

The book cover features a composite image. On the left, a man with dark hair and a light beard is shown from the chest up, looking directly at the viewer. On the right, a vibrant nebula with green, yellow, and orange hues is set against a dark, star-filled space background. A large, blue, textured sphere, resembling a planet or moon, is positioned at the bottom center, partially overlapping the man's torso and the nebula.

**CAITLYN
WILLOCKS**

**WARRIOR
PRINCESS**

WARRIOR PRINCESS

Rhiannon wrapped her arms around him and nestled her head against his chest. "There is no sacrifice too great for my people. How many times have you said that, Father? How many times have you shown that?"

His arms fell about her. "A true leader. Just as your brothers were."

"We will be victorious, Father."

"Or die trying?" He gave a soft chuckle. "Yes, you are truly of the House of Ba-lark."

"I can't fight you both." Sadness weighed down her mother's voice. Rhiannon pulled from her father's embrace. "Thank you. I have one final request of you."

Her parents waited, eyes focused on her. The gods only knew what was going on in their minds. It was a daring request, but no more so than what she had previously told them.

"I need something to carry me through the years. A sweet memory if I am to lay nightly with Taroog. All I ask is one night of pleasure in the arms of a man chosen by you."

The silence lasted a full minute. Finally, her father uttered a single word.

"Agreed."

Her mother flicked away a tear and turned away.

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WARRIOR PRINCESS

BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

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WARRIOR PRINCESS
AN AMBER QUILL PRESS BOOK

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*To Trace, Ing, E.J., Laura, Pat,
Karin, Barbara, Charlee, Josephine, and Lara—
all represented in this story
in some fashion.*

CHAPTER 1

THE HOMECOMING

Rhiannon struggled to read the instrument panel through a veil of tears. How could the ravaged wasteland below possibly be her beloved Juron? The years since her departure had not been kind, and neither had that vicious, black-hearted cretin, Taroog.

Gone were the islands of light that announced sprawling cities below. Devastation lay in their place. She'd circled the planet twice looking for something positive, drifting from night to day then back again. Spirals of smoke drifted into the atmosphere. Some represented the remains of fires that still consumed the cities. Others were bastions of hope from those who refused to give up, choosing to live primitively rather than in tyranny. Life still existed, that much she knew.

But how long before Taroog added them to the countless millions who had perished?

Gone were the crystal spires that were a beacon of optimism and love to all. They had drawn all to the center square for joyous celebrations of life. From what she'd been told, they'd been Taroog's

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first targets when his forces had invaded from Primadyl. His goal, she presumed, had been to defeat them by destroying a symbol of their religion. But Juronians were made of stronger stuff than that. Just not as strong as those whose own survival depended on takeover.

If only the Primadylians had been open to negotiation. Rhiannon's people had been perfectly willing to share. Taroog wouldn't hear of it. It was all or nothing for him.

Rhiannon swooped her shuttlecraft toward the dense forest near her family's castle. The fact she wasn't challenged was a good sign she'd managed to slip in undetected. It looked like the cloaking device was truly a success.

The little ship eased between the trees with nary a rustle of the leaves. Settled in the tiny clearing, she flicked the controls off. The engine shut down with a sigh.

She patted the panel. "Good girl. Always so quiet and dependable. What would I do without you?"

This was the prototype for what she prayed would one day be a fleet of vessels. All they needed now was time and the element of surprise—a distraction so great Taroog would never know what hit him until it was too late. And that's why Rhiannon had snuck home after five, long years.

She tucked her laser pistol into the pouch at her side then swung her pack over her shoulders. No doubt her return would be greeted with a mix of tears and anger. Her parents would simply have to understand her safety no longer mattered, not when Taroog had systematically killed off all her brothers. She couldn't stay tucked away in Rebazet any longer. It was time to get out of the laboratory and make a different kind of stand.

The door lifted silently. Not even a hiss of the hydraulics indicated its presence. Cool mist drifted in, bringing with it the acrid stench of smoke.

Rhiannon stepped into the glade, shutting the hatch behind her. The

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vessel disappeared behind its cloaked shield. She wished she had the benefit of that type of camouflage. *One day.* She and her fellow engineers had labored intensively on that project, too.

Holding her pistol at the ready, she ducked into the line of trees. Smoke pervaded all, chasing away the sweetness of late blooming moon lilies. Gone, too, was any sign of wildlife. Her presence stirred no roosting birds, no animals on their nightly foray. Survival had required desertion of their normal ranges. With any luck, they'd made it to Mount Rasi and were safely tucked away on the highest peaks, nestled in its deepest valleys. But not for long if Taroog was victorious in his conquest. He would destroy all in his path.

Rhiannon hiked up her chin. That wouldn't happen. It couldn't happen...even if she had to slit his throat herself. He and his regime *would* be brought down.

Scanner in one hand, laser pistol in the other, she picked her way through the towering trees. The well-trodden path she'd known as a child had long since disappeared. Had it been daylight, she could have found her way with no problem. Night now held too many dangers, so she drew out her scanner. It showed more than just direction, so she knew she was alone. One thousand measures later, the dark gray walls of her family's castle loomed before her.

Rhiannon tucked her scanner away as she glanced around the open expanse of patchy grass between her and the stone wall. Here she trusted her eyes. All was clear. A quick sprint carried her across. She hugged her back against the surface, daring not to breathe for fear of discovery. Several minutes passed. Still nothing. It was safe to move on.

She counted the windows towering above. Dark curtains blocked out any hint of light beyond, yet she knew her target well. How many times as a child had she and her brothers snuck back in after a night of fun, doing all to avoid that particular window? The thought of joyful times made her smile. At least she had memories.

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The creeper leading to their respective rooms had died. Too risky to climb. Rhiannon had expected as much. Reconnaissance had paid off. Pulling the rappelling cannon from her pack, she aimed for the eaves above. A small pouf launched the projectile. A light thunk seated it. Rhiannon gave a hard tug to make sure then clicked the rope to her belt. A flick of her wrist hauled her up. She stopped at her parents' window and swung to the ledge. Hopefully, her mother was still a light sleeper. She hated to destroy the glass.

Drawing in a breath, Rhiannon tapped against the pane. Thick walls kept her from hearing anything inside. She tapped again lest they pass off the noise as inconsequential. Within seconds the dark shielding parted and the flare of a candle backlit her father. His mouth dropped on a gasp as he yanked open the window.

"By the gods of Remlig, child!"

Strong arms snapped around her waist and hauled her inside. Her mother's gasp brought her scurrying to their side to pull her the rest of the way.

"Rhiannon, my darling." She grabbed her in a smothering hug. Rhiannon clung to her, fighting the urge to cry. Just as quickly, her mother shoved her away at arm's length.

"What are you doing here? Have you lost your senses? We told you to stay on Rebazet. The danger here is too great."

Her father wrapped an arm around her shoulders. "Much too great."

