



A movie poster for "Star Ravaged Man". The poster features a close-up of a man's face on the right side, looking slightly to the left. On the left side, there is a woman with long dark hair, looking up and to the right. The background is a mix of warm orange and yellow tones with some purple and blue nebula-like patterns. The title "Star Ravaged Man" is written in a large, bold, white font with a black outline, positioned in the lower right. The name "Gaitlyn Willows" is written in a similar font in the upper left.

**Gaitlyn
Willows**

**Star
Ravaged
Man**

STAR RAVAGED MAN

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She waited until the last of the women left before approaching Lienna. It was a big favor to ask, but...

"Congratulations."

Lienna smiled. Everything about the woman glowed lately, highlighting her copper-colored hair and adding a sparkle to her eyes—this was a successful woman, a woman in love with life and her man. "I'm sorry I didn't mention it sooner, but I wanted to make sure everything was in order first."

Cayana matched her smile. "I would've done the same thing. I was wondering if I could get a private suite there...complete privacy. For an unspecified length of time."

"I can have a trans-light tube take you directly to the suite from IPC, if you like."

Cayana gave a small laugh. Were her emotions that transparent? "Thank you. I'll see about making the arrangements."

"Are you certain the IPC will turn him over to you?" she asked as Cayana started to walk away.

She glanced over her shoulder. "Money talks."

If not, she had a Caldonian marriage certificate that would. One way or the other, she was going to retrieve her husband...

ALSO BY CAITLYN WILLOWS

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STAR RAVAGED MAN

BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC

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STAR RAVAGED MAN
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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CHAPTER 1

Cayana stared at the facility on her viewing screen—the Bon Appétit Resort for Interstellar Liaisons. She should have known Lienna was up to something. There'd been an extra energy about her these last several months and a definite sparkle in her eye. Cayana wholeheartedly supported her latest venture.

It seemed everything Lienna touched turned to gold. The woman certainly had a talent for business...one Cayana admired, but didn't seek to emulate. She was content to work with her and never cared to be the one completely in charge. It was a devotion Lienna appreciated, or so she'd said. Cayana was about to find out just how much she really appreciated it.

She punched the button to reveal the other area she'd been watching. While her fellow attendants used the club's after-hours to engage in voyeuristic activity, Cayana had selected another more mundane subject. She always watched...*him*.

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Durok Simeon wasn't the man she once knew. He hadn't been that man for a long time. But fate had been particularly unkind to him this last year.

There had been a flash of panic when Cayana heard he'd been kidnapped by a renegade energy thief, Zantar. Once he'd been rescued and taken in by the Interplanetary Commission for rehabilitation, and word filtered out about what Durok had endured at Zantar's hands, Cayana quietly cheered. It couldn't have happened to a nicer man. Durok deserved to be a sexual pawn, to have done to him what he'd done to so many others, especially to her.

She studied the shell of a man now curled in a fetal position on his narrow bed inside the IPC compound. It had taken more than one bribe to allow her visual access. At first, Cayana had gotten perverse pleasure in his suffering. Seeing first-hand how his captivity had affected him physically and mentally shredded her hatred over time. And now she knew that hatred had been a façade. No matter what Durok did, or how many times he'd done it, Cayana still loved him.

They'd met while still in school. It seemed an eternity ago. A thousand lifetimes since eyes the color of the cobalt blue Ionian ale she now sipped locked onto hers. Eons since they'd clutched each other in the wonder of first love. And yesterday when they lost it all.

How many times had she tried to figure out exactly what had gone wrong? Too many, as were the reasons she'd come up with. The death of his father had altered family circumstances. Dreams she and Durok once had were shoved aside so he could provide for his mother and siblings. His bitterness grew and Cayana stayed by his side, hoping he'd snap out of it. His downfall continued as he fell into company with two true degenerates—Macris and Jamel.

