

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

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By Erin Wade

Edited by

Julie Versoi

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DEDICATION

To the one who has always supported me in everything I have ever undertaken. You have encouraged me and have always been my biggest fan. Life is sweeter with you.

All My Love,
Erin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special “Thank You” to my wonderful witty friend and editor **Julie Versoi**. I treasure her advice and welcome her suggestions. She makes me a better storyteller.

Cover & Graphics
by
Jean Austin Graphics
Photos Designed using
an AI program

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Visible Screams

*A scream folds into empty swings, dust
swirls in a hot, buzzing box.*

*Footsteps fall where no one walks, cracked
floors echo forgotten knocks.*

*Slides bend into silent things, seesaws tilt
without hands.*

*Corridors stretch beyond sight, whispers
cling to corners tight. Nights pass where no one
goes, rooms remember only shadows.*

*Cries pulse in darkness deep, folded into
waves the dark keeps. Hands reach for air, touch
only space, whispered screams leave their trace*

*in hollows where light belongs, outside, the
world turns on, watching on the periphery, as if it's
never been here all along.*

*Echoes erased in threadbare clothes,
breath drawn, food eaten, only pain remained in
these rows, suffering held where shadows close.*

*A teddy bear left alone, its only friend— a
cold stone.*

By Tonya Pinder

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THE VICAR
AND
THE PHYSICIAN



Dr. Destiny Sinclair and Vicar Faith Seraph

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CHAPTER 1

The Year of Our Lord 1692

Six-year-old Destiny Sinclair watched in horror as the crowd burned her dead mother at the stake. She knew it was just a matter of time before they turned their ignorance toward her and started screaming, “Burn the witch’s spawn.” She hid under a trapper’s pile of animal skins in the back of a rickety wooden wagon and willed the rain to fall and lightning to strike the heathens. They began wailing and grinding their teeth as shafts of fire fell from the heavens spearing the infidels causing them to burst into flames. She didn’t need to see them; she only needed to visualize them in her mind’s eye and move her hands directing her fury.

The storm subsided and the lighting ceased. The smell of burning flesh filled the air. Exhausted, Destiny fell asleep under the foul-smelling skins as the wagon creaked away from the carnage of Salem.

##

The Year of Our Lord 2026

“Dr. Sinclair to the emergency room. Dr. Sinclair to the emergency room,” the announcement repeatedly filled the hospital.

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Destiny ran down the hallway and into the scrub area where she sanitized her hands and arms then slipped into sterile gloves.

“Details,” she demanded as she entered the operating room.

“Four-car pileup on I-35E,” the nurse reported. “This woman is the most severely injured. Her left hand is hanging on by a strip of skin, and her back is broken. Her spleen is ruptured and must be removed.”

Destiny studied the woman’s X-rays. “You failed to mention that she is slightly pregnant.”

“Holy crap,” the nurse exclaimed. “I missed that.”

“About six-weeks,” Destiny grunted. “We will do what we can. Remember, saving the mother is our main concern. I believe the baby is already dead.”

“This is one hell of a way to begin the week,” the nurse mumbled. “Mondays are almost as bad as Saturdays and hopped-up thugs with their Saturday night specials.”

##

Four hours later, Destiny peeled off her gloves and slowly walked to her office. She sat down at her desk and cried. She had to get control of her own emotions before she spoke with the woman’s family.

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To her surprise her office door opened and a stunning brunette woman wearing a clerical collar entered the room. “Dr. Sinclair, may I pray for the patient you just operated on?” she asked.

“Why not,” Destiny mumbled. “I’ve done all I can do. Honestly, prayer is her only hope.”

Destiny led the woman to the intensive care unit and gasped when she realized her patient was covered head to toe in a sheet. “Is she dead?”

“Yes ma’am,” a nurse replied. “She just stopped breathing. You need to call the time of death.”

“May I pray over her?” the vicar asked.

Destiny walked with her to the hospital bed.

“Please, stand on the other side of the bed and hold her hand,” the vicar instructed.

Numb to the soul, Destiny followed her orders and took the still warm hand of her dead patient.

The vicar removed the sheet from the woman’s face, took her motionless hand, and clasped Destiny’s free hand forming a circle of contact. She began whispering words Destiny didn’t understand. The limp hand she was holding tightened around her fingers. “She’s alive,” Destiny gasped softly.

The vicar continued to whisper a strange language as the patient’s grip increased. She moved her legs and moaned softly.

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“Her spinal cord was severed and vertebra crushed,” Destiny muttered. “She shouldn’t be able to move her legs.”

The patient’s eyes snapped open, and Destiny jumped back but held her hand tightly.

The vicar said, “Amen,” then gently touched the woman’s face with her fingertips. “Rest my child.”

“Nurse, I need someone with this patient,” Destiny yelled as the vicar stepped back, and the nurses surrounded the patient, softly talking in disbelief.

Destiny examined the woman from head to toe. She was completely healed. She placed her stethoscope on the woman’s stomach and listened in disbelief to the heartbeat of the fetus that was dead when the woman entered the hospital.

She hurried to the waiting room to tell the family the woman was okay. “We will keep her overnight for observation and release her tomorrow,” she said.

The woman’s husband burst into tears. “Our baby? How is our baby?”

“The baby is fine.” Destiny looked around the room for the vicar. “Where did the vicar go?” she queried those around her.

“We haven’t seen a vicar,” the husband replied.

“A woman dressed in black wearing a clerical collar,” Destiny insisted.

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“You are the first person to walk through that door in hours,” the husband declared.

##

Destiny hurried to the hospital chapel. Surely a vicar would go there to pray after performing a miracle. “Yes, she had performed a miracle,” Destiny mumbled out loud.

The chapel was empty. Destiny inhaled deeply controlling the anguish that was rising in her. She had to find the woman. She had to know her. She was a healer. Perhaps, she was like Destiny, endowed with magic.

##

Later that night, after showering and drinking a glass of wine, Destiny went over her brief encounter with the healer. She had lived in many countries for many centuries, wandering alone. Occasionally she had used her gifts, but she had never interfered with death. She had never pulled someone back from the other side. She could control the four elements: earth, wind, fire, and water, but she had no control over life and death. That wasn't entirely true, she could kill, but she couldn't bring someone back from the dead. That was a gift reserved for the pure of heart and Destiny was definitely not pure. “What game is the gods

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playing with me now?” she muttered into the darkness.

Destiny vowed to make it her mission to find the beautiful dark-haired vicar. Surely she was affiliated with some church in the area, but Destiny didn't even know her name and she had never seen her at the hospital before.

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**ARE YOU POSITIVE
THE
PATIENT WAS DEAD**



*Sacred Heart Hospital Director
Dr. Whitney Langley*

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CHAPTER 2

Sacred Heart Hospital Director Doctor Whitney Langley reread the report left for her by the head nurse of the night shift then raised her gray eyes to stare at the woman. “You are positive the patient was dead?” she asked Helen Roper.

“Swear to God,” Helen declared raising her right hand. “Ask the others who assisted with the operation. When Dr. Sinclair finished the surgery the patient’s vitals were fading fast. We were putting her on life support when her heart stopped beating. We couldn’t revive her. Also, her hand was severed from her wrist and Dr. Sinclair had sutured it back on, but it never moved.

“After the surgery, Dr. Sinclair went to her office then returned to check on the patient who was already dead. I asked her to call the time of death. Instead, she began praying for the patient. The woman was completely healed. She didn’t have a scratch on her.”

“Would you ask Dr. Sinclair to come visit me when she comes in today?” Whitney requested.