She cupped her hands against their cheeks. "I am aware of it. Losing Debron was too much. I had to see you."

"But, sweet dear—"

She pressed a finger to her mother's lips. "You may scold me in a moment."

Without explanation, she turned and released the rappelling gear, then tucked it back into her pack. "Can't take the chance of discovery, can I?" she said with a smile. Neither of them returned it.

Rhiannon studied their features. She could put their wan appearance

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down as shadows from the dim candlelight. To do so would only mean lying to herself. The years had not been kind to her parents. Lines dragged down their faces. Her mother's brilliant, shining, red hair—a match to her own—was shot with silver, and her father's now completely gray. The loss of four sons, the absence of a beloved daughter, and the destruction of their home world were all too much for the royal couple to bear.

Her father drew her close once more. “Why are you here, child? Has something gone wrong with the trials?”

She curled her hand over his, holding him tightly. “No, Father. The trials have been perfected. One of the prototypes lies protected nearby. The A-bot is a success. It will just take time to build the fleet.”

“Child, why bring it here and risk discovery?”

She had to smile. Would they ever think of her as anything other than that? She'd managed a team of scientists for the last five years, uncovered the mysteries of cloaking technology, and still she was *child* to them. And, yet, Rhiannon would never take that from them.

“I brought it here for training. You need experienced people to pilot the vessel. Success depends on many factors. We do not have the luxury of error.”

“But”—her mother swallowed hard—“how will you return?”

Rhiannon pulled in a breath. Time to sell her plan. “I don't intend to go back to Rebazet, Mother.”

Her father took a step back. Anger reddened his face. “By the gods of Remlig, I refuse to allow you to stay here.” He punctuated his decree with a stab of his finger. “I have lost four sons. I will *not* lose my daughter.”

She dusted her hand from his shoulder to his elbow. “I won't be staying here, Father. There is work elsewhere which needs to be done.”

Her mother frowned. “But...where will you go?”

“Come, let's sit.” She drew them toward the two chairs perched before the dying embers of the fireplace. Once they sat, Rhiannon

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pulled the small table before them and sat on it.

“As I said, we cannot afford the luxury of failure. It’ll take time to build a fleet. Time to train qualified pilots. Taroog cannot discover our plan. We need a diversion. Something to distract him.”

Her mother snapped to her feet. “No! I forbid it! Royal brides are to enter marriage pure. To mate only with the chosen one.”

“If I don’t do this, there’ll be no royal line to carry on. No world to rule and protect. And certainly no marriage.”

“No man would have you after Taroog,” her mother spit out.

“Then he wouldn’t be a man worth having,” she shot back.

Her father buried his head in his hands and slowly shook it.

Rhiannon looked from one to the other. “His penchant for Juronian women is well-known.”

Her mother squatted before her, taking both hands in hers. “So is his desire for a miracle child.”

She held her mother’s hands tightly. “And we know that’s not possible. Juronians and Primadylians are not genetically compatible.”

“That doesn’t keep him from trying. Those who conceive have borne abominations. What would you do then?”

“Love it. Bless it during its very brief time in this world. Thank it for the sacrifice it has made.”

Her father stared at the thread-worn carpet on the floor. The fact he had said nothing boded well. Rhiannon turned her argument toward him.

“Taroog will think he’s achieved a supreme victory when a royal Juronian falls into his lap. One banished for her support of his regime.”

Her mother gasped. “Banished? No, Rhiannon!”

She clutched her hand tightly to keep her mother from pulling away. “We all must make sacrifices, Mother. Once Taroog has been brought to his knees, all can be revealed. Trust me. I can keep him busy enough until the fleet and pilots are ready. There’s no other woman who’d intrigue him more than one of royal blood.”

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Her mother jerked away and strode to the fireplace.

Rhiannon snapped to her feet. "I have lost my brothers. You have lost sons. Others have made sacrifices just as great. Victory is in our hands. I will make this work. No cost is too great. I refuse to allow Taroo to continue to rape our world."

Her mother whipped around. "So you choose to put yourself in its place? To sacrifice yourself? To have yourself...*banished*?"

"The pain will be great, but temporary. The shame for you regrettable, but also temporary."

A deeply drawn breath pulled her father to his feet. "You and your team are confident in the A-bot?"

She gave him a single nod. "The cloaked battle suits are a different matter and giving us problems. The ships are perfect."

His blue eyes bore deeply into hers. "I had hoped for a spectacular wedding with the Chosen One by your side. Feasts would last for days. I had planned for many things for all my children. Taroo has taken too much from my people. As much as I abhor the idea of you laying with this odious creature..."

Rhiannon wrapped her arms around him and nestled her head against his chest. "There is no sacrifice too great for my people. How many times have you said that, Father? How many times have you shown that?"

His arms fell about her. "A true leader. Just as your brothers were."

"We will be victorious, Father."

"Or die trying?" He gave a soft chuckle. "Yes, you are truly of the House of Ba-lark."

"I can't fight you both." Sadness weighed down her mother's voice. Rhiannon pulled from her father's embrace. "Thank you. I have one final request of you."

Her parents waited, eyes focused on her. The gods only knew what was going on in their minds. It was a daring request, but no more so than what she had previously told them.

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“I need something to carry me through the years. A sweet memory if I am to lay nightly with Taroog. All I ask is one night of pleasure in the arm’s of a man chosen by you.”

The silence lasted a full minute. Finally, her father uttered a single word.

“Agreed.”

Her mother flicked away a tear and turned away.

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CHAPTER 2

ONE NIGHT

“My lord, you’ve been summoned by the king.”

Barron pulled himself from a fitful sleep. It seemed he’d just dozed off. A glance at the pallet beside him showed he had. They’d spent the night patrolling the perimeter of Kutier. Fortunately, the Primadylians were driven back for the moment. But the tension still remained, despite the days of silence.

“Sorry to wake you.”

He glanced Elroy’s way. A frown knit the young boy’s brow.

“Not to worry.”

“I’ll ready your mount.”

Barron caught his sleeve before he could dash away. “No need. The sled makes far too much noise. I’ll take the underground transport.”

“And risk cave-in?”

He shrugged. “Better a cave-in than to alert Taroog’s men of a meeting between the House of Ba-lark and the House of Compett.”

Elroy backed away. “Then I’ll fetch your morning rations.”

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“And give them to yourself. I’m not hungry for the moment.” A lie, but the boy was growing at an alarming rate. He needed the nourishment more than Barron.

He strapped the laser pistols to his sides and slung the pulse rifle over his shoulder. Odd the King was requesting his presence at this time. They normally communicated by courier, never in person. The risk was too great. Ambush might kill them both, setting their people into disarrayed panic, and igniting fear among the remaining, weaker houses. That he’d done so meant it was something of greater importance than all the other danger.

Barron lifted the flap on his shelter. The camp lay silent save the four guards posted and Elroy at the cook fire. He stoked it slowly—a hot fire with no smoke. A true skill.

