



Caitlyn
Willows

My
Salvation

MY SALVATION

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MY SALVATION

BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

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MY SALVATION
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She lay upon the clear blue ocean, like a string of pearls on a silk azure sheet. And like the pearls she awaited the pleasure of those who sought her out. For one thing that could never be denied, when you visited Desirata you definitely got what you needed...not necessarily what you wanted.

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Aaron Crane hoisted the bottle of Absolut to his lips and chugged it. He'd passed the buzz-stage quite some time ago, yet he still maintained a death grip around the neck. The vodka dulled the pain in his heart, filled the void in his soul, and faded the memories that assaulted him even in his dreams.

"Are you taking a leak or what?" Joe Sanchez hollered back.

"Keep your panties on," Aaron yelled back.

He heard the other three snicker in response, most probably because Aaron had used the word "panties" rather than for the insult he'd intended. God, they really were an immature bunch. None of them had evolved beyond the mentality of a college freshman. Fun was belching contests, seeing who could piss the farthest, and laying down quarter bets of whatever game was on TV, while they scratched their balls and scarfed pizza. Aaron was the only one of the bunch who held a steady job. If he kept partying with these guys, he'd be standing behind them

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in the unemployment line, and he knew it. Insurance companies liked their claims adjusters alert and attentive, not to mention timely, and he'd been none of those lately. Hungover, emaciated, and perpetually tardy were more likely descriptions.

And yet, in his grief, Aaron had chosen to return to this comfort zone rather than setting out on his own. The more time he spent with these four, the more he disliked them...and himself. But then, he'd hated life and himself since the night Melinda died. The only thing he wanted was to be dead, too. That's how he felt inside—dead.

He tossed back another drink. Who the hell got the bright idea to stop off in the middle of the desert? They were halfway to Vegas. Why the fucking side-trip?

“Screw it.”

Aaron sank to the nearest boulder and stared across a landscape silvered with the light of a full moon. A warm breeze washed over him. They'd made love under a moon like this once, with only the wind as their blanket. Melinda had wrapped her legs around his. They'd clutched each other as closely as two people could as they soared to the stars watching over them.

He'd loved everything about her from the moment they'd met—her beauty, her goodness, her laughter, her mind. Melinda made him want to be a better person. Hell, he *had* become a better person, shrugging off his errant ways to be the man she'd want. She was his salvation. Everything he'd dreamed of had seemed to fall in his lap once she'd beamed her smile over him. Paths Aaron never knew existed opened. The world, the future, was golden.

The day he proposed they'd scoured the Internet for the perfect honeymoon spot. There was really only one choice—Desirata. Melinda had read about the idyllic island chain in a travel magazine; a tropical paradise where all a person's needs were met. It was off the beaten tourist path, exclusive, private—visitation was granted on a person's

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needs, not their wealth. Melinda filled out the application, her eyes shining the whole time.

"I know they'll accept us," she'd said.

Aaron didn't care where they went. As long as they were together, he'd give her the world if he could. What better place to start than on a white sand beach perched on the edge of a crystal blue-green ocean?

And just like that...she was ripped away from him. All because some fool blabbering on a cell phone ran a stop light at sixty miles per hour. She'd died clutching the envelope containing the Desirata application.

Grief had torn him in two. He'd tried so hard and for what? To bury the woman he loved? It was all for nothing. In the end, that's all he had...nothing.

Aaron had quickly reverted to his previous ways, hoping to drown out the unrelenting pain that haunted him day and night. He hated life, hated the four rowdy friends who couldn't wait to pull him back into their fold. Where once he'd found some measure of joy in the constant partying, now it was merely an escape from the horrors of an unjust world.

He closed his eyes as the breeze brushed over him, lifting the hairs on his arms. His mind drifted with the sensation, imagining Melinda was here with him, gently dancing her fingers against his skin. She'd kiss her way down his throat, while she toyed his nipples into hard dots meant for suckling. While her lips played there, her hands would wander to his cock, stroking, kneading...

