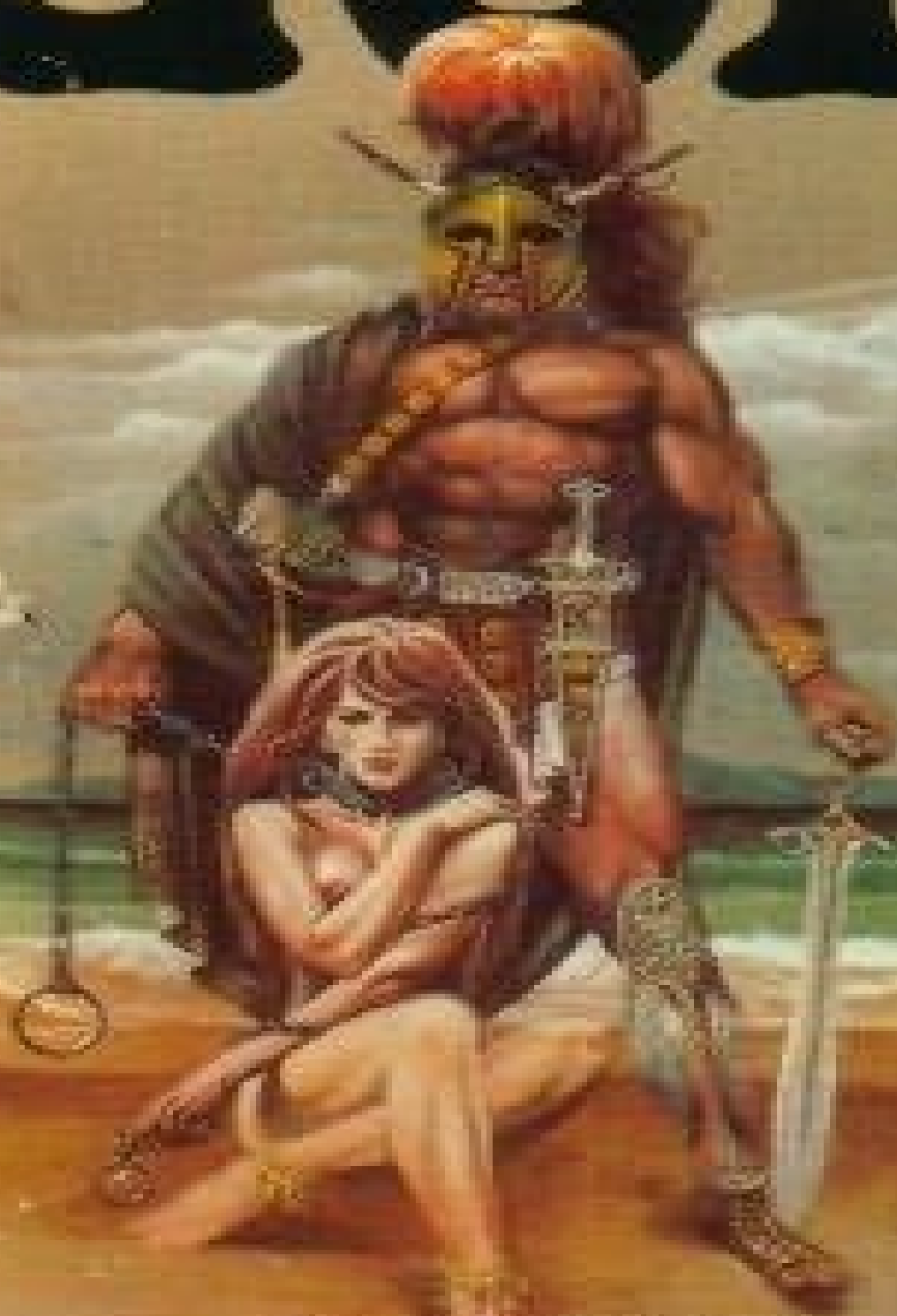


SLAVE GIRL OF GOR



JOHN NORMAN



Slave Girl Of Gor

(Chronicles of Counter-Earth - 11)

John Norman

The Eleventh book of the saga of Tarl Cabot. Tarl Cabot had resumed his allegiance to the Priest-Kings, the non-human benevolent rulers of Gor. And accordingly Tarl knew that the battle for the possession of the planet was under way — the Kurli, the beastlike invaders, had made their plans.

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1 The Collar

I lay in the warm grass. I could feel it, the warm, individual green blades, separate, gentle, on my left cheek; I could feel them on my body, my stomach and thighs. I stretched my body, my toes. I was sleepy. I did not wish to awaken. The sun was warm on my back, even hot, almost uncomfortable. I snuggled deeper into the grass. My left hand was extended. My fingers touched the warm dirt between the grass blades. My eyes were closed. I resisted the coming of consciousness. I did not wish to emerge from bed. Consciousness seemed to come slowly, dimly. I did not wish to emerge from bed. I wished to prolong the warmth, the pleasantness. I moved my head, slightly. My neck seemed to wear weight; I heard the soft clink, a tiny stirring, of heavy links of metal.

I did not understand this.

I moved my head again, sleepily, eyes closed, to its original position. Again I felt the weight, circular, heavy, on my neck; again I heard the small sound, the stirring, simple and matter of fact, of heavy metal links.

I opened my eyes, part way, keeping them half shut against the light I saw the grass, green and close, each blade seeming wide, blurred in its nearness. My fingers dug into the warm earth. I closed my eyes. I began to sweat. I must emerge from bed. I must snatch breakfast, hurry to class. It must be late. I must hurry.

I remembered the cloth slipped over my mouth and nose, the fumes, the strength of the man who had held me. I had squirmed, but had been held in his grip, helpless. I was terrified. I had tried not to breathe. I had struggled, but futilely. I was terrified. I had not known a man could be so strong. He was patient, unhurried, waiting for me to breathe. I tried not to breathe. Then, lungs gasping, helpless, he at last inhaled, deeply, desperately, taking the sharp, strangling fumes deep into my body. In an instant, choking in the horrid, obdurate fumes, unable to expel them, unable to evade them, I sickened, had lost consciousness.

I lay in the warm grass. I could feel it on my body. I must emerge from bed. I must snatch breakfast, and hurry to class. Surely it must be late. I must hurry.

I opened my eyes, seeing the grass blades not inches from my face, wide, blurred. I opened my mouth, delicately, and felt the grass brush my lips. I bit into a blade and felt the juice of the grass, on my tongue.

I closed my eyes. I must awaken. I remembered the cloth, the strength of the man, the fumes.

My fingers dug deep into the dirt. I clawed at it. I felt the dirt beneath my fingernails. I lifted my head, and rolled screaming, awakening, tangled in the chain, in the grass. I sat upright. In an instant I realized I was nude. My neck wore its encircling weight; the heavy chain, attached to the collar, dropped between my breasts and over my left thigh.

"No! No!" I cried. "No!"

I leaped to my feet screaming. The chain's weight depended from the collar, heavily, gracefully. I felt the collar pulled down, against my collarbone. The chain passed now between my legs, behind my left calf, then lifting. I jerked wildly at it. I tried to thrust the collar up, over my head. I turned, again tried to thrust it up, over my head. I scraped my throat, hurting it. My chin was forced up; I saw the bright sky, blue with its startlingly white clouds. But I could not slip the collar. It fitted me closely. Only my small finger could I thrust between its weight and my neck. I moaned. The collar could not be slipped. It had not been made to be slipped. Irrationally, madly, nothing in my consciousness but my fear and the chain, I turned to flee, and fell, hurting my legs, tangled in the chain. I, on my knees, seized the chain, pulled at it, weeping. I tried to back away, on my knees; m

head was pulled cruelly forward. I held the chain. It was some ten feet long. It extended to a heavy ring and plate fastened in a great granite rock, irregular, but some twelve feet in width and depth, some ten feet in height. The plate, with its ring, was attached near the center of the rock, low, about a foot above the grass. The rock had apparently been drilled and the plate fastened with four linear bolts. They may have passed through the entire width of the rock and been clinched on the other side. I do not know. On my knees I pulled at the chain. I wept. I cried out. I pulled again at the chain. I hurt my hands; it moved not a quarter of an inch. I was fastened to the rock.