The few hours Durok had given her were now devoted to frequenting sex clubs with the two. And *still* Cayana stayed with him, even to the point of hiring on as an attendant at this club just to be near

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him. Seeing him with other women hurt, but she stayed, praying to the moons he'd see his descent before it was too late. She knew a glimmer of hope when Kestral Dermot joined the motley trio. Here was a man who had some substance to him. Perhaps a little would rub off on Durok.

That hope, her last hope, faded when Cayana heard the wager the quartet had made—the first one to get an Earth girl pregnant would win a planet skipper. A laser blade slicing open her chest couldn't have hurt more than the sight of Durok whipping through the city in the thing. What about the children *they* had planned to have? By the time Cayana learned the truth—that Kes had won and given the skipper to Durok—the damage was too deep to be undone. He'd made the wager with her standing only steps away. Cayana finally cut her ties to the man.

But not to my heart. She sighed and turned off the screen. She couldn't bear to see him this way—wasted and hurting. All manner of tests run by the IPC hadn't managed to salvage his soul. No one deserved this, not even the man who'd repeatedly broken her heart. He needed healing, not more medical probes. And that would only come from someone who loved him...no matter what.

Cayana knew she was probably setting herself up for heartbreak once more. But she also knew she'd never forgive herself if she didn't at least try.

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CHAPTER 2

Durok Simeon tugged the three blankets around him. It did little to chase the chill from his bones. He hadn't been warm since the day Zantar had kidnapped him. At this point, he doubted he'd ever be warm again. No fire of any kind existed within him any more. Zantar had stolen it all. With his death, that energy had been scattered to the stars.

He'd had a lot to reflect on since his rescue. Sometimes he wished Kes and Anne had left him to die in that cavern. Other times he realized this was his penance for all the wrongs he'd done in life, all the hurt he caused to those he'd professed to love. Vermin such as he deserved this fate. There was nothing left, only the horrible guilt he was forced to face each and every day of his frigid existence. He was truly a shell of a man now, trapped in a nightmare of his own making.

Durok could barely remember the day he'd been brought into the IPC facility. He wished he could forget the torture he'd suffered in Zantar's hands. No wonder he'd been impotent since then. He'd been

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sucked dry, literally. His penis was raw and bloody from the abuse Zantar forced him to endure. And the poor women who'd been forced to serve him weren't in such good shape either. With each orgasm Zantar had ripped from them, more energy pulsed into the collection device and then into the thief.

Under the care of the IPC doctors, the women eventually had recovered. Durok did not. He'd been probed and scanned and studied until he felt like a pincushion. Nothing. His energy never replenished and his penis remained flaccid and shriveled. One of the female scientists had even attempted seduction. The instant she touched him, Durok scrambled to the farthest corner of the room and begged her to stay away.

Just the image of him cowering from a beautiful woman brought tears to his eyes. Not because he couldn't react, but because he deserved such punishment for all the wanton fornicating he'd done in the past. He'd had any woman he wanted then, and now he wanted none. Just desserts for a man who'd shoved aside the one woman he never should have—Cayana. The wrongs he'd done her would haunt him until the day he died. That day couldn't come soon enough.

Durok wondered if that was why they continued to keep him at IPC—they were afraid he was a danger to himself. That earned a wry chuckle. Since he could barely lift a fork to eat, how could he hold a weapon to kill himself? They apologized to him frequently for the extended stay. What did he care? It wasn't as if he had any place else to go. His family had long since disassociated themselves from him. And Cayana? It had taken him a while, but he'd finally managed to alienate her as well.

Tears clouded his vision. Durok curled more tightly into a ball and rubbed his fists in his eyes. All the tests on all the machines in existence couldn't help him understand why he'd behaved as he had. He didn't understand it, so how could he explain it to others? On some

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level, it was almost as if someone had taken over his body. Many times he wished that was what had happened. That would be so much easier to deal with than the horrible knowledge he had willingly inflicted a demon personality on everyone. And there was no other way to describe it. He'd behaved...abominably.

