



CAITLYN  
WILLOWS

JUST  
PARTNERS

## JUST PARTNERS

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And by this time tomorrow, Lane would be on her way to knowing it, too...

ALSO BY CAITLYN WILLOWS

*The Heir*

*Showtime*

*Stargazer*

*Star Traveler*

*Teacher's Pet*

*Warrior Princess*

*White Lies*

# JUST PARTNERS

BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

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JUST PARTNERS  
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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## *DIVERSIONS*

*Where the water diverts  
On a blue moon night,  
Forever you shall be  
Those lovers who unite.*

## CHAPTER 1

“Shut the door! Quick!” Lane Davis said through an exhausted laugh.

“And bolt it, too!” Brice Cameron added.

The keys jangled as he locked the door.

Lane stretched her arms high over her head. “We survived another tax season.”

“Barely.” Brice tossed the keys to his desk. “I’d like to have one year, just *one year* where the government doesn’t screw us with convoluted changes to the tax law.”

She massaged her temples. “That would be heaven.”

He snapped his long fingers. “I have a surprise for you.”

Lane looked at him from under her eyebrows. But before she could ask what it was, he strode down the hall. Lane fought the urge to turn and watch. He had the best rear end a man could possibly want—perfectly rounded, not plump, just firm. It called to a woman’s wandering hand, begging to be cupped. She closed her eyes and stayed

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rigidly focused forward.

*I will not look. I will not look. I will not—*

“Here we are. One split of champagne, chilled and waiting.”

Lane looked up into golden brown eyes dancing with humor and affection. Her heart skipped a beat, her breath caught. She craved his lips on hers, his body pressing her deep in a soft bed. Why, oh, why did he have to be her business partner?

He set two champagne flutes before her. “And, you’ll notice, real crystal, not cheap plastic.” He flicked his fingers against one. A clear tone sang out.

She forced lustful images away and smiled. “What are we waiting for? Open it up.”

A loud pop echoed through the small office. Brice poured, then lifted both glasses. His smile was as bright as his eyes. Her fingers brushed his, shooting invisible shockwaves up her arm as she took the flute from him.

“To us,” he said, lifting his glass.

Lane tilted her head to one side. “Us?”

“Five years ago today you and I decided to strike out on our own and form a partnership. I haven’t regretted one second of it.”

Nor had she...until six months ago.

They clinked glasses and downed the golden bubbles. He poured another one to be enjoyed more leisurely.

Lane watched his lips kiss the edge of the glass. It had to be a sin for a man to have such perfect lips. She cursed herself and not for the first time. Here they were—friends for at least ten years, partners for five and she chooses now to see him in a different light.

She wanted him, no doubt about that. She wanted him badly and she wanted him now. He was intelligent, compassionate, business-like, and had a body built to caress. And Lane hated herself for feeling that way.

They had a good thing going. The last thing she wanted to do was



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ruin it. And that's what sex did to relationships—ruin them. Lane refused to lose Brice. Even if that meant she had to spend her nights wearing out vibrators while she dreamed of his hard body on top of hers. Of his lips nibbling at her breasts. Of his fingers going deep inside her.

Lane tossed down the contents of her glass as she crossed her legs to quell the ache there.

“Vacation plans?”

She nodded. “I’ve got a place all picked out. I’ll be gone a week. Kind of feels weird going by myself.”

“Yeah, know what you mean.” He danced his thumb over the moisture on his glass. She imagined it caressing the curve of her breast. “A year ago...”

He left the rest unsaid. A year ago, they were both married. Lane’s husband had filed for divorce the second they got back from what she thought was the perfect Caribbean cruise. Brice’s wife had served him with papers three days before the end of tax season.

“Can’t say I blame them.” Lane kicked off her shoes and propped her stockinged feet on the edge of the desk. “We aren’t at our most pleasant during tax season. We practically live at the office.”

He kicked back. “Only person I know who can put up with me is you.” He gave her a wink and lifted a toast her way.

Lane returned it with a big smile. Another reason not to step over the sex line. He was her best friend.

“I have a crazy idea,” he said. “Why don’t we go somewhere together?”

Her smile faded. She shifted her gaze to the paper-cluttered desktop. “Brice, I...”

He sighed. “Yeah, I know.” He finished off his drink then stood. “I’m off to find me a steak at Charley’s. Care to join me?”

“No, thanks. I need to finish packing. I have an early flight.”

Lane listened to his footsteps disappear down the hall. Once she

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heard the rear door close, she slipped the brochure from her desk drawer.

*Diversions. An Exclusive Resort.*

It promised to indulge the visitor in every luxury. No request would be denied.

“We’ll see about that.”

If all went well, Lane would never had to worry about all those pent-up frustrations regarding Brice again. Relief was no more than two hours away in Palm Springs.