I rose moaning to my feet, my hands on the chain. I looked about myself. The rock was prominent. There was none like it in view. I stood on a rolling plain, grassy and gentle, widely sweeping and trackless. I saw nothing but the grass, it moving in the soft, unhurried wind, the distant horizon, the unusually white clouds and blue sky. I was alone. The sun was warm. Behind me was the rock. I felt the wind on my body, but not directly, as the plate in the stone was on the sheltered side of the rock. I wondered if the wind was a prevailing one. I wondered if the plate and chain were so situated in order that the chain's prisoner, such as I found myself to be, be protected from the wind. I shuddered.

I stood alone. I was nude. I, small, white, was chained by the neck to that great rock on this seemingly endless plain.

I breathed deeply. Never in my life had I breathed such air. Though my head was chained I threw it back. I closed my eyes. I drank the atmosphere into my lungs. Those who have never breathed such air cannot know the sensations which I then felt. In so simple a thing as the air I breathed I rejoiced. The air was clean and clear; it was fresh, almost alive, almost sparkling with the exhilaration of swiftness and abundant, pristine oxygen. It was like the air of a new world, one yet innocent of the toxins of man's majority, the unquestioned gifts, ambiguous, poisoned, of civilization and technology. My body became vital and alive. So simply did a proper oxygenation of my system work its almost immediate effect in my feeling and awareness. Those who have never breathed the air of a clean world cannot understand my words. And perhaps those who have breathed only such an atmosphere may, too tragically, fail to comprehend. Until one has breathed such air can one know the glory of being alive?

But I was lonely, and frightened.

It was a strange world on which I stood, wide and unfamiliar, open, bright and clean. I looked out upon the vast fields of grass. I had never smelled grass before. It was so fresh, so beautiful. My senses were alive. In this atmosphere, my blood charged with oxygen, I found that I could detect odors which had eluded me before; it was as though an entire new dimension of experience had suddenly opened up to me; yet I suppose it was only that here, in this place, my body did not have reason to fight its world, shutting it out, forcing it from consciousness in order not to be distracted or sickened; here there was an atmosphere which was unsoiled, undefiled, one in which the human could be a part of nature, not a rampart raised against her, not a defensive sojourner treading at night, stepping softly, scarcely daring to breathe, through the country of enemies. My vision, too, in this pure air, was keener. I could see farther and with greater detail than had been possible before in the clouded, contaminated atmosphere in which I had been raised. How far away seemed the familiar pollutions of the gray world I remembered. On certain days there I had thought the air clean, and had delighted in its freshness. How little I had known. How foolish I had been. It had been only less murky, less dismal, only a sign of what a world might be. My hearing, too, seemed acute. The wind brushed the grass, moving in and stirring the gleaming leaves. Colors, too, seemed richer, deeper, more vivid. The grass was richly green, alive, vast; the sky was blue, deeply blue, far deeper than I had known a sky could be; the clouds were sharp and white, protean and billowing, transforming themselves in the pressures of the heights and the winds which sped them; they moved at different heights at different speeds; they were like great white birds, stately and majestic, turning, floating in the rivers of wind. I felt the breezes on the field on my exposed body; I trembled; every bit of me seemed alive.

I was frightened.

I looked at the sun. I looked away, down, then across the fields.

I was aware now, as I had not been before, or so clearly, of the difference in the feel of my body and its movements. There seemed a subtle difference in my body weight, my movements. I thrust the comprehension from my mind. I could not admit it. I literally forced it from consciousness. But it returned, persistent. It could not be denied. "No!" I cried. But I knew it was true. I tried to thrust from my mind what must be, what had to be, the explanation of this unusual phenomenon. "No!" I cried. "It cannot be! No! No!"

Numbly I lifted the chain which hung from the collar fastened on my neck. I looked at it disbelievingly. The links were close-set, heavy, of some primitive, simple black iron. It did not seem an attractive chain, or an expensive one. But I was held by it. I felt the collar with my fingers. I could not see it, but it seemed formed, too, of heavy iron; it seemed simple, practical, not ostentatious; it gripped my throat rather closely; I supposed it was black in color, matching the chain; it had a heavy hinge on one side; and the chain, by a link, opened and closed, was fastened to a loop on the side of the collar; the loop was fastened about a staple, which, it seemed, was a part of the collar itself; the hinge was under my right ear; the chain hung from its loop and staple under my chin; with my finger, on the other side, under my left ear, I felt a large lock, with its opening for the insertion of a heavy key. The collar, then, fastened with a lock; it had not been hammered about my neck. I wondered who held the key to that collar.

I turned about and looked at the great rock, the granite, streaked with feldspar.

I must try to awaken, I told myself. I must awaken. I laughed bitterly. I must be dreaming I told myself.

Again the difference in the feeling of my body, its weight, its movements, intruded itself into my consciousness. "No!" I cried. Then I went to the granite, and looked at the heavy plate and ring bolted into the stone. A link of my chain had been opened, and then closed, about that ring. The chain was some ten feet in length. I idly coiled it at the foot of the ring. "No!" I cried. I must awaken, I told myself. Surely it must be nearly time to arouse myself, to hurry to breakfast, to hurry to class. There is no other explanation, I told myself. I am dreaming. Then I feared I might be insane. No, I told myself. I am dreaming. It is such a strange dream, so real. But it is a dream. It must be. It must be. It is a dream. All a dream!

Then to my misery I remembered the man, being seized from behind, not able even to see him, my struggles, being held so helplessly, the cloth over my mouth and nose, his waiting for me to breathe, my last my gasping helplessly for breath, the terrible fumes, nothing else to breathe, nothing else, which could not be tolerated by consciousness, nothing else to breathe, and then my loss of consciousness. That, I knew, had been no dream.

I struck my fists until they bled on the granite rock streaked with feldspar.

Then I turned and walked from the rock, some five feet, and looked out over the vast grassy fields.

"Oh, no," I wept.

The full consciousness of my waking state, and my awareness of truth, welled up within me. It flooded my consciousness, overwhelmingly, irrefutably.

I knew then what must be the explanation for the difference in the feelings in my body, the explanation for the sense of subtle kinesthetic difference in my movements. I stood not on Earth. The gravity was not that of Earth. It was on another world I stood, an unknown world. It was a bright, beautiful world, but it was not Earth. It was not the world I knew. It was not my home. I had been brought here; no one had consulted my will; I had been brought here; my will had been nothing.

I stood alone there, naked, defenseless, before the great rock, looking over the fields.

I was lonely, and frightened, and I wore a chain on my neck.

Suddenly I cried out with misery and put my face in my hands. Then it seemed the earth spun beneath me and darkness swept about me, rushing in upon me and I lost consciousness.

The Retinue

I felt myself being rolled roughly on my back. "Veck, Kajira," said a voice, harshly. "Veck, Kajira." It was not a patient voice. I looked up, startled, frightened. I cried out with pain. A metal point jabbed into my body, at the juncture between my left hip and lower abdomen. The point lifted and the shaft of the spear turned; he struck me on the right thigh, hard, with the butt of the spear. My hand went before my mouth; his foot, in a high, strapped sandal, heavy, almost an open boot, kicked my hand away. He was bearded. I lay between his legs. I looked up at him in terror.

He was not alone. There was another man a bit behind him. Both wore tunics, red; each, at his left hip, had slung a blade and scabbard; each, at his belt, carried an ornamented knife; the man behind him who stood over me had slung over his back a shield, of layers of leather and brass, and carried a spear, beneath the blade of which was slung a helmet with a plume of dark, swirling hair; he wore a cord of teeth, from some carnivore, about his neck. The man who stood over me had put his helmet and shield to one side; the helmets of both would cover the entire head and most of the face; the helmets were cut and opened in such a way as to suggest a "Y." The hair of both men was long; the hair of the man behind was tied back with a narrow piece of folded cloth.

I slipped from between the feet of the man who loomed above me, moving back. I had never seen such men. I felt so vulnerable. They were mighty, and like animals. I crouched, backing away. The chain hung from my collar, heavy. I stopped. I turned, and tried to hide myself, as I could, with my hands. I dared not even speak.

One of the men barked a command at me. He moved his hand, angrily. I removed my hands from my body. I turned, still crouching. I understood that they would look upon me.

The bearded man approached me. I dared not meet his eyes. I could not understand such men. My world had not prepared me to believe that such men could exist. He stood closer to me than would have a man of my world. Each in my world, it seemed, carried about with him a bubble of space, a perimeter, a wall, an invisible shield, an unconsciously acculturated, socially sanctioned remoteness, a barrier decreed by convention and conditioning. Behind this invisible wall, within this personally privately owned space, we lived. It separated us from others, it kept us persons. In my particular Earth culture, this circle of inviolate, privately owned space had a radius of some two to three feet. Closer than this we did not, commonly, in my culture, approach one another. But this man stood close to me. He stood within my space. Suddenly I realized that my space did not exist on this world. I began to tremble with terror. So small a thing it seems, perhaps, that this convention should on this world not be acknowledged or respected, indeed, that, at least in my case, it did not exist, but it is not, truly, a small thing; no, to me the crumbling of this artifice, this protective device, this convention, was catastrophic; it is difficult to convey my sense of loss, of helplessness; on this world my space did not exist.