With any luck he'd continue to shrivel up into a cold lump of flesh and pass into relative obscurity. Just a footnote in criminal history as a man Zantar had tortured, one in a long list of people. His punishment was just—forced into solitude now, with only his recollections to haunt him...over and over again.

He squeezed the tears from his eyes and forced his lids wide. Sleep was something he took when he had no other choice. With it came nightmares more vivid than all the memories he possessed. Asleep he relived every heartrending pain he'd inflicted on others.

Durok eased his feet to the floor. Perhaps a walk around the compound would help, or he could spend several hours scanning the volumes of material in the IPC library. He was hardly a prisoner. They'd afforded him every luxury possible. His accommodations were larger and nicer than he'd had in...well, a very long time.

He shrugged the blankets aside and was reaching for his jacket when he heard the door at the end of the hallway open. One set of footsteps padded his way. *More tests? Another visit from the psychologist?* Durok tucked his arms in his sleeves and stepped from his room.

The young woman stopped when she saw him and offered a tentative smile. "I'm glad you're in."

When wasn't he? If not, he was easy enough to track down.

"It looks like you'll be leaving us. If you'll gather your things..."

"Now?"

"Yes." She followed up with a nod.

He should have realized this was coming. IPC could do nothing for

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him. He was an unnecessary expenditure easily eliminated. If they wanted to monitor him later, they'd have no trouble rounding him up. All they had to do was hone in on the LifeLock every Narun carried. The device was a blessing and a curse. With it, a Narun was never lost, but they could also always be found. He stuffed the few personal items he had—mostly clothes—into a pack and wrapped his hands around it. Time to face head on the demons he'd created.

Fear pumped his heart faster. Determination set his legs in motion. He walked in step with the woman, focusing on each shining portal they approached then left behind until they reached the hangar adjacent to the building.

"It's been a pleasure knowing you," the woman said. "Good luck."

"Is...is there anything I'm supposed to sign?" He'd never been more scared in his life.

There was another semblance of a smile. "No, it's all been taken care of. Your party should be here soon." She walked away without another word, leaving Durok to stare after her in confusion. Before he could pick apart the puzzle, he heard more footsteps, two sets this time.

He turned in the direction of the sound and swore his heart stopped. It had to be the beginnings of a nightmare. He'd fallen asleep and hadn't realized it. But there she was, looking more beautiful than he remembered. Her figure was carved to curvy perfection. Her long, black hair drifted behind her in a nebula of curls that tumbled to her waist. And her eyes were so dark and liquid they reminded him of a forest pool on a moonless night—a rare event on Naru with so many moons. She wore an outfit similar to those he'd seen on his Earth trips—a sleeveless blouse of deep red with matching slacks of red and white checks that ended at mid-calf. White sandals protected her feet.

The man beside her was one of the directors of the facility. He seemed in no hurry, matching the steady pace Cayana set. Her gaze never left Durok's and never gave him a clue what she was thinking.

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"The tube should be here any minute," the director said when they reached him.

"Thank you." Cayana blessed him with a smile.

The man nodded and walked away, leaving Durok alone with his wife for the first time in... Stars alive, he couldn't remember how long.

"Why?" The single word croaked from his throat. Perhaps she sought to punish him. She should, after all he'd done.

Cayana tightened her grip on the handles of the bag she held. "I'm your wife. I need no other reason."

A barely discernible hum signaled the arrival of the trans-light tube. Seconds later the portal opened before them.

Cayana hooked her arm through his and tugged him into it. "Come."

Durok held back. "Where?"

She pulled again. "To Earth. It's time to heal."

He let her draw him in. "That's quite a task you've decided to undertake."

"I'm up for it. And you will be, too, once you are away from all...this." She motioned with her hand, then sealed the door.

Wearied from the short walk, Durok sagged into the cushiony blue seat. Cayana leaned over him, dusting her warm fingertips over his forehead. "Sleep."

He fumbled for her hand. "I can't...nightmares."

She avoided his grasp and cupped his face. "You can. I vow no harm will come to you while I'm here."

"I don't deserve your compassion." Those damnable tears threatened again.

