

Collar and Cage: – Sex Slave Erotica for Men from the Hyperborean Age

By Alice Sinclair

[The Bounty](#)

[The Tavern](#)

[Zana](#)

[Rindar the Slaver](#)

[Collecting Stars](#)

[Get the Next Book](#)

The Bounty

I walked down the dirt road, a naked slave girl bound and thrown over my shoulder.

This was Hyperborea, 300 million years in the past. It was the Carboniferous Period on where plants were (until recently) the dominant life on land. I breathed easy; the ratio of oxygen was much higher during this time. They grew all along the path, horsetail ferns and scrambling plants fighting for space. Cycads and ferns created underbrush so thick that a man with a copper machete could spend the whole day hacking and have crossed no further than a mile.

There was a rustling further along to the right of the path: Fern leaves shoved aside, and a giant millipede burst out. It was an *Arthropleura*; almost twice my size and covered in hard, chitin plates. It tasted the air with feelers as long my arm, then crossed the path and re-entered the undergrowth. In the air, I could hear the buzzing of giant insects. The sky was ruled by dragonflies as large as small dogs. As long as I didn't run into a pack of them, I was safe.

The slave girl over my shoulder fidgeted. She was a slender, petite creature, about 5'5" tall. I had bound her thin ankles and wrists with knotted rope. Her young skin was clear and unmarked; a warm, tanned, Mediterranean tone to it. Her long, dark, hair hung straight and swished with every step. It shined in the morning sunlight.

"Please, I beg of you, Master!" The 18-year-old spoke the Hyperborean language 'Low Common.' She spoke it well but with a strong, Anatolian accent. This placed her at about 12,000 BC during the Neolithic. This was when the people of that region developed agriculture and became ascendant. "Do not return me to my owner! I will be your loyal slave and serve you in every way!"

I laughed.

"My owner will slay me!" Feathered lizards squawked in the trees. They did not belong in the Carboniferous any more than I did. Like many things in Hyperborea, they had been transplanted here. "He will give me to his dark god and then feast upon my flesh!"

"Yog," I said stroking her thigh. "His god's name is 'Yog.' What your master does with you is his business. My business with you is almost done."

The ferns and cycads came to a sudden stop, and I stepped into a small, cleared, valley.

A gentle slope of knee-height plants ended at a narrow but deep river. Its water was dark with jet black mud at the bottom. Off to the East, the black river cut its way through ancient, granite hills. There were ruins there; thousands and even *tens* of thousands of years old. We were not the first wave of humans here. Nor would we be the last.

Off to the West, the river disappeared into thick jungle and wetlands. Beyond them was the dull grey of the Mist Wall. It was a permanent cloud bank over a hundred feet tall that encircled around the cosmic battleground of the gods. I could see a few lightning flashes over it; a quiet day in Hell.

Down in the valley before me, built alongside the river, was a small town. A two-story sandstone and mud wall ran around it; enough to keep out both men and larger, more dangerous creatures. Within the wall were beehive-shaped buildings made from stone. Many had thatched roofs made from hay (grass was another foreign import from across time). The smoke of cooking and forge fires rose above.

Right where the town met the water was a small set of docks. Long, Egyptian-style reed boats were moored along it. I watched bare-chested sailors unfurling a large, bright red sail. The wind quickly filled it in, and the boat strained to move. On its deck were clay pots filled with plant oil, dried fish tied in bales, and wicker cages holding naked slave girls.

I made my way down to the town gates. They were open; a pair of guards stood outside, looking bored. They carried shields of stretched hide, and their spears were tipped with dark, iron, blades. They wore bronze helmets shaped like fish heads.

Tattooed in black on their chests was the silhouette of a monstrous, fish-like, humanoid.

"The hunter returns," One nodded, noticing me. "With prey most swiftly caught. Dagon be praised!"

"Good morning, gentlemen." I stroked the slave girl's smooth, clear, behind. "Not *that* swiftly, But still in good time all told."

Black stone statues twice the size of a man stood on either side of the gates. They were of a tall, humanoid being with long arms and wicked talons. Green river stones formed their eyes. Humans skulls had been placed around them on the ground.

They waved me through, and I entered Dura; a town that worshiped the monster fish god, Dagon.

Yes, *Dagon*. Cthulhu, Set. These were not fanciful horrors from the minds of writers of the 1920s and 30s. They were quite real, and Hyperborea was their battlefield.

Just four months ago, I had stumbled my way to it out of this alien jungle and to this town, dazed and delirious. A kindly ironmonger named Scar took me in. With foul broth and bed rest, I survived the 'Transport Sickness.' I repaid Scar by working in his shop, first running the fires and pouring yellow-hot liquid metal. Then, casting collars and chains for slave girls. Finally, he let me try beating metal into blades. He taught me swordmaking, and in return, I showed him how to make steel.

I came upon a large shed of dark wood and stone. Hammering came from inside. Firewood was stacked outside in a pile. Kneeling by it was a tall, brunette slave girl with her hair done up in a swishing ponytail. She gathered wood into her arms and stood, straining. All she wore was a ragged, gray loincloth that hung down between her knees. Around her throat was a black iron collar. Her skin was sheened with sweat and marked with black, ash stains. She turned and saw me, her blue eyes becoming wide.

"Master Gerard!" She quickly got down on her knees and looked at the ground.

The hammering stopped.

From out of the shed stepped a large, well-muscled man. He wore a blacksmith's apron and thick, leather bracers. He was bald; his black beard and mustache tied with stone beads. He smiled when he saw me.

"Who comes to entrance bringing idle words and purse too light with coin?" He had the hard, clipped accent of a native-born Hyperborean.

"I've got no coin for *your* garbage, Scar."

"Painful words from a man who carries my best blade at his side. Have great Dagon and Cthulhu cursed me with ingratitude instead?"

We embraced. Beside us at the doorway was a small pedestal of mud bricks. Perched on it was an ugly, bone-carved statue of a Dagon. The morning's blood offerings still dripped from it-I wondered if it had been human.

“You did not miss a sacrifice,” he said, seeing my gaze. “There are still two more days to the full moon.”

“Of course. Wouldn’t miss it!” I lied.

"What delight is this?" He studied the dark-haired girl over my shoulder and ran his hand down her leg. "Perhaps we should broach a casket of wine and waste this day with beautiful women kneeling before us, our cocks in their mouths?"

His kneeling slave blushed. Lovely Orla was an Ancient North Eurasian. Hers was a Paleolithic people from out of Siberia, from 24,000 BC. They had hunted mammoths. Then the gods hunted them.

"I would love to, but this one must be delivered to the bounty house. She is worth more than most."

"Who does she belong to?"

"Garaman the Trader."

"The Yog worshiper?" He shook his head. "A waste to give her back to him. Before the evening, she will be skinned and impaled, her flesh roasted and eaten off her bones."

The dark-haired slave screamed and began kicking and writhing.

"Now look what you have done!" Passersby stared. "Gag her, will you!"

Scar chuckled and pulled a dirty rag from a pocket. He put it between the girl’s teeth and tied it roughly behind her head. She continued whimpering into her gag.

"I have detained you long enough. Go, collect your money, Sell-Sword."

I gave him a thumbs up (which he did not understand) and left.

Muddy, dirt paths ran between the buildings of Dura. I passed a shadowy alley. Inside men crouched around a table and rolled dice made from human knuckle bones. One cheered and the others groaned.

Small children screeched and ran past me; a boy bouncing right off my leg and carrying on like I hadn't even been there. An old lady with her face as creased as a scrunched up ball of paper, smiled at them while she sat in her doorway on a low stool. She was busy descaling fish in a bucket. Their severed, armored, heads floated at the top.

I stopped at a wooden cart with creaking wheels passed me at an intersection. It was pulled by a reptile big as a small elephant; the ground shook with its steps. It stopped for a moment, and a long, purple tongue snaked out, tasting the air. A farmer beside it swore and gave it a whack. The cart lizard ignored him but finally started on its way again. I have no idea what species it was, or what time it had come from.

The bounty house was a two-story structure of white-painted sandstone. Its windows were barred like a prison cell's. Standing outside were two guards with round shields and swords by their sides. Their bare chests were marked with tattoos and scars. They gave me a dirty look as I approached.

"Gentlemen," I nodded. "Here to collect."

They let me in.

Inside was a large, open, hall. There were no shrines or statues: bounty houses are neutral in the war of the gods. To my left as I entered was a large, long, wooden board. Papyrus scripts had been pinned to it. They were scrawled in Low and Middle Common, but some were in the other languages of the Hyperborean. Sitting at a small table beside the board was a white-haired scribe. He dipped the quill into a small, clay bowl of black ink and carefully continued writing on a parchment stretched out before him.