Helen nodded then left the room. She hoped Destiny had a good answer to how her patient was now in perfect condition and had already checked out of the hospital.

##

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“Who is responsible for staffing the hospital chapel?” Destiny asked the woman at the hospital information desk.

“Chaplain Daniel Criss,” the woman replied. “He is in his office now. Suite 110 just passed the chapel.”

Destiny followed the long hallway that led to suite 110 and knocked on the door.

“Come in,” a deep male voice invited.

“I am Dr. Destiny Sinclair,” Destiny introduced herself.

Chaplain Criss rose from his chair and shook her hand. “You are the talk of the hospital today,” he said as he motioned for her to sit down. “I understand you worked a miracle last night.”

“I believe someone on your staff worked the miracle,” Destiny replied. “I’m trying to locate her.”

“Her?” Criss scowled.

“Yes, a priest or a vicar. A beautiful brunette wearing a clerical collar and a black suit.”

“I have no women on my staff,” Criss admitted. “Only men volunteering from the various churches in the community.”

Destiny shook her head. “I did everything I could for the patient, but she died. A tall, slender, dark-haired woman approached me asking to pray over my patient who was already dead. We held hands and she prayed in a language I didn’t understand. The patient opened her eyes, and she was completely healed.”

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“It is my understanding that you alone healed the woman,” Criss replied. “The nurse said you were the only one praying for the patient when she revived. No one saw anyone else with you.”

Destiny closed her eyes. “I don’t do miracles,” she said slowly. “I have no idea how the patient was completely healed. I just know I didn’t do it. Is it possible the woman was filling in for someone?”

“I will ask,” Criss said, “but I know all the clergy in this town, and I promise you there are no beautiful female priests or vicars.”

“Thank you for your help,” Destiny said standing. “One more thing, are miracles normal happenings in this hospital?”

Chaplain Criss smiled. “I’d like to think so, but truth be told, I’ve never witnessed an honest to God miracle. I was hoping you would be able to enlighten me.”

Destiny shrugged and smiled. “Not today, Chaplain.”

##

“Dr. Langley wants to see you,” Helen Roper informed Destiny. “Just FYI, she grilled me about the patient you raised from the dead last night.”

Destiny scowled, “I didn’t raise anyone from the dead. That is insane.”

“She still wants to talk to you.” Helen insisted.

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“If anyone needs me, I’ll be in her office,” Destiny mumbled, punching the elevator button. As the car creaked its way to the first floor of the hospital, Destiny tried to conjure a story that would explain her dead patient’s miraculous recovery.

She always dreaded her exchanges with the hospital director. Dr. Langley seemed to be on a crusade to uncover some deep, dark secret from her past. It was true that Destiny had secrets that would make one’s heart stop beating and she had incinerated her fair share of evil beings over the centuries, but only those who were a threat to others. Most of all Dr. Langley was obsessed with Destiny’s youthful appearance.

Although she was an eternal being, she had stopped aging at thirty years old. Something that had forced her to change occupations or locations every twenty years. She loved practicing medicine but had to reinvent her qualifications and prove herself each twenty years to jive with her appearance of a young woman. Those who knew her often teased her about being wise beyond her years. Even Destiny had lost track of the centuries she had walked the earth, but her innocent wide-eyed appearance belied her wisdom and knowledge.

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**I AM AN EXCELLENT DOCTOR,
BUT I
CAN'T RIASE THE DEAD!**



Dr. Whitney Langley and Dr. Destiny Sinclair

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CHAPTER 3

“Dr. Sinclair, welcome.” Whitney Langley smiled at the gorgeous blonde doctor as she entered her office.

“Helen Roper said you wanted to see me,” Destiny greeted her boss.

“Please sit down,” Whitney instructed. “I want to know what happened in your operating theater last night.”

“I stitched together a pregnant woman that had been mangled in an automobile accident.”

“How badly was she injured?” Langley pressed.

“Her injuries were life-threatening,” Destiny replied.

“I understand she died.” Langley blurted.

“I don’t think so.” Destiny chose her words carefully. “I released her this morning.”

Langley scrutinized her young doctor for several minutes. Something that normally made other doctors squirm uncomfortably in their chair, but Destiny seemed unaware that she was being closely examined.

“You are extremely confident and composed for one so young,” Langley noted.

“I’m confident in my surgical skills,” Destiny replied, “but I do not resurrect patients from the dead. That is absurd.”

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“More than one person observed you praying for your patient.”

“I did pray for her. I pray for all my patients,” Destiny insisted. “No surgeon would enter the operating room without asking for assistance from the gods.

“I believe any fairytale suggesting that I have divine powers would cause extreme scrutiny of the hospital and the mental stability of its employees.”

Langley shook her head in agreement. “Consider this matter closed,” she declared, “and congratulations on an excellent job. I am curious though, you said, ‘gods.’ Do you believe in more than one God?”

“Over ten-thousand gods are worshipped around the world by various people. I am willing to accept help from all of them.”

Langley laughed. “I agree, there is no harm in covering all your bases. Have a good day Dr. Sinclair.”

“I have nothing scheduled today,” Destiny informed her superior. “May I take the day off?”

“I think that is an excellent idea,” Whitney agreed. “Take off the rest of the week. I’ll have another doctor cover your emergency room shifts. Hopefully, this will blow over by Monday.”

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**PLANES AND BOATS
AND TRAINS . . .
AND BUSES**



Looking for a Woman

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CHAPTER 4

Destiny sipped her coffee in the Java Stop and perused her laptop for female clergy in Dallas, Texas. When she found a woman's name, she visited the church's website to see photos of the pastor. Although there were several churches led by women ministers, none of them resembled the breath-taking brunette that had resurrected her dead patient.

"I'll tell you mine if you'll tell me yours," Java Stop owner Mindy Young joined her friend at the table in the corner.

"Tell you what?" Destiny scowled.

"What is bothering you. Did you lose a patient or something?"

"Nothing that uncomplicated," Destiny replied.

"You have been making faces at your laptop screen for the past two hours," Mindy pointed out. "Although I do enjoy the many expressions on your lovely face, it does bother me that I haven't seen a smile."

"I'm trying to find a woman."

"Aren't we all," Mindy teased.

Destiny laughed. "She's a member of the clergy. I met her at the hospital, but I didn't get her name."

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“Oh, sweet thing, don’t waste your time on a woman of the clothe. She will only break your heart. You will always play second fiddle to her God.”

“Do I detect the voice of experience in your advice?” Destiny asked.

“Maybe. But seriously don’t get mixed up with a female preacher. They’re complicated.”

“I only want to ask her a question. I don’t want to date her.” Destiny explained.

“What does she look like?”

“Tall, about 5’9” with a glorious mane of long dark hair that touched her shoulders. The most striking thing about her were her piercing Caribbean blue eyes. They were so bright I couldn’t stop looking into them. They were almost hypnotic. She was incredibly beautiful.”

Mindy made the sign of the cross with her index fingers. “Stay away,” she warned. “It sounds as if you are already smitten with her.”

Destiny made a face at her best friend and shook her head. “I’m not smitten with anyone. I need to ask her some questions about a patient. That’s all.”

“If anyone matching that description orders coffee, I will do my best to get her name and phone number,” Mindy promised. “Have you tried checking with the churches?”

“That is what I’ve been doing, but no luck.”

“Everything is clean and ready for the morning shift,” Mindy’s employee, Lou informed

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her. "I'm heading home. Don't stay too late. Things get nasty around here after dark. She waved and pulled the door closed behind her.