With a nod to his men, Barron took off at a trot. With any luck, he’d hit the underground transport before the sun peeked above the horizon. The fewer who saw him, the better. A gap between the rubble of two buildings was his goal. He ducked into the portal and trotted down the stairwell. In seconds, a transport chair snapped into place.

Barron buckled himself inside then pressed the activation button. Plastic shielding cocooned him in safety. A low hum built then shot him down the line.

Barron closed his eyes and reveled in the speed. As a youth, he’d spent hours riding the transport back and forth. It was never enough. As he grew, rocket ships called his name and still it was never enough speed.

All too soon, the chair eased to a stop. At least there was the ride back.

A shaft of light pierced the exiting stairwell. Skirting the shadows, Barron eased his way onto the streets. Few vendors were present—the bread man, the fruit lady. He missed the bustle of life. *Maybe one day.*

Tossing the lady a coin, he grabbed a Gastonian pear and bit into sweet nectar. A second coin to the bread man garnered him a hot roll.

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It'd likely be his only meal today.

He ducked down one side street after the other until the castle came into view. A quick glance around revealed no apparent witnesses. Still, to barge into the front gates was tempting fate.

Barron trotted around to a copse of bushes, then edged his way to a side entrance. The door opened at his knock. The king himself waited on the other side. "Barron."

They clasped each other in an embrace acquaintances normally made.

"Thank you for coming."

"We risk much, your highness."

"More than you realize, my young friend. Come."

He draped a fatherly arm around him and led Barron to the upper rooms. He waited until the door closed them in privacy before he spoke again. "I remember a time when I would have readily offered you and your father Turkolian brandy. Now?" He shrugged.

Barron knew there was no money for luxuries of any kind. The palace had long since been stripped of anything of value to pay for food for the people and weapons for the Resistance.

The king motioned Barron to a seat before the low fire. Barron stretched his hands toward it. The warmth seeped into his aching muscles.

"Rhiannon is back."

His heart skipped a beat. He tried to not let his interest show. His body had different ideas. Barron had often damned the war that had taken her away. Before its inception, their families had begun talks for their joining. The Ba-larks had chosen Barron as her mate. All they awaited was her consent. Taroog's attack changed everything.

He glanced up. "Why?"

Surely they wouldn't risk marriage now. That would target them both and put Rhiannon in grave danger. The last thing Taroog would want was a child of their union—a continuation of two strong houses.

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“She’s brought the ship. It’s to be placed in the hands of the Resistance for training while others are being built.”

Talk about risk. His heart swelled with pride. When this was over, he prayed he could still make her his woman.

“There’s more.”

Barron inclined his head waiting for the king to continue.

Then he wished he hadn’t. He didn’t know what to think about Rhiannon’s plan. Fear and pride warred with each other. He’d known brave women before, but this went beyond the call. She was truly a leader, a born queen. Ready to risk her life, her reputation, her future for her world and her people. By the gods, if he didn’t love and want her before, he certainly did now.

“When does this begin? I’d like to see her once before she goes.” She had to know the depth of his feelings, even if their families had never made any official announcement.

“That’s why I called you here. Rhiannon has a request.”

Barron actually choked up. *Who could deny her something so simple?*

“So we are to wed tonight?”

The king shook his head. “You know that can’t be. Ceremony involves too many people.”

He nodded slowly as he stared into the fire. “Does she know?”

“That you were her Chosen? No. But she asked us to select someone for her. It seemed only right it be you. We chose you for a reason initially. You would lead by her side. A good match. Once this is over, I pray the match will continue. I know you would not judge her actions...the sacrifice she’s making now.”

“Tonight then?”

“Yes, and in the daylight, she’ll be judged for banishment.”

Barron winced. There seemed little choice if her plan was to succeed. “I would like her to know I am her Chosen One.”

The king offered a smile. “She will be told. She and you deserve

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that much.”

* * *

“Wake, my darling.”

Rhiannon pulled herself awake and looked up at her mother’s smiling face. She brushed her hair from her temple.

“It’s night and time. He is here.”

She sat upright. “He knows and agrees?”

“Without question.”

“May I ask...”

“Lord Barron.”

A quiver coursed through her body. A pulse thrummed at the center of her being. *Barron*. When last she’d seen him, he had smiled down upon her from the balcony above the greeting hall of his family home. A striking man, with a smile that devastated her and made her weak in the knees. Her parents had pulled her away to talk.

Minutes later, their world as they knew it had crashed upon them.

Glass had exploded. The walls tumbled in. She recalled half-dragging her mother to safety before Barron had found them both and carried them outside. When she saw him hours later, dust and ash had marred his handsome features. War was here. It was the last she saw of him.

“He awaits you in the next room.”

Rhiannon glanced down at her underthings. She couldn’t meet him in battle clothes.

As if reading her mind, her mother handed her a diaphanous gown of white silver. *A gown for a bridal night.*

“He is your Chosen. The night is yours.”

Her jaw dropped open while her heart beat in double-time. What bittersweet thoughts this invoked. “Does he know?”

“Of course, dear one.” She tugged Rhiannon to her feet. “Go. For tonight, leave the war behind.”

Sure strides carried her mother to the connecting door. Still smiling,

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she opened it, blew a kiss Rhiannon's way then left her alone.

Clutching the gown to her chest, Rhiannon walked to the portal. Candles lit the far corners of the room. Fire spread warmth throughout. It was as if time had never changed their circumstances. Trays of fruit, bread, meats, and cheeses were set about. Bottles of wines sat at the ready. Her parents must have raided their food stocks for weeks to come. Soft rugs. A plush bed.

"You are more beautiful than I remember."

She glanced in the direction of Barron's voice. He stood in the far corner of the room beside the huge copper tub. Steam rose above it. A bath awaited, much as the one which would have been prepared for her bridal night—their night.

He was leaner than she remembered, but that did not detract from his looks. His dark hair dipped toward the collar of an open white shirt. Light threw shadows on the sculpted planes of his bare chest. A sprinkling of hair dusted his navel then disappeared into the band of his matching white trousers. The bulge throbbing below gave promise of the night to come.

He extended his arm. "Come, love. The night grows quickly and I refuse to waste a second. I have dreamed of loving you forever, and tonight I want to do so until the sun rises once more."

Mesmerized by his voice, his looks, and the spell cast by the room around them, Rhiannon let her feet carry her to him. It was only when she reached him that she realized she still clutched the gown to her chest.

Barron drew her fingers to his lips and kissed each one. "Tonight will be as it should be. Although, I know maids would've attended you and prepared you for it. Don't fear. Your mother briefed me thoroughly on my roll in that capacity."

He peeled the gown from her arms, leaving her standing there in underthings only. She'd thought she would've been frightened, yet anticipation raced in her veins. The mysteries of a union were not

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unknown to her; only the feelings that went with it. She was torn by the desire to grab him and make them one, and curiosity to see what seductions he had planned.

