### Princess Slave

By

# Carolyn Faulkner

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### Chapter One

Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!

It felt as if he was hitting her with the edge of the broad side of his sword, his swats landing crisply yet powerfully enough to make her strain at her bonds – as if she wasn't already – finishing sharply, and she suspected that he was leaving a thin trail of blood across her behind with each stroke.

It was all she could do not to scream, but she refused to give him – or their audience – the satisfaction.

"Will you submit?" he asked, after the second round of fifteen – whereas the first bout had only been ten. His deep calm tone belied the strictness with which he was punishing her.

Avaegna craned her head around so that their eyes collided before she cried in a voice more befitting a warrior, "Never!"

Without a second's hesitation, he began again and again, the time between each round when he would stop long enough to give her the opportunity to surrender to him lengthening, yet he showed no more evidence of tiring than she did of capitulating.

Finally, her body removed the choice from her and conceded on its own, causing her to faint dead away for the first time in her life. Lilta, her nurse, who had skirted the fringes of the auspicious gathering since it had begun and had seen the abominable condition of her charge's backside, rushed forward to tend to her, wiping a cool, wet cloth over flushed forehead and cheeks, not quite sure whether she wasn't doing a disservice to her lady in bringing her round again. The only sure thing the old woman knew was that Prince Stohsz would not abandon this pursuit until the woman who was destined to become his – in one way or another – finally acknowledged his dominance over her, here, now, in front of their fathers' combined courts.

No less than his honor – and thus his life as a Kohnzi male – was at stake. The thought of yielding – especially to a woman and a Tonyeh woman at that – would never enter his mind.

She knew, though, that her mistress possessed a streak of pigheaded stubbornness that was more than his match.

Lilta knew the moment Avaegna regained consciousness, although there was no outward sign, and leaned forward, hiding her face beneath the long cascade of soft, pale blue hair. "You must bend, Avette!" she whispered fiercely, using her family's nickname for her with a familiarity that her position as the girl's nanny – since her mother had died birthing her – afforded her. "You are not a child any longer; you're a woman of eighteen, and you need to recognize when you've been defeated."

"I will not." Although she had not once given in to the unbearable urge to scream with each savage connection of the Kohnzi's punishment blade against her tender, virginal skin, she still sounded painfully hoarse, as if all those stifled cries had clawed their way down her throat as she ruthlessly forced them back.

"Then you will die here, now, a failure, and take everyone and everything you hold dear with you. You condemn us to a war with the Kohnzi that you *know* we will lose, and the death of the Tonyeh will be on your pretty head *alone*. If you at least appear to yield now, you will live to wreak your vengeance another day."

"I. Will. Not. Cede."

"You – old woman. Step away from the former princess," Stohsz growled, hefting the paddle like blade that was as much an extension of his arm as his broadsword was, as their audience murmured at his audacious description of her.

Lilta reappeared, taking a few steps away, bowing and scraping before the powerful young giant of a man as she wished her mistress could. "Yes, milord, but..."

"But?" He stopped in the act of raising his implement to lay yet another strip of agony across the young woman's naked haunches.

"I brought her around, milord, and she – she acquiesces." It was the biggest lie she'd ever told in her life, and she only hoped it didn't get them all killed as surely as the princess's stubbornness would.

No smile or even small sign of triumph crossed his face as he thought for a long moment. "I would hear it from her own lips."

Certain that she had sealed her own fate, Lilta watched as the prince came to crouch by Avaegna's shoulder, reaching out a massive paw to grab a handful of loose, luxuriously soft hair and use it to lift the brat's head.

"Your scairn says you have come to your senses and that you will submit yourself to me. If she's right, then say so yourself."

"She..." The entire court leaned forward to hear what the princess had to say for herself.
"Is not *scairn*. She is a free."

Keeping a hold – by the barest ends of his fingernails – of his blood red anger at having been corrected in front of every highborn lord in both kingdoms, and by a woman, no less, Stohsz was barely able to grind out again, "Do you submit, woman?" But by the end of his question, he was close to roaring in her face.

Her eyes darted, for the merest second, to Lilta's beloved face, remembering how she had phrased her plea to her mistress. She could appear to surrender, for now, and bide her time, planning and plotting retribution rather than making this her last stand and therefore relegating everyone and everything she loved to their inevitable deaths under the cruel Kohnzi yoke. Taking a deep breath, she whispered, "I submit." Her body relaxed for the first time in what seemed like years.

But he wouldn't let her get away with that, wouldn't allow her to sink into humiliation quite yet. He wanted his pound of flesh, and he intended to extract it from her while he had a multitude of witnesses. "To me?"

"To you," she parroted, closing her eyes against the waves of shame that flooded over her.