"It isn't quite closing time," Mindy noted. "You are my only customer. No one orders coffee after 7:00 p.m. Do you want to grab dinner at that new Mexican restaurant down the street?"

"I'd love to."

Mindy called Destiny's attention to three thuggish-looking characters loitering outside her coffee shop. "I think I'll lock the door and close a few minutes early," she said. "They look like they are up to no good."

Before Mindy could reach the door, the men burst into the establishment. One of them brandished a pistol. He pointed it at Mindy. "Open the cash register," he commanded "and no one gets hurt."

Destiny stood and moved toward the men. It concerned her that they didn't wear masks or try to hide their identity. That usually meant they didn't intend to leave behind any witnesses that might identify them.

"You should leave," Destiny warned them.

"You going to make us, sweet cheeks," the gunman smirked. "We might take you and your friend into the back room and have some fun."

"Don't say I didn't give you a chance to run," Destiny whispered to him as a strong wind blew open the door to the shop. It circled the thugs and

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blew them into the center of the busy street where a city bus ran over them before it could stop.

“Holy hell, what was that?” Mindy squeaked as Destiny closed the door and locked it.

“One of our famous Texas wind gusts,” Destiny replied. “Let’s go out the back door. It looks like a major traffic jam out front.”

“That gust of wind saved our lives,” Mindy jabbered as they hurried to the Mexican restaurant. “You know they would have killed us. They weren’t even trying to hide their identity. That bus must have smeared them all over the pavement.”

“Could we talk about something else?” Destiny suggested.

“I’m surprised you didn’t try to run out there and save them,” Mindy continued to rattle on. “You being a doctor and all.”

“It will be hours before they get them from under that bus and I have no desire to save criminals.”

By the time they reached the restaurant, news cameras were on the scene filming the accident. “They came from nowhere,” the bus driver declared. “They ran right in front of me. It was like a mass suicide.”

Police began arriving on the scene and blocked off the street clearing it of traffic so the bus could back up exposing what was left of the thugs.

“One of them has a gun,” an officer called out. “They’re all dead.”

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“May we be seated away from the television?” Destiny asked. “We don’t really want to see that gory news coverage while we dine.”

They ordered Margaritas and began talking after the server walked away. “If I were you, I wouldn’t mention the gust of wind,” Destiny advised. “Folks will think you are crazy. I can’t explain it and I’m certain you can’t either. It is best if no one knows the wind blew them out of your coffee shop.”

“I was just thinking the same thing,” Mindy agreed. “It was freaky.”

Destiny nodded and sipped her Margarita.

##

“That was the best Mexican food I’ve eaten in a long time,” Mindy commented as they paid their checks and finished their drinks. “It’s late. Do you want to spend the night at my place tonight?”

“No, I need to get home. Venus gets psychotic when I am away from home too long.”

“Venus knows how to jerk your chain.” Mindy laughed. “She is one smart cat.”

“She is one of the smartest animals I’ve ever encountered,” Destiny admitted. “She is an excellent judge of character and she adores you.”

“The feeling is mutual,” Mindy said. “She is a sweetheart. Still, I worry about you walking home alone. Please take a cab.”

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“My apartment is just six blocks away,” Destiny reminded her. “We can walk together to your apartment then I can walk the additional three blocks alone. I’ll be okay.”

Mindy shrugged and followed her friend out the door. “I wonder if they have cleared the traffic jam in front of my coffee shop,” she worried as they strolled down the brightly lighted street.

“It’s been a couple of hours. I would think so.”

“So, you have the week off from the hospital,” Mindy changed the subject. “What will you do?”

“Some research on medical questions that I have,” Destiny answered. “Just when I think I know it all something exciting and interesting pops up.”

Mindy giggled, “Like a beautiful blue-eyed brunette?”

“Here we are,” Destiny stopped in front of the doors that led into the lobby of Mindy’s apartment building. “I’ll see you in the morning for coffee.”

Mindy nodded as the building doorman opened the door for her.

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**MY DAUGHTER
VENUS**



*Can We Watch that Video about Catwoman
and Eat Fish Pizza?*

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CHAPTER 5

Destiny lived in a penthouse atop the Athena Arms Apartments in downtown Dallas. It was the hub of the city that hummed with life and interesting people. She had lived all over the world, but Dallas was her favorite location, and she returned to it every hundred years. She was always amazed at how it changed every century.

She first discovered the area when it was populated by indigenous Indian tribes such as the Kickapoo and Comanche. On her second visit to the area France and Spain were settling in it. During her third visit, Mexico and Anglo-American settlers were battling for the land that eventually became part of the Republic of Texas. In 1841 the settlement known as Dallas was born. In 1845 the United States of America annexed the Republic of Texas. In 1941 Dallas was a thriving city supporting World War II as a major manufacturer of military automobiles and aircraft. Ford Motor Company produced 94,000 Jeeps and North American Aviation manufactured over 18,000 aircraft. Destiny had flown the P-51 Mustang Fighter during the war.

Now Dallas was the ninth most populous city in the United States. It was a cultural center, home to incredible museums, performance halls, and twenty Fortune Five Hundred companies.

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During her existence, Destiny had seen entire countries destroyed and rise from the ashes. Humans had an infinite capacity for never learning from their mistakes.

During all her years on earth and all her travels she had never met anyone like herself. She had met shape shifters, vampires, and demons, but none of them possessed eternal life. She had destroyed them whenever they threatened others, but no matter what they did to her, she came back stronger than ever. The female clergy had raised the dead. She must have incredible powers. “She must be like me,” Destiny said into the darkness of the night.

##

Destiny awoke to the soft purring of Venus as the black cat kneaded her stomach in a motion she laughingly called making biscuits. She lay still enjoying the cat’s massaging action that she recognized as Venus’ way of showing affection. She gently rubbed the cat’s ears causing Venus to purr louder.

Venus stretched the full length of her body as she shifted into her female form. “What is bothering you?” She asked Destiny.

Destiny shared her experience about the brunette clergy and sighed. “I must find her. I think she is like me.”

“You mean immortal?” Venus asked.

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“Yes,” Destiny replied, pulling Venus into her arms and gently massaging her back.

“Down a little lower,” Venus hummed. “Oh, yes, that is perfect. I love the way you rub my back.”

Destiny laughed. She loved Venus more than any pet she had ever owned and liked making her happy. “Do you want to go out to lunch with me?” she asked.

“I would love to go to that restaurant that serves the wonderful fish soup.”

“Then that is where we will go. You need to join me in the shower so I can soap you down and rinse you.”

“You take way too many showers for my liking,” Venus replied. “Cats only need to be bathed once a month.”

“Are you going out as my cat that I must put in a carrier, or a beautiful woman I can talk to in public?”

Venus tilted her lovely head, “Um, a beautiful black woman.”

“Then let’s get into the shower.”

##

Venus looped her arm through Destiny’s as they strolled along the river walk. “Lunch was superb. Thank you for taking me out of the house.”

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“I love when you accompany me places,” Destiny admitted. “Heads up! Here comes a pit bull. Don’t shift. I’ll take care of him.”

Venus squeezed Destiny’s arm tighter as the dog crouched in front of them and salivated as he snarled.

“I hope you have a firm grip on him,” Destiny addressed the dog’s owner.

“He’s harmless,” the man smirked as the dog’s growl grew more menacing.

Venus hissed and dug her fingernails into Destiny’s arm. Destiny pulled her from the walking path and nodded to the man to move along with his dog, but the man stopped in the middle of the path.

“Your dog is scaring my friend,” Destiny said as the pit bull strained against his leash.