\* \* \*

*Damn Lane’s stubbornness.* Brice treasured it when doing business, but now? It was damned frustrating. If she were any other woman, he’d accuse her of playing hard to get. But Lane didn’t play games. She was dead serious—business was business; personal was personal and the two did not mesh.

Up until a year ago, that wasn’t a problem. They were both married to others. They were partners, best friends. Their subsequent divorces brought them closer. All that changed six months ago.

It was stupid how it happened—like a contrived plot from an old movie. Lane was trying to wrestle a box off a shelf. She lost her balance. He caught her. Freeze frame.

Brice would never forget that instant. Lane cradled in his arms. Her eyes, half-closed lids, focused on his mouth. He wanted to kiss her right then and there, then press her up against the wall and strip her naked. It might have happened that way, too, if one of their new preparers hadn’t busted in.

The day they’d begun training their help for the season, Lane had stressed that their personal lives had no place here—to keep it out of the office.

Caught up in the hectic schedule, Brice didn’t pursue the issue then. But tax season was over and he’d be damned if he let any more time pass before he had her.

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## CHAPTER 2

Tucked away in a palmed canyon, *Diversions* was indeed private. And so exclusive only one small, arched sign showed the entrance. As Lane drove up the winding road, she marveled at the abundance of vegetation—palm trees, mesquite heavy with golden blossoms, grasses, and wildflowers in every color imaginable.

A footpath followed a small stream that trickled downward parallel to the road. The oasis that gave life to the place was obviously filled to capacity. Lane longed to wade barefoot in its cool shallows.

As she reached the niche at the top of the canyon, asphalt gave way to a red-cobbled circular drive. A fountain marked its center. Two lovers caught in a coital embrace was the focal point. Water cascaded gently over the couple, accentuating the passion of their orgasmic state.

Lane pulled in a breath. Just looking at the statue set her blood thrumming. To be that worshipped, that adored, that... uninhibited. She laughed at herself. Oh, there was definitely a time when she'd cast caution to the four winds. Thankfully, she'd grown up.

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The building was reminiscent of an old, Spanish hacienda. White stucco, deep arches for windows and doors, red tile shading it all. Cool, peaceful.

The valet greeted her with a wave as she pulled to a stop. “Welcome to *Diversions*, Ms. Davis. We’ve been expecting you.”

And they greeted her by name. Lane was already starting to feel pampered.

She offered him a smile as she opened the car door. “I’m looking forward to my stay.”

Another man stepped forward and gave a slight bow. Lane guessed him to be in his forties. He was in good shape—tanned from days in the Palm Springs sun, well muscled judging from the legs displayed by his shorts.

“My name is Charles. I’m with butler services and will be seeing to your every wish during your stay. We hope you’ll find it pleasant. Your room is ready.” He signaled to the bellman to retrieve her luggage. “This way, Ms. Davis.” He motioned her forward with a sweep of his arm.

*My every wish.* It seemed too good to be true. And suddenly her nerve failed her. She’d never done anything like this before. Wasn’t it akin to prostitution? She’d lose her business. How would she explain that to Brice?

“Charles, I...”

“Yes, madam?” He waited for her to continue, his full attention on her. Unfortunately, so were the valet’s and bellman’s.

“Nothing.” She forced a smile. “Just...thank you.” She’d mention her change of heart once they reached the privacy of her room.

He led her along Spanish tile through the foyer to the courtyard beyond and past more fountains. Paths twisted into the lush center garden profuse with roses, bougainvillea, purple sage, irises, and hundreds of other flowers. A towering Ladybanks bursting with yellow flowers wound its way through latticework overhead, shading them

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from the desert sun. The trickle of water drifted her way, then voices. A woman's giggle was followed by a man's deep-throated chuckle.

Then Lane caught a glimpse of a second couple sprawled in a patch of grass. She quickly averted her gaze when the woman parted her thighs to her companion's questing lips. Lane swore her cheeks flushed and prayed Charles didn't notice.

As if sensing her thoughts, he glanced over his shoulder. Her face heated. All he did was smile as his brisk steps took them to a bungalow set in the far section of the courtyard.

"Here we are. The Hibiscus Suite." A twist of his wrist opened the door.

Soft light greeted her. Breathless with wonder, Lane crossed the threshold to the huge room beyond. It was more a small apartment than a suite. A fluffy king size bed was tucked under an arched alcove. White and yellow draping made a curtain around it.

Each footstep sank into deep carpeting the color of spring moss. A sofa and two chairs were set before an entertainment center. What she could only call a breakfast nook invited the guest to linger over a meal. Sliding doors led to yet another garden wonderland. Two massage tables stood on the courtyard. Attendants—one male, one female—waited beside each one.

"You'll find a robe in the bathroom closet, madam," Charles said as he directed the bellman out. "We'll leave you to enjoy our masseuse's talents."

Lane snapped out of her reverie. "Charles, I...I've changed my mind. No companion."