I saw the black leather strap, wide, shiny, across his body, from which depended the blade slung at his left hip. Behind it I saw the coarsely woven, thick red fibers at his tunic. I knew that were he to seize me in his arms and crush me to his chest, with what strength must be his, that the mark of the strap, the coarse fibers, would be imprinted on my breasts.

I felt the point of his dagger beneath my chin. It hurt. It thrust up. I cried out, rising almost to my toes. I then stood straight before them. I stood straighter than I had ever stood in my life.

The man then stepped back, and he, and the other, inspected me, completely, walking about me. They discussed me, candidly. I could not understand their speech. My chin was very high, as the point of the dagger had left it. I trembled. I heard the small movement of the chain in the collar loop. I wondered what could be the status of women on this world, on a world where there were such men.

It took the men some minutes to complete their examination. They did not hurry.

The two men now stood before me, one a bit behind the other, looking at me.

I felt the collar, weighted by the chain, pull down against my collarbone; the chain hung between my breasts; I felt its heavy links on my body. I stood very still.

"Please," I whispered, not moving my position.

The bearded man approached me. Suddenly he struck me with his right hand, a swift, savage open-handed slap. I was hurled stumbling, spinning, to the end of the chain, which caught me, cruelly at the neck, jerking me to the ground. My lip and the side of my mouth were cut. My head seemed to explode. I tasted blood.

The man barked a command. In panic and misery, in a movement of collar and chain, I fled again to my place and again stood before them, so straight, my chin again high, precisely as I had been before.

I wondered what could be the status of women on this world, on a world where there were such men.

He did not strike me again. I had placated him by my obedience.

He spoke to me again. I looked into his eyes. For a moment our eyes met. I knelt.

The other man thrust my body down on my heels, so that I knelt back on my heels. He took my hands and placed them on my thighs. I looked up at them.

I am a brunet, with very dark brown hair. My eyes, too, are dark brown. I am light complexioned. I am some five feet five inches in height and weigh about one hundred and twenty pounds. I am thought to be not amply but excitingly figured.

The men looked down upon me. At that time my hair was cut short. I felt the side of the point of the bearded man's spear under my chin, and I lifted my chin, so that my head was high.

My name was Judy Thornton. I was an English major and poetess.

I knelt before barbarians, nude and chained.

I was terribly frightened.

I knelt exactly as they had placed me, scarcely daring to breathe. I feared to move in the slightest. I did not wish to be again struck, or to irritate or offend them in the least. I did not know what they might do, these mighty and terrible men, so unpredictable, so uncompromising and primitive, so different from the men of Earth, if they were not completely and fully, and absolutely, pleased with me. I determined to give them no cause for anger. I determined that they would have my absolute obedience. Thus I knelt not moving before them. I felt the wind move the hair on the back of my neck.

The men continued to regard me. This frightened me. I did not move at all. I remained, of course as they had placed me. I looked straight ahead, not even daring to meet their eyes. I was terrified lest inadvertently, I had done something to displease them. I moved no muscle. I knelt back on my heels, my back straight, my hands on my thighs, my chin up. My knees were pressed closely, defensively together.

The man said something. I could not understand.

Then, with the butt of his spear, roughly, to my horror, he thrust apart my knees.

I was Judy Thornton. I was an English major and poetess.

I could not help but moan, the position was so elegant and helpless.

I knelt before them in what I would later learn was the position of the Gorean pleasure slave.

~~Satisfied then, the beasts turned from me. I did not move. They busied themselves in the vicinity~~ of the rock. It seemed they searched for something.

Once the bearded fellow returned to stand near me. He said something. It was a question. He repeated it. I stared ahead, terrified. My eyes filled with tears. "I do not know," I whispered. "I do not understand. I do not know what you want."

He turned away, and again gave himself to his search. After a time, angry, he returned to regard me. His fellow, too, was with him. "Bina?" he said, very clearly. "Bina, Kajira. Var Bina, Kajira?"

"I do not know what you want," I whispered. "I do not understand you."

I gathered they must be asking after whatever it was they sought. They had covered the area thoroughly, even turning aside long grass with the blades of their spears.

They had not found it.

"Var Bina, Kajira?" repeated the bearded man.

I knelt as they had placed me, the chain hanging, heavy, from my collar.

"I do not know," I whispered.

Suddenly, savagely, he struck me across the mouth with the back of his right hand. I flew to the left, to the grass. The blow was vicious. It hurt me more than had the first. I could not believe its force, its ruthlessness, its swiftness. I could scarcely see; I fought blackness and pain and seething light; I was on my hands and knees in the grass, my head down; I tasted blood; the collar hurt my neck; I spit blood into the grass; he had struck me; did he not know I was a woman! He jerked me by the collar and chain to his knees; he thrust both hands into my hair. "Var Bina, Kajira!" he cried. "Var Bina!" "I do not understand you!" I cried. "Oh!" I screamed with misery. With both hands he shook my head viciously. I could not believe the pain. My small hands were helpless on his wrists. "Var Bina," he demanded. "Please, please!" I wept.

He threw me down, with a rattle of chain, to his feet. I lay there on my side, terrified. He unlooped the shoulder belt from him and cast it, with the scabbard and blade, to one side. Then he swiftly loosened the belt at his waist. He slipped it free from the sheath and dagger, and doubled it. He struck it once in the palm of his hand. I could not see him. I lay before him, turned away from him, on the grass. Then I heard it whistle through the air. I cried out with pain. Again and again, viciously, he struck me. Once he stopped. "Var Bina, Kajira?" he asked. "Please don't hurt me," I begged. Again he struck, and again and again. I writhed before him, lashed, squirming on my belly in the grass, weeping, clutching at the grass. In the pain I could scarcely comprehend it. I was being beaten! Did he not know I was a girl! "Please don't hit me," I cried. "Please!" I covered my head with my hands. I lay with my head down. I shuddered with each blow. I would do anything if he would stop! But I did not know what he wanted!

Then he stopped, angrily. I did not even lift my head, but lay, weeping, my hands still over my head, the chain running between my legs, and under my body, to the collar.

I heard him replace the sheath and dagger on his belt, and put on the belt. I heard him lift the shoulder belt and regard himself with the blade. I did not look up, but lay weeping, chained, trembling. I would do anything he wanted, anything.

One of the men spoke to me, and prodded me with the butt of his spear.

I rose to my hands and knees. I felt the chain on my collar. Again I was prodded with the butt of his spear.

Red-eyed, my cheeks and body stained with tears, in pain, my back and sides, and legs, stinging, I adjusted the chain and knelt again as I had originally. There was blood at my mouth. Little had changed. I knelt precisely as I had before. Little had changed, save that I had been struck and beaten.

The two men conferred. Then, to my horror, the bearded one approached me. He crouched before

me. He took from his dagger sheath the steel blade, narrow, about seven inches long, double-edged, evenly sharpened. He held this up before my face. He did not speak. The other man crouched down behind me. With his left hand, fastened in my hair, he drew my head back; with his right hand he thrust up, high on my neck, under my chin, the heavy iron collar I wore. It hurt. My jugular vein was held as I was, prominent and, beneath the clasp, circular iron, prominent and exposed.

"No," I begged. "No!"

I gathered that I was of no use to these men. I felt the delicate, razor-sharp edge of the dagger on my throat.

"Var Bina, Kajira?" queried the man. "Var Bina?"

"Please!" I wept, whispering. "Please!" I would have done anything. I would have done anything they would have told them anything, done anything, but I knew nothing. I could not give them what information they desired.

"Don't kill me," I begged. "I will do anything you want! Keep me! Keep me for yourselves! Keep me as your captive, your prisoner! Keep me as anything you want! Am I not beautiful? Could I not serve you? Could I not please you?" Then, suddenly, from deep within me, welling up, from somewhere so deep within me that I did not know I contained such depths, flooding from me, startling me, horrifying me with my own wickedness, I cried out, "Do not kill me! I am willing even to be your slave! Yes! Yes! I am willing even to be your slave. Your slave! Do not kill me! I will be your slave! Let me be your slave! I beg to be your slave!"