“He’s harmless,” the man insisted obviously enjoying the discomfort of the two women.

“I don’t believe you can control him,” Destiny insisted.

The dog sprang toward Venus. Destiny pulled her from harm’s way as a gust of wind caught the dog and blew him and his owner into the water. A fast-moving current caught the pair and carried them down river and out of sight.

“I love how you can do that,” Venus giggled. “Can you teach me?”

“Unfortunately, I can’t” Destiny said sincerely. “I wish I could.”

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“Can we grab a fish pizza, a six pack, and watch that video about Catwoman?” Venus asked.

“Sounds like a plan to me.” Destiny laughed. “I want to do some more research on the female clergy. She must be around here somewhere.”

“Dr. Sinclair, wait up,” a male doctor from the hospital called out to them.

Venus hissed upset by the interruption. She wanted to get home and back to her feline shape. *Next time, I'll make Destiny carry me*, she thought.

“Dr. Baker, it is good to see you,” Destiny said. “This is my daughter Venus. Venus, I work with Dr. Baker at the hospital.”

“Please call me Steve.” Baker insisted. “Is the story circulating at the hospital true?”

“Which story?” Destiny frowned.

“That you resurrected a dead patient.”

Destiny snorted. “Does that sound like a true story to you, Steve?”

“Not really,” Baker admitted. “I had to ask.”

“I’m an excellent surgeon,” Destiny added, “but I’m no miracle worker.”

“I’m filling in for you while you take a much-needed vacation,” Baker informed her. “May I walk with you?”

“Of course,” Destiny replied. “We are walking back to our car before it rains.” She made it sprinkle letting drops of rain fall on Baker.

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Baker held out his hand, and the rain came down harder. “I should head for my car too,” he said. “See you next week.”

As soon as Baker disappeared, Destiny made the sun shine warm enough to dry them completely. “You were talking about fish pizza when we were interrupted,” she reminded Venus.

Venus purred loudly. “Yes and I want to drool over Catwoman videos for the rest of the afternoon.”

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I'VE SEEN ENOUGH
OF THE
OUTSIDE WORLD



“Tell me again how surprised you were when you were playing with me, and I shifted into a human.”

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CHAPTER 6

Destiny scoured the internet for three days and came up empty handed. The dark-haired clergy was nowhere to be found. She turned off her laptop and placed it on the coffee table. Venus jumped into her lap and began to purr.

Destiny stroked Venus' black fur, walking her fingers from the cat's neck down her back and scratching at the base of her tail. "You are so soft and silky," she complimented. Venus morphed into the breath-taking woman Destiny adored. "You're sitting on my lap," Destiny pointed out.

"I like sitting on your lap," Venus declared. "I like being close to you. I love you. You are the best owner a cat could ever hope for."

"And you are the most wonderful cat I have ever met," Destiny replied.

"Have you had other feline shifters in your life?"

"No, you are the only one I have ever met. I've encountered werewolves and bears, but you are the only cat, and I love you to pieces."

"I'm glad you found me," Venus reminisced. "If you hadn't heard me crying in that dumpster, I would have died."

"I know. It takes a cruel human to throw a litter of week-old kittens into a dumpster in a blizzard. If I had found out who did that to you, I

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would have frozen them to death. I wish I had found you in time to save your litter mates.”

“Tell me again how surprised you were when you were playing with me, and I shifted into a human.”

“Surprised is not the word I would use,” Destiny exclaimed. “I was dumfounded. I had no idea how I was going to educate you and help you survive in the world of humans. I knew I had to teach you how to control your urge to shift from one form to another.”

“I consider you my mother,” Venus declared. “You saved my life, took me in, and taught me how to survive in a world that is unkind to creatures like me.”

“I love you like my own daughter,” Destiny agreed. “I am so proud of the woman and cat that you have become. I think you should make your human form your dominant identity.”

“I am most comfortable in my cat form,” Venus replied. “I don’t have to take baths so often or wear clothes, and I love drinking milk from a bowl. I also like lying in your lap while you pet me.”

“You need to put on a robe. You can’t lay here naked.” Destiny laughed. Silently she wondered if Venus would live the life span of a human. She hoped so. Venus had been with her twenty-two years and seemed to be aging in human years. She was in her last year at the university and wanted to get a law degree. Something Destiny strongly

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encouraged. She had been accepted into the Dedman School of Law at Southern Methodist University in Dallas.

“Are you having any luck finding your female priest or whatever she is?” Venus asked.

“No.”

“Doesn’t your hospital have surveillance cameras all over the place? Maybe she will show up on one of them somewhere.”

“Yes! Why didn’t I think of that?” Destiny blurted. “Do you want to go with me to the hospital?”

“It’s 3:00 a.m.”

“I know. I plan to slip into the security section and view the video from last Monday.”

“They won’t let you waltz into the surveillance area and watch whatever you want,” Venus pointed out. “Why don’t you just hack into their system, and we can watch the videos here at home? I can help you. A gorgeous woman wearing a clergy collar will be easy to spot, unless the cameras couldn’t pick her up.”

“If I can get a photo of her, I can do an image search on Google and locate her,” Destiny replied. “That is a great idea.

Each one retrieved their own laptop and sat beside each other as they hacked into the hospital surveillance system.

“I’m in,” Venus announced. “Click on the link I just sent you.”

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Destiny entered the security system. “I’ll do 12:00 a.m. to noon and you can search 12:00 p.m. to midnight.”

As Destiny searched the hour before the mangled woman was brought into her emergency room, she began to get excited. When she had done all she could do, she disappeared from the video. A black figure was in the darkest corner of the operating room. It didn’t move until the dying woman was wheeled from the room.

“I’ve got her,” Destiny whispered.

Venus placed her laptop on the sofa beside her and scooted closer to Destiny so she could watch the video with her. The dark figure walked from the shadows into the light of the operating room. Venus sucked in her breath. “She is gorgeous,” she hissed.

“Look at her eyes,” Destiny encouraged. “They are almost haunting. I feel like I could drown in the blue pools of ice.”

Destiny paused the video and made a screenshot of the woman’s face then copied it. “I’ll run it through Google Image and see if it matches anyone.”

“This could take a while,” Venus noted. “I’m going to make a tuna sandwich. Do you want one?”

“No, I’m not as fond of fish as you, but I will have a cup of coffee and a piece of that pecan pie you made this morning.” She followed Venus into the kitchen and brewed a cup of Segafredo Italian

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coffee while Venus made a sandwich and searched for potato chips.

They settled onto the sofa as Google finished its search. A dozen pictures of attractive dark-haired beauties filled the laptop screen. Three of the photos were of the woman that had resurrected Destiny's dead patient.

"That is her," Destiny declared placing her mouse pointer over a photo that had the name Faith Seraph, PhD beneath it. She clicked on the link that took her to an article on Faith graduating from Duke University with the highest-grade point average ever achieved from her bachelor's degree through her doctoral degree covering her twelve-year university stint.

Most of her education is from Duke University in Durham, NC. It is highly ranked in theological and ministerial studies, Destiny thought.

She clicked on the next photo of Faith that opened an article on her involvement in several archeological discoveries while getting her bachelor's degree in archeology at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

"Jeez," Venus hissed. "She graduated at the top of her class from a university that is ranked number one in the world for archeology."

"Impressive," Destiny murmured.

"She is obviously an over achiever," Venus smirked.

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“Do I detect a bit of jealousy?” Destiny teased.

Clicking on the third photo of Faith provided her current location and employer. An article headline read, “Faith Seraph, PhD Joins Dallas Theological Seminary.”