"As my slave?" He turned away from her as he asked it, his eyes sweeping the crowd, who had all gasped in shock at his question.

As the eldest of his father's sons, he would inherit the Kohnzi throne, and if he chose to marry Avaegna, who was the last remaining member of her father's line, he would become the heir apparent to the Tonyeh kingdom, also. Because the chosen one, her elder sister, had died, her father had to sweeten the pot a lot in order to get the stubborn Kohnzi to agree to take what they considered to be the lesser sister.

But it was his choice as to whether he intended to consider the princess to be his bride or his slave. That had been the choice put to Kohnzi princes for quite some time, and none of them – in consideration of the princess's social position – had ever demanded that she become his scairn rather than his wife.

But Stohsz had never much concerned himself with tradition. He did what he wanted and had the power and skill – with or without his well-trained army – to defeat anyone who might contradict him.

That was what kept anyone in the Great Hall from so much as whispering one word of consternation or rebuke at his outrageous demand, not even either of their fathers. He could see that her father, Wittag's, eyes were closed and his head slightly bowed, but that was the sum of it.

He turned back to Avaegna for her answer, using his hold on her hair to shake her eyes open, and when she looked up at him, she saw no sign of weakness or mercy in his eyes. Absolutely none, as she replied, "As your slave."

\* \* \*

That generated more of a response from those around them than he had. Stohsz quickly realized that none of the Tonyehs in attendance had expected her to submit to him, despite the fact that they had long been known for raising women who were well-skilled in the domestic arts and who enjoyed a worldwide reputation for their loving, kind, and distinctly mild, undemanding temperaments.

It was true that every Kohnzi man wore the paddle blade around his waist, attached to the same belt that held his sword, but it had largely become a thing of decoration rather than utilization. It had been one of the reasons he had delayed their match until he was in his early twenties, when she should have been his since his eighteenth birthday. But he didn't want a woman like that, with no fire and no passion, who would express no opinions of her own nor challenge him in any way.

But this one – as thoroughly annoying as she was proving to be – she was much more to his tastes, and his mind was already busy savoring the idea of taming her to his hand, slowly.

Stohsz knew that he had to make his point with the princess now, though, to impress upon her as quickly and thoroughly as he could that he was not going to tolerate anything but the strictest of obedience from her. So he lifted her off the ornate, elaborate – if somewhat dusty – horse over which she had been draped and secured, to place the completely symbolic – but nonetheless fully functional – golden manacles around her wrists, binding them securely together and using the short chain between them to tug her, naked, towards the dais on which both of their fathers sat. He left her at the bottom of the stairs to climb them himself and stand between the two men, with a hand on either of their thrones.

"Avaegna," he commanded, not deigning to use a title that, as far as he was concerned she no longer possessed, "Repeat what you just said in its entirety as you prostrate yourself before your kings and your owner."

More gasps and even a loud snort of outrage from the back of the room, but, as no one made any moves to challenge him, and Avaegna was already on her knees, Stohsz refrained from retaliation, for now.

There was a bit of a commotion when, just as she was about to lie face down before them on the cold marble floor, an apparent admirer burst from the crowd and made the gallant gesture of sweeping his red and gold cape off to lay it before her.

Seconds later, with the point of Stohsz's sword to his jugular, he withdrew it and scurried away to the back of the gallery.

Stohsz remained right where he was, standing in front of her, forcing her to make her obeisance much more demonstrably to him than to either of the old men behind him.

With her manacled wrists resting at the tip of his worn, muddy boots, Avaegna opened her mouth to speak – and would have done so very quietly, to the floor if her tormenter had allowed it. But he wasn't about to let her get away that easily.

"Raise your head and look me in the eye while you commit yourself to being my slave for the rest of your life, Avette," he ordered.

As he had intended, his casual use of her family's nickname for her – which she once would never have tolerated – raised every hackle she owned, and Avaegna barely managed to swallow down her anger before he continued.

"And remember to proclaim your status proudly, so that even the villagers in the town below can hear you."

\* \* \*

Drawing a deep breath – filled with the smell of dirt and muck that wafted from his well-worn boots – she did exactly as she was told, meeting those cold black eyes defiantly. Yet her clear, strong voice betrayed not one iota of inner conflict at a confession that would condemn her to a way of life that was as antithetical to her as it was for a fish to fly.

She didn't know how she was going to live through it. She thought they both might just die in the trying.