I shook with the horror, the scandal, the wickedness, of what I had said. But then, boldly and desperately, determinedly, resolutely, repudiating nothing, I whispered, clearly and firmly, my head back, held back, his hand in my hair, "Do not kill me, please. Yes, I will be even your slave. Yes, I will be your slave. I, Judy Thornton, will be your slave. I, Judy Thornton, beg to be your slave. Please. Please, let me be your slave!" I tried to smile. "Make me your slave," I whispered, "Masters!" How startled I was that I had called them Masters, and yet, how natural, it seemed, for I was a girl, suitable prey for such as they, a natural quarry and prey for such as they, and they, as I sensed, were the natural masters, by the dark laws of biology, of such as I.

"Please, Masters," I whispered.

"Var Bina, Kajira?" queried the man.

I moaned with misery. I did not know but they, rich and powerful masters, had access to many women as beautiful, or more beautiful, than I. On Earth I had been noted as a beauty, an unusual, even ravishingly beautiful girl, but on Gor, as I would come to understand, I, and others like me, could be acquired and disposed of for a handful of copper tarsks. There was little special about us. In many houses we would be kept with the kettles, as scullery and kitchen girls. I had been the most beautiful girl in the junior class at my elite girls' college. In all the school, there had been only one more loved more than I, or so some said, the lovely Elicia Nevina, who was in anthropology, in the senior class. How she had hated her. What rivals we had been!

I felt the edge of the dagger anchor itself in the outer layer of skin on my throat, preparing for its slash. I felt the man's hand and arm, through the steel of the dagger, flex for the movement of his arm. My throat was to be cut.

But the blade paused. It withdrew from my throat. The bearded man was looking outward, away from me, over the field. Then I, too, heard it. It was a man singing, boldly, a melodic, repetitious song.

Angrily the bearded man stood up, sheathed the dagger, took up his shield, his spear. His fellow and the other man, already accoutered, even to the helmet, watched the man approach. He balanced his spear in his right hand. The bearded man did not yet don his helmet, but stood near it.

I went to my hands and knees in the grass. I could scarcely move. I threw up in the grass. I pulled at the collar and chain, futilely. If only I could have run, or crawled away. But I was fastened in place.

Numbly I lifted my head. The other fellow was approaching at an even, unhurried pace. He seemed good-humored. He sang in a rich voice, a simple song, as though to content himself in long treks. His hair was black and shaggy. He, too, was clad in scarlet, as were the other two men. He was similarly accoutered, with short sword, slung at the left hip, with a shoulder belt; a belt at his waist with sheathed knife; heavy sandals, almost boots. He carried a spear over his left shoulder, balanced by his left hand; from the spear depended a shield, behind the left shoulder, and a helmet; about his right shoulder was slung a pouch, which I gathered must have contained supplies; a bota of liquid, water assumed, was fastened at his belt, on the left, behind the point at which the scabbard depended from the shoulder belt. He strode singing, smiling, through the tall grass. He seemed similarly garbed to the other men, wearing a similar tunic, but they reacted to him in a way that indicated they were not pleased that he had now appeared. His tunic was cut slightly differently from theirs; there was a mark at the left shoulder, which theirs did not bear. These differences were subtle to me, but to those who could read them perhaps acutely significant. I pulled at the chain. No one paid me attention. Had I been free I might have slipped away. I moaned to myself. I must wait.

The approaching man stopped singing about twenty yards from us, and stood grinning in the grass. He held the spear, with its dependent articles, in his left hand now, and raised his right in a cheerful fashion, palm inward, facing the body. "Tal, Rarii!" said he, calling out, grinning.

"Tal, Rarius," said the bearded man.

The newcomer slipped the bota from his belt, and discarded, too, the pouch he carried.

The bearded man waved his arm angrily, and spoke harshly. He was ordering the newcomer away. He pointed to his fellow and himself. They were two. The newcomer grinned and slipped the spear to the ground, loosening the helmet and shield.

The bearded man placed his helmet over his head, it muchly concealing his features.

Carrying the shield on his left arm, carrying the spear lightly in his right hand, the helmet hanging too, by its straps, from his right hand, the newcomer approached casually.

Again the bearded man waved him away. Again he spoke harshly. The newcomer grinned.

They spoke together, the three of them. I could understand nothing. The newcomer spoke evenly, once he slapped his thigh in laughter. The two other men spoke more angrily. One, he who was not bearded, shook his spear.

The newcomer did not pay him attention. He looked beyond the men, to me.

I then became aware, as I had not before, in my fear, of a strange emotional and physiologic response of which I had been the victim moments before, when I had begged mighty men to enslave me. My feelings had been flooded not only with terror but, mixed with them, with the feelings of release. The terror had been a strange, almost hysterical release of tension, of bottled-up emotion. I had said things which I had never dreamed could come from me, and they could not now be unsaid. I realized I had begged to be a slave. Of course I had been terrified, but I felt, in my deepest heart, that I had not said what I had said merely to try and save my life. Of course I had been desperate to save my life. Of course I would have said anything! But it was the way I had felt when I had said it that now so shocked me, so profoundly, to the quick. Mingled with the terror there had been a release of suppressed instincts, a joy in confession, a rapture of openness, of authenticity and honesty. That I had been terrified, and desperate to buy my life at any cost, had been the occasion and an adequate justification of my utterance, but this terror could not explain the wild, uncontrollable acknowledgement, the shattering of inhibitions which I had felt, the torrential rapture, the abandonment, the capitulation of myself and my instincts which had, though blurred and mixed with the terror, so shaken and thrilled me. The terror was unimportant. It had been nothing more than an occasion, not even necessary. What was important had been the way I had felt when I had begged those mighty men to be my masters. It was as though, in asking for chains of iron, I had cast off thousands of invisible chains, which had held

me from myself. Chains of iron I thought might hold me to my own truths, not permitting me to strive for what, in the heart of me, I did not wish, for what I was not. I wondered then what was the nature of women. I knew then that, before, in the emotions that had flooded me I had not been only terrified. I had felt liberty and release, and joy. Oddly, too, in those moments, besides my terror, I had been aroused. Never before in my life had I been so erotically charged, so aroused, as when I had begged those mighty men to enslave me. I now looked at the newcomer, who was regarding me. I shuddered. I, nude and chained, felt my body suddenly soaked with the heat of desire. Perhaps he had read the bodies of many women. He grinned at me. Beneath the bold appraisal of my bared beauty I reddened angrily. I put down my head. I was furious. What did he think I was. A chained slave girl, whose beauty might belong to him who was the most strong, or most powerful, to him with the swiftest sword, or to the highest bidder?

He pointed to me. He spoke. The bearded man again spoke harshly, waving his arm, ordering the newcomer away. The newcomer laughed. The bearded man said something, gesturing to me. The tone of his voice was disparaging. I felt angry. The newcomer looked more closely at me. He spoke to me, calling across the grass. The word he spoke I had heard before. The other man had said it to me after I had been beaten, when he had prodded me with the spear, before I had again knelt, though then struck and beaten, before the men, shortly before the dagger had been put to my throat. Tossing my head back, I knelt, the chain dangling from my collar before my body, to the grass. I knelt back on my heels, my back very straight, my hands on my thighs, my head high, looking straight ahead. I thrust my shoulders back, my breasts forward. I did not neglect the placement of my knees; I opened them as widely as I could, as I knew the men wanted. I knelt before them again in that most elegant and helpless position in which men may place a woman, that position I was later to learn was that of the Gorean pleasure slave.

The newcomer now spoke decisively. The bearded man and the other retorted angrily. The newcomer, as I saw out of the corner of my eye, was pointing to me. He was grinning. I trembled and shuddered. He was demanding me! He was telling them to give me to him! The bold beast! How I hated him, and how pleased I was! The men laughed. I was frightened. They were two, and he one! He should flee! He should run for his life! I knelt, chained.

"Kajira canjellne!" said the newcomer. Though he indicated me peremptorily with his spear, it was at the two other men that he looked. He did not now take his eyes from them.

The bearded man looked angry. "Kajira canjellne," he acknowledged. "Kajira canjellne," said the other man, too, soberly.

The newcomer then moved back a few paces. He crouched down. He picked up a stalk of grass, and began to chew on it.