I went up to the board, found the one I wanted, and pulled the yellow, papyrus-like paper off.

The old man looked up at me, whatever unpleasantness he wished upon me a mystery behind those eyes. Then he turned back to his writing.

Across from the board, a room had been partitioned by iron bars not unlike in a jail cell. Behind the bars were sealed casks of wine, bags of grain, even furniture. Two men were assessing a pile of rough-cut gemstones, checking them against a papyrus list. Kneeling in a corner was a slave girl in a gray loincloth and chest wrap. She looked down at the ground, a heavy, iron chain around her throat went to a ring set in the wall.

"We have told you not to tear those, and yet our words fall on deafest ears!"

At a table in the cage was a middle-aged woman. Her hair was in a bun, her nose had the severeness every school child learns to fear. Beside her was a wooden chest.

"Here you go," I passed her the papyrus through the metal bars. "Garaman's runaway slave."

She studied the papyrus carefully, eyes darting back and forth. Then she read it a second time. I think she just liked making me wait. That was fair; I was hardly a team player.

"Take her," she said to the two men, pointing.

The two men unlocked the heavy cage door and stepped up to me. The dark-haired slave girl began thrashing again as I handed her over. Our eyes met, and she gave me a look of pure hatred. They quickly took her inside and laid her down on the stone floor, on her belly. The stern woman handed one the papyrus, and he began reading through it. He nodded to the other who quickly cut the rope around the slave's ankles and forced her legs apart. He gripped her buttocks and pushed them apart.

"15 gold," said the stern woman counting out thick, crudely cast coins. She put them on a pair of scales and made sure they balanced. "More than a girl like that is worth."

"Wait!" The man studying the girl's buttocks held up one hand. "She is no longer a virgin."

The stern woman's eyes narrowed.

"Gerard of House Stone, could you not keep your cock from between her legs?"

"Have you *looked* at those legs? 15 gold."

"She is not a virgin anymore. Garaman the Yoggite requested his *virgin* be rescued."

"And she has been. It did not say in the contract that she be *returned* as a virgin."

"Don't you know that she is useless to him, used? That now he cannot sacrifice her? Why do you think he was willing to pay so much for her return?"

The dark-haired girl turned her head back to look at me.

I winked at her.

"Well, that's just too bad for him," I shrugged. "He's going to have to find another virgin then. The contract has been fulfilled *as written*. 15 gold please."

The stern woman handed me the coins. I pocketed them and left.

The Tavern

I made my way to the tavern.

It was a wide, two-story building back towards the town gates. Behind it was a small stable from which came the sounds of large but calm animals. The front of the tavern was hung with bright red and yellow streamers. From inside I could hear a slow beat on a skin drum. A reedy flute joined it and a light, chiming of metal. Over the doorway was a bronze cobra with a flared hood;

the snake god, Set. Dura was not religiously intolerant: no trading town was. Its fisherfolk worshiped Dagon but downriver were Settite settlements.

Inside, the tavern was a large, open space, well lit and airy. Men sat cross-legged around low tables, on furs and reed mats. The tables were arranged in a half-circle around the bar, which adjoined a backroom and kitchen. By low tables, I mean that: they were less than half as tall as my shin. You couldn't put your legs under them. They were for *standing on*.

On every table was a dancing slave girl. They were naked; tavern dancers are never clothed. They moved slowly to the music, copper anklets chiming with each step.

An oiled blonde and brunette danced back to back on an over-sized table. They had purple flowers tucked over their ears. On their thighs were the red, wriggling, snake-tattoos of their Settite faith (slaves were always converted to their owner's beliefs). Jugs of wine and plates of fruit, meat, and bread were arrayed around their feet. If either girl knocked over anything, both would be whipped.

Seated at that table were five men. They wore coarse, heavy cloaks better suited for traveling the wilds. Their weapons they kept by their sides; cudgels and swords. Four of the five cheered the dancers and raised their drinking horns. Two serving slaves in fur loincloths and chest wraps knelt beside them, chained at the throat to the table. One slave poured wine into the men's drinking horns. The other's head was bobbing over a man's lap, her lips closed around his penis.

The fifth man just sipped from his horn and refused refills. He had a long, thick beard of salt and pepper. He watched me with calculating eyes and smoked from a long pipe.

I went to an empty table by the far wall, with a view of the entrance. A blonde serving slave came up to me and knelt, head down, thighs clasped together. She put down a horn and filled it with red wine, unasked.

“Greetings Master,” she said softly.

I took hold of her by her jaw and made her look at me. Her eyes were green, she seemed in her mid-twenties. The skin on her thigh tattoo was still peeling.

“I do not recognize you.”

“I am new, Master,” her accent was ancient North Eurasian. She spoke Low Common haltingly.

“Is Zana dancing today?”

“Yes, Master.”

“Have her sent here,” I released her jaw. “She will attend to me, as well.”

She bowed and quickly disappeared.

Shortly after, a petite, slender, East Asian girl came towards my table.

“Greetings, Master!” her large, brown eyes sparkled. She had long, black, shining hair that fell straight to the small of her back. Other men turned and stared, murmuring jealously to each other.

“It lifts the heart,” her eyes sparkled, “to dance again for you!”

The East Asian stepped on to the table; I admired her shapely ankles. Her pussy was as smooth and hairless as the rest of her body. She wore the same, copper, chiming anklets as the other girls. Hanging off her hips was a belt made from bronze coins. On her arms were copper bracers and around her throat a necklace of crocodilian teeth. Brown nipples were pierced and hung with red, teardrop stones. They swung as she moved, drawing the eye.

“Shall I dance for you on my feet, Master,” she rose on her tip toes and stretched, “or would you prefer me on my knees?”

“Surprise me.”

Zana was a 'Shang'; a generic term for those of 'Chinese' descent stolen from the 70th Century AD. That was 5000 years into the 'Great Retreat': when climate change had turned the equator and tropics into scorching dustpans. The nations there went underground-or went extinct. They released semi-sentient boring machines to dig down and find subterranean water. There they seeded oxygen slimes and rock-eating worms - for food. Creating habitats for human survival, not comfort, had been their mission.

Zana had come from one of these habitats. The Shang lived in tribes about a thousand strong on average. They often raided each other; Zana had been the spoils of such a raid when she was an infant. Her whole life, she had only known slavery. To her, any other condition was unthinkable.

That suited me fine.

She got down and sat up on her knees and clasped her hands behind her head. She began to gyrate her hips to the beat, letting her large, well-developed breasts jerk forward.

"So," I began, "how was your day, Dear?"

"It was as every other," she shook her hair out of her face. "I danced in the morning. The men were pleased, but none paid the fee to have me serve on my back. One's hands did find vigorous purpose upon my legs, though."

"Did he pay for that?" I took a sip of wine.

"He did not see fit to, no. Nura, the Bharaji girl, knocked over a cup," she said with a cruel smile.

I wondered how much of her rivalry was ancient, folkloric memory. In the 23rd century, Great Bharaji was an AI-run Giga city under the entire, climate-ravaged, Subcontinent. 10 billion lived in its underslums. Great Bharaji would go on to rival Zana's ancestors, clashing back and forth under the mineral wealth of the Himalayas. It was the longest running war in human history, reduced to racial memory the same way humans hate roaches.

"Our master did lead her outside by her hair, and in great fury. He retaught her the taste of the whip upon her back, then hung her from a tree," she nodded towards the window.

Through it, I could see an old, dead tree with outstretched branches. A very tall, chocolate-skinned, Indian girl hung suspended by chained cuffs around her wrists. Nura's head hung down over her chest.

"That is a good punishment," I said. "A slave should not be so careless."

Her eyes bulged at that.

"If I were to fail you thus, would Master Uru learn of my shame, from your lips?" She got down on her knees and elbows, her breasts swaying from side to side.

"Oh, I would pay him money," I stroked her hair, "to discipline you *myself*."

Zana looked down. I enjoyed flirting with the lovely Shang, but it was good to remind her how little it meant. There is a saying in this period reserved for slave girls: 'not less than cattle, not more than cattle.'

"I also heard news. The cities of Zindar and Kurol move towards war over the matter of tax on the river trade. Deep Ones have been seen swimming in waters far beyond the Mist Wall, and boats have gone missing. And I heard rumors of what happened at Dubroca."

"What?" I was distracted by the haunch of roasted meat, so large four slaves carried it from the kitchen on a wooden cross. "Dubroca? That's off all the way in the Borderlands, right?"

"Here in Dura, we are also is near the Mist Wall," she sat back on her heels and ran her hands up from her thighs to cup her breasts.