No expression crossed his face. "You'll need to advise him, Ms. Davis. Those arrangements are done separately." He motioned to the courtyard with a slight jerk of his head.

She choked down her embarrassment as he shut the door behind him. If she didn't feel like a john before, she sure did now. That settled it. This man had to go.

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Lane gave a quick glance outside. *Did Charles' nudge of the head mean the man was already here? Where?*

As if in answer, the masseuses turned smiles to the copse of foliage beside them. The man's lips moved, "Yes, sir."

She stood on tiptoe trying to see over the hedge of golden green firebush. A head popped up, then broad, wet shoulders. Impressions slammed into her from all directions, coming so fast Lane would never be able to speak them with that speed.

There was a Jacuzzi tucked away over there. Yes, she could see the hint of steam curling around the man almost kissing the muscles carved into his back. He looked familiar.

He bent then wrapped something around his waist.

*He's naked! Good God, he's naked! He was in the Jacuzzi naked!*

Her thoughts ground to a halt. She was supposed to go up to a naked man who looked like he was carved from the finest marble and tell him she reneged. Was she crazy? When would she ever have a chance like this again? Perfect specimens simply didn't exist. Lane ought to know—she'd been with her small share of men over the years.

She watched long, thick fingers smooth his water-darkened hair. Droplets cascaded at his touch. Then he wiped his hands over the thick terrycloth stretched across his rear end. The clefts on either side of his buttocks clenched, then relaxed.

Lane's mouth went dry as her blood raced. She told her feet to move, her lips to speak and send the man on his way. But her traitorous body had a will of its own.

Gaze still riveted to his butt, Lane watched him turn sideways. Her eyes zeroed in on his crotch. No evidence of arousal presented itself, but then he had just left the Jacuzzi.

He turned fully her way. His fingers flicked water from his washboard stomach. Lane followed the action, held enthralled by those long, dexterous fingers and the line of dark hair that arched from his navel to below the edge of the towel. She followed the path once more

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to his crotch. A full erection now tented the towel threatening to undo the tuck that held it in place.

He'd seen her. He wanted her. Tempting as it was and despite all her protestations when she'd made her plans, Lane simply couldn't do this.

She forced her feet to propel her across the floor. They moved, but her damn eyes were still glued to his boastful erection. Hand on the grip on the sliding glass door, she yanked her gaze upward and stopped dead in her tracks.

“What the hell...”

It was Brice.



## CHAPTER 3

Brice watched the myriad of emotions cross Lane's beautiful face. Thankfully, none of them were anger. And while desire caved in to confusion, it still lingered in the depths of her deep brown eyes.

Truth warred with subterfuge. But in the ten years they'd known each other, Brice had never once lied to Lane and he damn sure didn't want to start now. Not when their future hinged on the outcome of the next few minutes, hours, days—whatever she granted him.

Not when he wanted her so bad that he knew all she had to do was wrap her nimble fingers around his dick to make him come. Not when he craved to bury his throbbing length deep into her hot, wet core and fuck her until eternity imploded upon itself.

*So, say something. Do something. Don't just stand there with your dick bouncing up and down.*

The glass door slid open. Eyes locked with his, Lane stepped over the threshold. Brice urged his feet to motion, meeting her halfway. She held her hands out, palm up. Tears puddled in her eyes, she rapidly

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blinked them away.

"Brice...I don't understand."

"Yes...you do." He slid his hands around her waist. Fanning his fingers across her back, he pulled her against him. God, she felt sweet.

Lane's resistance was token. He felt her tense, then seconds later sag against him. She rested palms and head against his chest.

He longed to mold his lips to hers. To chase away the attendants who waited patiently nearby and carry Lane to the California king waiting to bless their joining.

"You planned this." A statement, not a question.

"Yes," he whispered against her hair. "We'd be good together, Lane. And you know that. I want to be with you. I want to feel you quiver beneath my touch. I want to see your face captured in bliss."

She pulled her head back to look at him. "And what about afterward? No one's ever been there for me. They all walk out."

He smiled and traced the bow of her lips with his thumb. "I've been with you for ten years. Walk out *on* you? I walked out *with* you, remember? We've seen each other at our worst. We've got each other's back when the chips are down. I am the one person who will never walk out on you. And you know that."

"You are my best friend, my business partner. Everything will be ruined."

"It's already been changed. We've crossed the line, Lane. This will always be between us, creating tension when it doesn't have to."

She laughed lightly. "You almost sound like we're in high school and you're trying to talk yourself into my pants."

He cupped her buttocks and tucked her against his erection. "Do I feel like a high school kid?"

A shiver coursed through her body.

"I swear you'll never regret this, Lane."

She pushed away gently. "You realize, of course, that I'd only be using you to satisfy my needs. Any man would do. That's why I..."

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He tossed back a laugh. "Honey, this is me you're talking to. I don't have a doubt you're horny as hell. God knows I am. But I also know you. You might have scheduled a companion for the week. But before you realized it was me, you were coming out here to tell me to leave."