The bearded man approached me. From within his tunic he drew forth two lengths of slender braided black leather, each about eighteen inches long. He crouched behind me. He jerked my wrists behind my back, crossed them, and bound them, tightly. He then crossed my ankles, and, too, bound them, tightly as well. I could feel the braided leather, deep in my wrists and ankles. I winced, helplessly. Then, holding me by the hair with his left hand, from behind, I felt a heavy key, which he must have removed from his tunic, thrust deeply into the large collar lock, below my left ear. The heavy collar, with its lock, pushed into the left side of my neck. The key turned. I heard the bolt click back. It made a heavy sound. It must have been a thick, heavy bolt. He dropped the key to the grass and, with both hands, jerking it, opened the collar. He dropped it, with the depending chain, to the grass. I was free of the collar! I looked at the collar. It was the first time I had seen it. As I had surmised, it matched the chain. It was heavy, circular, of black iron, hinged, efficient, practical, frightening. It bore a sturdy and stout loop. One link of the chain was fastened about the loop. The loop was circular, and about two and one half inches in width.

I was free of the collar! But I was bound helplessly. I pulled futilely at my bonds.

~~The bearded man lifted me lightly in his arms. My weight was as if nothing to him. He faced the stranger, who still crouched a few yards away.~~

"Kajira canjellne?" asked the bearded man. It was as though he were giving the stranger an opportunity to withdraw. Perhaps a mistake had been made. Perhaps there had been a misunderstanding?

The stranger, crouching in the grass, his shield beside him, the butt of the spear in the grass, the weapon upright, its point against the sky, nodded. There had been no mistake. "Kajira canjellne," he said, simply.

The other man angrily went to a place in the grass, to one side. There, angrily, with the blade of his spear, he traced and dug a circle in the earth. It was some ten feet in diameter. The bearded man then threw me over his shoulder, and carried me to the circle. I was hurled to its center. I lay on my side, bound.

The men spoke together, as though clarifying arrangements. They did not speak long.

I struggled to my knees. I knelt in the circle.

The stranger, now, stood. He donned his helmet. He slipped his shield on his arm, adjusting straps. He slid the short blade at his left hip some inches from the sheath, and slipped it back in, lifting and dropping it in the sheath. It was loose. He took his spear in his right hand. It had a long, heavy shaft, some two inches in width, some seven feet in length; the head of the weapon, including its socket and penetrating rivets, was some twenty inches in length; the killing edges of the blade began about two inches from the bottom of the socket, which reinforced the blade, tapering with the blade, double edged, to within eight inches of its point; the blade was bronze; it was broad at the bottom, tapering to its point; given the stoutness of the weapon, the lesser gravity of this world, and the strength of the man who wielded it, I suspected it would have considerable penetrating power; I doubted that the shields they carried, though stout, could turn its full stroke, if taken frontally; I had little doubt such a weapon might thrust a quarter of its length through the body of a man, and perhaps half its length more through the slighter, softer body of a mere girl; I looked upon the spear; it was so mighty; I feared it.

The two men who were my captors conferred briefly among themselves. He who was not the bearded man then stepped forward, his shield on his arm, his spear in hand. He stood separated from the stranger by some forty feet.

I observed them. They stood, not moving, each clad in scarlet, each helmeted, each similarly armed. They stood in the grass. Neither looked at me. I was forgotten. I knelt in the circle. I tried to free myself. I could not. I knelt in the circle.

The wind moved the grass. The clouds shifted in the blue sky.

For a long time, neither man moved. Then, suddenly, the stranger, laughing, lifted his spear and struck its butt into the ground. "Kajira canjellne!" he laughed.

I could not believe it. He seemed elated. He was pleased with the prospect of war. How terrible he was! How proud, how magnificent he seemed! I thought I knew then, with horror, the nature of men.

"Kajira canjellne!" said the other man.

Warily they began to circle one another.

I waited, kneeling, frightened, nude and bound, in the circle. I watched the men warily circling one another. I pulled at my bonds. I was helpless.

Suddenly, as though by common accord, each crying out, each uttering a savage cry, they hurled themselves at one another.

It was the ritual of the spear casting.

The spear of him who was one of my captors seemed to leap upward and away, caroming from the

oblique, lifted surface of the stranger's shield. The spear, caroming from the shield, flew more than hundred feet away, dropping in the grass, where it stood fixed, remote and useless, the butt of its shaft pointing to the sky. The stranger's spear had penetrated the shield of he who was one of my captors and the stranger, bracing the shaft between his arm and body, had lifted his opponent's shield and turned, throwing it and his opponent, who had not the time to slip from the shield straps, to the ground at his feet. The stranger's blade, now, loosed from its sheath, under the opponent's helmet, lay at his throat.

But the stranger did not strike. He severed the shield straps of the opponent's shield, freeing his arm from them. He stepped back. He cast his own shield aside, into the grass.

He stood waiting, blade drawn.

The other man got his legs under him and leaped to his feet. He was enraged. The blade in his sheath leaped forth. He charged the other, the stranger, and swiftly did the two engage.

I knelt terrified. I shuddered with horror. They were not human, as I understood human beings. They were warriors and beasts.

I cried out with fear.

I had always had a fear of steel blades, even knives. Now I knelt bound and nude, helpless, utterly exposed and vulnerable, in the vicinity of fierce men, skilled and strong, who with intent and menace with edged, bared steel, addressed themselves to the savageries of war.

They fought.

I watched, wide-eyed, bound. Furious, sharp, was the precision of their combat.

They were not feet from me.

I moaned.

Backward and forward, swiftly, did they move in their grim contest.

I wondered at what manner of men they might be, surely like none I had hitherto known. Why did they not flee in terror from such blades? Why did they not flee? But they met one another, and did battle. How I feared, and still fear, such men! How could a woman but kneel trembling before such a man?

One man wheeled back, grunting, turning, and fell to his knees in the grass, and then fell, turning to his side, lying upon his shoulder, doubled, hunched in pain, bleeding, his hands at his belly, his blade lost in the grass.

The stranger stepped back from him, his blade bloody. He stood regarding the other man, the bearded man.

The bearded man lifted his shield and raised his spear. "Kajira canjellne!" he said.

"Kajira canjellne," said the stranger. He went to extricate his spear from the penetrated shield of the man with whom, but moments before, he had shared the sport of war. The fallen foe lay doubled in the grass; his lower lip was bloody; he tore it with his teeth, holding it, that, in his pain, he might make no sound. His hands were clutched in the scarlet of his wet tunic, bunching it, at the half-severed belt. The grass was bloody about him.

The stranger bent to lift the penetrated shield, that he might remove from it his bronze-headed weapon.

In that instant the bearded man, crying out savagely, rushed upon him, his spear raised.

Before I could respond in horror or my body move the stranger had reacted, rolling to the side and in an instant, regaining his feet, assuming an on-guard position. As my cry of misery escaped my lips the thrust of the bearded man's spear had passed to the left of the stranger's helmet. The stranger had not remained at the vicinity of the shield with its penetrating spear, but had abandoned it. For the first time now the stranger did not seem pleased. The bearded man's spear had thrust into the grass. Its head and a foot of its shaft had been driven into the turf. He faced the stranger now, sword drawn. The

instant he had missed the thrust he had left the weapon, spinning and unsheathing his sword. The bearded man was white-faced. But the stranger had not rushed upon him. He waited, in the on-guard position. He gestured with his blade, indicating that now they might do battle.

With a cry of rage the bearded man rushed upon him, thrusting with his shield, his sword flat and low. The stranger was not there. Twice more the bearded man charged, and each time the stranger seemed not to be at the point of intended impact. The fourth time the stranger was behind him and to his left. The stranger's sword was at his left armpit. The bearded man stood very still, white-faced. The stranger's sword moved. The stranger stepped back. The bearded man's shield slipped from his arm. The straps which had held the shield to his upper arm had been severed. The shield fell on its edge to the grass, and then tipped and rocked, then was still, large, rounded, concave inner surface tilted, facing the sky. I could see the severed straps.

The two men faced one another.

Then did they engage.

I then realized, as I had not before, the skill of the stranger. Earlier he had matched himself, for some time, evenly with the first opponent. In a swift, though measured fashion, he had exercised himself sharply and well, respecting his foe, not permitting the foe to understand his full power with the blade. The devastating and subtle skill which now seemed to lend terrible flight to the rapid steel. I saw the wounded man, now on an elbow, watching, with horror. He had not even been slain. Lying in the bloodied grass, he realized he had been permitted to live. It was with humiliating skill that the stranger toyed with the stumbling, white-faced bearded man, he who had, minutes before, been preparing to cut my throat. Bound, kneeling in the circle, it was with sudden, frightening elation that I realized the stranger was the master of the other two. Four times was he within the other's guard, his blade at breast or throat, and did not finish him. He moved the bearded man into a position where he had fallen, discarded shield lay behind him. With a cry he forced back the bearded man, who fell stumbling in the shield, backward, and then lay on the grass before the stranger, the stranger's blade at his throat. The stranger, in contempt, then stepped back. The bearded man scrambled to his feet. The stranger stood back, in the on-guard position.

