



Cagebird

Karin Lowachee

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Pirate Protege At age four, Yuri Kirov watched his home colony destroyed by the alien enemy. By six, he was a wounded soul, fending for himself in a desolate refugee camp, and still a child when the pirates found him. Now twenty-two, Yuri is a killer, a spy, an arms dealer, and a pirate captain himself-doing life in prison. That is until EarthHub Black Ops agents decide to make Yuri their secret weapon in a covert interstellar power grab. Released from jail, but put on a leash by the government, Yuri is more trapped than ever. Controlled by men even more ruthless than the brigands he's ordered to betray, Yuri is back again in deep space where his survival depends on a dangerous act: trusting a stranger's offer of help...

Cagebird Details

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Author : Karin Lowachee

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From Reader Review Cagebird for online ebook

Abi Walton says

I have enjoyed all three books in the Warchild series but I think that CageBird is my favorite. It's a lot darker than even Warchild and I really felt for Yuri and the choices he had to make from bad to worse. I thought for all things considered and how he was taught to behave as a child Yuri was very likable, even if a little scary and dark. Also Finch is everything Yuri needs someone who will stand up to him and not be afraid of the darker side of Yuri.

I am really looking forward to book 4 in this series Warboy!

Ambre says

Interesting series

I've enjoyed this series, although the last book was badly edited enough that I'd have requested a refund if I could have done so without stifling the author.

But this book is quite different from the first 2. First of all it's quite sexual - there are two scenes of dubious consent and unhappy outcome. They aren't explicit in a romance or erotica sense, but their presence sets them apart from the first two, which detoured around the sexual aspect of captivity.

Second, the author really starts to let loose with her prose in this book. It doesn't always come off perfectly, but when it does it is really quite lovely. I felt it gave Yuri a dreamier voice, while the MCs of the first two books were more straightforward.

I found this series on a list of SF books with gay main characters - of the three, Yuri, the narrator of this book, is the only gay character, and this is the only book with a real romance in it, or real sex scenes. However, the romance is mostly nonsexual and the sex scenes are mostly nonromantic.

It's an interesting book. She definitely delves into the personalities of her characters - all of whom have experienced some level of trauma and some of which have experienced rape and captivity, and all of whom have responded in different ways. Yuri initially falls in love with one of his captors and becomes attached to Falcone, the pirate captain. The author does a good job of making that seem like a perfectly reasonable reaction despite the circumstances.

I'm not sure if there are more books planned. The first two books are pretty pricy but I am not sure this book would be as good without reading them first. I hope this author writes more, especially books with gay main characters.

Danielle says

As expected of one of my favorite authors ever, she simply doesn't disappoint. Even more exciting than the

previous two in the series. That's almost unprecedented; I am a huge fan. She only gets better.

October 2009: Read again in preparation for The Gaslight Dogs release sometime early next year. This is my third read of this book, very unprecedented for me. I almost never re-read books, but I've re-read this series regularly since discovering it.

Tocotin says

I dislike these books for the misogyny, casual and unobtrusive as it is, and love them for everything else. That being said, Yuri DID get on my nerves a lot. He's this cynical, hardened, immoral creature and then he goes all emo and hurt – as if he couldn't understand where all this was going! As if he couldn't see how and why he would have been used! Eh. Still, fun to read and extremely competently written. If there ever will be a continuation of this series, I'll run to buy it. Maybe in hardcover.

Wealhtheow says

This seemed like tourism to me. Like visiting a very painful place, looking around, taking a few pictures, and leaving. I don't trust Lowachee to write authentically, at this point.

Erli says

Brilliant, harrowing, disturbing.

Thistle says

Cagebird starts out much like Warchild did: A young boy's home colony is destroyed as part of the war, and he (eventually) ends up in the hands of a pirate. Because of that, this book really worked for me at first, and I had high hopes for it. (I love plots about brainwashing and trust issues, not to mention age and power differences in relationships.) Unfortunately, it veered off into quite a different direction than Warchild did.

Yuri, the boy in question, is sent to a refugee camp. The story focuses on that for a time, how hard the conditions are there, how society often doesn't have the care or resources to help war refugees.

Pirates have taken advantage of the disadvantaged for a long time, picking up children from them to use or sell. A pirate shows up at Yuri's refugee camp, and picks him and others to take back to his ship.

Turns out the pirate is the same captain as took Jos in book #1.

