



JULIA PAYTON

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE UP FOR LOVE?

PARDON

COLONEL'S CONQUEST BOOK THREE

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This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's
advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Prologue

In a land ruined by military strife, and with a virus which has plagued the nations and affected the fertility of all remaining people, the Colonel (Maxim) rules the eastern half of what used to be the United States, now known as the Ruins. He rules with complete control, having with him a small panel of soldiers who group by his side: Tiberius, his second in command, a giant of a man with no need for love or companionship; Zahir, a soldier from another land who fights with honor and a cool exterior; Kal, a man with a smile on his face but torment in his heart.

With a genetic immunity against the virus, some honored women remain fertile. They are known as Pure. One of these women, Iolanthe, has been watched over and protected unknowingly since childhood by the Colonel who's been waiting until she was of age and ready to be his. When she reaches maturity, Maxim brings her to his home to be his. She resists him, even while she wants him.

In Maxim's home lives a man who professes to be the Colonel's servant, Jonathan. Jonathan instigates trouble, inviting seduction, and eventually has Iolanthe put from the house.

Maxim assigns Kal and Zahir as Iolanthe's guards and they go with her back to the warehouse and streets where she grew up. Their job is to keep her safe until Maxim decides he's ready to forgive and take her back.

Meanwhile there is a rebellion beginning, led by Ryva, the Elysium queen, who rules the western side of the decrepit nations. She has taken the ruined states and unified them, strengthening and readying the Resistance for warfare against the Colonel. It's clear what she wants: she wants to have his nation. And she wants him in her bed.

As Iolanthe wallows in the streets with her guards, she begins to form a friendship with the taciturn Zahir. Kal, who is unable to control his hormones that cause an elevated sex drive, attacks her and is driven away. Iolanthe goes with Zahir to his home, where Maxim finds her.

Punishing the both of them, Zahir is given to Ryva as her slave as part of a bargain struck between the Colonel and Iolanthe. Iolanthe is once again taken into Maxim's home, but this time she has no options. She must be his, with no recourse. She agrees to be totally compliant in order to save Zahir's life.

During a standard military trial in the Ruins, the Citadel is attacked. Maxim and Iolanthe flee to one of his safe houses deep in the mountains of the Appalachians. He seduces her, and she finally acquiesces. He then cruelly leaves her behind, choosing to battle with Ryva over loving her.

In Elysium, Zahir has been given to Ryva as her personal slave. He's bound by an oath and kept in shackles by a deviant queen who wants nothing more than to learn all the secrets he holds by using his body against him. But what she doesn't know will bring down Elysium when Zahir is finally done with her.

Tiberius is left in charge to clean up the mess after the attack on the Citadel. One of his captives is a woman named Sophie. He suspects she is a Resistance spy, but regardless, he is immediately drawn to her. His lust drives him to take her as his own, and

they later embark on a journey to save her adopted children, who have been kidnapped and taken to the Hillside by a ruthless Kal.

The Hillside is a commune deep in the mountains, a place known to have fetishes and dark secrets, and where they must go to save her children. Tiberius never thought he would care for anyone; now he's traveling with a woman who is likely a rebel against the nation he serves so faithfully...

Chapter 1

Tiberius

They stood on the fringes of the forest, a wrought-iron gate the only visible barrier that kept them out, and those of the Hillside—in. Sophie’s palm intertwined with his own. He could tell she was afraid by how her fingers trembled. She smiled though, and for her effort he smiled back, though somewhat dispassionately. He had gone back into soldier-mode when they left camp, and he didn’t want to let her distract him. Not even the beauty of her sweet grin could sway him right now.

Tiberius kept them far enough from the gate that he didn’t fear solar-powered stealth cameras were immediately upon them—a method he himself had implemented many times in his own tactical field—but he couldn’t be sure what levels of security the Hillside had devised for the outskirts of their commune. He gestured for her to keep her voice low, and her mannerisms and any physical interaction domesticated.

“So... husband,” she said, her voice breathy both from fear and from the way he kept purposely touching her. “Should I try

my wifely wiles on you, even if it means we have witnesses to whatever naughtiness I have in mind—”

“Sophie,” Tiberius barked and shot her a heated look, knowing where his thoughts lay, even if hers did not. “This husband is ready to take you over his knee for that mouth and then make sure you’re filled with enough of him so it doesn’t get you into trouble anymore.”

He wished she’d tell him to go ahead and do it. She’d see how full of threat he was, and how ready for her his body could be in an instant, in spite of his inward vow not to let her get to him. But instead of pressing, she looked ahead and gave a nervous giggle, saying nothing more.

At her prolonged quiet, he frowned and gathered her into his arms, tucking her head under his chin. “Hey. I wouldn’t hurt you, even...” He paused, not sure if he’d ever been so distinctly uncomfortable. He had clearly misread her. “I was just—”

“I know,” she said quickly, her lips muffled against his chest where she kept them pressed to the front of the shirt of his fatigues. “I know you wouldn’t, and I mean to have you keep that promise one day.”