The bearded man took his blade and hurled it into the grass. It sank to the hilt.

He stood regarding the stranger.

The stranger slipped his own blade back in the sheath. The bearded man loosened his dagger belt, dropping the belt and weapon to the grass. Then he walked, slowly, to his fellow, and similarly removed his dagger belt. The man held his bloodied tunic to his wound, to stanch the flow of blood. The bearded man lifted the other man to his feet, and, together, the bearded man supporting the other, they left the field.

The stranger stood watching them go. He watched them until, they disappeared in the distance.

He removed his spear from the shield which it had penetrated. He thrust it, upright, butt down, into the turf. It was like a standard. He sat his shield by it.

Then he turned to face me.

I knelt within the wide circle, torn by the blade of a spear in the turf. I was naked. I was bound helplessly. It was an alien world.

He began to approach me, slowly. I was terrified.

Then he stood before me.

Never had I been so frightened. We were alone, absolutely.

He looked at me. I thrust my head to the grass at his feet. He stood there, not moving. I was terribly conscious, helpless, of his presence. I waited for him to speak, to say something to me. He must understand my terror! Was it not visible in my bound body, my complete vulnerability? I waited for him to speak some gentle word, something kindly, something to reassure me, a thoughtful, so

word to allay my fears. I trembled. He said nothing.

~~I did not dare raise my head. Why did he not speak to me? Any gentleman, surely, by now speaking reassuring, soothing words, averting his eyes from my beauty, would have hastened to release me from my predicament.~~

He removed his helmet. He put it to one side, in the grass.

I felt his hand in my hair, not cruelly, but casually and firmly, as one might fasten one's hand in the mane of a horse. Then I felt my head drawn up and back, and back, until, his right hand on my knee, his left hand in my hair, I knelt bent backward, my head on the ground, my back bent painfully, my eyes looking up, frightened, at the sky. He then examined the bow of my beauty. I am quite vain of my beauty. Then he threw me on my side and stretched me out, to examine its linear aspect. I lay on my right side. He walked about me, and looked at me. He kicked my toes straight, that the line of my body would be more extended. He crouched beside me, then. I felt his hand on my neck. He rubbed his thumb in a scrape the collar had made on my throat when I had foolishly struggled, earlier. It smarted. But the scrape was not deep. He felt my upper arm, and forearm, and my fingers, moving them. He moved his hands on my body, firmly, following its curvatures. He put one hand on my back and another on my side and, for a few moments, holding me thus, felt my breathing. He felt my thigh, and flexed my legs, noting the change in the curve of the calf. It did not seem what a gentleman would do. Never before had a man handled and touched me as he did; no man on Earth, I felt sure, would have dared to touch a woman. I felt examined as an animal. At one point, turning my head, thrusting two fingers of his left hand and two fingers of his right hand into my mouth, he pulled my mouth wide open, examining my teeth. I have excellent teeth, white and small and straight. I had had two cavities, which had been filled. He paid them little attention. He had seen, as I later learned, women from Earth before. Such tiny things can be used to determine Earth origin. Goreans seldom have cavities. I am not certain what the reasons for this are. In part it is doubtless a matter of a plainer, simpler diet containing less sugar; in part, I suspect, the culture, too, may have a role to play, as it is a culture in which undue chemical stress, through guilt and worry, is not placed on the system either in the prepubertal or pubertal years. Gorean youth, like the youth of Earth, encounter their difficulties growing up but the culture, or cultures, have not seen fit to implicitly condition them into regarding the inevitable effects of maturation as either suspect, deplorable or insidious. He then threw me to the other side, and subjected my helpless beauty, on its right, to a similar examination.

I was horrified at the boldness, the frankness, with which he handled me.

Did he think I was an animal! Did he think I was only property?

Then he threw me on my stomach at his feet, and I lay there. My wrists were crossed and bound behind me in slender, braided leather. My ankles, too, were crossed and bound in that simple, secure fastening. I felt the grass under my body; I felt it brush my left side, as the wind moved it. I kept my toes pointed.

He regarded me for some time.

How beautiful I must look to him, I thought. And I had sensed his incredible maleness, the animal maleness of him, so different from the thwarted, crippled sexuality so commended and tragical endemic among the males of Earth. For the first time in my life I felt I understood what might be the meaning of the expression 'male, and, as I lay before him, too, dimly, it frightening me, what might be the meaning of the expression 'female. How beautiful I thought I must look to him, lying bound, totally vulnerable, helpless at his feet. How such a sight must stir the splendor of his manhood, to see the female, his, caught, helpless at his feet, his to do with, in lust and pleasure, and joy, as he pleased. Helpless to escape him, free for him to work his will upon her!

I felt him turn me. I must resist him! He is a beast! I was sitting now, my face turned to one side, trying to push back, but his left arm, behind my back, held me. I found it futile to struggle. With his

right hand he turned my face to face him. He regarded the delicate lineaments of my face. His thumb was at the right side of my jaw, his fingers at the left. I could not move my head. He was dark complexioned. His face, in a broad, coarse way, was brutally handsome. His eyes were very dark, his hair dark, shaggy, long.

He said something to me. I felt his breath on my face. I trembled. I stammered. "Please, please," he said, "I do not speak your language. Please untie me."

He said something again.

"I cannot understand you," I said. "Please untie me."

He stood, and lifted me, by the arms, to my feet. He looked down into my eyes. My head came only to his chest; the width of my body seemed but half the width of that mighty, scarlet-clad chest. His hands were very tight on my arms. My ankles fastened, crossed and bound, I would have fallen had he released me; I could not stand by myself. He said something again, a question. "I cannot understand you," I said. He gave me a sudden shake. I felt my head would leave my body. He repeated his question. "I cannot understand you!" I wept. He shook me again, angrily, but not cruelly. Then he released me. Bound as I was I could do nothing but fall before him, on my knees. I looked up. Never had I felt such strength.

He crouched down before me. He looked at me intently. Once more he spoke to me. I shook my head, miserably. I looked up at him. "I will learn any language you want," I blurted, weeping, "but I cannot, now, speak your tongue."

He seemed satisfied, or resigned, after this outburst, that there was little to be gained in attempting to communicate with me. We could not speak to one another. He rose to his feet and looked about himself. He was not pleased. He was not looking at me. I shrugged, a bit angrily. He could not see me. It was not my fault I could not speak to him! But then, as he looked about the field, and the rock, I, that large, rude circle torn in the turf, put my head down, alone, miserable. I was small in the grass alone. I knelt helpless, an ignorant barbarian girl, naked and bound, who could not even speak to her captor, on a strange world.

In time, after scouting the terrain of the rock, perhaps searching for clues to my meaning or identity, the tall man in scarlet returned to face me.

It was late afternoon.

I looked up at him, and trembled.

He took me by the hair and threw me to my belly in the grass at his feet. I lay there, helpless.

I heard the sword slip free from his sheath.

"Don't kill me!" I wept. "Please do not kill me!"

I lay there, terrified. I felt the sword, with an easy movement, as though meeting no resistance, sever the binding on my ankles.

He then left me. He fetched the pouch and bota which he had carried, and slung them both, this time, at his belt. He picked up his helmet. He went to the spear thrust in the turf, upright, blade to the sky, and the concave shield at its foot. He slung the shield and helmet over the butt of the spear, suspending them behind his left shoulder, his left arm over and resting on the shaft of the spear, steadying it in place. Then, without looking at me, he left the field.

I watched him go. I struggled to my feet, my hands still bound tightly behind me. I looked about the field, at the signs of battle, the discarded shields, one deeply punctured and cut, the scattered weapons. I looked at the great rock to which, by the neck, I had been fastened with a heavy chain. I stood in the circle torn in the turf. The wind blew the grass, my hair. The sky was darker now. I gasped. Low on the horizon I saw, rising, three moons. The man was distant now. "Don't leave me," I cried. "Don't leave me here alone!"

I fled from the circle torn in the turf, running after him. "Please stop!" I cried. "Wait! Please"

wait!"

Gasping for breath I fled after him, stumbling, sometimes falling. "Please, wait!" I cried.