Aaron clutched at the erection that burst to life. "Not now...please."

In his present state, relief wouldn't be possible. He was too drunk. The fact he had a hard-on at all was a shock. But with memories of Melinda assaulting him, his dick refused to obey the rules. All he could think about was how great her lips felt around him, how tight her hot pussy felt when he was inside, and how painfully lonely the world was

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with her gone.

Emotion clogged Aaron's throat. Tears welled up behind his eyelids. Hand shaking, he lifted the bottle to his lips. A sudden gust of wind knocked him off-balance. Arms flailing, he toppled backward. The vodka bottle shattered against the boulder.

Aaron sat on the hard cushion of sand. Moonlight glinted off the shards of glass. Fear welled up inside him. He needed the forgetfulness in that bottle. The pain in his heart was too much to bear without it.

He hugged his knees to his chest. That's when he noticed the blood. His hand was cut and he hadn't—still didn't—felt a thing. Heartache was more than he could bear, but a cut like this...nothing. It was really bleeding, too.

Wonder if it needs stitches? In his fogged brain he tried to calculate the distance to the nearest hospital. A coyote's howl nearby snapped him upright. He was just pondering whether they could scent blood like a shark when he heard Joe stomping back his way.

"What the fuck, man. You comin' or not?"

"I fell. Jesus, cut me some fuckin' slack."

Aaron shoved himself to his feet. He staggered there for a second or two, then followed Joe. At least the hard-on was gone. He glanced down to make sure and stumbled over his feet, nearly plowing into the other man.

Joe caught his shoulder to steady him. "You okay? Jeez, what happened to your hand?"

Aaron pulled away when he reached for it. "Bottle broke. It's just a cut. It'll stop bleeding soon. What was so all-fired important that we had to stop in the middle of nowhere?"

"Check it out." He motioned to where the other three stood, just beyond a sign that read, "Government Facility. Restricted Area. No Trespassing."

What little morality Aaron had remaining reared its head. He pulled

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Joe back. “Are you nuts? This is a restricted area. You’re going to have us thrown in jail.”

“Like we’re gonna get caught way out here. And since when did a little something like rules stop you?” He trudged onward.

Aaron followed reluctantly behind. God only knew where they were. Visions of Area 51 *gendarmes* swooping down on them filled his head. They weren’t in *that* area, were they? He’d paid no attention to the direction in which Joe had driven. His only interest had been in reaching the bottom of the bottle.

“What is it?” he asked as he crept forward. Please don’t let it be an alien, his drunken brain whined.

“Take a look.” Joe pointed to six rectangular boxes. They looked like—

“Are those caskets?” Aaron asked.

“Sure enough.” He actually sounded proud of the discovery. “I found them the last time I came through. I was looking for a place to take a leak and there they were. Suppose it’s a desert cemetery someone dug up?”

Aaron frowned. They were old coffins, nothing more than pine boxes. But they didn’t have the aged look he would have associated with a desert cemetery. Still...it was night. “Where are the bodies that were inside?”

“Ewww...” Joe adopted a spooky voice. “Maybe it’s a vampire lair.”

“Shut the fuck up, idiot. Let’s get out of here.” He turned to go.

“Scaredy-cat. I’ll pay you fifty bucks to lay down in one.”

The other three snickered—their comment on everything.

So, that’s what this was all about. Aaron tossed up his hands. “Whatever. I’ll play your stupid game.” Anything to get out of here and on the road. The bleeding hadn’t stopped. He really needed to find a hospital.

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He staggered over to the nearest coffin. A wave of dizziness overwhelmed him. Shaking his head to clear it, Aaron hoisted himself inside and stretched out.

“Satisfied?” he asked. “Pay up.” But he couldn’t move. Weakness overwhelmed him.

I’ll just close my eyes for a minute.

His mind slipped into the limbo stage of twilight sleep. Soon the nightmares would take him and there was nothing Aaron could do to stop them. He drifted on a sea of nothingness. Two tunnels lay ahead—one dark, one light—and there he hovered, waiting...waiting...waiting.