He butted his forehead against hers. "The heat in your eyes when you finally looked in my face said it all."

"Hmph. That was fire and I was pissed."

He chuckled again and tucked her back to him. "It was fire all right. The kind I see when you don't realize I know you're watching me."

She didn't have a comeback for that one. What would be the sense? They both knew the truth.

Sighing, Brice set her at arms' length. "We're here. We enjoy each other's company. Let's just have a good time for now. God knows we deserve a relaxing vacation."

"And the rest?" she asked with a tilt of her head.

"Will take care of itself."

"Or not?"

"Or not." He conceded the point with a nod. *If that's what it took to get her to stay for now.* But he'd be damned if they were going to leave without settling this once and for all. And, as far as he was concerned, the only resolution was him between her thighs.

\* \* \*

Lane's nipples felt like hard BBs someone had shoved into her bra. Desire, need, quivered through her, resting like a thousand busy bees in her stomach and under her skin. If she had any sense about her, she'd grab her suitcase and head home right now. So why in the world was she clutching the plush terry robe to her chest ready to join him for a massage?

Still, her footsteps led her to the bathroom. Cool marble tile caressed her bare feet, yet did nothing to ease the fire coursing through her veins.

Lane stripped her silky blouse away. Her nipples hardened even

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more in anticipation of a touch she was determined they wouldn't get. She ignored the nagging urge to cup her breasts.

"I can beat this."

Who was she fooling? In her current condition, she wasn't capable of resisting him. She needed release and she needed it now.

Lane twisted the lock on the bathroom then felt foolish for doing so. Who did she think would come in? Brice? He wouldn't be that bold. But then he had orchestrated this entire rendezvous. She pictured him charging through the door sans towel, his erection waving before him like horn of a rutting ancient beast. He'd sweep her into his arms, rip the last vestiges of clothing from her and stab his flesh deep and hard into hers.

Lane sucked in a breath. Her clit throbbed for attention. Perched on the edge of the bathtub, she wiggled out of capris and panties.

Her little lady peeked out from its hidden folds—hard, glistening, and ready. Lane pulled her lower lip between her teeth and covered it with her fingers. She bit back a groan. One circle, two. She imagined it was Brice's hand there, not her own. Dancing against her hard knot, plunging his fingers deep inside while his thumb nudged her toward climax. But it wouldn't be enough. His mouth...he'd have to use his tongue, flicking, teasing, sucking until she...

Orgasm shuddered through Lane. She wrapped her free hand around the edge of the tub to keep from falling. It seemed she sat there forever, head slumped while she waited for her heartbeat to return to normal. Now sated, she could handle anything.

Thrusting her arms into the robe, she knotted it loosely and returned to the patio.

Brice lay there glistening with oil and oblivious to the world while the male attendant worked his taut back muscles. Both were turned from her.

The woman lifted a large towel, further blocking Lane from anyone's view. Protected, she dropped the robe to the end of the table

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and let the woman wrap her up.

"Lay down and relax." She invited her with a sweep of her arm to the massage table. Lane stretched out, face nestled in the padded niche.

"Is there a scent you'd like? One you wouldn't?"

"No coconut," Brice mumbled from the next table. "She doesn't like it."

Lane smiled. That never would have occurred to her. Yet wasn't he always looking out for her, protecting her, seeing she took care of herself? As a lover, wouldn't he be just as attentive?

The attendant folded back the toweling until only her buttocks were covered. Lane resisted the urge to hide the sides of her breasts. They were smushed flat beneath her; what did she expect anyone to see? She jumped with the first touch of the young woman's oil-warmed hands against her shoulders.

"I'm sorry." She drew back. "Did I hurt you?"

"No...I..."

Other than Brice's neck rubs to help alleviate her tax season headaches, Lane had never had anything that remotely resembled a massage. She wasn't entirely certain she felt comfortable having another person—a stranger—touch her.

Lane snagged the towel and drew it up and around her as she pulled back to her knees. "I'm sorry. I just can't do this. Nothing against you," she added quickly.

Brice pushed himself to his elbows. "You're tense. It'll do you good."

She offered a nervous laugh. "Not if I can't relax."

He smiled. "True." Wrapping his towel around his waist, he swung his legs to the side. "But you need it. Just lay down and I'll take care of you."

A thousand images flitted through her head of the many ways Brice could take care of her.

"Come on." He caught her fingers and urged her down. "I'll send

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Carla and John away. It'll just be us." The slightest jerk of his chin and they slipped away.

Lane wasn't sure that was any better. Alone, temptation reared its head. She shot a glance down to his crotch. Even tightly wrapped, his semi-erect penis presented itself.

"It's just a massage, Lane. Nothing more. Come on. You need this."

She needed a lot of things, but thought it best not to say that out loud.