Once he turned to see me running after him. I stopped, panting. I stood in the grass, some two hundred yards from him. Then he turned again, and continued on his way. Miserable, stumbling, I began running again. He turned again when I was some twenty yards from him. Again I stopped. Under his gaze, for no reason I clearly understood, I put my head down. He again continued on his way and I again followed him. In a moment or two I had caught up with him, and lagged behind, some ten feet. He stopped, and turned. I stopped, and put my head down. He continued on his way again, and again I followed. Then again, after a few minutes, he stopped. I stopped, too, my head down. This time he approached me, and stood about a yard from me. I stood extremely straight, with my head down. I was terribly conscious of his nearness, my nudity, his eyes upon me. Though I was female of Earth I had some dim inkling of the tumult of joy and pleasure which the sight of a female body could wreak on a man. And I knew that I was very beautiful. He put his fingers and thumb under my chin and lifted my head. I saw his eyes, and looked quickly away, not daring to meet them. To my horror, I wanted him to find me pleasing—and as a female. He regarded me for a minute or two, and then, from his shoulder, unslung the shield, and helmet, from his spear. From his belt he took the pouch and bota. He slung them about my neck. Then, adjusting the straps, he fastened the shield at my back. I staggered under its weight. Then, carrying the helmet by its straps in his left hand and the spear, lightly, in his right, he turned and began to stride again through the grass. Staggering under the weight of the shield and the pouch and bota about my neck, I followed him. Once he turned and, with the spear, indicated the position and distance at which I should follow. These things vary, I learned, from city to city, and depend, also, on such matters as context and conditions. In a market, in the crowding and jostling, for instance, a girl may follow so closely she pressed against the back of his left shoulder. Girls seldom follow behind and on the right. If she is thusly placed it is commonly a sign she is in disfavor. If more than one girl is involved, she who follows most closely on the left is generally taken to be in higher favor; girls compete for this position. In an open area, such as the fields in which we trekked, the girl is placed usually some five or ten feet behind, and on the left. If he must move suddenly she will not thusly, constitute an impediment to his action.

He again took up his march. Carrying his shield, the pouch and bota, some eight or nine feet behind him, on his left, I followed him. I suppose I should have minded. I knew I was heeling him. How strange it seemed. I understood so little of what had occurred. I had awakened, stripped and chained, on a strange world. Men had come to the rock where I had been fastened. They had had the key to the collar. Doubtless they had come there to fetch me. But who had left me there for them? And what had they wanted of me? They had questioned me, beaten me. The word 'Bina' had often occurred in their demands. "Var Bina!" they had demanded. I, of course, had not understood. Then, angry, they had prepared to cut my throat. I had been rescued by a chance male, armed and skillful, who had happened in the fields at the time. He had been, judging from the reactions of my original captors, completely unexpected, and not welcome. By his own reactions I had gathered he knew nothing of the men he had met there, and had behaved as he might have with any others, similarly of his scarlet-clad, helmeted, armed sort. I had been part of a plan, a design, I suspected, which I did not understand, which had been, by a chance encounter, disrupted. But what did the word 'Bina' mean? There must have been something I was supposed to have, or be with me, which was not. The plan, perhaps, had been disrupted, or had failed, prior even to the arrival of the two men at the rock. I did not know. I understood nothing. But perhaps the plan had not been disrupted. Perhaps, even now, I carried some secret with me, which had been unknown to the two men. Perhaps they had not understood the way in which I was to have been useful. Perhaps their information had been incomplete or incorrect. I suspected I was intended to be instrumental in something I did not understand. I could neither explain

nor understand my nature or purpose, if any, on this world. Had I been brought here merely as a naked woman, it seemed pointless to have placed me as I had been placed in the wilderness. Too, it would have been pointless to have questioned me so closely; too, why, if I had been brought to this world for an obvious purpose of men, say, for my beauty, had the men prepared, in their anger, to end my life? Surely it must have been obvious to them that I was eager to do anything they wanted, that I was eager to please them. Had I been brought here merely for my beauty surely they would not have behaved as they had. I shuddered, recalling the feel of the knife at my throat.

Then the stranger had arrived.

"Kajira canjellne!" he had said. I had been released of the chain and collar. A circle had been drawn in the turf. Bound, I had been thrown to it. Kneeling, I had watched men fight.

I now, naked and bound, carrying his shield, followed him who had been victorious.

I remembered his might, his insolence, his skill, his power. I admired the width of his shoulders as he walked before me. I remembered the simplicity and audacity with which, after his victory, he had examined me.

I now carried his shield. I walked behind him, and to the left. I suppose I should have minded. I knew, of course, that I was heeling him. I thought about it. Whereas it would have seemed unthinkable on Earth that a man could be so strong, so mighty, that a woman would walk at his heel, here, on this world, it seemed not so impossible or strange at all. There were men here strong enough to put women at their heel. I felt, briefly, profoundly stirred erotically, and, perhaps strangely, marvelously pleased to be a woman. I had never met such men as these, the former two, and he whom I now followed, the mightiest among them, who would simply, unthinkingly, put a woman at their heel. I had never known such men. I had not dreamed such men could exist! I had never felt so feminine, so stirred, so alive, and real, as in their presence! For the first time in my life I was pleased to be a woman.

Then I castigated myself for my terrible thoughts. Men and women I knew, as I had been taught, were identical. Biology, and a nature, the product of harsh, exacting thousands of generations of evolution, of time, and breeding and animal history, was unimportant. It must be ignored, and dismissed. It did not suggest the correct political conclusions.

I looked up at the three moons.

I did not know what to believe or how to live. But, as I followed the man, trekking through the glorious grass, under the bright, marvelous moons, carrying his shield, literally heeling him, as might have an animal, his captive, nude and bound, I felt, paradoxically, a fantastic sense, of freedom, of psychological liberation. I wanted to run to him and put my head against his shoulder.

For hours we trekked the grass.

Sometimes I fell. He did not stop far from me. I would struggle to my feet, staggering under the weight of the shield, and flee to catch up with him. But then I could go no further. My body was not ready for such treks. I was only a girl of Earth. I fell. My breath was short, my legs weak. I lay in the grass and could not move my body. I lay on my side, the weight of the shield upon my shoulder. After a time I sensed him standing near me, looking down. I looked up at him. I tried to smile. "I can go no further," I said. Surely he could see my exhaustion, my helplessness. I could not even move. I saw him loosen his belt. I struggled to my feet. He did not look pleased. He would have beaten me! He refastened his belt. He turned away. Again I followed him.

Toward morning we crossed more than one tiny stream. The water was very cold on my ankles and calves. Bordering these streams was brush, and some trees. The fields were broken now, with occasional trees, many of them flat-topped. In what I conjecture would have been an hour or so before dawn he stopped in a thicket of trees, near a small stream. He removed the pouch and bota from my neck, the shield from my back. I fell to the grass between the trees. I moved my wrists a bit, and lost consciousness. In what must have been a moment or two I was shaken awake. A handful of dried meat

cut in small pieces, was thrust in my mouth. Lying on my side I chewed and swallowed it. I had not realized how hungry I was. In a moment, he lifted me to a sitting position and, his left hand behind my back, supporting me, thrust the spike of the bota in my mouth. Eagerly then did I drink. He much watered me. I lay then again on my side. He lifted me in his arms, so lightly that it startled me, and carried me to a tree. As he tethered my right ankle to the tree I, bound as I was, overcome with exhaustion, fell asleep.

It seemed to me that I was in my own bed. I stretched in the pleasant warmth.

Then I awakened suddenly. I was in a thicket, on a strange world. It was warm, and the sun, high, filtered through the branches of the trees. I looked at my wrists. They were now unbound. Each wrist, deeply, wore the circular marks of the leather constraints which, earlier, had confined them. I rubbed my wrists. I looked about myself. My right ankle, by a short length of black leather, was tied to a small, white-barked tree. I rose to my hands and knees, my back to the tree. I was still naked. I then sat with my back against the tree, my legs drawn up, my chin on my knees, my hands about my knees. I watched the man, who was sitting, cross-legged, a few feet away. He was putting a thin coating of oil on the blade of his sword.

He did not look up at me. He seemed totally absorbed in his work. He must have sensed my awakening, my movements, but he did not look at me. I felt angry. I was not used to being ignored, particularly by a male. They had always been eager to be pleasing to me, to do anything I wanted.

I did not realize that on this world it was such as we who must be pleasing to them, who must comply eagerly with whatever their whim might decree.

I watched him.