“Want to take a road trip tomorrow?” Destiny asked.

“No, I’ve seen enough of the outside world. I just want to curl up in my cat hotel and sleep all day.”

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by Erin Wade**

**DO YOU BELIEVE
IN WITCHES**



*Destiny recognized a “gotcha” question
when she heard one.*

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 7

Destiny parked her Lexus in front of the business office of the Dallas Theological Seminary. She had never visited the campus before and was impressed with the immaculate grounds and architecture of the buildings.

She walked to the information center where two handsome young men were helping visitors and students. “I’m doctor Destiny Sinclair,” she introduced herself. “I’d like to attend one of Dr. Seraph’s lectures.”

The man typed on his keyboard then his printer spit out a sheet of paper. “This is a list of her lectures and their times,” he said smiling as he handed Destiny the sheet with a map of the campus. “Dr. Seraph’s lecture hall is here.” He circled a building on the map. “It is the second hall on the walk from here. Walk out the same door that you entered and turn left. You can’t miss it.”

She thanked him and studied the list as she walked from the area. Dr. Seraph’s next lecture was in fifteen minutes.

##

Students packed the hall and Destiny squeezed into the last space of the last row against the back wall. She didn’t take her eyes off Professor Seraph, who was writing on the whiteboard. She

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noticed a straightening of the educator's body and a jerk of her head. The professor slowly turned around to face her class, her gaze locked with Destiny's who shivered as a cold wave washed over her entire body. *Not the warmth I expected*, Destiny thought.

Dr. Seraph's hair was pulled back in a French Twist showing off her beautiful neck. Destiny held her breath as she studied the professor. Her make up was flawless. Perfectly arched black eyebrows highlighted the most beautiful blue eyes she had ever seen. Her lips were accentuated by a natural plum-color. Destiny couldn't recall ever seeing a more beautiful woman. *She is taller than me*, Destiny thought.

The noisy class silenced immediately under their professor's gaze. Destiny feared she might strike dead anyone who made a sound. Then Faith Seraph's blue eyes sparkled, and her smile lit up the room as if the sun had come out. "I see we have a few visitors today. Welcome and please feel free to join in our discussion."

A young man on the front row raised his hand and Faith nodded to him. "Dr. Seraph, do you believe in witches?"

Destiny recognized a "gotcha" question when she heard one.

"I believe in the Bible," Faith declared. "There are thirty-one verses in the Bible that mention witches, so yes, I believe witches have

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existed. Do they exist today? I don't know. Looking back on the world's history of fearing and hating things they don't understand, I do believe that witches have been eradicated from the earth, just as mankind crucified the man sent to save the world. We have a propensity for killing anything we don't understand. For some reason we tend to declare anyone that is different from the norm a spawn of the devil. It is strange that we readily believe in the devil yet doubt the existence of God and his goodness."

A titter ran through the audience as Faith made her statement. She locked eyes with Destiny and smiled. Destiny felt warmth spread through her body.

"I have always found it interesting that the Greek work *pharmakie* translates to *witchcraft or sorcery* specifically the use of drugs often used in magical practices, and yet big pharma is a powerful entity in our world today. Pharmaceutical companies are allowed to thrive and flood countries with mind-altering drugs that kill their users or destroy their mental capabilities. So, yes, I do believe in witches. Do I believe all of them are evil? No! Do I believe witches should be persecuted and put to death? No!"

A murmur ran through the lecture room as students commented to one another about Dr. Seraph's declarations.

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“Most of the biblical references to witches are in the Old Testament. Jesus never mentioned them. Of course, by the time he appeared, most of them had been annihilated.”

A young woman raised her hand and Faith acknowledged her. “Professor Seraph if you knew for certain someone was a witch; would you destroy them?”

“If you killed a witch,” Faith said, “You would surely go to hell for breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

“I find it interesting that throughout the Bible, the worst things are attributed to women: Eve’s sins, Lot’s wife turned to a pillar of salt for looking back at Sodom and Gomorrah, Samson, and Delila. I won’t bore you with the list of evil women in the Bible, but it is interesting that the word warlock which means male witch never appears anywhere in the Bible. Witches are always women. Could that be because the Bible was written by men?”

Another student raised her hand and Dr. Seraph glanced at her wristwatch. “I’m afraid our time is up, Emily,” she said. “Save your question for our next time together. We can pick up where we are leaving off.”

The students gathered their things and quietly exited the room.

Destiny stood to let the students seated beside her exit then sat back down. When only Destiny and

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Faith remained in the room, Faith looked up at her. “Did you enjoy my lecture?” she asked.

“Very much,” Destiny replied.

“Why are you here?”

“You know why I am here,” Destiny declared. “I am here to take you to lunch.”

Faith nodded. “I knew you would look for me.”

Destiny stood as Faith approached her. “You made a huge impression on me,” she said, “and left me in an awkward position.”

“Do you know where St. Martin’s Bistro is?” Faith asked.

“Yes.”

“Meet me there in half an hour. I must turn in some paperwork to administration,” Faith said, “then I’ll be finished for the day, and we can have a leisurely lunch. If you arrive before me, request one of the alcove tables. They are extremely private.”

Destiny nodded, hesitant to let the professor out of her site. “You won’t ghost me, will you?”

Faith laughed. “Not a chance. I’ve been searching for you for a very long time.”

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by Erin Wade**

**“WHY ME?
WHY MY HOSPITAL?
WHY THAT PATIENT?”**



*“Dr. Sinclair, even you know it is impolite
to ask a woman her age.”*

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 8

Destiny arrived at St. Martin's Bistro before Faith and requested seating in one of the cozy little nooks at the back of the restaurant. She ordered a glass of wine and watched the door for Faith.

The hostess greeted the professor like an old-time friend. It was obvious Faith frequented the establishment. She smiled as she walked toward Destiny then ran the tip of her tongue between her lips. *She is beyond beautiful*, Destiny thought.

"Good, you have my favorite table in the restaurant," Faith complimented as she slid into the circular booth beside Destiny. "Have you tried the Champagne Brie Soup? It is one of the house specialties?"

Destiny found herself mesmerized by the woman. Faith was relaxed and smiled freely at Destiny as if she were a treasured friend. The way she looked at her made Destiny feel warm and wanted.

Destiny pulled herself from her enchantment with Faith as the server approached their table. "The soup sounds delightful," she replied.

Faith ordered for them. "Both of us will start off with a bowl of your Champagne Brie Soup and I'll have a glass of wine. Whatever Dr. Sinclair is drinking is fine."

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“I’m no wine connoisseur,” Destiny declared. “You might like something better.”

Faith shrugged. “If it tastes good to you, I am certain I will like it.”

The server walked away, and Destiny wasted no time getting to the crux of things. “Why me? Why my hospital? Why that patient?”

“I’ve been watching you for a long time. You work at Sacred Heart Hospital, and the patient was carrying a baby boy that is destined to be president of the United States. He will save the human race from annihilating itself.”

The server placed their order on the table. “Let me know if you need anything else.”

“Thank you,” both women replied as the server walked away.

“Who, what are you?” Destiny muttered softly.

“Someone like yourself,” Faith said before taking a sip of her wine. “Um, this is good.”

“How old are you?”

“Dr. Sinclair, even you know it is impolite to ask a woman her age.”

Destiny raised her brows. “Are we going to play games?”

“Older than time.” Faith murmured.

Destiny gaped at her. “Before man began keeping time?” She had a feeling Faith’s answer would rock her world.

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“Before creation,” Faith said. “Before there *was* a heaven and an earth.”

Destiny locked their gazes. “Are you a god?”