"Have you stopped trusting me?"

Lane nearly laughed. Up until now she would've said, "Never." But this was a different Brice. One she had little experience with. One who was determined to get what he wanted.

The term predatory male now had new meaning. Never had she felt pursued with such quiet, persistent vigor. Rather than be turned off by it, Lane found it only increased her desire.

And still she resisted. Out of stubbornness? For survival of their current relationship? Or was it the deeply genetically ingrained need to be pursued and have him prove himself worthy?

That last thought bothered her. She'd never been one to play games. Why subconsciously she might do so now didn't set well.

Brice braced his knuckles on either side of her thighs as he hovered over her. "After all these years, if you can't trust my word by now then we really do have a problem and perhaps we need to address more issues than sex."

Shame muted her. He'd never lied to her about anything, even his desire for her. Why would she think that would change now? She was the one not being truthful. She was the one who had never revealed how much she depended on him, how very much she wanted to give in and fall into bed with him.

*Trust him.* To love her. To stay no matter what. A big risk to take and Lane wasn't a gambler.

*The hell you aren't,* her conscience chided. She'd taken a big

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gamble when she decided to open her own business. Who stood by her then? Brice and only Brice. Her husband fretted and stewed, bitched and moaned—that marriage was definitely one risk that had failed miserably. Now here she was, being tempted to take another chance on love, another big gamble with Brice as her partner.

Lane had everything to lose and so much more to gain. So, how lucky did she feel? Hell, how could she feel anything with Brice so near? His heat swirled around her, pulling her close without touching, wrapping her in sensual abandon. Her skin prickled and her heartbeat pounded in her ears.

He lifted an eyebrow. “Lane?”

“Of course I trust you,” she somehow managed to say past a throat gone dry. Without another word, she resumed her former position, then trembled when she felt him fold the towel over her bottom. She was tired of fighting her desires. It was time to roll the dice of fate once more and pray she came up sevens.

There was the spurt of oil, the soft swish of his hands as he rubbed them together. Then he touched her back and Lane melted into heaven.

\* \* \*

Brice shuddered with Lane’s low groan of contentment. The sound played havoc with his resolve to keep this nonsexual. She sagged beneath his long strokes against her muscles.

*God, her skin’s soft!*

He longed to run his tongue down her spine from top to tip. To part her thighs and hear her moans when he targeted her clit.

He swore he’d never been this hard in his life. All she had to do was reach around, cup his hardened sack in her hands and he’d be coming like a teenager. That would impress the hell out of her. He prayed for the stamina to ride her like he did in his dreams. To make her come time and time again. To beg him to fuck her.

His erection twitched with anticipation, begging him to be appeased. Brice longed to crawl onto the table with Lane, yank her to

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her knees, and take her doggy-style.

*So much for being a gentleman.*

At least you couldn't fault a guy for what he thought.

He watched her relax beneath his touch. It was a start. Within minutes her breathing deepened. Each measured breath indicated she'd fallen asleep.

*Good, she needed the rest.*

He pulled away and draped her robe over her. No telling how long she'd be out, but he refused to disturb her by moving her to some place she'd be more comfortable. If she slept, it was all the comfort she needed.

After ordering their room service dinner in advance, Brice took his hard-on to the Jacuzzi. Something had to give or he'd never last. Tossing his towel to one side, he sank into the bubbling warmth and wished it were ice water. Resting his head against the padded rest behind him, Brice closed his eyes and curled his hand around his penis. Long, slow strokes coupled with images of being buried deep in Lane's heat brought him quickly to the edge. He dusted his fingers over his belly as the feeling crawled upward.

Something brushed against his side. Brice's eyes flashed open as he jumped. Lane's soft smile greeted him.

"Need a hand?"

Brice sucked in a sharp breath through his teeth as her fingers wrapped around him. "I thought you were asleep."

"I was. Until your hands stopped their magic." She stroked him from tip to root.

A groan tore from his throat. "God, Lane...honey, I need you." He slipped his arm around her waist and drew her over his lap.

"I know. I need you, too," she whispered. "And I want you." Arms braced on his shoulders, she eased her body onto his. Eyes closed, bottom lip caught between her teeth, inch by inch she surrounded him until he was buried in molten velvet.



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“God, you’re tight.” He caught her hips and held her in place. “Don’t move. Not yet.”

She gave a light laugh. “How can I? I feel...impaled.”

He chuckled softly. “Now you’re going to give me a swelled head.”

“Really? And you don’t already have one?” She rotated against him.

A surge coursed through him. Brice gritted his teeth and fought for control. Lane flickered her nails down to his flat nipples. Catching the hard dots between thumb and forefinger, she tweaked hard.

“Honey, please, you don’t know what you’re doing to me.”

“Yes...I do.” She nuzzled against his ear. “I need this, too, Brice. I need to know you want me so much you can’t hold back. I need to know I can devastate you.”