He hooked her straps with gentle fingers and slipped them from her shoulders. "Your skin feels like the finest silks."

Rhiannon closed her eyes as his lips brushed her shoulder. The fresh scent of male wafted around her, seeping into her senses. She reached for his torso, slipping her fingers around his ribs.

Barron sucked in a breath and released her breasts into his palms. She arched her neck as his lips drifted a lazy circuit around her nipples. Heat coursed between them, melding their skin where they touched.

His rock hard maleness throbbed against her belly as if knocking at the door demanding entrance. She brushed against him, answering the call.

A low groan rumbled in Barron's throat. He dove his hand into her bottoms to tug them free. A wiggle of her hips urged them down, but the garment refused to budge. Barron danced a line of kisses down her throat to the curve of her breasts, down the valley between to her navel. There he laved circles around it while he freed her of the last barrier to nudity.

Rhiannon dusted her fingers over his shoulders. "Your shirt. Take it off. I want to feel your flesh against mine."

Dark eyes gazed up at her as he followed her orders. Her breath caught. She could spend hours exploring each perfect muscle and still not have enough.

Barron's fingers drifted up the inside of her legs. Reaching the top, he found the hooded guardian.

"Oh, yes!" She grabbed his shoulders to keep her balance.

"Not yet, love." He slowly slid his hand away, adding more fuel to the fire that consumed her. "It's time for your bath before the water cools."

Taking her hand, he helped her into the water like it was a golden

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coach ready to take her away.

“Your hair. It should be up. You wouldn’t want to dampen those beautiful red curls tonight.” He handed her a small bowl of pins.

Rhiannon lifted her mass of hair. Before she could seat the first pin, his lips closed over her nipple. “Oh, Barron...”

His tongue flicked circles around the hard peak, then suckled deep. Only his arm around her waist kept her from falling. She dropped her hair and clutched his head to her breast. He pulled back and glanced up. Rhiannon offered the second breast. With a smile, he seized the prize.

She heard the clatter of pins as they fell to the floor. A heartbeat later, his fingers dipped into the well of her heat. She parted herself, silently begging for possession.

“By the gods, you are hot,” he muttered against her breath. “And moist.”

“And ready for you,” she whispered.

Barron pulled back. “Not yet, love.” He retrieved the pins and lifted her hair. “Sit.”

Reluctantly she did as he asked. He twisted her hair and secured it in place.

“Now?”

He laughed lightly. “You tempt my patience, love.”

She draped her arms over the edge of the tub, then traced a finger across his chest. “How can you be patient if you’ve wanted me forever?”

“It isn’t easy. If you were any other woman, I’d have stripped you naked and pounded my flesh into yours by now.”

“And, of course, I’m not just any other woman. I am Rhiannon, Princess of Ba-lark.”

“No. You are Rhiannon...the woman I love.”

The revelation caught her off guard. Her mouth dropped open of its own volition, only to be captured by his questing lips. He draped his tongue around hers in a kiss that spiraled her emotions out of control.

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He traced each nubbin on the surface of her tongue, the ridges in the roof of her mouth, each tooth, and she swore, her tonsils, too. He sealed the kiss just as slowly.

Speechless, all she could do was stare at him.

"I promise you a night we will remember all the rest of our days. We might not be joined in the eyes of royal law, but the gods themselves will bless us tonight."

He reached for the bar of spring moss soap and lathered his hands. "Just lean back and let me enjoy you."

Rhiannon rested her head against the pillow of the tub. His hands drifted over her in a glorious exploration, tracing each curve, each divot, each hidden place. His touch stoked the fires higher, until she had to curl her hands over the edge of the tub to keep from crying out.

"Oh, please, Barron. I cannot bear another second. I must know."

"Yes, love. So must I. I crave to see your beautiful face wrapped in wonder when you come as a woman." Without another word, he slipped his hand between her legs.

Sure circles brought her hard bulb to attention. Rhiannon strained against his hand, urging him onward. Barron moved at his own pace, taking control of her pleasure. Soft cries left her throat. Tension built and built and built...and built. She hovered on the edge of a precipice, then exploded into a wondrous release.

* * *

By the gods, she's beautiful. Barron clutched at the wedge in his trousers in an effort to keep from spilling himself. That she could pull this response out of him when he was outside of her was true testament that they were meant for each other. Already his trousers were damp where release threatened. Once inside her molten heat, Barron doubted he'd last ten seconds.

"Come. More awaits."

He yanked the plug from the water and pulled her to her feet. Her blue eyes were dilated from pleasure as he patted the droplets of water

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from her. She lifted her arms, exposing her breasts to his lips. He couldn't refuse. Without hesitation, he suckled one deep into his mouth. He felt her jerk, then a curtain of flame red hair draped around him.

"It is time for you, too," she said.

Pushing him back, Rhiannon reached for the snaps on his trousers. "Do you think me too bold?"

He shook his head. "I think you are a woman schooled in the ways of men, yet untried."

"Correct." She made quick work of the snaps then dove her hands inside.

Barron tossed back a groan. He felt himself surge and ground his teeth against the rush. He longed to tell her to stop, but speech was impossible. She wrapped thumb and forefinger around his penis, then stroked.

"Ahhhhhh...love...no..."

"It hurts?"

The humor in her voice taunted him. "You know it doesn't."

"If it does, I should kiss and make it better."

Before he could stop her, Rhiannon wrapped her mouth around him. Barron's knees buckled. He clutched the chair behind him in an effort to keep from falling. *Innocent, be damned!* He craved to know in what book she'd learned that.

Her tongue flicked maddening circles around his foreskin, then fluttered across the slit at the top. The rush built again. He yanked her back.

"Not yet!" he said through pants of breath. "Bed. Now."

Smiling, Rhiannon edged toward the bed, spreading herself wide as she crawled on top.

"Woman, I'm going to give you the ride of your life." He hovered over her.

"I do hope so." She traced the inside of her thighs then peeled back her folds for him to get a good view of what awaited him. "Now, my

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lord?”

Barron forced himself to shake his head. “I promised your mother I would do things right. I refuse to break my word. No matter how badly I want to lose myself in your heat.”

He shoved himself away from the bed and retrieved one of the oils left for their use. Knowledgeable as she might be, Rhiannon was still a maiden. He refused to cause her pain. By the queen’s word, the oil would prevent that. He prayed it worked.

He dipped his fingers into the jar as he knelt between her legs. Her sigh as he touched her urged him onward.

“Relax, love.”

She sagged into the pillows.

Barron traced the folds and valleys of her womanhood. The flower at the top started to swell until its fruit beckoned him to taste.

Rhiannon cried out at the first touch of his tongue. He flicked slow circles around her, drawing her up once more. One hand wrapped around her pillows while the other drifted to his head, holding him in place.