As if to punctuate her words, there was a sound not unlike thunder in the distance towards the west. Other patrons looked up, then to each other. The sound did not repeat, and they went back to their business.

The slave dancers, to their credit, had not been disturbed.

"True," I replied. "but we are further from it. What did you hear about Dubroca?"

"That the Gods destroyed it," she waved her arms like a Balinese dancer. "A traveler seated at this very table, but three hours ago shared what words he exchanged with another. All who lived in Dubroca are dead."

"All?"

"So it was said. Every man, woman, child, and slave. The ground was rent with large burrows that descended into darkness. It is the work of the God Yith Izda!"

There are no gods, I used to tell people. Just cosmic beings that came to Earth to war behind the Mist Wall. Not surprisingly, this did nothing to shake belief in their divinity. If anything much the opposite. So now, I hold my tongue.

It was the 'gods' who transplanted humans here. They are still bringing them too; on clear nights, you can see it happening. Slow shooting stars streaming points of fire behind them. These are 'Landing Beasts'; cosmic vehicles re-entering into our universe from wherever they had been hunting. I arrived on one such creature-craft, snatched from the 21st century, Boulder Colorado.

"Yith Izda?" I asked. "Sounds like the Yith. I have not heard of that one."

"Not the Great Race," she replied, settling into a pose I had not seen before. "A worm god. He dwells in the deep places of the world and spawns his wriggling children. They hunt those that walk the surface world, striking from burrows or fed sacrifices by worshipers."

"Sounds like a real charmer. You tell good stories."

"I speak truth!" Her eyes widened, and her jaw dropped.

"Sure you do."

I grabbed hold of her waist and pulled her off the table. She cried out loud as she landed in my lap. I pulled her to me, my penis hard and pressed against her pelvis. She giggled and wrapped her legs around my back.

"I wonder who is better," I kneaded her buttocks with my fingers. "You, or Nura."

"Master lies," she looked up at me, chin pressed against my chest. "Let Nura lick your feet. I will suck your cock."

She began licking my chest and neck and rubbed her tits against me.

"You!" I heard from the entrance.

We both looked.

Standing there was a short, fat, man. His bald head showed ritual scars cut into his scalp. Around his neck was a wooden necklace hung with fragments of human bone. He wore a pair of linen pants and a tunic. By his side was an iron scimitar. Standing by him were two, bare-chested men in heavy, reinforced leather, leggings. They stood with scimitars in their hands.

All three were looking at me.

"You!" the short, fat, man pointed. "You have cheated me!"

The bar became silent; even the music and the dancing slaves stopped. The four drinking travelers at the larger table stopped and stared. The fifth traveler seemed interested in something, at last.

"Garaman, you lout!" a half-drunk man from another table stood, drinking horn in hand. "How dare you come here and-"

A guard punched him in the face, throwing him back to fall on the table. Patrons cried out in surprise, and the dancing slaves ran and hid behind the bar counter.

I pushed the Shang female off my lap and stood. She started to crawl away on her hands and knees. I caught her by her ankle, she yelped as I dragged her back.

"You're not going anywhere," I said, As the three men approached, I pulled out a rope and tied her wrists behind her back.

"Stay," I commanded Zana.

She sat back on her heels and knelt, looking down.

"You soiled my virgin," said Garaman, his eyes popping from their orbits with anger. "Do you hail from a time of simpletons, or did you deliberately seek to press insult against respected worshiper of the great god Yog?"

"What can I say, Garaman?" I shrugged. "This is what happens when you don't go through a lawyer. I'd recommend one to you, but he won't be born for three hundred million years. Fair is fair. If you have a problem with that, take it up with a bounty house. But then, you've already tried that, haven't you?"

I regarded the two guards. They had positioned themselves to flank me at a moments notice.

"You have no use for her?" I continued, "Fine. I'll help you out. She is easily worth 10 gold, I'll give you that for her. Call it outstanding customer service on my part."

"Do not seek to press instruction upon your betters!" Snapped one of the guards.

I regarded him.

"Hey shirtless, why don't you shut the fuck up?"

The word was lost on him, but he got the gist. He snarled and raised his sword to strike-

I threw my wine in his face and punched the other right in the chin. He staggered back, stunned. I drew my sword and slashed it across his belly. The crowd gasped as the man stumbled back, screaming, his intestines spilling out of him.

There was a roar behind me, and I whirled just in time to catch the other guard's sword against mine.

"You unbeliever scum!" The guard spat. "I will sacrifice you and eat your flesh tonight!"

I punched him in the balls. The crowd gasped again; a low move in any time period. The guard stumbled back as he doubled over. He brought his sword up against mine, but he had been distracted.

The first steel sword in creation (made up the street) cut right through his hand.

The guard screamed and clutched at his wrist, blood spurting. He turned and ran out, patrons complaining as he sprayed them.

I regarded the stunned Garamond. "10 gold."

"Off-of course!" His voice shook, "The girl is yours for 10!"

"No. That offer is rescinded. 10 gold is what you will pay to Uru the barkeep for bringing this shit into his business, and to buy everyone a round. Capice?"

He stopped and stared. Someone at the next table cocked their head to the side like a confused dog.

"Look, just leave the money and get out."

Garaman threw the coins down and ran out as fast as his short legs could take him.

I picked up the gold.

"Drinks for everyone!"

There were a few nervous cheers.

"I said," brandishing my sword, "*drinks for everyone!*"

There were many more this time.

I went over to the counter where a dark-haired man with his beard and hair tied in knots gave me a look that seemed to have mixed expressions behind it

"Do not misunderstand friend Gerard, but you should not have picked a quarrel with a man of such pride and wealth, but so little stature."

"Stature?" I put the gold down on the counter. "Are you sure about that?"

Serving slaves rushed out carrying fresh jugs of wine. People slowly returned to their conversations.

"Mine are the best slaves in Dura. I know as much about the stature of every cock that passes through that entrance, then the most shameless slave and faithful whore. Thank you for the gold." He passed one coin back to me.

"What's this for? My charm?"

"Sadly, there isn't coin in all this town for what do you think that that is worth. No, that's for the body," he gestured to the dying guard. He moaned as four serving slaves picked him up by his arms and legs and carried him to the kitchen.

I gave Uru a hard look.

"That is not to the Settite way!" He raised his hands. "But the flesh, dried and ground, will be good to mix into the slave meal."

Except for treats and scraps given as rewards, slave girls were mostly fed 'slave meal.' This was a paste of raw yams mixed with ground up insects or worms. If they are lucky, a bit of fish fat is added as well.

Except among the Yoggite cultists, human flesh was something most free people in this world would not eat.

I looked across the room. Zana still knelt at my table, head down.

I pushed the coin back to Uru.

"I will have her."

"She is worth far less for a night, but if you pressure gold upon me, I shall not insult your generosity," he took the coin.

My gold pouch felt heavy at my side.

"I'll give you 15 gold if you sell her to me."

"We are spoken on this before," he shook his head.

"And we will again. 15 gold for the Shang woman."

"I will not sell."

"You can't blame me for trying."

I walked back to my table.

Zana

She looked up as I approached, the 20-year-old beauty gave me a relieved smile.

"I feared for you, Master!"

"Those guys were nothing; I used to be a Facebook group admin. Now stand."

She got to her feet. I put my arm around her neck and forced her to bend at the waist 90°.

"Come." I led her in this way, her head pressed to my hip.

I took her up the stairs to the second floor. Here there was a row of rooms with heavy wooden doors. From one I heard the slapping of flesh on flesh and a girl moaning. I went to the room at the end and unlocked the door with the key I had in my pocket.

Inside was what had been my home for the past month. It was a fair-sized room, neat and clean. To one side was a wooden weapons rack. A mace, another sword, and a cruel-looking, notched, steel spear were mounted in it. Propped against it was a short bow which I was quite useless with.

On the other side was a wooden desk with parchment maps pinned to the wall above it. None were very good, and one was partly drawn in by my own hand. From what I could tell, we were near a mountain range that went as far as anyone traveling through Dura had seen. Within that mountain range, the Great Old Ones warred with the Elder Things.

Stacked in a corner was a pile 8 inches high, of animal furs. Affixed to the walls of that corner were several, iron rings.

I put Zana down on the furs. She quickly sat up on her knees and looked about. She lowered her head to the furs and sniffed them.

"I can smell Nura!"

I laughed and sat down across from her.

"She smells like scented flowers, as do you."

"I can smell her, under the perfume," the Shang protested.

I shook my head. The casual racism was endemic to the era.

"She is a great fuck," I took off my boots. "It is nice seeing a tall girl with a long neck, down on her hands and knees."

"Foot-licking is in her nature," Zana shook her hair back.