Grabbing a handful of her hair, he gently pulled her back. “Be careful what you wish for, sweetheart.”

Without warning, he yanked her free and turned her around. “Kneel in the seat, hands on the edge of the tub.”

He gave her little time to comply. The instant she was in position, he plunged into her to his full length. Lane’s back arched on a moan.

“Tell me what you want, honey. Say it,” he spit out through clenched jaws.

“You. I want you,” she breathlessly replied.

Slipping his hands around, Brice found the hard core of her center. Rigidly in place, he pressed the pads of his fingers around it. Lane twitched against him, riding his dick with each circle he made. Forehead against the headrest, her sweet ass pivoted against him while her fingers gouged the rim of the tub.

He felt her tighten around him even more, pulling his orgasm to the surface with her own. Ripples of her pleasure traveled up and down his erection. She tossed back her head on a guttural cry as she came. Then and only then did Brice grab her hips and give her the full pounding measure of his own need. His orgasm spewed from him in a searing

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explosion of jism.

Panting for breath, they sank into each other's arms. Nestled in the cove of his arm, Lane danced her fingers through his chest hairs. Nothing felt more right, more natural. His heart swelled with the love he'd known was always there. But a declaration now...

He lifted her chin on the crook of his finger and slanted his mouth over hers. Her soft, full lips molded to his. There was nothing submissive in her kiss. Her tongue lashed and twined with his, taking his breath away, rousing his libido once more. Brice never would have believed it possible so soon, no matter how horny he was. Yet the evidence of the power she held lifted its head in wanton exploration.

Lane traced the veiny underside with her forefinger, then dropped lower to tickle his balls. Lips locked, Brice stood taking her with him. Her fingers never stopped mapping him, tantalizing him. Cupping her buttocks, he lifted her until she wrapped her legs around his waist. Snagging his discarded towel, he carried her to the plush patch of grass hidden by the hedge of cedar. He snapped the towel down and placed her lovingly upon it.

Brice sat back on his heels to finally admire her beauty. Beaded nipples capped dark aureoles on full breasts. Her chest curved inward to her waist, then outward to softly rounded hips. Her skin was flawless—a peachy cream that showed she took care of herself.

He ran his hands down her sides. "You're so beautiful."

A pink flush covered her cheeks. Brice half-expected Lane to cover herself after his words in a sudden bout of shyness. Instead, she smiled and draped one arm around his neck.

"So are you," she whispered.

Brice kissed her again, long and deep. Then again. He was starved for her, every bit of her. If they lived a thousand years, he knew he could never get enough.

\* \* \*

Lane's heart swelled with every kiss they exchanged. Emotions that

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had coursed under the surface of her skin now threatened to overwhelm her. Ecstasy, euphoria was hers and it had nothing to do with sex. She loved Brice. Maybe she always had. Joy choked her throat. Tears of happiness puddled her eyes. She rapidly blinked them clear. The last thing Brice needed to see was her crying.

*Talk about a spell-breaker.* Her explanation might be simple, but there was nothing in the world that would make her ruin this glorious moment.

He sealed another long kiss then crawled his mouth down her neck. She lifted her chest to his questing lips. He took the offering without hesitation, drawing her breast deep into his mouth.

Lane's soft sigh mutated to a guttural moan when he flicked his tongue around and around her nipple. Desire shot a lightning streak straight to her clit. His fingers combed through her soft pubic curls, teasing on either side until she twitched from the frustration of trying to get his hand where she really needed it.

"Oh, Brice, please!" She beat her fists into the grass.

His lips traced a hot, wet path lower, flicking circles around her flat navel before continuing on. Lane held her breath in anticipation. *Would he? How many years had it been since a man...?*

He wedged his knees between hers. Her hopes plummeted. *Why would he?* Her husband never had in six years of marriage. Why would she even think Brice would on their second time?

Cupping her buttocks, he lifted her to his thighs. She fell open to his view. Shyness assaulted her, yet there was nothing she could do save twist away and end the moment. He slid one long, thick finger inside her, then another. Lane pressed her lips together to keep from crying out.

*Lord, it feels good.*

He finger-fucked her slowly, in and out, then pushed high into the top center of her vagina.

Lane arched off the makeshift pallet on a strangled cry.

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“Feels good, doesn’t it, sweetheart?” He pushed again, hitting that special spot.

Stars danced behind her lids. *Feel good? Beyond heaven.*

Again, he pushed. Lane clutched at tufts of grass. Again. Damned if she didn’t feel like she could come and he hadn’t even touched her clit.

He shifted once more, raining kisses down her belly, down her thighs, up the inside. Good God, he was going to do it! He was going to do it! He was...

“Ahhh, yesssss.”

She clutched his head to her crotch while his tongue ran circles up and down, over and around. He answered on a groan then thrust his fingers up.