"No, you don't," she said, stepping away. "But you have it nonetheless. Now...sleep."

He closed his eyes and trusted. It was all he had left.

CHAPTER 3

Durok awoke in a feather-soft bed piled high with equally soft, plush covers. He lay there cuddled in warmth for the first time in what felt like forever. His toes and fingers were still cold, though. He burrowed deeper in his nest.

There had been no nightmares. As far as he could recall, he hadn't even dreamed. He felt rested. Hunger nibbled at the edges of his consciousness, pulling him more fully awake. He also had a desperate need to pee. Both meant he'd have to leave his cocoon.

Peeling open his eyelids, he glanced around while he tried to hold out a little longer. He was alone in the big bed. Cayana was nowhere in sight. The room itself was awash in mauves and creams. About the size of his old apartment on Naru, it was open and spacious. A buffet separated the bedroom area from that of the living room. A tray of fruits was set in the center. Durok's stomach rumbled in response.

A motion beyond the glass door caught his eye—Cayana. She

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l lounged in a long, white chair, sipping what looked like a frosted fruit drink while she watched the scenery in the garden courtyard. Her long legs were stretched before her, lightly tanned and looking just as silky as ever. She wore little more than a top, which she presently had opened to the filtered sunlight. Her hair was piled on top of her head, yet stray tendrils still managed to escape and curl against her slender neck. Every so often she'd pluck a purple berry from the bowl beside her and put it in her mouth. He still couldn't believe he was here with her.

Cool air assaulted him the second Durok tossed back the covers. He was still dressed, except for his shoes. He couldn't remember taking them off. Durok frowned. He couldn't even remember his arrival. Cayana had said they were going to Earth. Obviously, the atmosphere agreed with him—he actually felt a little stronger.

He snagged a piece of melon from the tray as he trudged toward the bathroom. Flavor exploded in his mouth. Cool, sweet juice trickled down his throat. He'd forgotten how much he loved fresh fruit. There wasn't much of it at IPC. The deep carpet cushioned his walk to the bathroom like a bed of peat. That made the blue marble tile in the bathroom much less inviting. Still, his bladder demanded release. He dared a step forward...and smiled. The floor was heated.

"I see you're awake."

The sound of Cayana's voice whirled him around.

"Sorry," she said with a smile. "I didn't mean to startle you. I wanted to see if you were all right."

He found himself nodding. "Better...yes." By all that was wondrous, she was beautiful. How could he have forgotten that...or rather, ignored that? All he tossed aside... He could have easily lost her to another. Yet here she stood. "Why?"

Her dark eyes never left his. "We took sacred vows when we married, Durok. I meant them...even if you did not."

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The last was like a slap in the face. He deserved it and on some level he almost wished she would physically lash out at him, hurt him as he had hurt her.

Cayana sighed and glanced away. “Come outside when you’re ready. The sun feels nice and warm. You should enjoy it.”

He caught her arm when she turned away. “You think you can help me when all IPC’s best people could not?”

She lifted one corner of her mouth in a sultry smile that used to devastate him. “They did not love you. I do.” She traced two fingers down his cheek, then kissed him gently. “I’ll be waiting.”

Eyes wide, Durok watched her grab the tray of fruit and return to the garden outside. She loved him still. Just realizing that made him want to fall to his knees before her and weep.

* * *

Cayana set the tray on the small table between the lounge chairs and poured a fresh glass of frosted punch for Durok. All she had to guide her was her instinct, and she was going to rely on that heavily. Only Durok could exorcise the demons that haunted him, but she could resurrect the memories of the good times to help him do so. Here on Earth, in the privacy of the Bon Appétit Resort, she would be able to do that without the risk of anything else pulling forth the bad. At least that’s what she hoped to do. Even their LifeLocks were turned off. No one would bother them.

She glanced up when she heard the door slide open. He gave her a nervous smile as he eased into the chair beside her. Cayana held the drink out to him, then prepared him a plate of fruit that would remind of his favorites on Naru. He accepted both without a word. The pleasure on his face said it all.