"Oh yes, "I reached down and took hold of her soft, shapely foot. I squeezed the copper anklet off. "And it is also in yours."

She gave me a dirty look.

"I tried to buy you today."

"Buy me, Master?" her back went rigid, and her eyes sparkled.

"Uru did not go for it. Not this time."

"Master has made offer on me before?" She seemed quite taken with the idea.

"Many times." I lifted away her crocodile tooth necklace.

"Has master made offer for Nura?"

"No, not for Nura. I could never afford her," I teased.

Zana gave me a dirty look and pouted.

I untied her hands and pulled off the copper bracers. Then, taking hold of one breast at a time, I removed her nipple piercings.

"Master has stripped me!" said the slave who had already been naked.

"Yes, your body is now completely bare," I took hold of her by her jaw and stroked it. She looked up at me with large, brown eyes. "Does that make you uncomfortable, slave?"

"Yes! I am as an animal before you! A cheap, fresh-collared girl!"

"Like Nura should be?"

"Yes!"

I doubted it was very often a man took the time to remove her trinkets before using her. Before now, I certainly hadn't.

"May I-if it pleases you," she said guardedly, "At least wear my necklace, Master?"

"No."

The word struck her like a slap.

"Of course, Master." She tipped her head down.

I got down on the furs with her and pushed her onto her back.

"Do not feel awkward or shy," I ran my hand up her side, stroking the side of her breast. "Your body is magnificent, it should be enjoyed this way. You should be exhibited this way. Without adornment."

She got up on her elbows.

"Like a beast? Like a girl caught and thrown into a slave pit?"

I pulled off my clothes and settle down on top of her. Her soft, young body was the loveliest mattress.

"Did you think I wanted to buy you to have you dance in a tavern? Or to be sent to a temple, covered in ash symbols and body paint?"

I held her wrists together and clamped them down in the furs above her head.

"Yes, Master?"

I laughed and licked her face. "Such an arrogant little slut! No," I bit her cheek. "You are livestock, and one does not dress livestock except in humor. You should wear nothing but a collar at your throat and cuffs to hold your wrists and your pretty little ankles."

I sat up on top of her, my knees pressed into her armpits. With one hand, I held her down by her throat. I spat on her face. She winced and turned her head to the side. I grabbed her jaw and forced her head back to face me. I spat again. The saliva trickled down her cheek and into her ear.

"Lovely little bitch! I will make you carry my loads through the jungle, straining with it on your back. When you are slow, I will whip your legs and behind." I slapped her thigh hard. "Would you like that?"

"Yes, Master!" She opened her eyes and looked at me. There was a smokiness there now. Her tongue snaked out and licked away my saliva on her cheek.

I spat on her face again. It is a good way to mark your dominance on a slave girl. There is a big difference between trained obedience and primal submission. It was for the power to extract primal submission over beautiful women like Zana that I loved this world.

"I'd take you far away from this place. Somewhere the wars of gods and men can't find us. And there you will wake me every morning, with your mouth around my cock."

"I'd like that, Master," she wriggled deliciously under me.

I reached over to my table. Lying across it was a long, leather whip. I pulled it out and let it unfurl, its end trailing on the floor. Her eyes suddenly popped open, as if she had been woken suddenly from sleep.

"This is not a play whip," I said, tugging on the leather showing her how tough it was. "Do you know what this is?"

She nodded.

"Say what it is, Slave."

"A training whip, Master," she pulled her knees up against her breasts protectively.

Play whips were short and built with many, soft, leather flails. Most whips that men used to thrash their slave girls, whether for discipline or pleasure, were play whips. Training whips are quite different. They are larger, heavier, and can be excruciatingly painful when used correctly. A training whip can easily take the skin off a slave girl's back if one is unskilled in its use.

"When was the last time you saw one of these?"

"In a slave camp, Master. When I arrived in this world."

"And did you train well?" I hefted the whip in my hand.

"Yes, Master," she nodded vigorously.

"No, not well enough."

She moaned suddenly in fear and shrank back away from me.

"Here is what will happen." I reached into a sack and pulled out a crude, iron collar. "I will put this around your throat, but you will fight me. You will fight me like the day a Hyperborean slaver landed a lasso around your waist. If I do not think you are fighting hard enough, then I will thrash you with this whip. A *real* whip. You remember what that feels like?"

Once beaten with a training whip, no slave ever wishes the experience again. That is the point of the training whip. Submissive slavery is preferable to its sting.

It is, of course, more complicated than that; it is the entire experience of a slave camp-where slaves are often killed-is what the girl does not wish ever to repeat. They associate that with the training whip.

"Yes, Master," she nodded.

I got to my feet and set the whip aside.

"Stand," I commanded. I forced open the iron collar, it's two halves clunked.

The slave girl stood, staring like a deer at a hunter.

I stepped forward.

She jerked back, frantically looking this way and that. She grabbed a metal flask and threw it at me. Next, a clay jug. It shattered against the wall as I dodged.

I rushed forward and grabbed at her throat. She screamed and brought up her hands to block me. The girl stumbled and fell back in the sleeping furs. Her small feet kicked at my chest with as I came down on top of her.

Zana's face pounded against my chest, and she kicked under me, nearly smashing my balls (I *did* instruct her to resist). I pinned her arms down, but she slipped them free and turned over, her well-formed buttocks pressing against my penis as she tried to crawl away.

"Ah!" The slave cried out as I grabbed her by her long, dark hair. I yanked her head back, and she craned her neck, gritting her teeth in pain. I put her in a wrestler's headlock and pinned her down into the furs. She moaned into them, her face pressed down. She tried to resist, but my heavier mass kept her in place.

With one hand free, I grabbed the iron collar. It was a thick piece with a simple locking mechanism. A very common, rugged design worn by most of the human females on the planet. I forced her head up and slipped the dark iron under her throat.

"I obeyed! Please don't whip me!" she moaned.

I pressed the iron to her skin and with both hands forced the two halves shut. The mechanism clicked loudly; it would take not only the key but strong hands to get it open again. Some masters let the locking mechanisms rust. This way, even if a slave escapes, she may not be able to remove her collar.

I rolled her onto her back. She sat up and backed away, bringing up her knees and clasping around her legs. Her expression was wounded, distrustful. She had seen a side of me that I had kept from her.

"I am disappointed," I lied. "Your resistance was poor."

"No!" she clenched her hands into little fists, glaring.

I grabbed her by her collar, yanked her to me, and slapped her (gently). Her ivory cheek flushed red.

"Master! I resist-"

I slapped her again.

It is a rush to wrestle a slave to the ground and collar and cuff her. However, the real value is in imposing physical dominance. Overpowering a slave quickly teaches her her place.

I produced a pair of heavy manacles from the sack. I yanked her wrists in front of her and cuffed them. Then, I produced a rope from the sack. I tied it securely at the middle of the chain that held the manacles.

Fixed to the ceiling, right above the sleeping furs, was an iron ring.

"No," she shook her head. "No, please Master!"

I took the end of the rope and threw it up through the ring. I caught it as it fell through.

"Do not whip me!"

She cried out as I yanked on the rope. Her wrists shot up over her head, and she was jerked up, till she was standing on tiptoe. I tied the end of the rope to support and picked up the whip.

"I obeyed you, Master! I obeyed!"

I spun her around so that her back was facing me.

I took the whip, reached back, and brought it slashing down across her back.

She howled in pain and was thrown forward. She swung back and tried to stand on her toes. She cried out again and thrown forward by the second strike. She began sobbing.

I in the four months that I had been in this world, I had found the training whip most effective. Slave girls under it are more fearful. However, they rarely need disciplining and are more servile.

I gave her 10 lashes over 3 minutes. I varied the timing between strokes so she could not prepare herself mentally. When I was done, her back, buttocks, and legs had telltale red marks. None, however, would bruise.

I untied the rope and pulled her free from the ring. She collapsed onto the furs, no longer crying. Her face had a sullen blankness to it. She would not meet my eye.

I removed the shackles from her wrists and tossed them aside. Next, I pulled out a long, heavy chain from the sack and affixed it to one of the rings set in place against the wall beside the sleeping furs. I took the other end and fastened it to her collar. It pulled her head down even further, the chain clinking on the floor.

I put my foot down in front of her.

"Lick it, Slave."

"Yes, Master."

She took my foot in both her hands, brushed her hair back behind her shoulders, and pressed her lips to my foot. Eyes closed, she kissed and licked them. Her tongue pressed between my toes, running up and down my foot, stopping at the ankle.

"Open your eyes, Slave. See what you are doing."

"Yes, Master," she obeyed.

I enjoyed the feel of her lips and tongue. I brought my other foot forward as well, and she shifted her attention to it. Then I spat on the floor, beside my foot.