* * *

The sound of waves washing gently to shore was the first conscious thing Aaron became aware of. It soothed him, making him reluctant to open his eyes. He lay there wrapped in warmth from the sun, cushioned in comfort from...

Frowning, he tested the area around him. He was no longer inside the coffin. Instead, he was nestled on a bed of what felt like moss.

Moss? In the desert?

It had to be a dream.

Aaron assessed himself. No churning stomach, no headache, no taste of camel dung in his mouth. Yep, definitely a dream, especially since he was as naked as the day he was born.

Now what?

He carefully peeled open his eyelids. Fluffy white clouds drifted across a brilliant blue sky. Palm trees swayed in the light wind. He could smell the ocean. Bird chatter filtered from the foliage surrounding him. For a dream it was pretty vivid. He pulled in a deep breath, filling his lungs with fresh tropical air.

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through his dark chest hairs as she came into his line of sight. Aaron braced himself for the piercing stab to his heart that occurred each time he saw her in his dreams...or his mind. This time there was nothing but peace.

Smiling, he draped his arm around her naked body, pulling her over him until his rapidly rising cock was nestled against her belly. Everything about her felt so real. Sunlight shot gold through her long brown hair. Her eyes were bright with the smile she cast over him. She was soft and smelled of all the wonderful things in the world combined. A soft white glow surrounded her.

"I've been waiting for you," she said softly, then covered her mouth over his.

Smothering a groan, Aaron twirled his tongue around hers. Electric shocks of joy zinged beneath his skin. Warmth encompassed them, like someone had tossed a downy blanket over them. Soft, full lips cushioned his, testing, kneading, tasting as he did hers.

He cupped her ass and rolled her beneath him. Melinda opened her thighs to him, loosing a deep sigh into his mouth when his cock fell against her pussy. He wanted to cry for want of plunging hard into her tight cunt, to be one with her again. Fighting the driving need to pound into her, Aaron sealed the kiss and raked his lips down her throat.

"I love you. I love you so much," she cried out as she arched back.

"God, baby...I love you, too," he muttered against her neck. Emotion choked him.

Melinda wrapped her arms around his torso. "Shh...it's okay. We're here, together again. All will be as it should. You're safe here with me." She curled her legs over his hips, lifted her pelvis, and thrust herself onto his erection.

A shudder quaked through Aaron. *This* was what he needed—to be bonded to the love of his life. He didn't need to pound into her to know that, or to come either, just linked was tie enough...the sex and release

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could come later. He could lay joined to her like this forever.

“I never want to wake up from this dream.” Tears blurred his vision. Aaron let them fall. One dropped to her chin. He captured the salty drop with his lips.

Melinda caught his head between her hands and licked the tears from his cheeks. “You aren’t dreaming, love. This is real.”

Puzzlement tugged his eyebrows together as he pulled back. “But how—”

“Shh...” She kissed the corners of his mouth. “Later. Love me. It feels like it’s been forever.” A wiggle of her hips stole all other thought from him.

Aaron kissed his way slowly down her throat, pausing at the base to let his tongue play there. She tasted of strawberries and felt like silk. The hard points of her breasts burrowed into his chest hair, begging for attention. His slid his hand between them, palming her breast.

A soft “mmm” slipped from her lips. Her nipple nudged into his hand. He circled over it as his lips wandered in that direction, readying it for his mouth. Her pale brown aureoles puckered in anticipation, thrusting the peaks higher. He twirled one nipple between his thumb and forefinger, elongating it. A gush of warmth from her pussy responded and his cock pulsed with an answer all its own. His balls tightened. The urge to thrust gripped him.

He yanked his dick free, swallowing her moan of protest with a deep suckle on her breast. His erection screamed betrayal and threatened to come anyway. Aaron clutched it with his free hand, squeezing it into submission.

“Oh, let me,” she said on a rush of breath.