“I honestly don’t know,” Faith replied. “I honestly don’t know.”

“How long have you been watching me?”

“Since you were born. Since the heathens murdered your mother.”

“And you are just now contacting me? Why?”

“I wasn’t certain what you were. Each century that passed made me increasingly curious about you. When I ascertained that you only do good—except for the occasional encounter with godless men—I knew I wanted to know you better, and the fact that we are the only two immortals on earth.”

Destiny ran her finger around the rim of her wine glass trying to assimilate the information she had received. “There are no others like us?”

“None that I know of.”

“Sometimes I feel like a pawn in a giant chess game.”

“If we are pieces on a chess board,” Faith smiled, “then I am the queen.”

Destiny couldn’t keep from chuckling at the brunette beauty’s claim of power.

“So, you are the most powerful piece on the chess board,” she teased Faith. “Still someone else’s hand is moving you.”

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“No one moves me,” Faith declared as she placed her hand on Destiny’s thigh.

To her surprise, Destiny felt a stirring deep in her core that she hadn’t felt in decades. She pushed Faith’s hand from her leg. “Don’t touch me without permission,” she whispered.

“I apologize. I didn’t mean to take liberties with you,” Faith said sincerely. “Men and women ceased to arouse me centuries ago.”

“I enjoyed your lecture today,” Destiny complimented regretting that she had slapped away Faith’s hand. “You make your students stop and think.”

“More importantly, did I make you stop and reassess your situation?”

“Maybe,” Destiny murmured.

“You should attend my lecture tomorrow. It is about overcoming the desires of the flesh. I will be in the same lecture hall at the same time.”

Destiny knew she would attend the class. She craved more knowledge of the woman sitting beside her.

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by Erin Wade**

**“WHAT ARE YOU
FAITH SERAPH?”**



*“I have spent centuries wrestling
with my desire for you,”*

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 9

Destiny awoke to the warmth of Venus curled into her side. She gently stroked the black cat's stomach and smiled at the volume of her pet's purring. Her mind went to Professor Faith Seraph. Seraph! It was a name she had never encountered in her life. She wondered what ethnic group it originated from.

She briefly thought that Faith might be dangerous. She knew nothing about her except that she could resurrect the dead. Perhaps she had resurrected Jesus. A shiver ran through her as she thought something so blasphemous.

If Faith existed before creation, perhaps *she* was the creator. "Why has she revealed herself to me?" Destiny asked the darkness of her bedroom.

Venus mewed softly and stretched pushing herself against Destiny. "Time to rise and shine," Destiny said as she hugged the cat tightly then rolled out of bed.

##

Faith felt the blonde doctor before she saw her. Something in the air changed when Destiny was close. It became lighter and felt like laughter. She turned to see Destiny standing at the entrance to the lecture hall watching her. Although she could not read minds at will, Faith could meld her mind with

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others who were thinking thoughts similar to her own. She smiled her most enticing smile and Destiny smiled back.

She is gorgeous, Faith thought as she motioned for Destiny to come closer. “Please, sit here on the front row,” she invited.

Destiny did as she was instructed and sat in the spot right in front of Faith. It didn’t offer a desk to write on, so she balanced her steno pad on her lap as she pulled a pen and a small recorder from her purse. She planned to record the professor’s lecture. Not that she would ever forget a word Faith uttered, but so she could listen to the melodic voice when she was alone.

Faith sat down beside her. “I enjoyed lunch yesterday especially our discussion.”

“As did I,” Destiny admitted. “Do you have time for a repeat today?”

“I do,” Faith murmured close to her ear and fire consumed Destiny’s body. An ache she had long ago forgotten spread below her abdomen as a pink blush crept up her chest to her neck and engulfed her face.

“I love it when you blush,” Faith muttered then stood to welcome her class.

The bell rang and the students were silent. “How many of you studied witches in the Bible last night?” Faith asked. The entire class raised their hand. “Do you have questions for me?”

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Every student raised their hand. “Let’s just go down the rows and start with Emily. Emily began talking and Destiny went deaf. There was nothing in the room but Faith and her. She didn’t hear the scholars’ questions or Faith’s answers. She only heard the soothing hum of the instructor’s voice sending a calming warmth through her. She licked her lips trying to summon moisture to her mouth and tongue that had gone dry. She couldn’t take her eyes off the statuesque woman gracefully walking in front of her. Too soon, the bell rang and students cleared the hall. Propped against her stool Faith watched her from behind the lectern.

Destiny shook her head trying to pull herself from the trance she had slipped into as she watched Faith teach.

“Are you okay?” Faith asked, her blue eyes turning the turquoise of the heavens before a snowstorm.

Destiny nodded as Faith slowly moved toward her. Standing in front of the doctor, Faith gently took her face between her hands and gazed into her eyes. “You are so beautiful, Destiny Sinclair and you don’t even know it.”

She leaned down and softly placed her lips against Destiny’s. Destiny couldn’t remember the last time she had kissed anyone. It was so long ago, but nothing compared to the feel of Faith’s lips on hers.

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Destiny couldn't stop herself, without breaking the kiss, she stood seeking more contact with the sensual professor. Faith slid her arms around Destiny's waist and cupped her buttock as she pressed the blonde's body hard against her own.

"I have spent centuries wrestling with my desire for you," Faith whispered in her ear as she kissed her neck and nibbled her ear before recapturing her lips.

Faith's hands on her body seemed to sear her flesh. Not in a painful way, but in a hot possessive way that screamed, "You are mine."

Faith slowly pushed Destiny back into the seat and knelt before her. Still kissing her, Faith possessively moved her hands under Destiny's dress and up her legs caressing her thighs until she reached the apex of their beginning culminating in the softest, wettest place Faith had ever touched. She slipped her long fingers into silk panties and parted hot, moist lips.

"No, please, not here," Destiny whimpered, greedily capturing Faith's lips again and sliding her tongue between her teeth. She closed her eyes tightly. She knew she would let Faith Seraph do anything she wanted to do to her.

"Dr. Sinclair," Faith's voice came from somewhere far away. "Destiny, are you okay?"

Destiny snapped open her eyes and frantically looked around her. Faith was still behind

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the lectern sitting on her stool staring questioningly at Destiny.

“Are you okay?” Faith asked again.

Destiny ran her hand across her lips removing the tiny line of perspiration that had formed above her upper lip. “I—I don’t know. . .” She scrutinized Faith. It was obvious the professor had not moved from her stool and certainly had not almost violated her. “I need a drink of water,” Destiny croaked, gathering her belongings and standing on shaky legs.

Faith picked up her computer bag and slung it over her shoulder. In four long strides she was beside Destiny slipping her arm through the blonde’s and steadying her as they started the walk up the stairs. “I have water in my office,” Faith informed her. “Also, a bathroom if you need it.”

##

Destiny splashed cold water on her face and gulped down the glass of water Faith had given her. She didn’t hesitate to use her magic to style her hair and apply her lipstick. What she really wanted to do was blow up something, but she knew an explosion wouldn’t remove the image of Faith on the floor between her legs. She questioned her own sanity, but a being that could raise the dead was also capable of creating hallucinations. “What are you Faith Seraph?” she mumbled to herself.

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She couldn't let Faith intimidate her. She was powerful in her own right, but something told her that she was no match for Faith. *I'll bide my time and be more wary of her*, she thought. The thrill of Faith's touch still warmed her flesh. If she was entirely honest, she couldn't wait for Faith to caress her again and not stop until she had stilled the storm raging in her core.