"You know what to do."

Without a word, she licked my spit off the floor. I did it again, next to her face. She turned and licked that up as well.

"I told you that you would lick a man's feet well. Did I not?"

"Yes, Master."

I took hold of her by her hair and pulled her up to kneel. Her body moved like soft butter.

She regarded my erect penis; I could feel her breath on it. She looked up at me.

"Perform the Morning Lotus," I instructed.

"Yes, Master."

The two most popular sex slave arts were Snake and Lotus. Lotus was very giving, it was about tender, gentle, and utterly degrading lovemaking. It induced slaves to fall in love with their masters; to perform submissively, and to enjoy being quite sexually shameless! It also induced masters to be gentler to their slaves. This, in turn, positively reinforced the females' servile behavior.

Zana spread her knees wide apart and gripped my thighs. She pointed her toes and placed her feet flat against the floor. This was Morning Lotus; her body mirroring an opening flower.

Then, she opened her mouth and took in my penis. The warmth closed over it, her lips pressing around the shaft. She started rocking her head back and forth, her collar chain clanking.

Morning Lotus is a simple sex dance with room for self-expression. As such, a halfhearted performance is an obviously poor one. This makes it useful for training new slaves or submitting one newly bought.

Zana's head moved quite slowly while she looked up into my eyes. The slow movement is submissive; it prolongs the experience for the girl, making her really think about what's in her mouth (and why). Direct eye contact is key in Lotus; it produces a feeling of adoration in the girl.

After eight, long, strokes, she pulled her head back. She gripped my penis and rubbed her lips along the shaft, like a musician with a flute. She pressed my penis to her cheek, rubbing it. Her cheek was soft and warm.

She repeated the eight strokes and then rubbed the other cheek.

For the next part, she did ten, but then pulled out messily; thick strings of semen hanging from my penis to her lips. She threw her head back and closed her eyes, letting the strings drip and stick on her chin and throat.

Then, her hands went to work. One pushed my penis up and against my belly. The other cupped my balls. She bent forward and craned her head back to look at me. She took a testicle into her mouth; her tongue stroked and caressed it. Then she spat it out and took in the second one.

I resisted the urge to end her dance, prematurely.

Ten more strokes followed, but this time, she held my balls in both her hands. She stroked the loose skin. Her head pulled free; lots of semen mixed with saliva gleamed on her lips and chin.

She pursed her lips back around my cock and gently squeezed off the fluids. Then, she spat it into her open hands. She rubbed them on her neck, under her jaw, and on her breasts.

It was an excellent performance, but I could take no more.

I pushed her head back over my penis. A few quick thrusts later, I held her head in place while I came. She remained still, receiving. When I let go, she drew her head back slowly and opened her mouth for me to see. It was full of white semen.

The dance was done.

"Do not swallow," I reached for the key and unlocked her collar. I forced it open and let it drop.

"Spit," I cupped one hand to her lips.

She spat out my seed, careful to get it all in. Some dripped between my fingers and splashed on her thighs and the floor.

My other hand bunched her hair and pulled it upwards. Neck bared, she put her palms down on her knees and waited for what she knew was coming.

I wiped the semen around her throat, creating a thick, gleaming, ring. Where it dripped, I scooped it back up and reapplied it. It became sticky as it began to dry.

This was called a seed collar. A man holds his kneeling slave in place while it dries. Part of the experience is the girl just kneeling there, between her master's feet. Neither speaks. She feels the cooling of the drying seed around her throat.

After, he may re-collar her, in iron.

"There is some on your thighs," I said at last. The drops had dried there.

I let go of her hair and crouched down in front of her. I moved her hand aside and scratched the dried seed. It peeled off in a flake.

“Open your mouth.”

She obeyed. I put the flake in.

“Eat it.”

I saw her throat bob as she swallowed.

I peeled off the rest of the semen and fed it to her. Then I pushed her head down; she licked the dried seed on the floor till it was gone.

I sat cross-legged. Crouched down, she put her head in my lap and looked up at me.

“Master,” her eyes shined, “may I eat the seed collar?”

“Yes,” I fondled her buttocks. “I will watch.”

She peeled off the seed collar. She threw her head back theatrically as she ate the flakes. Guided just by the sense in her fingertips, she found and ate it all.

I pulled her into my lap and studied her neck, pressing her head back.

“If I find any, I will whip you,” I warned.

But there was nothing; she was Lotus trained. Lotus slaves give of themselves entirely to their masters. They are givers, nurturers, desperate to give love.

Yet, to the men who owned them, they were not more than cattle.

“Very good, Slave.”

“Thank you, Master!” her smile was like a sunrise.

She squealed as I pushed her, belly-down, on to the furs.

I climbed on top of her, pinning her. I pushed her knees apart and held her down by her wrists.

"Master! Oh, oh, Master!" her jaw dropped as I entered her.

I began pounding the slave.

She moaned as I worked her, her whole body rocking forward with each thrust. Her hair tossed as she raised her head. I pressed it down to the furs, she cried out, head forced to the side.

"Little slut! You should be mine!"

Her moans became louder, she started gasping for air. Finally, her whole body clenched, and she screamed, eyes shut, teeth clenched. Her whole body relaxed: she became warm butter under me.

I came inside her. When I was done, I lay down beside her in the furs. She put her head on my chest and curled up against me. I picked up the heavy chained collar and snapped it back around her throat. Then, I pulled her over me.

"Thank you, Master," she folded her hands on my chest and rested her chin on them. "Is that what it would be like—to be owned by you?"

"Yes," I cupped her buttocks and fondled them. "You should not be dancing for many men. You should be owned by one."

"I am, Master."

"That's not what I mean. Uru is Settite; you are not tall enough to be kept caged in his private harem."

As mentioned, the other popular sex art was Snake. Snake was highly seductive, sinuous style focused on enticement. If a slave is 5 foot 8 inches – about the height of a fashion model – she is usually trained in Snake. A good Snake can draw a man's attention from across a room, as she squirms in her cage. Snake acts are mostly sinuous sex dances, often a girl's back or her belly. Snakes tend to be brothel girls, temple dancers, and sacrifices.

Once, after a long night of drinking after hours, Uru let me into his harem. There he kept two, tall, naked girls in a cage. One was a blonde, Ancient North Eurasian from the Siberian steppes with a face out of a fashion magazine. The other, a Sub-Saharan African from 11th Century, Great Zimbabwe who could have been a king's concubine. Uru had branded both on the thigh with a snake design. Their labia had been pierced and fitted with bronze rings. Around their throats were bronze collars shaped like coiled snakes. They wore dark eyeliner and black lipstick.

"Do you like my pets?" he had asked me.

"Of course. They are a wonder to behold."

"Minka is ready to be bred for the glory of Set," he had reached into the cage and stroked the blonde's leg. I remember how she bent over and sucked his finger. *"Would you honor me by seeding her?"*

The blue-eyed beauty jerked her head back up and stared at him, her pouty mouth gaping open. Then she stared at me.

"This is your harem! Are you sure?"

"Of course! We are good friends, Gerard of House Stone. Breed her."

He then pulled aside a curtain at the back of the room. Behind it was a small chamber, bounded by curtains. At the back of the room and facing us, was a 9 foot tall, wooden statue of a cobra. Its hood was flared, ivory had been used for the fangs. The statue had been painted black. Polished, white, river stones were its eyes.

On either side of the Set idol were brass, incense pots. Before it was a rectangular wooden altar with four, metal, rings attached to its corners.

"Set awaits your tribute, Gerard of Stone."

I had opened the cage and dragged the outraged blonde out by her ankle. We then pulled her on to the altar and put her on her elbows and knees. As I tied her wrists and ankles to the rings, I had noticed a dark stain on the wood.

“Is that blood?” I had asked. *“Did you breed a virgin here?”*

“No. There were two more girls, but I sacrificed them.”

Perhaps it was a good thing Zana was not in his harem.

“I would like to be owned by you, Master Gerard of Stone,” she stroked my face. “Thank you for showing me what that would be like. I shall remember it, Master.”

I stroked her head and back till she fell asleep.

I would remember it, too.

Rindar the Slaver

Early in the evening, there was a knocking at the door.

I was seated at my desk, going over a new map I had come by. It showed the Black River’s tributaries; Dura sat on one of the minor ones. I looked over the Mist; there was a sketch of Cthulhu and not much else. For a place few dared to enter, we all got our water from inside it. As

such, it can't have been that bad. Why had no one mapped it? Probably just stupid fear and superstition.