He was a not unattractive man. I wondered if it would be possible to work out a meaningful relationship with him. He must learn, of course, to respect me as a woman.

He finished with the oil and blade. He wiped the blade with a cloth, leaving on it only a fine, evenly spread coating of oil. He replaced the cloth and the oil, which was in a small vial, in his pouch. He wiped his hands on the grass, and his tunic. He resheathed the sword.

He then looked up at me.

I smiled at him. I wanted to make friends with him. He slapped his right ankle, and pointed to it, and then beckoned me to approach him.

I bent to untie the dark leather which fastened me to the white tree. I first bent to remove the leather from my ankle. But a sharp word from him, and a gesture, indicated to me that I must first remove the tether from about the trunk of the small tree. Doubtless he thought me stupid. Did not any girl know that the last bond to be removed is that on her own body? But I was of Earth and knew nothing of such matters. I struggled, with my small, weak fingers, with the knots. I worked hard, frightened, sweating, that I might be taking too long. But he was patient. He knew the knots he had tied could not be easily undone by one such as I.

Then I approached him, and, with my left hand, handed him the supple tether. He replaced it in his pouch, and indicated that I should position myself before him and to his right. I knelt there, and smiled at him. He spoke sharply, harshly. Immediately I knelt in the position I had learned yesterday, which had been clearly and exactly taught to me, back on heels, back straight, hands on thighs, head up, knees widely opened. He then looked at me, satisfied.

How could I make friends with him, kneeling so? How could I get him to respect me as a person so desirably and beautifully positioned before him? How could I, so kneeling, so beautiful and small, so exposed and vulnerable, so helpless, so much his, get him to accept me as his equal?

I bent forward and took the piece of meat between my teeth from his hand. He did not allow me to touch it with my hands.

How miserable I felt. On this world I had not yet even been allowed to feed myself!

When I had eaten some meat, he then gave me to drink, again from the bota.

He must learn I am an equal and a person, I resolved. I will show him this.

I broke the position to which he had commanded me. I sat upon the grass before him, my knees drawn up. I smiled. "Sir," said I to him, "I know you cannot understand my language, nor I yours, but still, perhaps, from my voice, or its tone, you may gather something of my feelings. You saved my life yesterday. You rescued me when I was in great danger. I am very grateful for this."

I thought my head would fly from my neck, with such swift savageness was I struck! The blow was open-handed, taking me on the left side of the face, but it must have been clearly audible for a hundred and fifty yards about; I rolled, stinging, crawling, for more than twenty feet; I threw up in the grass; I couldn't see; blackness, violent, velvet, plunging, deep, lights, stars, seemed to leap and contract and expand and explode in my head; again I shook my head; again I threw up in the grass; then I sank on my side on my stomach.

I heard a word, of command. I recognized it. I had heard it before. Swiftly then did I reassume the position which I had dared to break, and again I knelt, though this time in an agony of terror, before the strange, mighty man, legs spread, arms crossed, who stood before me.

Blood ran from my mouth; other blood I swallowed. My vision cleared; I could not believe the pounding of my heart. I had been cuffed. I knelt, terrified. At that time I did not realize how light had been my discipline considering the gravity of my offense. I had both spoken without permission, and broken position without permission. Most simply, I had been displeasing to a free man.

Had I known the world on which I knelt, how I would have rejoiced that I had not been lashed! *Alas!* I later realized, allowances were being made for me which, had I been more familiar with the world on which I found myself, would not have been made. Later, such allowances would not be, and were not made.

I knelt before the man. He stood before me, legs spread, arms crossed, looking down at me. Gone from me in that moment, with the blood that ran from my mouth, were my illusions. No longer did I deceive myself that I might be his equal. The farcicality of that illusion was now transparent to me. The pitifulness of that pretense vanished before the simple, incontrovertible biological reality which had been impressed upon me, in the light of his uncompromising masculine dominance which he, in health and power, chose to exercise over me, a female. How beautiful to men must be women, I thought, who are at their feet. I wondered, frightened, if it were at the feet of men, or at least at the feet of such men as this, that women belonged, if that might be the unperverted order of nature. The thought of dominance and submission, pervasive in the animal kingdom, universal among primates, ran through my head. Never before had I so clearly, and profoundly, understood the meaning of those words. I looked up at him. I was frightened. My world, I knew, had chosen to deny and subvert biology. This world, I gathered, had not. Before him I knelt terrified, his.

To my relief he turned from me. Yet I remained immobile, absolutely, fearing to move, as though frozen in that elegant and helpless position, so vulnerable and exposed, which later I learned was the position of the Gorean pleasure slave.

He looked up at the sun.

It was late afternoon. He lay down, to sleep. I did not break position. I had not been given permission. Perhaps he kept me in position to discipline me. I did not know. I was afraid to break position. I told myself, of course, that this was rational, that he might wake and discover me out of position, or that, perhaps, at times, he was not truly asleep, but was, through half-closed eyes, watching me, to see if I, in the slightest, moved. But in my heart I knew I had not broken position because he had not given me permission to do so, because he had not released me from his command. I was terribly afraid of him. I was afraid to break position. I was obeying him.

For more than two hours, I think, I knelt in position. He awakened.

He looked at me, but he did not release me from position. I remained as I was, in that position symbolic of female subjugation.

It was now in the early evening.

He gathered up the pouch and bota, and slung them at his belt. He slung his sword, in its scabbard over his shoulder. He donned his helmet. He lifted his shield and spear.

I looked at him. Was I not to bear his burdens? Was I not to carry the pouch and bota? Was I not to bear his shield?

With a snap of his fingers and a movement of his hand he released me from position. Gratefully I moved my body. I stretched. I saw him watching me stretch, catlike. Reddening, I stopped. At a sharp word from him I continued to stretch, luxuriously, brazenly, and fully relished doing so. He watched me as I moved my body, and rubbed my legs, that their full circulation might be restored; they were stiff and cramped, as was the rest of my body, after the fixed position in which I had been kept, as the discipline sequent upon my cuffing. I was aware, though would scarcely admit it to myself, that my movements, as I stretched, and moved my hands upon my legs, were performed rather differently than they would have been had I been alone. I realized, though scarce would admit it to myself, that I was displaying myself as a female before him. He laughed. I blushed, and lay back, angry, on the grass. The body, kept overlong in any position, of course, even the most natural, becomes stiff and cramped. A girl, incidentally, in the position of the Gorean pleasure slave, but who is not being kept in that position as a discipline, in which case she remains rigid, is allowed much subtle latitude, which she exploits, without breaking the position. Sometimes, as she becomes animated, she rises a bit from her heels, sometimes her hands move on her thighs, her shoulders and belly move, her head moves, her eyes are live and vital, she speaks and laughs, and, radiantly, every inch, every bit, of her alive. She converses lyrically and delightedly. Any girl knows that an interesting body is a moving body. Even within the apparent restraint of the position of the pleasure slave a girl's body can be a subtle provocative melody of motion. The interplay between the restraint of the position and her animation gives the position incredible power and beauty. Yes, power. More than one master, I suspect, has been enslaved by the beauty who kneels before him. It is one of the excruciating delights of the mastery to expose oneself fully to, and yet skirt, the dangers of the girl's beauty, to keep oneself strong, to draw the absolute fullness of pleasure from her, and yet to resist her wiles, to get everything from her, and yet to keep her on her knees, completely.

I lay back on the grass.

Some girls fight one another with whips to obtain such a master.

I looked up at the sky. It was darker now, through the trees. The man in whose company I was, and in whose power I was, had left the thicket. I did not fear that he would not return. He had not been angry with me. Too, I had seen him look at me, and had heard him laugh.

On Earth, I had found boys of little interest, except for the admiration, which they had accorded me. I had held myself, though frequently dating, rather aloof. I did not much care to have boys put their mouths on me. I would brush them back, or thrust them away, appear offended, say "No," firmly to them. They would apologize, stammer, redden. Perhaps I was angry? They were sorry, truly sorry. Perhaps I was angry? Would I forgive them? Could I even consider going out with them again? Perhaps. But what sort of girl did they think I was?

I lay in the grass, and smiled to myself.

I wondered at what sort of girl I was. There had begun to stir in me feelings which I had never felt before. Dimly I had begun to sense how it could be that a woman could give herself totally to a man.

I thought of the stranger. I laughed to myself. He was no boy. With boys I had always felt in command, but with the strange, mighty man in whose power I now was I knew I was not in command. He was in command, completely. At his slightest word I would leap to serve him. How furious, how

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