Seeing him from the viewing screen hadn’t prepared her enough for the face-to-face meeting. His muscle tone was gone. His skin had lost its golden glow. His thick, blond hair lay limp and fine. Blue eyes no

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longer snapped with humor. But somewhere in there was the man she fell in love with. Cayana was determined to dig him out.

“How long was I asleep?” he asked.

“One full Earth day.”

He laughed lightly. “I don’t remember arriving.”

“I arranged to have us delivered directly to the room. You simply stumbled from the trans-light tube and into bed.”

“I haven’t slept that well in a long time.”

“Didn’t I promise as much?”

“Yes, you did.” He smiled. “How did you arrange all this on Earth?”

“The resort belongs to Lienna and her human mate.”

His eyebrows raised. “Lienna owns this?”

“She owns many properties now. A lot has happened since you’ve been—” *No, nothing to remind him of that time.* This might be harder to accomplish than she’d envisioned.

“Is that a hot spring over there?” He jerked his head toward the hot tub built into the corner of the garden. Steam rose above it.

“Not exactly.” She swung her legs onto her lounge, letting her white cotton cover-up fall open. From the corner of her eye, she watched Durok pass a leisurely gaze over her. “It is a hot tub and feels delicious, but it lacks the healing mineral properties we used to enjoy in Caldonia. Once you’ve finished eating, you might find you enjoy it. Although the sun feels nice, too.” She clicked the chair into a horizontal position, shrugged free of her cover-up, and stretched out with her eyes closed.

Several minutes of silence passed. She could hear him chewing and his occasional sip from his drink. Anything he might be doing beyond that was only speculation—she hoped he was getting an eyeful.

“It hurt me to see you with other men,” he finally said.

“It hurt me to see you with other women,” she shot back. “As for the other men...there was no other way for me to be near you.”

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“I don’t know why you wanted to be.”

“Frankly, at the time, I couldn’t figure it out myself. But it’s all in the past. Let’s leave it there, shall we? Some things are best forgotten.”

“And other things?” he asked.

Cayana smiled, but didn’t move. “All good things should be nurtured and treasured within our souls.”

“You make it sound so easy.”

The sadness in his voice pained her. After all he’d been through at Zantar’s hands, she truly couldn’t blame him. That made her response even harder to say.

“It’s easy if you let it be.” More silence replied.

“I think I’ll try that hot tub now,” he finally said.

Cayana waited until she heard his chair creak before she rolled to her stomach. “Before you do, could you rub a little of that lotion on me?”

His gulp reached her. “Uhm...sure.”

She felt the heat from his body as he sat beside her. When the cool lotion hit her back, she sucked in a breath, then laughed. “Thank you. I’m particularly worried about my ass. I don’t want a burn like I got before. Remember that?”

His hands, hesitant at first, skimmed over her skin. With each swipe, she could tell he grew more comfortable and increased the pressure. “I do. We’d found a nice patch of grass for a picnic.”

“That we never ate,” she said with a laugh.

“I ate...it just wasn’t food.”

“Mmm...no, it was me.” Her sigh said the rest—about how sweet a memory it was.

“Then I let you have your way with me.”

“You rolled to your back and hoisted me atop you. Then impaled me,” she amended.

“You wore me out and we fell asleep.”

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“When we woke, my ass was fried...and so were your knees and legs.”

He laughed with her, and Cayana mentally applauded her minor success. His awkwardness had faded. Deep caresses worked the lotion into her back, legs, and ass with a comfortable touch they'd had any number of times in the past, one that had often led to other things. She wondered if he was remembering them now. How he'd grow hard just from touching her. How he'd rain kisses over her skin. How he'd tease and taunt her to the edge of orgasm before gently nudging her legs apart and taking her from behind.

She forced herself to remain still, to not let her curiosity get the better of her. His healing had to be gradual. He couldn't be forced into a corner.