Spasms of pleasure exploded over her. Lane jerked beneath his mouth as she came in an orgasm she swore lasted forever. Before she could collapse into an exhausted heap, he gathered her close and stabbed his flesh into hers.

Each pivot of his hips into hers urged her participation. She rocked with him. Joy, love, surrounded her. The emotion before was nothing compared to this. She smelled herself on his mouth and kissed him deeply. His back muscles contracted beneath her wandering hands. A lesser man would have come by now. Hell, a lesser man wouldn’t be having sex again so soon after the first time.

She felt the tension in his lower back just as he did. Breaking off the kiss, Brice tossed his head back. A long, low groan rumbled in his throat. Lane gloried in the mix of bliss, of pleasure-pain that covered his face as he came. And in her heart she knew she’d given him this—and no one else.

Wrapped in each other’s arms, they lay there amid the kisses and caresses of after-love until their breathing returned to normal. Braced on his forearms, Brice brushed the backs of his fingers across her cheek.

“I ordered dinner for us. It should be here soon. I’m sure finding a

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naked couple in the grass isn't anything new for Charles, but..."

Lane giggled. "I could go for a shower. Join me?"

Mischief highlighted his grin. "Try to stop me."

\* \* \*

*Man, this couldn't get any better.* Brice loved the intimacy of bathing together. He always had. Never in his wildest dreams did he think he'd ever find a woman willing to do so. And here she was, right under his nose all these years.

He let her lead him by the hand to the bathroom. They stepped into the dual-head shower stall together.

"I love a big shower," she said as she twisted on the faucets.

"Me, too. I'd love to have a bathroom with a huge garden tub."

Lane stretched her arms high over her head. "That would be heaven after a long day at work. To sit and soak our troubles away."

Hope surged. She saw them together! In a place of their own! A tub of their own! Still, he remained mute. There had to be a perfect time to announce his intentions, but he suspected now wasn't it. Instead, he picked up the bar of soap.

"I wash your back, you wash mine?"

She sidled up to him with a naughty smile. "And what about my front?"

Brice tossed back a laugh. God, he loved her this way. He loved her all ways.

Lane slipped the soap from his fingers and scrubbed it through his chest hair. She sculpted designs there, swooping the suds lower and lower. With each swipe of her hand, his dick lifted another notch. Once fully erect, she cupped her fingers around it, then under to caress his hardened sack.

Brice wrapped his hand around the towel bar to keep his balance. Mesmerized, he let her work her magic. She left no part of him untouched. From shoulder to toes and in between, Lane washed him gently. Heaven never knew hands so sure. Then, when he thought it

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couldn't be any better than this, she knelt before him and wrapped her lips around the head of his dick.

"Oh, baby..." he groaned.

Her tongue twirled around the tip, down the slit and around once more before she sucked him deep into her mouth. Brice cupped his free hand to the back of her head, holding her gently in place while he slowly bucked his hips in time to the ministrations of her mouth. He couldn't stop the rush of orgasm any more than he could his heart from beating. Lane sucked the cum right out of him, leaving him weak-kneed afterwards.

He sank to the floor of the stall before her feet. Nudging her legs apart, he returned the attention. Minutes later an orgasm shuddered through her.

\* \* \*

Lane couldn't remember when she'd been more content, more pampered. Wrapped in a plush *Diversions* robe and stuffed after a meal of pan-seared salmon in a light dill sauce with fresh asparagus and rice pilaf, she tucked herself against a mound of pillows and watched Brice see Charles to the door with the cart of dirty dishes.

"Would you like a fresh bottle of Riesling, sir?"

Brice glanced back at the ice bucket where the empty bottle rested. "I think we're fine for the night."

"Call down should you need anything. Good night, sir...madam."

Brice closed and latched the door on the butler's exit. Long strides carried him to the foot of the bed. He doffed his robe and crawled up between her legs.

Lane laughed. "I plead exhaustion."

"You lie like a rug." He tugged the belt free on her robe and peeled it from her. "Who says I'm after sex? Maybe I just want to cuddle under the covers with you naked in my arms."

She laughed again. "Now who's lying?" Lane rubbed her leg against the erection resting there.

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Brice loved the light dancing in her eyes, the pure joy that rested there. It was now or never.

“We’re good together, honey.”

Her smile faltered. He brushed his fingers over her cheek.

“We need to be more than just partners.”

Her eyes rounded, yet she said nothing. Brice didn’t know if that was a good thing or a bad thing. He pressed on.

“We want the same things. We always have. We’ve never found them with anyone else. Maybe we’re supposed to find them together.”

Lane’s mouth worked, but the words were slow to follow. “You mean...”

“Yes...children...a home...a life together. I love you, Lane.”

A tear trickled down her cheek. Now he’d done it. Screwed up big time. He rolled to her side and wrapped his arms around her.

“Aw, honey, don’t cry. Please, don’t cry.”