She wedged her hand between them and feathered her fingers over his penis, then down to cup his testicles. Aaron groaned around a mouthful of tit as she kneaded his balls. He indulged himself with strokes against her belly while he alternated sucking first one breast,

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then the other. A surge raced from his groin to the head of his cock, spilling pre-cum over her. Aaron smeared it around, then forced himself away from her reach.

He rocked back to his heels and lifted her leg. “So smooth,” he said, tracing the length before he followed the caress with his mouth.

Kisses and soft nips carried him toward her pussy. Rather than plunge into that delight, he worked his way around her curls toward the other leg. When they’d both been mapped, he looped them over his shoulders and nestled down between her spread thighs. Moisture glistened on her labia, beckoning him to taste. Aaron licked his lips, then eased two fingers deep inside. Her cunt walls squeezed him in a not-so-subtle reminder of what she could do to his dick there.

Aaron pressed the pads of his fingers into her G-spot, pulling an unfettered groan out of her. As her hips left the ground, he delved into her musky treasure. Another surge quivered through his body. His body fucked the moss of its own volition while he traced his tongue through the valleys of her pussy. He toyed with her clitoris, smiling to himself when she twitched each time he flicked it. It was swollen—red and plump like a berry.

Then he focused solely on that, twirling around and around while her muscles contracted around his fingers, threatening to squeeze the life out of them. He felt her strain as her climax approached, and tickled a third finger against her anal passage. Soft whimpers gasped from her lips, her heels dug into his back. Aaron probed, gently but firmly, until the tight band of her anus gave way.

Melinda exploded in an orgasm that shook them both. A gush of wetness drenched his face. He stayed with her, lips locked onto her throbbing clitoris, until she crested the top and slid back to earth on a sigh of wonder and contentment.

He kissed his way back up her thighs as he crawled up her body. Leaving her legs draped over his shoulders, he aimed his cock at her

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pussy. Short thrusts pushed the head inside, but it was her labia and the powerful vaginal contractions that sucked him inside.

Braced on forearms, Aaron bowed his back as the sensations rippled from head to toe. It felt like his penis was caught in a velvet vise.

“Don’t hold back.” Her breath tickled against his ear. “Give it to me.”

He thrust deep and hard, each stroke propelling him into a faster rhythm. Fire licked his belly, his back, then settled into his balls. They hugged the base of his cock, ready to launch him into oblivion. Aaron squeezed his eyes shut against the climax that loomed, grinding his teeth as his whole body tightened, then froze as the orgasm blasted from him. Jism spurted from him in wave after wave, until he thought he’d never stop coming. Finally, he collapsed, exhausted, panting, and happier than he’d been since before she died.

He eased her legs down as he kissed her lips, then relieved her of his weight and lay beside her. Melinda curled into the cove of his arms.

“My dreams have always been filled with pain. I see the car crash over and over. You in the passenger seat bleeding. The other driver screaming his head off. And that red light he ignored flashing and flashing. This is the first pleasant dream I’ve had since—”

“I told you...this isn’t a dream.” She nestled under his chin. “This is real.”

Aaron closed his eyes, expecting the dream to turn to nightmare as was the norm. He should have known it was too good to be true. Still, he played the scenario out. “How can it be real when you’re dead?”

She pressed her fingers to his lips. “Think, Aaron. Where were you before you were here?”

He frowned as he tried to remember. Images filtered in. “We were...” He clamped his lips closed, embarrassed to tell her he’d fallen back into his old ways with his friends.

“It’s all right. I know.”

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“How?”

She shrugged. “From where I sit, it’s easy to see. Go on. You were hanging out with the guys, doing what the five of you have always done—behaving like Neanderthals.”

He’d let the memory have him. They were drunk, on their way to Vegas, when Joe decided to take a detour into the desert to see those discarded caskets. Aaron had cut himself on the shattered vodka bottle and was bleeding. On a dare he’d crawled into one of the coffins and...

“Am I dead?”