Durok paused with his hand on her rear, then eased away. “That should do it.”

She thanked him again and nestled her head on her arms. The next thing she heard was the gentle slosh of water as he stepped into the tub.

“It's beautiful here,” he said.

“Very. And peaceful. And private. Rather nice to be away from people for a while, don't you think?”

“Yes. Would you like to join me?”

Cayana forced her smile away and rolled over. “No, thank you. I'm content.”

She reached for the bottle of lotion, squirted a portion into her palm, then slowly worked it over her breasts. Her nipples hardened under the attention as she went around and around. Long strokes carried the liquid over her belly. Lifting one leg high, she covered it, parted her thighs so Durok could get a good look, then covered the other. She glanced up to see him staring...just as she wished.

“I love the scent of this coconut,” she said, easing back down. “Nothing like it on Naru.” Playing at an absentminded gesture, she

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toyed with one beaded nipple and dusted her fingers through the top of the dark curls leading to her thighs. That should get Durok thinking of things other than what he'd been through.

She pulled in a sigh and stretched her arms over her head. "The Earth sky is a pretty blue, very much like our own. The green leaves take some getting used to. The only time they're golden is before they die for the winter. I'll never forget how the sky and ocean melded into one at Caldonia. It was the most beautiful sea green I've ever seen." Cayana turned her head his way. "Remember?"

The first genuine smile she'd seen spread over Durok's face. "I remember. You could taste the sweetness in the air. There were no waves. Just the soft lapping of the water against our toes as we...sealed our union as husband and wife."

His blue gaze was distant. Cayana swung her legs to the ground. Was he remembering that night, or how their world had tumbled in on itself when they returned and learned his father had died? She held her breath while she waited for some sign she hadn't gone too far.

Durok closed his eyes and leaned his head against the padding that lined the tub. "I love you, Cayana. I've done a poor job of showing it. I'm sorry for all the hurt I've caused you. I... If you..."

She curled her fingers around the edge of the chair, bracing herself for whatever blow he planned to deliver. Instead, he shook his head, perhaps dismissing what he'd been about to say.

Seconds ticked by to minutes before she dared to move.

CHAPTER 4

Durok watched Cayana slip into the room through slitted eyes. He remembered all right, more than he thought he would. Her laughter mingled with his. The way she'd welcome him in her arms. How they slept curled into the embrace of the other. And the sheer wonder of being joined, clutching each other like lifelines when they came together.

How could he have forgotten? How could he have thrust all that aside for...self-pity? Yes, that was the only appropriate word for his descent into a hell of his own making. Rather than face circumstances like a man, he'd fostered resentment and given up on everything. Durok had never been more ashamed. Until now he'd wallowed in guilt and self-pity rather than fight to get his life back.

No more. He'd been given a gift with Cayana's appearance and her devotion. If he wasn't careful, he'd ruin this, too. True, he'd suffered at Zantar's hands. But he suffered now at his own, letting a dead man rule

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him. Durok had scuffed around since his rescue, bemoaning all he'd done and knowing he'd never find forgiveness. What he now realized was that he couldn't very well expect others to forgive him, unless he forgave himself first.

Cayana was offering him hope, redemption, love, and acceptance. He'd truly be a fool if he shoved all that aside. She was here to help him help himself. He was ready to take the hand she'd offered.

The image of her stretched out on the lounge, lost in a daydream as she played with herself, washed over him. He'd been tempted to ask her to make herself come so he could watch. But that was something the selfish Durok would have done. From this point on, he refused to be that person again.

When she stepped from the room carrying a tray of small, covered bowls, Durok opened his eyes fully and offered her a smile. "What do you have there?"

"Treats." She sat the tray beside the tub, then retrieved the platter of fruit. When she tried to sit on the hard stone patio, he caught her hand and tugged her gently.

"Come sit in here with me...please. You'll be more comfortable."

A smile lit her eyes as she stepped in. She looked like a goddess easing into her bath. She *was* a goddess in his eyes.