The pirate captain, Falcone, trains Yuri as he had Jos. But, unlike Jos, Yuri doesn't escape the life. Yuri embraces it. Sort of. Through the book he tries to escape a the pirate life a couple times, but that's easier said than done.

While I had loved the worldbuilding in the previous books, in this one it took a sharp left turn. In this book we learned the pirates have geisha -- beautiful boys and girls who are trained both as whores and assassins. I had a couple of issues with this. The alien world is strongly Japanese-y, so the pirates (humans) having geisha made me scratch my head. Why not come up with some other, non-Japanese word for it? The second and larger issue I had was... pirate geisha? The two ideas just don't work together in my head. The pirates had this whole geisha culture going on, and it just never fit with the idea of 'pirate'.

The other big issue I had with this book was that Yuri cut himself. It makes sense he'd be stressed as hell and have all sorts of issues, but the whole cutting thing felt seriously heavy-handed I just never believed it. (He cut himself to let the "scarlet plague" out.)

I didn't buy the Falcone character in this book either, sadly.

While I did enjoy parts of the story (all of the sections about young Yuri worked for me), all in all, I struggled to enjoy this book.

Stephen Poltz says

This is a good, disturbing book. It's a look at war and child abuse through the eyes of a boy who's recruited by pirates. It's tough to read in parts because of this content. The writing style however is wonderful and it's a fairly easy read. This is the third book of a trilogy. I didn't realize it was such but the novel stands alone pretty well. It won the Gaylactic Spectrum award for positive LGBTQ images in science fiction and fantasy back in 2006. However this content is obscured by the sexual abuse the protagonist endures.

Come visit my blog for the full review...

<https://itstartedwiththehugos.blogspot.com>

Colin says

Oh, wow. Utterly harrowing but ultimately redemptive--I teared up at the end. Trigger warning though, this book is pretty effing graphic about severe childhood abuse of all kinds. I really thought this main character was amazingly done. My one gripe is that the character of Finch seemed underdeveloped. I had no idea exactly why Yuri had fallen in love with him, and since that's the crux of his emotional recovery and kind of the whole book in a way, it was frustrating. Overall, I really liked it, as intense as it was. Each book in the trilogy examines childhood trauma from war through the eyes of overlapping and interconnected characters. Lowachee is very good at first person characterization, and I wish there were more books about some of the other characters in this world. I'm excited to read more of her in the future.

Althea Ann says

Warchild, Burndive, Cagebird

Interesting series. I got these because I'd seen them highly reviewed somewhere; of course, now I don't

remember where.

In many ways, they're basic military SF - I'd recommend them, with some reservations, to fans of Lois McMaster Bujold, maybe CJ Cherryh.

Each one has a different young man as the protagonist, but they follow one timeline, and link to each other, with many shared characters. All of them are very homosensual. All the young men are super-cute, and there is much tousling of hair. (Is the author's hair an erogenous zone? It's really non-stop.) At times I was like, "Um, am I reading yaoi here?" At other times... well, it gets disturbing. That's where my reservations arise. I wouldn't normally 'warn' any reader off a book for content, but if you are sensitive about child abuse, I would not recommend the second two in this series, and especially not the third, due to explicit scenes of rape and abuse. It doesn't just discuss it, but while condemning the perpetrators, it's still oddly mixed with the eroticism.

The first one is the best of the bunch. Not necessarily BECAUSE, but it is much more restrained and understated. You know bad things happened to the protagonist, but he is in denial, and refuses to talk about them. This actually makes the trauma very real and believable. With the second and third, I almost felt like the author was just trying to see how far she could push it...

The first book, *Warchild*, sets up the world: Humanity has become spacefaring, and discovered a moon full of valuable resources. Unfortunately, it was already colonized by an alien scientific mission. Humans try to take over, and a war starts. Some humans sympathize with the alien cause, and go over to their side.

Meanwhile, vicious starfaring pirates take advantage of the social instability, and prey on whoever and whatever they can get their hands on. One of the worst of the pirates is Falcone, a former space Marine captain with an obsession with raising young boys to be his proteges... and treating them in ways that leave them horribly damaged, in the process. The main character here, the adorable Jos Musey, is orphaned by an attack by Falcone on his family's merchant ship, and taken by Falcone, who has plans for him. However, Jos takes advantage of the chaos of an alien attack to escape... and finds himself in the hands of sympathizers, who train him in alien martial arts. Next, he's sent undercover to infiltrate the marines...