Zana, I had set to cleaning the room. Usually Uru sent up a serving slave in the evening to attend to it—and of course any of my other ‘needs’-but it was good to put Zana to real chores. On her hands and knees near my feet, she scrubbed the floor with a brush. Her throat was still in the heavy collar. It was good to make her feel what most other slaves did.

I looked up at the knock. It wasn't timid as a slave's.

“Shall I answer it?” Zana stopped and regarded me.

“No,” I stood and went to open the door.

Standing on the other side of it was the older, fifth traveler, in the group that had been sitting at the large table.

“Hail and well met, Sell-Sword,” he began. There was steel in his voice. “I am Rindar, a Slaver. May I present to you proposal towards joint profit?”

“Hi, Rindar. That depends. Will it be dangerous?”

“Somewhat, yes.”

“Then come in.”

Zana quickly disappeared into a corner, kneeling, head down, hands on her knees. Slaves are invisible unless needed.

Rindar studied the maps on my wall as I pulled him up a chair.

“All of these,” he settled into the seat, “they show interest in where we may not tread.”

“May not *safely* tread,” I sat. “People have crossed the Mist Wall.”

“They have *entered* it. None know what fortunes followed venture most foolhardy.”

“Maybe they liked it so much there, they didn’t come back.”

The man's creased face smiled, and he shook his head.

“I do not petition that you join me in doomed but no doubt wondrous quest, but instead purpose less grand—but of proven worth. Have you been to Red Water?”

“I have not, sir,” I snapped my fingers at Zana, “Wine, Slave.”

The Shang female immediately got to her feet. She took a jug of wine from the shelf and poured two cups. She handed one to each us; we took them without looking at her. Then, she sat back in her corner, holding the jug at the ready.

“Red Water is but humble tributary of the great, Black River. It is to the east, six days travel by boat. There are no towns there; the soil is cursed with red clay,” he held up his cloak and showed me its dusty end. “There is little that honest farmer or whipped girl can do to bring forth bounty there. All surrounding it is wilderness; beasts of horn and claw. The mating calls of Shoggoths have been heard in the nights. The wasteland stretches further than the eyes of giants may see. But,” he smiled, “it is where the Landing Beasts arrive.”

I immediately sat up.

"The Landing Beasts? Sorry, I didn't think you were that kind of slaver."

"Pray tell, what sort did you think I was? Do I present image of man too old and feeble to hunt beneath the very noses of the gods themselves?"

"Yes, you do."

He laughed.

"In truth, I am, but I still lead our expeditions. That is why I am here, to find younger, stronger men that I may commission to work."

"I have not seen any postings at the bounty house for work at slave camps."

"Slaving is long and tedious work. It has its pleasures, but many men must come together and work long and disciplined hours for weeks. Bounty hunters and sellswords are rarely apt for such tasks. Yet, so near to the Mist Wall, slave camps are always in danger. Men such as you excel in the face of danger."

"Why me? There are plenty of sellswords up and down the river."

"You spared a man who came to visit grievous injury upon your person."

"It would've been pointless to do so." I took a sip of wine.

"See? That is judgment rare in those in your line of work. It is your judgment that I am more interested in, then simply your way with the sword-though that is not inconsiderable."

He cleared his throat before continuing.

"Our seer has foreseen that a Landing Beast will arrive a few days hence, in an area of the Red River where we have camped before. The larger part of our group has already traveled there, renewing an old campsite of ours. My comrades and I stopped in town to gather needed supplies. We will work at Red Water until the coming of the new moon. Join us and serve well, and you will take home a share of the profit in gold and in slaves. Do these terms meet with your favor, Gerard of house Stone?"

"When do we leave?"

"In the morning, at dawn." He stood up. "I will see you at the dock then."

I spent the rest of the evening preparing for my departure. I sent down the surprised (and somewhat miffed) Zana with a note for Uru and a downpayment for my rent until my return. I packed for the journey and polished my weapons.

Landing Beasts! I wondered if we would get a chance to see one up close. Most of them crashed beyond the mist wall in the battlegrounds of the guards. As they hit the atmosphere, Landing Beasts begin to disintegrate; shedding "eggs" as they are called. It is these eggs which appear like glittering lights behind them in the night sky.

Hibernating inside (most of) them, are human captives. About half the eggs burn up in the atmosphere, or overshoot and are lost in the sea. The other half survive reentry and are scattered in a wide landing zone. I had survived re-entry in one such egg, landing not far from here.

I was lucky: I'm a man. Men are very uncommon cargo, though some say men and women were evenly mixed in the deep past. As such, we are seen as good luck charms or signs of the favor of some god or the other. Had I been a woman-well. I was about to find out firsthand what happened to women who awoke into this world on this side of the Mist Wall. A slave camp!

Too excited to sleep, I went for a walk. Many people were still out, mainly traders and revelers. It was a prosperous settlement; a reasonable distance from danger yet well placed for trade. I wondered if Rindar would have us come back here when all was done.

"Already, he walks the streets like a vagrant with no gold in his pouch but the weight of lead instead it seems," I heard a man call out.

It was Scar; I was passing his metal works.

"Go home and get some sleep old man. You can't afford to fall ill; antibiotics haven't been invented yet."

"Would that I had sense to do so," he wiped his hands on his apron. "But I heard that you were leaving on an expedition, and thought I would make a little gift for you."

"That's very kind of you, Sir!" I was touched. "You didn't have to do anything like that."

"Nonsense," he waved me over.

He picked up something about as long as the distance between my elbow and my wrist. It was wrapped in a piece of soft leather. I unrolled it: inside was a thin length of iron that ended in a shape like a letter "X." However, there was a snake-like pattern superimposed on it; it was the letter in High Common for "G."

"You are a slaver now, but what is a slaver without a branding iron? Those who look upon the girls you mark with these will know that you, Gerard of House Stone, was the one who taught them to kneel."

"Scar, thank you so much. This was most kind of you." I turned the brand this way and that, looking at it in the firelight that came from his workshop's entrance. It was widespread for slave girls to be branded on the thigh with the "X" design. However, there were variances in the style of that design to denote the personal work of a particular slaver or slave camp.

"It is nothing, and after all, you may use it so badly that only the "X" shows. That is why I have designed it in this manner, to hide what clumsiness your hands may prove too simple to overcome."

"Unless it falls apart once I put it in the fire." I wrapped it back up and tucked it under my arm.

"Have you ever been to the Red River region, Scar?"

"I must confess not," the man shook his head. "Slave camps are far deeper in the Borderlands than most sane men would dare tread. The further they are, the greater the gain-and the risk. You will see ruins of old camps, destroyed not by time but servants of the Gods."

"The maps I have suggest that there is still plenty of distance between the Red River and the Mist Wall. Going there, I will be able to test how accurate they are, and add some more detail in, myself."

"There is a reason, foolish man, that the Mist Wall is avoided. Some say that it is there so that we simply cannot see what happens across it. Our very minds will break at the sight of the intentions and horror of the Gods themselves."

"There are no Gods, Scar. Just creatures we do not understand, that people need to stop worshiping and making sacrifices to. Especially human sacrifices."

"I will not be dragged into this blasphemy again," he wagged his finger at me and turned back to the workshop. "Come and share a drink, Friend. For tomorrow, like a rat hiding in the wall, you will dart out to steal crumbs that fall in from the table of greater beings."

Collecting Stars

A shooting star burned across the night sky and disappeared over the horizon. It trailed sparks behind it that flared before slowly fading out.

"There goes another one," said Duzil. "That one will land right over the battleground."

"With our luck," said Ettun, darkly, "we'll get sent to check, just in case."

We were four men on horseback, making our way in the predawn darkness. The unpolluted night sky was filled with stars; elbowing each other for room. It was no wonder that the humans of Hyperborea thought they were godly. I had never bothered to learn the positions of the stars in the sky of the 21st century, but here such knowledge was a matter of life and death. Sailors and caravaners used the stars to navigate space. High priests used the stars to foresee the future.

Behind us, the cart lizard grunted and farted loudly. It was as tall at the shoulder as a man standing, and crushed its way through the ferns on feet shaped like an elephant's. It pulled no cart. Instead, ropes thrown over its back were tied to crude, wooden cages that clattered against its sides. Each cage was a cube, 3 feet on its side.

We carried no torches: we did not want to give away our presence to either our prey-or that which might prey on us. These were not safe lands, the no-man's-land between the territory of humans-and gods. Our horses stepped with caution through the ferns, feeling about for steady footholds. We did not rush them: these hunting nights had become routine.

"There it is!" Said Duzil. "Maybe it will give us the biggest haul of the night, and Rindar will reward us!"

"Ha! Or maybe we will find that crawling creatures infest them, and have eaten their eyes!"

said Ettun. The man was cup-half-empty, incarnate.