He kissed her fingertips. "I remember how we used to sit in the mineral springs at Caldonian—you nestled between my legs, my chest as your pillow, your head as mine."

When she glided his way, Durok tucked his legs on either side of her and pulled her around. Cayana settled against him with a sigh.

"But there is one thing the springs did not have." He moved them around until they were opposite of one of the jets of water. "Something I think you might enjoy," he whispered into her ear. He parted her thighs and gently maneuvered her crotch into the hard flow of water.

Cayana gasped and arched into him.

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“Yes, love, it feels wonderful, I know,” he murmured as he slowly kneaded her breasts and traced his thumbs around her hard nipples.

Eyes closed, she tossed her head from side to side as the water built her toward orgasm. He felt her tense as if poised in mid-air. She came on a long, soft mew of pleasure. The energy released rippled through Durok’s body, warming him from inside. He closed his eyes against the tingle and reveled in the life force her love had given him.

Cayana sagged into his embrace, drawing in deep breaths in the aftermath of her climax and nothing more. He blessed whatever insight kept her from trying to arouse him. It would happen on its own...or not. Durok no longer cared. As long as he could hold this woman and give to her half the devotion she’d given him, he’d be a happy man.

“What are all these treats for?” He lifted the lid off one of the bowls.

She eased away and peered at the contents inside. “You may dip your fruit in them or...” She dipped her finger in one filled with a brown-yellow substance, then reached for his nose.

Laughing, Durok caught her wrist. “Ah...I get the idea.” He sucked her finger into his mouth. “Mmm...”

“Butterscotch,” she said, smiling when he twirled his tongue around the digit.

He pulled free and licked his way to her wrist. Cayana laughed and smeared a dark brown substance there for him—chocolate, that’s what it was called. Durok sucked it clear, adding a little nip at the end that made her jump. The giggle that followed made his heart sing.

Girdling her waist, he hoisted her to the side of the tub. “I can see that the possibilities are endless and I know just where I want to start.”

“So do I,” she softly replied.

How many lifetimes had passed since he’d seen her eyes this bright? He could bask in that adoration for eternity.

Cayana snagged the stem of a dark red berry, dipped it into the

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chocolate, and brought it to his lips. “Take it,” she whispered.

He did as she asked, pulling the fruit from the stem. Before he could chew, she brought her lips to his. Tongues dueled for the treat, divesting it of its coating, until she flicked it into her mouth, broke it in two, then returned half to him. Foreheads butted together, they chewed and swallowed while her long fingers tickled into the hair at the nape of his neck. More warmth swooped down his body. He could feel the energy strengthening his limbs.

Fumbling for the closest bowl, Durok clutched at the topping inside. Cayana grabbed his hand and brought it to her mouth, licking it clean just as she would candy on a stick. The sight of her tongue looping around and through his fingers mesmerized him. When she finished, she pushed his hand to her breast.

A growl tore from his throat as he captured both. He alternately flicked his thumb against one nipple while he licked and sucked at the other. Cayana’s soft moans danced around his head, music to his ears. He worked his way downward, following dots of chocolate she’d placed there. She stopped with a dollop on each thigh. He lapped them up without hesitation, then nuzzled into the hot core between her legs.

Cayana eased back on a sigh, opening herself to him. Energy pulsed from her, beckoning him on as it wove beneath his skin. Parts of Durok long dead awakened. He wanted to weep. He wanted to cheer. But most of all, he wanted to please his woman.

His tongue traced each fold, teased at the red bud of her clitoris, tunneled into the heat of her pussy and then traveled the circuit all over again. Her thighs quivered from the wait, but she let him re-memorize her. He watched her clit swell and pulse for attention. Her juices pooled beneath her like an overfull honey nest. Cupping her buttocks into his hands, he captured her ripened fruit between his teeth. She reared up higher, tossing her legs over his shoulders. Groaning with her, he twirled his tongue over her clit, anchoring her in place when she

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exploded in orgasm.