And then she adjusted her thinking to the idea that she might well be the only one who died from this encounter when, after executing curt bows to both their fathers, he reached down and in one practiced movement, grabbed a hold of her wrist and used it as leverage when he put his shoulder into her stomach – causing her to "oof" embarrassingly – as he settled her like a sack of wheat. She was facing towards the crowd of tittering, open-mouthed gawkers and away from everyone she loved. As he stalked towards the door, the crowd parted for him as if they were worried that if they hadn't, then they might be in line for the same treatment. There was no chance for her to get a last look or whisper good bye or even just make eye contact with her father, her brothers or even Lilta, who she knew had saved her life for a second time today. Avette knew that there was a very good chance this was the last time she would see any of them, and she had missed it, all because of him.

Tears welled in her eyes, but she refused to shed them, ruthlessly fighting them back and knowing she had to bide her time, as Lilta had suggested. She had to do something, or all of the inevitable debasement she was facing at his hands would be for naught.

Before she had a chance to say or do anything in the way of a possible escape, though, Avette found herself flopped hard over the front of his saddle, her bound wrists – as well as her previously unbound ankles – secured tightly to it prior to him mounting. Seating himself altogether too close to her for comfort and laying a possessive hand over her tender backside, he dug his heels into his enormous mount's flanks and sent them thundering away from everyone and everything she'd ever knew.

She wasn't sure she knew how far they'd travelled, despite the fact that she knew her very survival could depend on remaining as alert and aware of her surroundings as she could, but they very quickly exhausted her ability to recognize the ground that passed beneath her eyes and his horse's hooves. The all-consuming throbbing in her backside — which was a completely new experience for her since no one would have dared to raise a hand to her in that manner before this day without the certain knowledge that they were going to withdraw a bloody stump — was only increased by the way he groped her cruelly. Yet at the same time, it was almost absent-mindedly, as if he wasn't giving her much thought, and her own misery quickly grew to dominate her dark thoughts.

To say nothing of the fact that the stark reality of what she had done, what she had agreed to of her own free will, was setting in, distracting her usually astute mind.

He certainly seemed determined to make her as miserable as possible. She was used to riding astride – she'd had her own horse since practically before she could walk – not thrown over the beast's back like a discarded carpet. Her embarrassingly ample, naked breasts were pressed painfully against the horse's side, but she had been restrained so tightly that she couldn't ease the discomfort, to say nothing of the way the rest of her was bumped and bruised and battered by the ignominious position he'd put her in.

His molestations continued throughout the long trip. They only stopped once, in a thickly wooded area she was not familiar with, closer, as it was, to his kingdom than hers. As they dismounted, he kept a firm hold on her wrists, and as soon as her feet touched the forest floor, he inquired roughly, "Do you need to void?"

Avette nodded somewhat absently and was rebuked as a broad, stiff leather gauntleted hand seared its way across her backside for her impudence, after which he easily lifted her hands well above her head, forcing her onto tip toes to fight for balance. "I don't know or care how it's done by the Tonyeh, but the correct Kohnzi response from a slave to master is 'Yes, thank you, sir', and that's all that should matter to you from now on."

As she danced awkwardly before him, Stohsz reached out to cup an enticingly bobbing breast with a surprisingly gentle hand that nonetheless stirred more resistance in her than she had shown since she had finally seen reason and sworn her submission. He'd known it wouldn't be an easy road for her, and that was what he was going to relish about teaching her to submit.

Avette twisted like a rag hanging in the wind, all to no avail. She didn't succeed in dislodging his hand even slightly where it hefted and manhandled her breasts, and when she caught a look at his face – which she had been avoiding – she realized that her attempts at resisting him only served to amuse him, so she stopped immediately, willing herself to suffer the indignity of his groping without comment or reaction.

It took every bit of her concentration in order to accomplish it, but she managed it. At first.

\* \* \*

For his part, Stohsz had hoped, quite fervently, that she hadn't really meant that she was going to become like all of the other Tonyeh women, and was glad to see that she hadn't lost her fire as he drew back his hand and began to spank her breasts. Reaching down to grab most of that glorious hair in the same hand that held her wrists so as to keep it well out of his way, he applied

angry, red palm prints equally to each bouncing globe, striking the vulnerable – and peaked, he noted – nipples more often than not. This caused her, finally, to lose control and scream at him in pain and frustration, baring her teeth and growling at him in a feral manner he'd never seen from any other woman.

Stohsz only threw back his head and laughed, using the leverage of his hold on her to force her up against him. Even on tiptoes, she barely came to the top of his chest, so he wrapped a thick arm around her waist and lifted her so that he could ruthlessly claim her mouth with his, as if daring her to use those very same teeth he had seen on him.

\* \* \*

But, especially at first, Avette was too surprised to have much of a reaction at all, even anger seemed beyond her.