“Not yet. You’re in a coma pending...resolution, so to speak. Your friends are dead, though.”

He sat up and stared at the waves kissing the white sand. “How?”

Melinda sat with him, draping her arm over his shoulder as she rested her chin there. “That site where Joe found the caskets was a hazardous waste dump. It was filled with radioactive material. By the time your friends got you to the hospital for blood loss they were already feeling the effects. There was nothing anyone could do.”

Aaron hugged his knees. It didn’t make sense. “I was exposed, too, and I was bleeding badly. Why I am in a coma and not dead?”

She ran her finger down his face. “Because I asked that you be given one last chance. The goodness in you was just starting to come to life when my death plunged you back into that hell. It hardly seemed fair. Fortunately, they agreed.”

He turned a frown her way. “They?”

Melinda smiled. “Let’s just call them the Powers That Be. They brought you here to me.”

“And where are we?”

She pulled in a sigh. “Desirata, of course. It was where we wanted to go. Somehow they managed to send us both here. What better place to resolve this than on an island paradise where—for lack of a better explanation—a person gets what they need. They are judging you at

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this very moment, looking fully into your heart and mind, seeing you for what is inside your soul rather than by your actions of the last months.”

Logic demanded he ignore her explanation. His heart knew it was the truth. She’d never been one to make light of the metaphysical.

“If I pass, what happens?” he asked.

Melinda hugged him. “We continue on together to a higher level.”

“If I fail?” He knew the answer before she gave it.

“You will be doomed, like and with your friends, to a hell of your own making.”

Aaron found himself nodding. “I should be. I let grief be my mistress. The pain of losing you...” He slowly shook his head. “Meeting you gave me the greatest gift a man could have—not only your love, but salvation. I should’ve accepted what we had rather than curse the world that our time was short. I didn’t treasure the memory and move on to do better from it. Instead I used it as an excuse to wallow in self-pity as well as self-destruction. I should be with them.” He glanced her way, cupping his palm to her cheek. “But again you are my salvation. This time I’ll graciously accept whatever path I’m given.”

He kissed her, then butted his forehead to hers. “How and when will we know?”

“We’ll be given some sign, something that shows us which path was chosen. Or...” She bit her lower lip.

“Or I could simply fade away to my fate, leaving you to your own path.”

“Yes. And the decision could come at any time.”

Aaron would be damned if he was going to waste what precious time they had left. He jumped to his feet. “Then let’s enjoy it while we can. Show me the island.”

She swung into his arms as he gave her a hand up. “I only arrived

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moments before you did.”

He smiled, cupped her butt, and hugged her close. “Then we’ll explore together. Starting with a walk on the beach.”

“I’d like that.” Melinda hugged him back. Just as quickly she jerked away. Mischief sparkled in her eyes. “Race you. Last one there’s a rotten egg.” A playful shove toppled him. Giggling, Melinda tore off for the sand, cute ass jiggling all the way. Even his penis perked up for a look.

Aaron scrambled to his feet and ran after her. They hit the warm water at the same time. “Got you!” Laughing, he swept her into his arms.

“Now don’t let go.”

She wiggled around until she could wrap her legs around his waist. He guided her hips onto his erection and walked them into deeper water. One hand anchored her in place for his gentle thrusts while the other wedged between them to give her clit the friction it needed. Their climax built slowly, rocked by ocean swells that were the perfect complement to the rise building in them. They came together on a cry that echoed off the bank of palm trees onshore, then clung to each other as the sensation faded.

Too late Aaron saw another mischievous gleam in Melinda’s eyes. She reared back, knocking them off balance and into the waves. They surfaced at the same time, slinging water from their eyes before they body-surfed back to the beach, where they sat on the powder-soft sand and let the waves lap their toes.

The joy he’d felt before with her filled Aaron’s heart. No matter what happened, he was going to keep it there. No more back-sliding. Melinda had talked of a hell of his own making...Aaron wasn’t going to resurrect it again. He’d play the hand the Powers dealt him, but this time he wouldn’t cheat himself.