One finger divided her folds and moved inside with a circular motion. He moved as far as the membrane allowed, then returned with two fingers.

She felt the push, the resistance, then he was in. He pumped his hand in slow motion, mimicking what he’d be doing to her soon. Rhiannon longed for him to possess her, to wedge that hard, thick rod deep inside her. But, to do so would mean his mouth would have to move. She couldn’t bear that. Not when she was so close to...

“Ooooooooooooo.”

Barron squeezed his erection as the orgasm overcame Rhiannon. His penis twitched in his fist in protest. He was never going to last. He waited until the last of her spasms died, then kneeled back on his haunches. His pulsing erection bounced before him. Droplets hovered at the tip waiting for completion. He pulled in ragged breaths,

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struggling for control.

Rhiannon draped one leg around him. "Please, sweet lord, give it to me." She nudged him closer with her heel.

The fight went out of him. Covering his body over hers, Barron captured her lips. She opened herself to him fully.

In one hard thrust, they were one.

Liquid fire enveloped him, racing up his spine. It was like being engulfed in a laser blast.

* * *

Rhiannon's eyes widened. She felt gloriously impaled. Each throb of his penis bounced against her walls. And he had yet to move. She was spread wide, his to do with as he wished.

Barron dug his fingers into the flesh of her buttocks. He pulled back slowly then thrust hard again.

"Oh, yes, love. Hard. Pound me into oblivion."

He needed no other encouragement. Thrust after thrust beat into her body. Another rise grew. She dug her heels into his backside, rocking with him. He touched every part of her, pulling her with him as he mounted the summit. A spasm seized her. Rhiannon let it, crying to the stars as it washed over her.

He reared back, taunt with release. It spewed from him to her like a jet of molten flame. As still they rocked as one.

The moment died slowly. Barron peppered her cheeks and lips with kisses. His thrusts were gentle this time, building them both up once more. Again they came as one then collapsed in exhaustion.

Barron rolled his weight from her body then pulled her into the crook of his arm. "I have been to many places. None are as wondrous as where I've just been with you. I curse this war that has kept us from one another."

"And the man who caused it?"

"Especially the man who caused it."

"And yet you will not stand in the way of what I need to do."

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“I would never dishonor you that way.” He seared a kiss onto her lips. “No matter what the years bring, Rhiannon, always remember I love you.”

She cupped her palm to his face. “The night is still young. A little nourishment will do us well.”

He forced a smile. “Then you can show me what else you’ve learned from those books of yours.”

CHAPTER 3

BANISHMENT

Rhiannon stood before the tribunal in the palace meeting hall. They'd all watched her grow from a child. She hated deceiving them, but they'd understand when the truth could come to light.

Her father was at the head, ready to pronounce judgment. Her mother had refused to attend. She claimed shame to any who asked. In truth, she couldn't see her daughter undergo punishment. Hours before, shortly after Barron had slipped away, her mother had given her a potion to help her deal with the pain. Grateful, Rhiannon swallowed it all. Now she wanted to get it over with before her courage failed.

"Rhiannon of Ba-lark, you are accused of treason. How do you plead?" Her father's voice boomed across the hall.

She lifted her chin to a defiant tilt. "By your definition of the word, guilty. By my own, not."

Mutters of shock drifted around her. Did she not realize the severity of her actions? How could she continue to flaunt authority in the face of banishment?

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“So be it.” Her father tapped his staff against the marble floor. “Rhiannon of the Seventh House of Ba-lark of the First Order of Juron, I find you guilty of treason. You shall suffer the fate of others foolhardy enough to have followed this path. Banishment. The full measure. To be carried out immediately.”

Gasps raced around the hall. The full measure. Twenty-five strokes of the four-whip.

Rhiannon prayed the potion would help with what was about to happen.

The handler rolled the rack into place before her. The four-whip dangled from a hook above it. Ropes head and toe would spread and bind her limbs. She would be naked and publicly humiliated for her crime. At some point, she’d soil herself. With any luck, she’d pass out. And she’d be scarred for life. For her people, her world, and the death of Taroog.

The handler stepped up to her. “Disrobe.”

She glanced up his long body. The man refused to make eye contact with her. She couldn’t blame him. He was the one who’d plucked her from the trees she’d climbed in childhood.

Rhiannon reached for the clasp at her throat. The sooner they got this done, the better.

“Hold!”

Heads whipped around as Barron marched into the hall. “I have a claim to make.”

“Do so,” her father said.

“As her Chosen, she has shamed my family as well. We shall have to bear the stigma of her actions forever. Twenty-five strokes are hardly enough. I demand fifty!”

Gasps exploded through the hall. None compared to Rhiannon’s. Wide-eyed, she stared in disbelief at the man who had spent the night loving her.

“Fifty it is,” her father decreed.

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Mute with shock, all she could do was stare from one to the other as tears filled her eyes.

Barron clutched his hands behind him and gave her his back. "Another request, your highness."

"That is?"

"I deliver the punishment...privately. I seek total retribution from her for the wrongs done the crown and my family. It is my right. But I want no witness to say I mercilessly tortured a woman. After all, I hope to wed another one day. Before I can, there is much the prisoner and I have to settle."

"Agreed. Do with her as you will. When you are finished, you can dump her at Taroog's feet for all I care."

The handler passed the whip to Barron. Smiling with evil intent, he weighed it in his hand. His gaze clicked up to hers.

"Come here, wench."

Rhiannon's feet refused to move. Fear choked her.

"I said come here."

He snapped the whip out. It curled around her waist, capturing her firmly in its grip. Rhiannon blessed the gods there was no pain. Even with the potion, she couldn't bear a lash wielded by him.

Barron tugged. She had no choice but to obey. When she neared, he caught a handful of her hair and yanked her face close to his.

"We have a long day ahead of us, my beauty."

Just as quickly he shoved her away. "Take her to my rooms. I want her stripped and ready when I arrive. See I have food and water to last the day and night. I want no interruptions."

His gaze zeroed in on her once more. "Scream to the heavens, love. There won't be a soul to help you."

A jerk of his head brought two women to the forefront. Each captured an arm in a gentle hold and slowly pulled her away.

It was a nightmare. It had to be. By the time Rhiannon reached Barron's rooms, tears streamed down her cheeks. She tried not to sob.

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It was impossible. How could he do this to her after loving her so sweetly the night before?

The women said nothing, merely dragged her across the threshold. Once there, one slipped the knot on her robes. It fell in a puddle of fleece at her feet.

“Lord Barron wants you there.” The older woman pointed to the arch between sitting room and bedroom.

Silken ropes dangled from iron hooks at the top and bottom. Barron had planned for this.

Taking her position, Rhiannon let them bind her, spread wide between the restraints. The younger one pinned her hair up, then spurted oil on her hands. She reached for Rhiannon’s breasts.

Rhiannon pulled back. Her bonds kept her in place. “Did Lord Barron tell you to oil me up, too?”