These are are kind of 'familiar' scenarios, but the book does a great job of portraying emotional manipulation and conflicting loyalties.

Burndive is the second book. (And kind of oddly titled - a 'Burndive' is virtual reality hacking, and there is very little of it in the book... less than in the first book.) The protagonist here is, of course, cute. He's the son of the most famous Marine captain, and a bit of a celebrity. He's also a spoiled brat, and not really nearly as compelling a character as that of Jos. Ryan (the spoiled celeb), has a bit of a drug problem, but his bigger problem is assassination attempts... his father's attempts to make peace with the aliens haven't gone over well in some circles, and some people are more than willing to kill him to get to his dad. The dad takes him aboard his ship - both for safety, and as a bit of a boot camp program to whip him into shape and get him to grow up a bit. Space action ensues... and we learn more about Falcone, the captain, Azarcon, and why he hates pirates more than aliens.

In the third, *Cagebird*, we get to see thing from the point of view of the 'bad guys.' The protagonist here is Yuri - yet another of Falcone's proteges. This one hasn't run away or escaped... he's become a captain under Falcone's command. However, he's far from not-messed-up - he's full of emotional conflict, and has a tendency to cut himself. Of course, he's also a bad-ass that will just as soon kill you as... The narrative switches from showing how Yuri got to where he is, with training (mostly to be a prostitute) under Falcone, to the present, where military and political negotiations involving pirates, symps, aliens, marines, and the human HubCentral government are ongoing.

These three books are all there are to the series; but it doesn't really feel quite done. The second two concentrate on Falcone's story arc - and really neglect the part of the story that has to do with Niko (the Warboy) and the alien/human conflict. There's definitely room for another book here.

Moose says

Lowachee is not for everyone. Her writing style is unorthodox and she takes great liberty with grammar and invented jargon, yet despite this I found the novel totally engrossing. She has a talent for creating damaged characters who feel real--these aren't the Mary-Sue stereotypes that litter most stories. I definitely, suggest starting this series with Warchild, which is still my favorite book of the series. The plotline will make more sense if you read that one first and then Burndive, however, all of these novels are able to stand alone.

Andi says

I really appreciate Karin Lowachee stylistically. Each book builds on themes presented in the previous ones, but takes a unique perspective. Each book can also be considered a character study of how war (and Falcone) directly and indirectly affects different people. Each of the three protagonists has different reactions to what can be considered similar events, based on their personality types and their experiences so far. The author present a wonderful character study in each book. The reason this book is only rated at a three is because I found the protagonist of this book very, very painful to read. I enjoyed the book very much, and I understood the protagonist, but I didn't really LIKE him. What I did like what the glimpses of the previous protagonists through this one's eyes. I hope to see this protagonist through someone else's eyes in a later book. Hopefully it will deepen my understanding of him, and help me to like him more.

Joy says

Review for the entire series: These books are the stories of 3 young men: 1 captured by pirates as a child, who manages to escape and be recruited to the "alien" side of the Earthhub-alien war; 1 who is privileged yet traumatized by the war's violence; and 1 who is recruited by pirates as a child and grows up to be one.

Cagebird is the story of the third man, after his capture, when the government wants to cut a deal...The series is very good, but the material is heavy and most of the characters are damaged in some way.

WARNING: the first and last books contain descriptions of child abuse, particularly child sex abuse. Those pirates were very bad guys.

Kaje Harper says

This is the third book in the series. All the books deal with a futuristic far-flung interstellar society where the best and worst of humanity have room to expand. In all three books there is kidnapping, murder, indifference to suffering and childhood sexual abuse so be warned. This book is the best of the three, with the main character I felt most connected to and cared the most about. Yuri's struggles to become someone worthwhile, his love for another man in spite of all attempts to prevent becoming attached, his scars and flaws, gripped me all the way through. And since I like SF, the combination has had me rereading the series once and this one more than once.

Kristen says

Warchild remains my favorite of the three *Warchild* books, but this one is also excellent and my next favorite after that one. It's the most raw and character-driven of the books so far, and Yuri is an interesting character to follow. I am beyond excited that a fourth *Warchild* book, *The Warboy*, is in progress.

4 1/2 stars - Loved it

Full Review: <http://www.fantasybookcafe.com/2015/1...>