Fire raced into his body with the force of her release. Durok closed his eyes against the showers of golden sparkles that surrounded them. He was whole once more. Her love had healed him. He'd see she never regretted it.

When the last of her spasms faded, Cayana melted. Durok smiled. The rough stone surface was no place for his lady. Hoisting himself from the tub, he snagged a towel from the end of one of the chairs and blotted the water from her body, and then his own.

Cayana flashed him a lazy smile. Her eyes widened with glee when she saw the erection bobbing in front of him. But when she reached for it, Durok put his arms behind her shoulders and knees and lifted her against him.

"This could take a while," he said. "Or it could be very quick," he added with a laugh. "In either event, my lady deserves comfort."

Tears shimmered in her eyes despite her smile. She traced his cheek with her forefinger as he carried her inside.

She whipped the covers back before he placed her on the bed. Together they crawled beneath them. She opened her legs to him, wrapping them around his when Durok settled on top of her. He dusted his fingers against her soft cheeks. A kiss followed with gentle nips that quickly morphed into tongue tangling sensation. He shifted, thrust the head of his cock against her molten heat, and slowly slid into her fire.

* * *

Cayana's breath caught at the feel of him deep inside. No memory compared to this. He was so hard, so big she could feel him throbbing against her walls. She wanted to touch him, burn him with passion as he was doing to her. But all she could do was lay there and hold on as he slowly stroked her. Her clit nudged against the length of his cock, swelling with each of his gentle thrusts. Her climax was quick, washing her in wondering, showering him with sparkles of green and blue.

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He loosed a low growl, smiling when his cock hardened and swelled. Their love...her coming...it bound them as it once did, making them truly one. His thrusts quickened, going deeper, harder. Cayana lifted her heels to his buttocks, nudging him along. She was going to come again, but not without him. She had to feel him come. Had to feel his energy inside her.

She reached for his back, to that special tickle spot that always made him lose control. Instead, he caught her hands, laced his fingers through them and anchored them on either side of her head as he kissed her. Another climax quaked through her. Cayana closed her eyes against the brilliance the moment wrought. And still he got harder, bigger. Each pounding thrust dragged her clit with it. That's when she realized, all the orgasms before were just the prelude for what was to be.

He braced himself on his forearms, seeking the perfect union of souls with her as he pivoted into her. Emotion choked her. This they'd never done. It'd been too intense to consider. Not anymore. She locked her gaze to his, opening everything she was to him. His soul reached out, wrapping her in a cosmic embrace.

"My...love," they gasped out.

Orgasm seized them with a bone-jarring intensity Cayana thought only existed in books. Fireworks of sparkles bounced to the ceiling and trickled over them, blessing the union. Sweet kisses and caresses further sealed the moment. That's when Cayana knew they were going to be all right.

"I want to go home, sweet love," he said as he continued to dot kisses over her face and neck. "We have a lot of time to make up for. I have a lot to make up for. Starting with my family. It will be hard, but—"

She placed her fingers on his lips to silence him. *Now* he was ready. "It might not be as hard as you think, love. Your mother was furious

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when she learned it was the IPC who had unleashed Zantar on our world. She made certain...shall we say...demands on them.”

Clearly confused, he kissed her fingers and curled them into his hand. “What kind of demands?”

“Let’s just say none of us have to worry about anything again. And when you’re ready, there’s a full scholarship waiting for you at the university.”

Tears flooded his blue eyes. Durok didn’t bother to hide them or wipe them away when they drifted down his cheeks. “I truly don’t deserve this. I don’t deserve you.”

“Nevertheless, you have me.”

He wrapped his arms around her, hugging her close. “And I’m going to spend the rest of my life making sure you don’t regret it. I never want to risk losing you again.”

Cayana gave a soft laugh. “Then just don’t forget where you put me.”

“Very funny. I expect to never have to look any farther than my arms.”

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. Sometimes the novels are written singularly, and sometimes they are a collaborative effort with award-winning author Paris Dixon. Always they will be action-filled...in more ways than one.

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* * *

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