Riding alongside me was a tall, bald, gaunt man who seemed very much a Nosferatu vampire. He just nodded to Duzil and carried on. This was Fogrim; a man of the fewest of words. He was the wisest of us-or the dimmest.

The four of us were a "slaver's claw;" the smallest 'field unit' of slavers at work, seizing captives. Our horses would allow us to run down anyone we found. We had the car lizard to bring back our trophies. Most of the females who survived transport to Hyperborea, were enslaved by teams such as ours.

We drew closer to the light, which resolve itself into a bonfire. A wide ditch had been dug around, it in a circle. As we grew closer still, we could hear moans coming from it.

"See?" Ettun spat. "I told you some filthsome horror would have got to our crop before we could."

"Only you would receive gifts from the Gods, and wonder if better, had been given to another."
Said Duzil.

We reached the ditch around the bonfire. Lying inside it were three, naked, girls. Two were ancient North Eurasians; tall, Siberian, brunettes with long hair. One muttered to herself and clawed at the side of the ditch, staring up at the fire. The other one was curled up in a circle, shivering. The third female was a petite Bharaji with hair falling past her shoulders. She lay in the dirt, suddenly looking up when she heard the approach of the horses. She stared up right at me: eyes not focusing. Her jaw dropped and she cried out in alarm. It was a weak, tired sound.

"Ha!" Ettun rode up and looked down at them, licking his lips. "These are some fine looking animals. I think that one will earn my red cord!"

I dismounted and approached the ditch. Steps had been cut into it going down going down to the bottom. On the other side of the ditch, the wall was sheer. Just over it, the bonfire burned.

I crouched down by the Siberians.

"This one is burning up," I put my hand against the curled up girl's forehead. "And the babbling one is not much better."

The babbler kept staring at the fire, speaking in one of the countless Paleolithic languages of the Siberian steppe. Most would disappear on the tundra, as tribes melded, starved, and killed each other-or were transported here. She shivered, her skin covered in sweat. I took a moment to admire her strong cheekbones, and angular features. She was stunning. All of them, were stunning.

The Bharaji girl cried out again, cowering from me behind her hands. I snapped my fingers in front of her, and snapped them again pointing up towards the fire. She squinted at my hand, following it to the bright flames. She instantly calmed, staring with her large eyes at the bonfire.

This was Transport Sickness-a state of disorientation, delirium, and life-threatening fever, that captured humans experienced on waking in the liquefying remains of their transport eggs. Some

recovered from it quickly. Others, not at all. All sufferers were drawn to bright light. Across the landing area, Rindar had teams like ours checking on bonfires. On the first day, we had found as many as 10 girls per bonfire trap. Yesterday, that number went down by about half. Today, we were only finding two or three girls.

They would not be a fourth day: any still disoriented enough to be caught by these traps, were either already caught, or dead.

"We should do something about the fever," I picked up the curled-up brunette in my arms. She did not resist. Indeed, it was not clear she even knew what was going on.

"To what point?" Said Ettun. He picked up the other Siberian and threw her roughly over his shoulder. He stroked her long, shapely legs as he carried her out of the pit, and licked her thigh.

"So that more of them *survive*," I replied.

"If they cannot survive the Transport Sickness, how then will they survive Hyperborea?"

I had no answer to that.

We put the two girls down, side-by-side on the ground. Duzil dismounted, his hand clutching a bundle of short, rope lengths. I took several from him and went back down into the ditch.

The Bharaji girl turned and looked up at me; she knew well that I was there. She looked behind and about me, as if trying to pin me down in the darkness. She was on her hands and knees, mud caked to her legs and hands, her large breasts swinging freely. I imagined how they would feel in my hands.

I got behind her. She looked left and right, wondering where I had gone. She squealed as I grabbed one arm and pulled behind her back, twisting it. She tried to jerk free, but lacked the strength. I grabbed her other arm and pulled it back, holding her small wrists together in one hand. I bound them together, pushed her into the mud, and sat on her back. Then I seized her by her ankles and pulled her legs back, till her heels were pressed against her buttocks. She

squirmed and moaned; I found it a pleasant sound. I crossed and bound her ankles, threw her over my shoulder, and climbed out of the ditch.

Duzil had opened three of the cages hanging off the sides of the cart lizard. I squeezed the Bharaji into one. She whimpered and tried to push against the sides of the small cage. Her breasts jiggled as she struggled.

“Shush,” I reached into the cage and stroked her cheek. “Be still.”

She stopped struggling and looked in my direction, peering.

I cupped her left breast. She gasped but did not recoil. I gave it a gentle squeeze and enjoyed its warmth and fullness. She would fetch a good price.

I closed the cage door and tied it shut. Duzil caged the feverish Siberian, who offered no resistance. Ettun however took the other one, climbed back onto his horse, and threw her across his saddle. He grabbed her by her long hair, yanking her head up. She gasped, and her licked her face. The girl winced but did not seem to understand what was happening. Ettun took a red cord out of his pack and tied it around her thigh. It had a small clay tablet affixed to it. On it was his initial.

"This one is mine!"

For each share Rindar had granted us, we were entitled to claim a slave girl (like most of the men I had one shares). These we could keep in our personal tents. The way a slaver would know that another had marked out a girl for his own (and to leave her alone) would be a red cord tied somewhere around her body.

I reached into a pouch and looked at the two, red cords, inside. It was strange to think that, after four months of lying with tavern girls and captured runaway slaves, I would own a girl of my own.

I had not thought it through. Where would I put her? What would I do with her (when not recreating)? What if-or I suppose when-she became pregnant? These didn't seem the greatest of problems to me, but I still hadn't the answers.

The others had all picked their women, I had yet to pick-I could not bring myself to choose. How does one pick a girl that one *keeps*? Perhaps I would find one back at the camp.

"Let us be off," said Duzil as he climbed back on his horse. "There are yet for more bonfires to check before we may return."

Day broke. It brought the sight of a long, rolling, plain of red-brown dirt. Green, thorny plants and black cycads split out of the ground and sheltered against basalt boulders. We traveled alongside the river; it was more brown like a tropical waterway, rather than red. It roared, whitecaps forming and smashing against rocks that jutted up from beneath.

"Look upon the anger of the God Dagon," said Duzil, looking down from a small cliff at the fast-flowing rapids. "Any fool enough to attempt crossing, will most certainly be taken by him. Let us hope that none of our prey make foolish attempt to cross, in their weakened and maddened state."

"And yet they have," said Ettun the Pessimist. "Yesterday, downriver, Loro's team did discover eight females, drowned and washed up along the shore. Dagon takes his share to his satisfaction. Only thus will he allow us to return with those that we would claim for ourselves."

Right up along the edges of the river were giant ferns and tall, cycad trees. They grew better closer to the water; buffered against the red, clay, wastes. Along the riverbank, lizard-like creatures with sails along their backs were hunted by giant dragonflies and three-foot long, centipedes. Those that strayed too close to the water were snapped up in a spray of angry thrashing; claimed by shark-like, armored fish.

None of these creatures harassed us though. There were too many of us and the cart lizard shook the ground with each step. Nothing that had evolved on land by the Devonian had any right to do that.

"What are you doing?" Said Ettun, giving Duzil a dirty look.

We were ascending a rocky shelf that rose up along the side of the river. Towards the rise was a particularly thick growth of giant ferns and trees. Duzil's horse went straight into it, lowering its head and chomping on tender leaves.

"We do not have time to humor your horse." Said Ettun.

"He likes these," said Duzil. "It costs us not to appease this beast!"

"By the Gods!" Ettun spat, "I will not delay here while others return with-"

"Silence," quiet Fogrim spoke. The Nosferatu held up his hand and stared into the undergrowth. He grabbed a javelin from a pack at his side and flung it into the ferns.

They erupted and girls ran from them, screaming.

"Form a line!" Yelled Duzil, drawing his whip and cracking it. Ettun and Fogrim quickly went to his right. I went left.

"Gerard, stay where you are!" said Duzil, urging his horse forward. "You be the anchor!" He too raised and cracked his whip. It smacked into the dirt kicking up sand and pebbles.

The three of them fanned out, till we formed a loose line that cut off the screaming girls.

Two burst from between the ferns and halted, just a few feet away from me. They clutched each other, eyes wide in terror. They had long, dark, hair and their tanned features were Semitic: Neolithic Anatolians. They wore crude chestwraps and loincloths made from leaves.

I drew my whip and lashed at them. They screamed as it struck across their legs. They turned and ran, back into the ferns. I watched as the other girls ran up the cliff.

"Advance and cut them off!" Ordered Duzil. "He urged his horse forward. We closed in, shortening our line – trapping our prey up the cliff.