“He was most specific about it,” the older one said from behind.

She closed her eyes. They were thorough. She’d give them that. *Too thorough*. And they took their time about it, rubbing oil more than once over the most intimate areas of her body.

The older one locked the door to the bedroom and scooted around her as she left through the other.

Once alone, the younger one leaned closer. “You look good enough to eat.” She closed her lips over Rhiannon’s nipple and tugged gently.

The door to the room slammed open. Flushed red, the girl jumped back.

“What the hell?” Barron roared.

She scurried to the exit muttering an apology as she did so. Barron snagged her arm and swung her against the wall.

“I should take the lash to you! Did I not make myself clear? She is for me!” He cracked the whip in the air.

The girl fell to her knees. “Please, lord, I meant no harm.”

“Out!” He hauled her up by the hair and shoved her into the corridor.

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He seated the lock with a solid thrust. Tossing the whip to the floor, he crossed his arms over his chest and rocked on the balls of his feet. A slow smile spread over his face.

“By the gods, love, you make a beautiful sacrifice.”

She blinked away tears. “Don’t toy with me, Barron. You want to wield the whip? Do it. The sooner this is over—”

He was before her in three strides, capturing her face in his face. “Do you really think I could take a whip to your tender flesh? Or bear to have another do it? My stars, Rhiannon, I love you. You’re the bravest woman I know. You are my woman, my love, my life, and *my* Chosen One. No one will ever hurt you as long as I have breath in my body.”

“But...”

He smothered her protest under a kiss. “I went to your father this morning. This is what we’ve planned. No one shall be the wiser.”

“Only Taroog when he sees no evidence of punishment.”

He smiled again. “But he will.”

He walked to the desk where a small crock rested beside a well of brushes. “The juice of Arbonian berries—”

“Have a ghastly taste.”

“Only if not prepared correctly. These come from Piranian Forest on Mount Rasi. From the deepest valleys of the highest peaks.”

She cast her gaze heavenward. “That sounds like the beginning of an over-told legend.”

He laughed lightly as he walked toward her. “I just want you to understand their true worth. When applied with a catalyst, they stain the skin much as a wound or a bruise. They fade with the same speed and coloration as a bruise.”

Rhiannon smiled. “The oil?”

He nodded.

She tugged at the silken ropes that bound her. “Then untie me and let’s get this done.”

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“Oh...no, no, no. I get to have a little fun here, don't I?” With a wiggle of his eyebrows, he dipped the brush into the juice. “Now...where shall I start? I have fifty strokes. Each stroke lays four. We could be here a while.”

“Barron, I don't think—”

He drew a line that criss-crossed her buttocks. Rhiannon shivered from the sensation.

“Yes, love.” Another line followed down the crack. He added a flick upward at the curve. Two parallel designs followed.

Rhiannon's body pulsed between her legs. “This is torture.”

He arched a brow. “Is it?”

“You know it is.”

He cupped his hand to her furry mound. “Then I'll let you get even later.” One finger parted her wetness. He flicked the little nodule to life, to the very edge of her endurance...then stopped.

Rhiannon sagged against her bonds and muttered a curse. “I swear if you keep this up, I just might take that whip to *you*.”

He chuckled and lifted his brush once more. A soft groan tore from her lips as he danced the bristles over her breasts.

He responded with a grunt. “If you keep that up, we'll never get done here.”

“I cry foul. You should be naked as well.”

“Very well.” He stripped to nothing. His erection bounced hard and heavy before him.

Rhiannon pulled in a breath and licked her lips.

“All right. You win...partially. And only because I'm so hard I hurt.”

A flick of his wrists freed her feet. That's as far as Barron went with her release. Grabbing her hips, he hoisted her onto him and stabbed his flesh deep into hers.

She tossed back a groan. He seized her nipple and sucked it deep into his mouth.

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Rhiannon wrapped her legs around his waist. He thrust hard and deep as if they'd been parted weeks instead of hours. A simultaneous orgasm ripped from them both. As the spasms passed, he set her gently on her feet and grabbed up his torture device once more.

But each stroke of his brush raised her need to a fever pitch. Across her back, down to her buttocks and around. Into the crack, under the bottom. Over her thighs and between. Down to her calves. Until the hint of a touch made her shudder with anticipation. Then he moved to the front.

He was hard again. Wanting her as much as she wanted him. This time he would not be distracted.

His brush swooped over her pebbled nipples, yanking moans from deep within her core. One, two, three, and a fourth. Again and again until her breasts were laced with cool berry juice.

Her stomach was next. Here he marked "Xs" staking his claim. Her body quivered and blood pumped to her womanhood. It throbbed and ached for attention as he danced the brush lower and lower.

Then her thighs. Unbidden she spread her legs wide. Bristles flicked across her inner thighs. Low and high. Up, down. Up, up, then...

"Oooo..."

"Hmmm..."

He flicked the tip over the hard center. Rhiannon twitched with every stroke, revealing in her captivity, praying for sexual release. It washed over her without warning. She strained against the bonds that held her, then collapsed, only the silk ropes around her wrists holding her upright.

Barron knelt before her, raining kisses over her stomach, her thighs, then nuzzled his face in her musky scent. Sensitive, she pulled away. He captured her hips and held her in place. A few swipes of his tongue and she melted into the caress. She pumped against his face as she would his body until another orgasm shuddered through her.

Only then did he release her.

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She fell into his arms, sealing their lips with a kiss. Cradling her, Barron carried her to his bed and plunged into her heat. He took her hard, and he took her long. He took her in such a way she'd never have cause to ever doubt his love. He took her to drown out the future memory of anything Taroog would ever do to her. To give her some sweet escape to cling to on the horrible nights when she'd lay with the enemy.

And when he came, he cried out her name and his love.

Rhiannon clutched his face and kissed him hard. "I'll love you always, my sweet, sweet, Barron."

They fell asleep wrapped in each other's embrace. Hours later, a knock pulled them awake. Darkness was here, and with it, her departure.

"I'll take you to Primadyl."

She shook her head. "It's too risky. We can't have you captured. The A-bot is in the glen nearby. Father can show you. The remote to open the hatch is in the pack in my room."

She slipped from bed. He pulled her back. Rhiannon straddled his lap and seated herself on him. Their joining was quick. Release held none of the joy of their previous times.

She butted her forehead against his. "I do love you."

"I'll miss you."

"But you mustn't worry."

"I won't."

She laughed lightly. "Yes, you will."

He wouldn't dispute that.

"I have one more favor."

He pulled her closer. "Anything and it's yours."

"Come get me when it's time. I'll leave with no one but you. I'll trust no one but you."

Barron squeezed his eyes shut against the pain of their parting. "We'll hurry things along."

“Please do.”