Destiny opened the bathroom door and joined Faith in her office. She had so many questions to ask the professor but didn't trust herself to be alone with Faith behind a locked door. "I'm starving. Do you want to go to the same restaurant we met at yesterday?"

Faith nodded. "Let's go in my car. We can visit on the way to the Bistro. I can bring you back here after lunch."

Destiny bit her bottom lip, torn between her desire to spend time with Faith and her concern over what had happened in the lecture hall. She was not prone to hallucinations and suspected that Faith had exercised some form of mind control over her. "I need to take my vehicle. I must go to the hospital after lunch."

Faith shrugged. "I'll follow you."

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**I DON'T HAVE TIME TO SORT
YOUR TRICKS OF FANTASY
FROM REALITY**



*Taking you with me would be like taking a
water pistol to douse an erupting volcano.*

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 10

The hostess led them to the same alcove they had dined in the day before. Faith ordered wine for them, but Destiny opted for iced tea. She wanted to keep a clear mind.

When they were alone, Destiny turned to face Faith. "If we are going to be friends, you must promise me that you will never use a mind meld to read my thoughts or to cast illusions in my mind."

Faith smiled. "You liked it."

"It wasn't real," Destiny declared. "I don't have time to sort your tricks of fantasy from reality. Promise me."

"I promise you that I will always ask your permission before reading or placing thoughts in your mind. I will not access your mind unless you invite me in."

"Fair enough," Destiny responded.

"You trust me to do what I say?"

"I don't believe you would lie to me," Destiny said.

"I promise I will never lie to you," Faith reiterated.

"Good. Now what was that in the lecture hall?"

"I simply responded to what you wanted. That was what I wanted to do to you right then and there," Faith answered honestly. "What I still want

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to do to you. If we are both honest, it was what you wanted me to do.”

Destiny nodded. “I’m not certain what you are. I hope you understand I need to know more about you before I um...”

“...allow me to make all your desires and dreams become reality,” Faith finished her sentence. “You know you want me to.”

The server returned with their beverages and requested their order.

“I will have the avocado wrap,” Faith replied.

“I’ll have the same,” Destiny said.

The server collected their menus and walked away.

“Do you truly want to know the real me?” Faith asked.

“I believe you know all there is to know about me,” Destiny said. “I want to know all there is to know about you. I believe you are more powerful than me, therefore you are a threat to me. You’ve been observing me since I was born and I’ve just become aware of you.”

Faith nodded. “I’m a thousand times more powerful than you, but I would never harm you. Go home with me now and I will show you everything you want to know about me.”

Destiny nodded. “Okay.” She pulled a pen and small notebook from her purse. “Write down your address and phone number. I will arrive at your home at 7:00 p.m.”

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Faith wrote the information on the page and returned the pad to Destiny. “I am looking forward to spending time alone with you. I want to share with you the secrets of the universe. I want to teach you everything I know.”

“I must feed my cat and make sure she is okay before I leave her alone.”

Faith smiled. “I admire your concern for all animals. Your cat is one lucky feline. What is her name?”

Destiny frantically searched her mind for a second name for Venus. “Cat,” she replied.

“What an original name. I look forward to meeting Cat,” Faith said trying to stop her smile from turning into laughter.

They finished lunch discussing mundane things that fill the empty time for mortals.

##

“You should take me with you,” Venus argued after Destiny explained that she was going to spend some time with Faith.

“I’m certain I will be safe,” Destiny replied. “Trust me taking you with me would be like taking a water pistol to douse an erupting volcano.”

Venus laughed. “In that case, I’m reverting to my cat form and taking a nap. Wake me when you get home.”

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by Erin Wade

**BEHIND HER, DESTINY HEARD
THE ELECTRIC GATES SWING
SHUT AND LOCK.**



“I know who you are. You are an angel.”

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 11

Faith's home was outside the city sitting atop a mountain—as close as one can get to a mountain in Texas. Destiny accelerated to provide her car with the power it needed to climb to the top that leveled out onto two acres of the most beautiful botany she had ever seen. The massive double gates were open inviting her to enter Faith's little piece of heaven.

Bougainvillea flowered in thick clusters as the plant's vines weaved themselves through trellis that graced the sides of the house. The plant camouflaged the ten-foot-high wrought iron fence that enclosed the top of the mountain. Huge double doors welcomed visitors to the impressive Mediterranean home. Destiny sat in the car for several minutes allowing her senses to absorb the peaceful beauty of her surroundings.

She was jerked from her utopia by the opening of her car door.

“Are you going to stay out here or join me in my home?” Faith asked as she stepped back to allow Destiny to get out of the vehicle.

“This is beautiful,” Destiny complimented. “It is so peaceful. Everything about it is soothing—the fragrance, the beauty, and the silence. I don't often see Bougainvillea in Texas.”

“I love the plant,” Faith explained. “The flowers are a symbol of resilience, love, passion,

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and protection. The colors have a deep emotional meaning for me. Something I hope we will share.”

She clasped Destiny’s hand and led her toward the house. Behind her, Destiny heard the electric gates swing shut and lock.

##

Faith led her guest through her home into a magnificent garden whose beauty overpowered the senses. “This is incredible,” Destiny murmured. “The scent, the elegance, everything is so perfect. It is overwhelming.”

“I’m glad you like it,” Faith replied handing her a glass of wine.

Destiny sipped the burgundy nectar of the gods. “Oh, my,” she breathed. “This is amazing. I’ve never tasted such a perfect drink.”

“It suits you,” Faith said.

“Faith Seraph,” Destiny whispered, holding Faith’s gaze. “I know who you are. You are an angel. A celestial being with a fierce passion for serving your god.”

Faith’s eyes flickered crimson then cobalt blue before returning to their usual cerulean color that rivaled the clear blueness of the heavens in the springtime. “And what about you Destiny Sinclair? Whom do you serve?”

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“Certainly not a god that would allow a hysterical demented crowd of fools to burn a kind loving woman at the stake.” Destiny replied bitterly.

Faith nodded, “Your mother.”

Destiny nodded and took a deep drink of her wine. “You were there, weren’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you stop them?” Destiny wailed.

“It wasn’t God’s will,” Faith whispered.

“Do you always do God’s will?” Destiny asked. “What if some lunatic discovers that I’m a witch and raises a crowd to burn me? Would you stand idly by and watch?”

“No! I have saved you numerous times during your life. The time the Egyptians drugged you and rendered you helpless. How do you think you awoke on a barge floating down the Nile? The time the Aztecs were going to sacrifice you to their pagan gods. Who do you think caused the torrential rainstorm that washed the altar you were bound to into the river and ripped away your bondage freeing your hands to rain down fire and brimstone onto the heathens?”

“You?” Destiny whispered.

“I have watched you from the day you were born,” Faith informed her.

“Why are you making yourself known to me now?” Destiny asked.

“Because I have fallen in love with you,” Faith admitted, “and I am tired of being alone.”

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Destiny lowered her eyes to the half-full wine glass she held in her hands. “Does this contain drugs?”

“No, anything you do with me will be of your own free will.”

“And the god you so fiercely serve, does he still talk to you?” Destiny asked.

“No, I think he has moved on to other worlds, other civilizations. I am left to guard earth and its inhabitants. It is becoming more difficult every day. I am beginning to understand why he has turned his back on them.”

“If you have watched me through the centuries then you know the reason I am alone.” Destiny bowed her head.

“Yes, you are too strong, and your passion destroys your lovers in the end.”

“I can’t go through that again,” Destiny declared. “I can’t bear to lose someone I love again.”

Faith stood. “Look at me Destiny,” she commanded.

