



NOBLE HEART **by Linda J. Parisi**

What was he driving at? All of a sudden, Elena looked at him. She saw the torch light dance in the midnight of his hair. She saw the tiny laugh lines around eyes that told her how much he truly valued life, in spite of his careless attitude.

Against her will, her head moved closer to his. The sounds of the party faded. Her heartbeat sped up, racing wild as the wind. She could smell the spicy tang of the desert mixed with his scent and a warm glow grew in her belly.

Was this desire? True desire? If so, no words could ever describe the sensation.

This was how a man teased a woman. But shouldn't she be trying to seduce him?

Did she dare?

How far could this go before one of them stepped

too close to the fire?

His gaze caught and held hers. She'd never made love before.

They started walking. As soon as they were far enough away, Elena whirled and threw her arms around his neck. Alexi's mouth opened in surprise and she took advantage. He groaned and his arms tightened about her like two steel bands. His mouth engulfed hers. His tongue ravaged the inside of her mouth sending shivers up and down her spine.

All of a sudden, he tore his mouth away from hers. "I'm not a toy," he reiterated, his anger like daggers.

Tears flooded her eyes. She'd insulted him again. With a heavy heart, Elena realized she couldn't learn everything from books. They certainly hadn't prepared her for a man's wounded pride. Or for a Noble pride. With a hollow feeling in the pit of her stomach, Elena knew the truth.

It was time to leave.