“Where were you before you were here?” he asked.

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Melinda rolled to her side, facing him. "It's a little difficult to explain. Not heaven as we were raised to believe. Not even an afterlife. It's like I simply moved to another phase. Like when we move from the womb into the world."

"What's it like?" He wrapped a tendril of her hair around his finger. Despite the tumble in the ocean, it had dried to its previous silky perfection.

"Peaceful. Thought-provoking. Enlightening. You can see what was and what is from there. It's alive with color and love, old friends and family. No pain, no sadness, just love. You get to evaluate your experience just past, make decisions about further development, and help others do the same. It's very busy and rewarding."

And yet she'd taken the time to champion him. If that wasn't love and devotion, he didn't know what was.

"What did I ever do to deserve someone like you?"

"Just be...that's all." Melinda danced her fingers down his chest and straight to his penis. Her lips followed. The warmth of her mouth awakened his cock once more.

Aaron closed his eyes on a contented sigh. Her tongue coiled around him like a live wire, quickly bringing him to full staff. One hand cupped his balls, kneading them as she started to suck. Shock waves of pleasure stabbed his groin.

An errant wave shattered the moment, dousing them fully. They sputtered for air, then laughed.

"Now I know how dogs feel," she said, combing her hair from her eyes.

"I hear a bed of moss calling our names."

Melinda's smile widened. "Sounds like a wonderful way to pass the time."

No race this time. They were content to wander back to their nest wrapped in each other's arms. As their feet sank into the spongy green

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blanket, Melinda knelt before him.

“Now...where was I?”

Hot lips wrapped around his erection. Groaning, he held her head while he thrust into her greedy mouth. Her short nails carved crescents into his butt cheeks. Aaron wanted to come, but wanted to fuck her, too. Yet when he tried to pull free, a sharp smack to his ass kept him in place...and added to the fire in his cock. She smacked the other cheek, tearing a groan from deep in his chest. After a third smack, she shoved one hand between his thighs, nudging them apart. When he didn't move fast enjoy, another harder smack propelled him to motion.

One hand kneaded his butt, while the thumb of her other one rubbed circles into the soft spot at the base of his cock and her fingers tickled his anus. And just as the orgasm perched on the threshold of release, she squeezed his cock hard, forcing it into submission.

His legs buckled on a hard groan. Melinda slid back as he eased to the ground. The second his knees touched it, she butted up against him on all fours. It was an invitation only a fool would refuse.

He slammed into her, hard and deep. One hand dove straight to her clit, while the other tweaked a nipple. Melinda writhed against the sensation, meeting each of his demanding strokes with one of her own. Bodies slapped together, drowning out the birdsong in the trees overhead...or was that the moans of love that silenced them? Her pussy muscles rippled over him, coaxing the cum out of him. He clenched his jaw in an effort to hold back, letting go only after she quaked with her orgasm.

Finally sated, they collapsed into each other's arms on the bed Nature provided.

“It's so wonderful being here with you.” She rolled to him to give him a kiss. A glance over his shoulder faded her smile.

“What is it?” He twisted around for a look, but saw nothing.

“It's a lighted portal calling me back.” She shifted her gaze back to

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him. “Don’t you see it?”

Aaron slowly shook his head. It looked like the Powers That Be had made their decision. He couldn’t blame them. He’d done this to himself.

“No, honey, I don’t.”

Tears flooded Melinda’s eyes. She blinked them clear. “But I want you to be with me.”

He dusted his thumb over her cheek. “Desirata’s promise was that we get what we need. Nothing says we get what we want. What better place for these Powers to show us that?” He’d heard that before, but never really understood what it meant until now. More importantly, he could accept it.

“Come on.” Aaron helped her to her feet. “Always know...I love you more than life itself. I don’t like being parted, but I accept it this time knowing you’re always here.” He touched his chest. “And here.” He touched his head.