CHAPTER 4

RESCUE

Barron stood outside the second floor windows of Taroog's primary residence. A balcony all around gave him easy access. The cloaking device he wore allowed him to do so undetected. Rhiannon would be pleased to know her breakthrough in the technology helped them develop it. Not only did it protect the wearer, but also anyone with whom he had physical contact. Getting her out would be easy. Getting in to get her was another problem.

Three years of planning, training, and research had culminated in this invasion. Even as he picked his way from window to window, the fleet and ground forces moved in on Primadyl. Taroog would never know what hit him. He and all associated with him would be killed or captured.

The king and queen of Juron, with Barron at their side, had passed word to their generals of Rhiannon's true role. Once a pariah, now she was touted a heroine. Battle cries sang her virtues. Flags bearing her likeness were emblazoned on ships, uniforms, and all else. It wouldn't

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be long before Taroog learned the truth, too. Movement in a far window caught his eye. He hurried in that direction. A bird roosting on the eaves never budged. He was perfectly cloaked. Then he saw her.

She sat before a mirror, dressed in a silk gown of forest green.

She'd grown more beautiful, if that were possible. And also sadder. No light sparkled in her blue eyes. A sigh lifted her shoulders. She picked up a hairbrush and drew it through her flame red hair.

By the gods, Barron knew she'd been through hell the last three years. Taroog had wasted no time taking her in and making her his when the Juronians had dropped her on Primadyl. Within months, word had filtered through their warring worlds that she carried his child. The very thought sickened Barron. It was all he could do to not storm the doors and drag her to safety. Only his vow to her kept him away.

Rhiannon set the brush aside as she stood. She stretched her arms high over head. Her breasts were fuller than he remembered and provided more evidence of having birthed a child. Not any child—Taroog's miracle child. It had survived and thrived.

A clear indication, so Taroog claimed, of his right to rule both Juron and Primadyl. The gods had blessed their union. A child of royal blood from the House of Ba-lark.

Some claimed it had to be an abomination. Juronians and Primadylians weren't compatible. Others claimed it was a true miracle child. Barron didn't know how either faction could know for certain. The child had never been photographed or drawn or seen in public. Stories again claimed the mother refused for the child's protection. But Barron had to admit he often wondered if it was her shame that caused her stand.

Rhiannon brushed her arms, as if chilled, and wandered to the windowed doors leading to the balcony. Instinctively, Barron took a step back. He still didn't know if she was alone. Then he realized his folly. No one could see him. It was a hard concept to get used to.

She leaned against the sill and stared at the stars above. A tear

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trickled down her cheek, followed in quick succession by another. It was more than he could bear. He grabbed the handle, ready to charge to her rescue.

Something else spurred her to action. Rhiannon snapped upright and flicked the tears from her cheeks. Barron paused. The door opened behind her. Pasting on a bright smile, she turned and faced Taroog.

The man was just as ugly as Barron recalled. He had a snout rather than a nose, a wattle for a chin. His nails were long and sharpened like claws. His long, scraggly, dark hair was pulled back in a braid, revealing holes where Juronians would have ears.

"You are not prepared. Why?" his voice thundered across the room.

Rhiannon laced her fingers before her. "Forgive me, my lord. I lost track of the hours."

"Hmph." He took a menacing step in her direction.

Rhiannon held her ground. "Shall I make ready now?"

His wattle shook with his nod.

Gaze unwavering from his, she slipped the gown from her shoulders.

A semblance of a smile crossed Taroog's face. He licked his forked tongue over his lips. Rhiannon merely spread herself over the bed and opened her arms to him.

Bile rose to Barron's throat as Taroog yanked his trousers down. His tongue wasn't the only thing about him that was forked. He grabbed himself into one solid penis, knelt between her legs, and aimed. Pounding at the door froze him.

"What is it?" Taroog barked out.

"A problem, my lord," a voice replied. "Very urgent."

"I'll be right there." His gaze passed over the woman beneath him. "You'll be ready when I return."

"Of course."

She smiled sweetly. It faded the instant she was alone. Curling into a ball on her side, Rhiannon hugged the pillow to her chest. Barron

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could wait no longer.

Her eyes grew wide with horror when she saw the balcony doors open seemingly of their own volition. She crawled backward until she was against the headboard.

Barron switched off the cloaking device. "It's me, love."

She burst from the bed like a blast from a laser pistol, tossing herself into his open arms. "I thought I'd never see you again. I thought this nightmare would never end. Love me, Barron. Make it fresh and new."

"There's little time." Yet he was already unfastening his fly as she pulled him toward the bed.

"I haven't known the pleasure of your touch for three, long, disgusting years. Don't deny me now. Show me nothing matters. Show me you love me still."

She fell back to the cushions, wrapping her legs around his waist as she did so. His engorged flesh fell free. He pierced it deep within her heat.

Rhiannon arched against him. He shoved his hand between them to the source of her pleasure. With each pounding thrust, he swirled his thumb against her. She balled the bedcovers in one fist while she clutched at him like a lifeline with the other. Climax rushed upon them quickly, binding them as it had before.

Footsteps in the corridor froze them. There was no time for more. Still joined, Barron yanked them away from the bed and switched on the cloak.

"Quiet," he whispered. "And hold tight. We're cloaked."

The door swung wide, banging against the wall. The mirror shattered. Artifacts on the shelves crashed to the floor. Rhiannon jerked in fright. Barron held her tight.

"Where is she?" Taroo roared. Someone scurried up behind him. Taroo whipped around. "I want her found and delivered to me. Get me the child."

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Rhiannon dug her fingers into Barron's chest. Only the steel band of his arm kept her from moving.

Taroog slammed the door on his exit, destroying the few objects that remained.

Rhiannon wasted no time. "We must hurry before he gets Ingold."

Barron decloaked them. One simple sentence said all he needed to know. Abomination the child might be, but she still loved it. Somehow he'd force himself to do so as well.

He stripped the cloaking device from his belt. "Take this and go. I'll find the child."

She shoved it back. "There's too much risk. We'll stay cloaked and go together."

She tossed the gown over her head, grabbed his hand and tugged him toward the door. "Hurry. There's no time to waste."

Hidden once more, they hurried through a corridor filled with guards searching for her. They'd gone no farther than fifty measures when she stopped before an open door. Taroog stood before a crib.

Rhiannon released Barron's hand, revealing herself. "You wished to see me, my lord?"

Taroog lifted the child. This was no abomination.

Shock rippled through Barron. This was a Juronian child! This was Barron's son!

"Traitorous, little black-heart. They'll be little left of you for your people to worship by the time I'm through with you."

She tsked as she reached for the child. "Don't be ridiculous, Taroog. Did you ever think this could be a ploy to divide us? Look at our child. The miracle child. Don't you think they'd do anything to destroy him and us?"

Indecision warred in his ugly features. He allowed her to slip the boy free from his grasp. Rhiannon swung away quickly, giving Barron the best target he'd ever had. He whipped his laser pistol into position. A distraction in the hall ruined his chance.