She flicked her cheeks clear as she pulled in a breath. Brice covered her lips with his forefinger. “Please, don’t say anything. I just want to hold you. I’d really like to know how it feels to sleep with you in my arms.”

He switched off the light before she could see the fear in his eyes.

\* \* \*

Lane watched Brice sleeping by the light of moon that filtered through the patio doors. The man was gorgeous even as he slept. And to think she’d fought against this. He was an insatiable and generous lover. Coupled with everything else she knew about him, she was head over heels in love with him. And he loved her, too. The news was emotionally overwhelming. She wanted to weep and cheer at the same time.

Looked like her gamble had definitely paid off. She longed to shake him awake and tell him she felt the same way. But suddenly just saying it wasn’t enough. It was time to take one more gamble. He had to know she really meant it.

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Easing from bed, Lane dressed in the dark then left.

\* \* \*

The clatter of dishes woke Brice at what felt like the crack of dawn. He squinted at the bedside clock.

*10:00 am. Jeez. Talk about the sleep of the dead.*

Half dazed, he reached for the other side of the bed. Lane was gone and the sheets were cool. Another rattle pulled his head up. Charles was setting up for breakfast on the courtyard.

Seeing him awake, the butler walked in. "Breakfast soon, sir. I've got a hot shower and your razor waiting in the bathroom."

"What? No coffee?"

"There as well, sir."

"Where's Lane? Ms. Davis?"

"I've not seen her, sir. She called in a breakfast order about an hour ago. As far as I know, she hasn't returned from last night."

*Last night? She left me last night? "Where?"*

"She retrieved her car around midnight and left, sir."

Brice stumbled to the bathroom and stepped under the spray. What the hell was going on? Her toiletries were still here, and so were her clothes. It made no sense. Worry gnawed at his gut. He'd have to find her. But where the hell did he start to look? Home? It made no sense. Why leave without her things? Still, he had to start somewhere. Obviously his declaration of love had sent her packing. Maybe she left her things behind so she wouldn't wake him, so he couldn't stop her.

*Then why call in breakfast?*

He twisted off the faucets and wiped himself dry. Time was wasting. Home was the best place to start looking. Grabbing the coffee cup, he slugged down the contents as he charged from the bathroom. As he grabbed for his boxers, he stopped short.

Lane sat at the table on the courtyard looking fresh and bright. It was the person with her that caused him the most alarm—their attorney.



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Brice hauled on boxers and his Dockers, then snagged a yellow shirt from the closet. Finger-combing his hair, he marched to his doom.

“Good morning.” At least Lane’s smile was as bright as the rest of her.

“What’s going on?” His tone was demanding, fed by his alarm. “Tom.” He nodded to the attorney and pulled out a chair.

“Lane called me early this morning and explained the need for a change in the partnership paperwork.”

“A change?”

“Yes, to sole proprietorship.” She took a sip of her coffee.

Brice parked his elbows on the table and buried his head in his hands. How could she be so calm about this? She was ready to dissolve everything because he loved her? Because they’d made love? This was crazy, insane.

Tom slid the papers his way. “I know it’s a bit premature. But Lane explained everything to me this morning. No reason why we can’t get started right now and have it all set to go.”

Brice pulled his head up. Everything he’d worked for was gone. And all his hopes and dreams for a future with Lane were gone with them. He yanked the papers to him. Fine. There was no fight left in him. He’d laid his heart out there with everything else and...

Brice rubbed his eyes and stared at the papers once more. There had to be a mistake. Was he so crazy in love with Lane that he’d misread them? He looked again.

*Nope...there it was plain as day.*

He shifted his gaze to Lane, to her bright smile and the glimmer of mischief in her beautiful brown eyes.

She slid her hand over his. “We *are* good together. I want to be more than just partners, too. Actually, I want us to be the ultimate partners.”

He glanced down at the papers that clearly said, *Brice and Lane Cameron, joint ownership, husband and wife*. “You’ll marry me?”

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“In a heartbeat.” She patted her flat belly. “I’d like to see what it’s like to have a little tax deduction or two of my own.”

“But why...” He held up the papers.

She shrugged a shoulder. “It’ll save us money.”

“I know that. What I want to know is why the subterfuge?”

She motioned to their surroundings. “You should talk.”

She had him there. He’d set the wheels in motion, she’d just kept them rolling. That was one of the many things he loved about her.

Brice caught her fingers and pulled her to her feet. “Time’s wasting, partner. We’ve got a week left and nothing would please me more than to spend it here on our honeymoon.”

“While we plan our dream house?” she said tracing her finger down his jaw.

He smiled. “Sweetheart, anything you plan is bound to be a winner.”

Lane sighed. Love sparkled in her eyes. “Only as long as you are by my side. That’s the only sure thing I do know.”

## CAITLYN WILLOWS

Caitlyn Willows is the pseudonym for award-winning author Catherine Snodgrass, who wanted to flex her writing muscles in the romantica 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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