Smiling, she stretched on tiptoe, kissed him good-bye, and walked toward her destiny. Aaron watched her every step of the way until she simply faded from sight.

Pulling in a deep breath, he looked around at his surroundings wondering what to do next. He obviously wasn’t destined to go with Melinda. So did that mean a giant chasm was going to open up and drag him into bowels of the underworld? He shrugged and stretched out on the moss. It was still warm from their bodies.

Memories of their time together both here and before drifted through his mind. Aaron smiled. This is what he’d let grief steal from him—the joy and laughter. Maybe that’s what he was supposed to do now—take this lesson, return to his life, and spread more good from that. He could accept that. Looked like Melinda truly was his salvation.

He folded his hands behind his head and watched the clouds drift by.

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I'll just close my eyes for a minute.

Aaron felt his body drift. His mind slipped into the limbo stage of twilight sleep. He drifted on a sea of nothingness. Two tunnels lay ahead—one dark, one light—and there he hovered, waiting...waiting...waiting.

* * *

Pain seeped in. A hospital bed had supplanted the moss. Tubes were shoved up his nose, down his throat. An IV needle was taped to his hand. He heard voices muttering around him, but couldn't make sense of what they were saying. A steady *beep-beep* beat against his ears, then shifted to one long *beeeee*.

Ah...I'm dying.

Odd that he could face it without emotion. He saw a shimmer just ahead, his path opening. Lifting his chin, Aaron prepared to meet it head-on. The shimmer shifted to a light. A shadow silhouetted against it and then stepped forward.

"Melinda!"

Aaron urged his feet to move faster. He felt like he was flying. She stood before him in an iridescent gown of pastel sparkles, her hand extended to him. He grasped it and pulled it to his lips.

"My love."

Melinda cupped her free hand to his cheek. "Our future awaits. Ready?"

He'd passed. There was goodness discovered in him after all...thanks to the love of this beautiful woman.

"I'm ready for whatever faces me." With his added nod, white shirt and trousers covered him. He tucked her hand through his arm and they walked toward the light.

* * *

"That's it. He's gone." Dr. Royce Cantrell glanced at the clock on

MY SALVATION

the wall. “Time of death—six-forty-five.”

He stepped away to let the staff disconnect the equipment from the patient’s body, frowning when a trickle of white sand drifted from the man’s hand.

“What the hell? Where did that come from?” he demanded to know.

The nurse lifted one shoulder in a shrug. “It wasn’t there when I prepped him, doctor.”

Frowning, Royce squatted down and dusted his fingers through the white sparkles. He remembered stitching the cut on his one hand, then checking the other. Both had been empty—stained with his blood.

He pulled in a breath and walked away, watching the remnants of sand on his fingers gleam like distant stars.

At the doorway Royce paused for one final look. He’d never seen a bigger smile on a live person much less a deceased one. It wasn’t something he’d forget any time soon. Despite the tragic turn of events, seeing that smile bolstered his spirits. People didn’t seem to smile much anymore, especially in a hospital.

I think that needs to change. At least something good could come out of Aaron Crane’s death. Plastering on a smile of his own, he walked onto his next patient.

CAITLYN WILLOWS

Caitlyn Willows is the pseudonym for award-winning author Catherine Snodgrass, who wanted to flex her writing muscles in the erotica genre. Readers will find the same quality from “Caitlyn” that they have come to expect from “Catherine,” but the stories will be more over-the-top and more steamy. Always they will be action-filled...in more ways than one.

Caitlyn Willows’s email address is caitlyn@caitlynwillows.com.

* * *

***Don’t miss Bring Me To Life, by Caitlyn Willows
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Amy Thornton felt like she’d died the night her husband was killed. Now, two years later, she’s ready to starting living again, and she knows just the man to help her do so. All she has to do is get him to admit he wants her as much as she wants him. One call to Acme Escort Service brings owner Josh Colbert running to her door and with him all the emotions she’d forgotten exist. Little does she realize the power in her hands--to crush Josh’s heart or to bring it to life.

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