This was hardly how she'd envisioned her first kiss, having been forced rather than gently coerced into it, his mouth taking hers aggressively rather than the sweet, soft pecks she'd imagined would entice her into thoroughly enjoying it.

Instead, the entire bare length of her was being flattened uncomfortably up against him, his broad, muscular chest easily revealed by the largely open leather jerkin flattening her breasts, those impudent nipples dragged roughly over the wiry hair they found there as he slanted his mouth across hers, forcing her to yield to him in this as surely as she had earlier in the day.

Avette hadn't counted on the insidious heat that rose within her as his tongue wheedled its way past her lips to boldly explore her mouth, making it flash through her mind that she wished she could truly surrender to him, and then, to add insult to injury, finding it nearly impossible not to kiss him back.

At the realization of just how dangerous this man was to her, she did the only thing she felt she could do.

She bit him. And it was no delicate nibble, either. She sank her teeth into his tongue and held on with everything she had until he reached a hand up between them and grabbed a nipple with his thumb and the side of his first finger. Twisting, pinching and pulling cruelly, all at the same time, tugging her delicate flesh away from her body as if he intended to rip it off her right then and there.

She hadn't had much experience with pain in her life, certainly never in that area of her body. It was so unexpected, so barbaric, and so excruciatingly painful that her mouth went slack, and she let go of him solely in order to bellow her displeasure at him.

Cupping his hand to his face and seeing his own blood on his palm had Stohsz incensed as he turned to her. One look at his thunderous face, and Avette knew beyond a shadow of doubt, that her time on this planet had just become severely limited.

She took a step away from him, but his ever-present hold on her golden bracelets brought her up short. She expected him to reach for his sword and chop off her head. At the very least, she expected him to beat her to her knees.

She knew she had but another few seconds of life, if that. Few people who had attacked a Kohnzi in any way lived to tell the tale.

But before she could work out what might be the best thing to do, he surprised her, by throwing her back onto his horse, after not having given her a chance to relieve herself at all. Securing her wrists and ankles again, with one big difference that she noticed immediately when he swung up behind her. When his hand inevitably reached out to claim her rear end, it was his right hand. The one with which he held a sword. The one with which he had so expertly wielded the implement of her surrender before all and sundry.

He had positioned her just perfectly such that he could punish her as they were riding.

And punish her he did. As every coppery swallow reminded him of her treachery, his leather-clad palm fell in a relentless rhythm that continued for the entire rest of that day's trip. When he dismounted at a tiny cabin, deep within an old growth forest, and literally dragged her roughly down from the saddle, she collapsed at his feet, unable to support her own weight, and screaming in agony when her naked bottom collided with the stones and twigs of the forest floor.

Stohsz had no sympathy for her whatsoever. She'd made her bed.

And soon enough she was going to be lying in his.

He herded her into the one room cabin that was little more than a shack. Its small bed – although surprisingly long enough for someone his size, but without much room for anyone else – and large fireplace took up most of the inside. There was a tiny rough-hewn chair and table in the corner, and that was it.

It looked to her like a place her father's gamekeeper might have used as shelter if he had ended up staying out later than he'd intended while tracking a particularly elusive boar or deer.

Surely he didn't intend for them to stay here...

Avette moved as little as possible in consideration of the condition of her buttocks and the backs of her thighs, which he had decorated at least as liberally as what had once been the milk-white hillocks of her behind, but it seemed that everywhere she tried to be, she was in the behemoth's way. There just wasn't room for the two of them to be in the cabin at the same time.

Finally, he pointed to the rough rope bed with its burlap covering and wool blanket. "Sit," he commanded.

"I have to void," she spilled out, willing to say pretty much anything to avoid the agony of having to put her tender flesh against what passed for a bed. Not that it was a lie; she did have to go.

He disappeared for a few seconds outside, returning with a pot, which he put in the only unoccupied corner of the room. But when she stepped towards it, he grabbed her arm roughly and swatted her so hard with his free hands that he drove her onto her tiptoes. "You forget yourself, scairn. You must ask permission."

As a full-throated cry at yet another layer of agony added to flesh already seared beyond measure died slowly in her throat, Avette managed to use the exact verbiage he expected, but her growl made it considerably less than subservient and even less of a plea. "Please, sir, may I void."

In a flash, the pot disappeared beneath the bed. "Until you can learn to ask in a more respectful fashion, no, you may not."

It had been a long day, and she needed to use whatever facility he was going to provide, however crude. But no matter how hard she tried, she couldn't quite manage the obsequious tone he was demanding, and after several abysmal attempts, he told her that, if she asked again incorrectly, he would thrash her before she would be allowed to ask.

Then he lifted her off her feet and dropped her onto the bed in one smooth – abominably painful – motion.