I looked past Duzil and over the edge: rapids were raging along the sides of the cliff, about two stories down. The sound of cracking whips competed with the roar.

"This is not a hunt, this is sport!" Said Ettun, his face one giant grin.

We reached the end of the cliff. Ahead of us, right up against the drop, were 12 girls. They were Anatolians and Siberians. The former were dark-haired and the latter were brunettes and blondes. They wore chestwraps, skirts, and loincloths of plant fiber.

"They must have recovered quickly from the Transport Sickness," said Duzil.

"Look at that one!" Said Fogrim. His eyes were wide and his jaw had dropped.

At the very back of the group of cowering and squealing females, was a tall, slender, Amazon. She had long golden hair that fell to the small of her back. Her eyes were a light blue, set in an oval face. She looked like a Victoria's Secret runway model, but her build was more athletic, graceful. The breasts were large and perky; they swung violently from side to side in their leaf-bra, as she looked about for a way to escape. She stared at us, mouth open eyes wide, a hunted animal.

"Lassos and ropes," commanded Duzil.

My job was ropes; I got off my horse and pulled some lengths of fixed twine from a saddlebag. Ettun did the same.

Duzil and Fogrim put away their whips and pulled out long, pre-made, lassos. They began to twirl them in the air as if they were cowboys.

Fogrim threw, first. His lasso came down over a petite Anatolian. She squealed as he yanked; the noose tightening and pinning her elbows against her body. Fogrim yanked and the girl stumbled forward. The other females cried out and tried to hold onto her. Fogrim gave another yank and she was pulled clear

She grunted and struggled, her small feet skidding in the mud as he patiently drew her in. Once she was closer, I rushed up behind her. She screamed as I locked my arm around her waist, put my leg out, and tripped her. She went down in the dirt, legs kicking as she wriggled. I sat down over her back and quickly tied her wrists together. Then I grabbed her kicking feet, crossed her ankles, tying them together as well.

I slipped the lasso off her shoulders and Fogrim drew it back. Then he went back to twirling it in the air.

"Why don't you try it?" Asked Duzil. He adjusted his lasso and handed it to me. On the ground before him, Ettun was hog-tying a tall brunette.

"I have never used this except in practice," I took the lasso. It felt light in my hands.

"They are not leaving here, except in our cages, or down in the water in Dagon's embrace," said Duzil. "Go on!"

Just as I had practiced, I began twirling the lasso. Girls stared at me, exchanging panicked words in the clipped, hard sounds of the steppes and the softer, longer vowels of Western Asia.

"Throw it!" Said Ettun.

I let the lasso fly.

It came down over a petite, red-head's, throat. I yanked on the rope and it tightened. She choked and clawed at it, stumbling forward. She tried to resist but that only made the knot tighter; I dragged her slowly towards me. She collapsed at my feet, looking up at me, one hand reaching up to me and the other clutching the rope.

I let her gasp like that for a few moments before loosening the lasso, and pulling it off. She doubled over and choked, while Ettun bound her hands tightly behind her back.

"Your first catch!" Duzil smiled. "You are a slaver now! Everyone, lassos! Bind your own captives."

Soon, the air was filled with flying rope. After we had dragged out four of them, it became a little harder: the girls had more room to dodge.

"That beauty will be mine," said Ettun, leering at the blonde Amazon we all had our eyes on.

"You have already used your red cord," said Duzil. "She will be mine!"

"All three of you have claimed girls," I said.

I looked right at the blonde. She seemed more wary of me and of the others; and with good reason.

I was *only* trying to catch her.

We got them down to just six remaining. Some looked over the cliff edge, judging distance, but always they came away from it.

"Do not worry," said Duzil, catching my eye. "They will not jump. They are submissive slave stock, that is why the gods chose them. They will take capture and slavery by our hand, rather than freedom and death, by their own."

"And should any choose otherwise," said Ettun, "then it is the will of the gods. Dagon will take his sacrifices."

The blue-eyed blonde stood at the very edge of the cliff, looking straight down. A calm seemed to come over her. Her figure straightened.

She jumped.

“No!”

"By Set!"

I do not know what came over me in that moment, but sometimes in life, one knows exactly what to do without having to think about it. This was one of those times. I dropped my lasso, ran to the cliff, shoving girls out of my way, and jumped.

It was only two stories; but I didn't know how deep the water was. The River came up to meet me; a boiling wash off murky brown. I struck like a hammer and went straight down, bubbles boiling around me. The water was ice cold and dark. I felt a strong current close around me and pull me down.

I did not resist. In the dark, and disoriented, it was the hardest thing to do. The water pulled me deeper, till all around me was blackness. Just as I was about to panic, the current changed and forced me to the surface.

My head burst through the water, I gasped for air. In those few seconds I had moved 30 feet downriver. The cliff was behind me, stunned females and slavers alike staring at me from its edge. I saw Duzil down by the shore, running along the edge.

I heard a woman cry out.

Ahead of me was the blonde, struggling and kicking against the water. She was healthy and strong, and knew how to swim. However, she had tried to swim *against* the current. That had tired her out-and would soon drown her.

The current pulled me back down again. I held my breath and looked about as best I could. There were dark shapes in the water; some as large and self-assured in their movements, like sharks. Suddenly I made out the pale, long, legs of the Siberian, thrashing about. Her kicks became weaker and the current kept dragging her under.

I kicked upwards, and swam up till I broke the surface. The Siberian was just a few feet from me now, floundering and crying out. She regarded me with a different expression; desperation. I swam towards her and clamped my arm around her long, graceful throat. The other one banded around her waist. Her soft body was pressed against mine, her wet, hair against my face.

I felt the current pulling down again, and quickly took a deep breath. The Siberian cried out and flailed, but I held her tight against me. This time the water pushed us towards the riverbank, the long reeds of water plants anchored to the riverbed, brushed against my feet. It was now or never.

I pushed up to the surface, holding the blonde the way a lifeguard would. I saw the shore just 20 feet away. I swam at an angle to the current. First it took us further away, but slowly, surely, we towards the shore. The Siberian girl clutched at my arm but did not resist.

At last, I felt the sand and shells of the bank beneath me. I stood, and dragged the her onto the beach.

The blonde lay on her back in the sand, gasping and spluttering. She spat out water and looked up at me, her eyes seemed filled with relief and thanks.

I grabbed her by her throat.

She cried out and clutched at my arm, trying to break free, but I sat down over her belly. I pushed down on her throat, pinning her to the sand. She started choking, eyes bulging.

My other hand grabbed the leaf fiber chest wrap she wore, and yanked. It tore away in my hands, and her large, well-developed breasts swung free. She had Brown aureoles and nipples: I had felt the softness with my fingers.

Next, I reached down and grabbed at the grass fiber skirt she wore, and ripped that off as well. Her pussy was hairless and smooth: all those arriving by the landing beasts, are shaved from the shoulders down.

I rolled her onto her front. She put her palms down on the sand and tried to get up. I shoved my hand between her shoulder blades, and forced her down. I grabbed one hand and yanked it behind her back, then the other. I bound them and let go, she tugged at her wrists, trying to pull them free. Then, I grabbed her long, slender legs and bound her ankles together.

I rolled her on to her back and regarded the female I had captured.

She stared with light blue eyes, her large chest heaving as she breathed. Her lips were parted, she seemed both anxious and afraid.

I took my red cord out, and tied it tight around her throat. The clay tablet with my initial hung under her chin.

Duzil came running up, panting.

"I do not know whether to sing praises to your courage, or curse you for your stupidity." He said.

I stood, picked up my girl, and threw her over my shoulder.

"Likely both," I patted her buttocks; they were large and well shaped. "I own her!"

"So you do. None may claim that you haven't the beast."

We made our way back to the others. The other females had been subdued; they lay bound in a row, stripped naked, the cart lizard standing alongside them. Ettun was opening cages while Fogrim shoved them inside them, one by one. Both men regarded me as we approached.

They were not smiling.

"What you did was wrong," said Fogrim. "You have cheated the god, Dagon. This will bring misfortune upon us."

"Dagon does not exist!" I replied. "And if he did, he is not a god. And either way, go fuck yourself, buddy."

The expression was lost on them but the intent was not.

"Let us not bicker," said Duzil. "We have had a good night; likely the best of any of the slaving claws. Let us return now to camp to claim what rest and reward we may, and set these females towards their ordained future."

Fogrim and Ettun remained glaring at me.

"There will be a reckoning for this," said Fogrim. "You know this, Duzil."

"I do not presume to know the minds of gods," Duzil replied. "But I do I will not suffer weak discipline in my hunting claw. Attend to purpose, and let not one more word of this matter pass foolish lips!"

Grudgingly, they turned away.

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