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Troops stormed the room, cornering Rhiannon and the boy. Taroog turned on her once more. "The child stays. Liar or not, I have no further use for you. Seize her!" He motioned to the guards.

Barron yanked the device free. "Rhiannon, here!"

She caught it with one hand and disappeared.

Taroog whirled around on his new target. Recognition mottled his face to puce. "I have been deceived! Take him!"

Barron felt the brush of her hand. He grabbed it and joined her in obscurity.

Taroog's roar shook the windows. Barron longed to end the tyrant's life. To fire a blast now would reveal their position.

"It's sorcery," a guard muttered.

Taroog hurled a lamp at the man's head, narrowly missing Rhiannon's. "Fool! They've acquired cloaking! We're being invaded!"

Even as the words left Taroog's lips, the first volley of laser weapons struck the city. This home would be the first to fall and Taroog knew it. If they didn't leave now, they'd never make it out alive.

Taroog jerked his arm toward the door. "To the ships! Now!"

They trotted away. He jerked around, scanning the room for his enemy. "I know you're here. Show yourselves."

Rhiannon shoved Ingold into Barron's arms as she grabbed his pistol. Before he could stop her, she stepped free.

"I'm right here, my lord," she said with a smile. Then blasted a hole through the center of his chest.

Taroog clutched at the wound, staring in disbelief that she should dare such an act. He grappled for the weapon at his side. Barron locked his pulse rifle into position and fired. Taroog toppled back.

"You...traitor."

"No," Barron said. "She is a hero. A true warrior. Something cowards like you will never know."

He drew Rhiannon to him, hiding them from view once more.

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“Come, love. Our ship awaits.”

Skirting the turmoil about them, Barron and Rhiannon escaped into the night.

* * *

“The ship is just beyond that rise.” He pointed to a small knoll. A shot of light overhead urged them to hurry. The explosion that followed ripped through the night. Frightened, Ingold let out a wail.

“So much for being cloaked. Run, love.”

Cradling his son to his chest, Barron sprinted for safety. The vessel’s door opened as he approached. He tumbled to the floor behind Rhiannon, protecting the child from the fall. The hatch snapped shut.

“Hold tight, little one, while I get us out of here.” He shoved the boy into his mother’s arms and jumped into the pilot’s seat.

Fire erupted behind them. The ground shuddered in protest. He danced his fingers over the control panel, shooting them into space.

“I thought by now you would’ve learned to pilot this thing.” Rhiannon peeled herself from the back wall.

He laughed. “I can do things with this little ship you could never imagine.”

“Don’t bet on that. I have a very vivid imagination.”

“Rest, love. The trip home won’t be that long.”

She dusted her fingers over the nape of his neck. “To sleep means to be away from you. I can’t bear that any longer.”

He glanced up with a smile. Ingold lay nestled against her chest, sound asleep. “Obviously, he doesn’t feel the same way.”

She gave a light laugh. “He was awakened from his bed. Ingold likes his sleep. He’s a very active boy.”

Barron blinked away the sudden sheen of tears. “Our child. You bore me a child. A son. If I had known...”

“Shh...” She pressed her finger to his lips. “We agreed we’d do what we must. Never fear. You shall be present for all the rest.”

As they left Primadylian atmosphere, she tucked the sleeping child

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in the berth toward the back of the ship.

“As I recall, I designed an automatic pilot for this ship.” Brushing her breast against his arm, she leaned forward. “Ah, yes. Here it is.”

One touch of her finger took the controls from his hands. She straddled his lap.

“I can think of much better ways to pass a trip than resting. Can’t you?”

Rhiannon dropped her gown and offered her nipple. He took it, suckling deep like the starving man he was. He fumbled to free himself. Her hands steadied him.

“Hang on, love,” she said with a smile. “I’m going to give *you* the ride of *your* life.”

She seated herself on him with a swift lunge that took his breath away.

**AMBER QUILL PRESS, LLC
PROUDLY PRESENTS**

WHITE LIES

BY

CAITLYN WILLOWS

Unloved Sarah Mason flees her domineering parents and manipulative fiancé, embarking to Jamaica on a quest for clues to her sister's unnerving disappearance. Her quest, however, takes an unexpected and exhilarating turn when she meets the sexy Dominick LaCroix, her sister's ex-landlord and supposed ex-lover, who not only aids in Sarah's search for answers, but also helps her explore her heart and sexuality.

But can Sarah and Dominick survive not only a killer hurricane, but a dangerous undercover mission to learn the truth about what happened to her sister?—or will they become the next people to mysteriously vanish?

Excerpt from White Lies

...In the bungalow's bedroom, Sarah made Dominick lie on his back, then took her sweet time administering to his needs.

She started at his hands, kissing his battered fingertips, his raw knuckles, his reddened wrists, anywhere she saw cuts or bruises or rope burns, any place that might be the source of his silent suffering. With her tongue, she dabbed each area, hoping her gentle kisses would somehow act the emollient to his pain.

She lapped unhurried rings around defiled areas on his cheek and chin, on the side of his neck, a purplish region on his shoulder, then a small cut below his breastbone. Rubbing her cheek against his jungle of chest hair, she flicked her tongue over his nipples, suckling each of the stiff peaks before journeying lower.

His rib cage merited her finicky healing expertise. She did so with tender pleasure, tasting every inch of the ill-colored area as she tongue-bathed his ridged belly.

After a fierce battle with her deepest desires, she licked farther down his body, bypassing the tempting, pulsating prize until she completed the task she had lovingly started. She never wanted to give this sexy man a reason to seek another woman to nurse him...

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**THE HEIR
BY
CAITLYN WILLOWS**

A dying millionaire needs a heir to protect his fortune. Can he pull the strings one more time to see his life's work fulfilled? His proteges, Galen Walters and Tracie Walters, are oblivious to anything but each other once Sherman sets the wheels in motion. But can they really put aside their burgeoning feelings and give him what he wants—an heir, with Tracie as his wife?

Excerpt from The Heir

...Like a thief, Tracie quietly twisted the lock on her office door. Blood roared in her eyes as she drew the drapes closed. Automatic lighting cast a harsh glow throughout the room. Tracie didn't bother to dim them. There was no time.

Stretching out on the black leather sofa, she parted her legs. Her

own musky scent wafted to her. Could Galen have smelled it? Sensed her desperate need? Did he want her, crave her, as she did him? Or was obligation and loyalty his aphrodisiac?

Tracie shoved her hand into the waistband of her pantyhose, right to the source. The tiny nub was triple its size, and as hard as a rock. Sticky wetness embraced it. Tracie danced quick circles around it. Her nipples tightened, begging for attention she couldn't give. She imagined his mouth around them, drawing them in, sucking them hard while his dick pounded thrust after thrust into her.

An orgasm shuddered through her. Tracie yanked her hand free. Damn it. It wasn't enough...

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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.

Caitlyn Willows' email address is caitlynwillows@hotmail.com.

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