He caught a breath but released it quickly when he realized, though she taunted him, she was not in the same mindset to follow through—at least right now. He seemed willing to screw her at any time, in any place. Tib wondered where his fucking mind had gone to become such a horny bastard. He held her as she whispered forlornly into the folds of his shirt. His erection faded at her tone.

“It’s not that you don’t feel wonderful,” she said, nearly making him groan again. Darting her eyes up towards his, she continued, “I was just thinking of my children, and what might happen if something goes wrong. You are a pleasing distraction, but I guess wanting you isn’t enough right now.”

He looked over her head, kissed the top of it and then let her

go. “Nothing’s gonna go wrong. I gave you my word, and I meant it.”

He looked down at her from his massive height to her slight one. This woman... even if she wasn’t a spy, had somehow infiltrated her way into his cold heart. He cleared his throat.

“Darling, we need to go over our story one last time.”

She nodded.

He continued, “They’ll know who I am. It’s no secret I’m the Colonel’s lieutenant, and I’m a recognizable man, so it’s best I keep my identity. You won’t change your name, except for your last. You now bear my last name.”

She murmured, “Blackfield.”

“Yes.”

Tib squeezed her shoulder reassuringly, and she tossed him a quirky grin. Irrepressible. She never failed. He kept his voice soothing but strong and controlled, not letting her know his trepidation at going into the enemy field. This was uncharted land; none of his soldiers bothered to monitor those in the commune. So these men and women were truly untouchable—at least until now.

“If they try to separate us for any reason,” he said, continuing, “remember the story.” Shooting her a tender look, he said, “When we tell them the falsehood of you carrying my child, try not to giggle about it, and as a woman expecting a babe, you don’t want to be away from the man who is your Master.”

The idea of her acting pregnant had been Sophie’s. It was a good one. A fertile woman, one who could potentially birth another female Pure, was looked at with honor.

She mused carefully, and her voice lilted with interest. “They won’t think it’s unusual for me to call you that?”

Tiberius shifted his body’s weight and his arousal, which had decided to swell uncomfortably against his trousers. He looked down at her, at her auburn hair she’d hastily braided and her pale, tired face. She was terrified. But at the hint of him taking

charge, Sophie's breathing soothed and her eyes lit up with the desire he had come to love seeing on her face.

He answered, trying to remain calm. "It's not uncommon for a Pure and her owner to have a power exchange relationship which involves Dominance and submission, or anything else that falls within that realm. And since we will be considered a bonded couple, then no. It's expected."

She heaved a deep exhale. He stroked her hair back from her temple. "You all right?"

"Yes." She paused and then gave him a teasing blow-kiss. "Master."

He chuckled. "Your sassy mouth, darling..."

He gave her a glancing kiss, just because he wanted to and because he could. He looked back to the gate and pulled her forward with him. "For now, let's accomplish this."

"Yes, sir."

He went into range of the cameras, her hand securely in his. The intercom on the gateway buzzed into awareness, but no one spoke out of the machine to greet them. Instead, music played in the background and came out of the speakers, lyrical and soft. It immediately raised suspicion and irritation in him.

The music was meant to tease the senses into calmness, but for Tiberius, the melody did the opposite. It created awareness of something wrong. This place hid something. He knew he was right to trust his gut, for who out of the ruined nations had the authority—or even the ability—to engineer and incorporate what was lost to the rest of society?

The Colonel's territory, and quite likely the rest of the world's as well, had no electricity. The grids shut down after the virus spread so rampantly and the systems went unmanned. Eventually they fell into disrepair, their technology obsolete and unable to be used, the physical aspects compromised by the elements. Even after, there was the threat of insidious underground terrorist

attacks that kept the grids down. So why were these elite few powered up? His glower spread.

“Greetings, Lieutenant Blackfield,” the female voice said, coming from the intercom. “Do you have business with our Most Pure?”

The hell? Tiberius didn’t react, but beside him, Sophie cringed. He leaned down, and in the guise of kissing the soft skin just behind her ear, whispered to her, “Remember our plan. Stay by me.”

Before he stood, he kissed her temple and gave her fingers a squeeze. He looked at the camera on the intercom, squarely.

“We do. Let us enter.”

The music rose to a crescendo, and the gates swung open. Tib felt like he was entering into the baseless pits of Hell, but taking an angel down with him. His heart tripped unsteadily, but he kept walking. Sophie didn’t stumble, though her grip was tight and her palm moist against his skin. His poor darling was petrified, but she was not about to show it.

Failing her wasn’t an option.

He would bring down these sketchy bastards... or he’d die trying. The one thing he knew he couldn’t do, was not bring her children back to her. And to bring Sophie back out alive from this fucking Hillside, safe and free from harm.