The witch raised her eyes to meet the angel’s. Faith inhaled deeply and unfurled the most magnificent wings Destiny had ever witnessed. Faith seemed to grow in stature as she held out her hand to Destiny.

“Do you trust me?” Faith asked.

“I do.”

“Then come with me.”

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Destiny hesitated briefly, placed her wine glass on the table and gripped Faith's hand. "If I give you my heart, you must promise me you will never leave me."

"I vow to always be with you," Faith affirmed as they ascended into the heavens.

##

Destiny snuggled into the warmth of the angel's soft wings as they engulfed her. She had never felt so loved, so safe. "Look," she exclaimed, "there is the Gulf of America and the Atlantic Ocean and Mount Everest, and the Sahara Desert."

Faith hugged her tighter. "Look over there."

"The Milky Way," Destiny exclaimed as Faith immersed them in the planets and stars making up the solar system. They floated through galaxies and shared the wonders of the endless universe.

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**THE MAGIC CRACKLED AROUND
THEM THEN RECEDED. DESTINY
SINCLAIR HAD MET HER MATCH.**



Faith took them into a black hole to keep the intensity of their lovemaking from destroying the universe.

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CHAPTER 12

Destiny couldn't catch her breath. Her lungs felt as if they would explode. Faith filled her entire body with feelings and desires she had never experienced. Just when she thought the angel couldn't take her any higher Faith threw her in the air, let her free fall hurtling toward earth then swooped beneath her, and caught her crushing Destiny in her arms merging with her body and soul.

During her time with the angel Destiny had suppressed her magic but Faith's intense passion ripped through her freeing the magic that had been simmer beneath the surface.

Faith took them into a black hole to keep the intensity of their lovemaking from destroying the universe. It was as if the efforts to suppress her raging desire for Destiny had taken their toll and Faith gave up trying to control her insatiable craving for the witch.

Destiny dug her nails into the flesh between Faith's shoulder blades and dragged them to the small of her back. Faith roared from the pleasure of the pain. "More," she demanded. "More witch. Hold back nothing."

Lightning flashed from Destiny as the magic took control. Finally, the angel was willing to accept the power of her love and the depth of her lust. Destiny no longer feared her hunger would destroy

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the celestial being. She knew that Faith could take what her magic demanded of her and return the soul shattering agony of her love.

“Hurt me,” Destiny screamed. “You know what I want. Make me remember this night throughout eternity.” She trembled as Faith filled her with fire that burned through her body and exploded into the universe. “Yes! Oh God, yes!” she shrieked. Unable to catch her breath from the sheer ecstasy of what Faith was doing to her, Destiny fainted.

Faith folded her wings around her lover and held her against her stomach as she caressed her back and pledged her eternal love. Destiny lay limp on the angel’s stomach listening to her heartbeat.

The magic crackled around them then receded. Destiny Sinclair had met her match. “I’m not through with you,” Faith murmured.

“I can’t—”

“Yes, you can,” Faith insisted. “You can give me everything I desire. That is why I chose you.”

“And I was worried about being too much for you,” Destiny murmured.

They floated weightlessly in the heavens reveling in the joy of finding someone to share eternity.

##

Half asleep, Destiny snuggled closer to the warm body in her bed. “Faith,” she murmured.

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“Wrong woman,” Venus sat up and glared down at her mother.

“Venus,” Destiny exclaimed jumping from her bed. “How many times have I told you not to assume your naked human form in my bed.”

“I only did it because you startled me. You have been restless, moaning and carrying on.”

“All night? Have I been here all night?” Destiny clarified.

“I don’t think so. You were gone when I curled up on the bed and went to sleep, but sometime during the night you woke me screaming. I don’t know what time you came to bed.” Bored by their conversation Venus assumed her cat form and curled up in the center of her pillow.

Destiny knew any further conversation with her cat would be useless. She walked to the kitchen to make coffee. She was surprised by how good she felt. She had expected to be sore and aching all over, but her body felt alive and satiated. She wondered if Faith was thinking about her. She pondered how she had ended up in her own bed after Faith had finished with her. She feared her glorious night with the angel had been a wild and wonderful dream.

As Destiny waited for her Keurig to finish brewing her coffee, she searched for her cellphone. It was in her purse on the sofa under the clothes she had worn to Faith’s home. She checked the time and was shocked to see it was 6:00 a.m. Monday morning. *I’ve been gone the entire weekend*, she

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thought. *I have the 8:00 a.m. shift in the emergency room this morning.*

She grabbed her cup of coffee and hurried to the en suite to shower. She shivered as she recalled lying on Faith's stomach as they floated through space. *Or did I dream it?*

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**“YOU HAVE A BEAUTIFUL
CONFESSIONAL.”**



*“This place often provides me solace when
I pray for a patient.”*

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CHAPTER 13

Destiny was delighted to see people with minor injuries sitting in the waiting room. Other doctors who needed the experience would treat them. She greeted her staff and visited the nurses. “I’m going to grab breakfast in the cafeteria,” she informed Rhonda, the head nurse over the emergency room.

“Director Langley just called,” Rhonda replied. “She wants to see you in her office at 10:00 a.m.”

“I’ll be there.”

Destiny wondered what Whitney Langley wanted. Hopefully, her last patient’s miraculous recovery was already forgotten--lost in the past week’s emergencies.

She finished her breakfast and a second cup of coffee then took the elevator to Whitney’s office.

##

The Director was standing in the waiting room of her office talking to Faith Seraph. Destiny caught her breath when Faith smiled at her and raised her perfect eyebrows.

“Here she is now,” Whitney said as Destiny entered the room. “Destiny, I’d like you to meet Vicar Faith Seraph. She is an instructor at the

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seminary and a vicar at Christ's Chapel Church. Faith, this is Dr. Destiny Sinclair."

Destiny held out her hand to greet Faith wondering if a sizzle of lightning would jump from her hand to Faith's. To her relief, she encountered only a soft, strong hand that sent shockwaves through her as she recalled how Faith had touched her while making love to her all weekend.

"It is a pleasure to meet you Vicar," Destiny said. "I've heard wonderful things about you."

"Vicar Seraph will be on call to pray with those who are leaving this world and help those who are losing their loved ones," Whitney informed her.

Destiny nodded. "I hope you will also ask your God to provide strength to those of us who sometimes lose a patient."

"I will pray for everyone." Faith smiled.

"Do you have time to give Vicar Seraph a quick tour of the emergency room and the hospital chapel?" Whitney asked.

"I do," Destiny replied. "My team has everything under control."

"I am surprised you have never visited our chapel," Destiny said as they walked from Whitney's office.

"Let's save it for last," Faith requested as they entered the elevator and Destiny pushed the button to take them to the emergency surgery floor.

"I know you are familiar with this area," Destiny said as they walked into the intensive care

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unit. “This is where your assistance almost got me committed.”

“I told you I was sorry,” Faith reminded her. “I had to act fast. I couldn’t let her body get cold or you would have really needed to explain her resurrection.”

“Is your office on this floor?”

“Yes, would you like to see it?” Destiny asked.

“Yes, I want to know all there is to know about Dr. Destiny Sinclair.”

Destiny led her down the hallway to a door bearing the plaque “Dr. Destiny Sinclair.” She unlocked the door and led Faith inside. Faith closed the door and locked it.

“Why are you here?” Destiny asked.

“I came for this,” Faith announced as she pulled Destiny into her arms and kissed her sweetly. “I can’t get you out of my mind.”

“I can’t even think straight,” Destiny admitted. “All I can think about is being in your arms with you wrapped all around me. I’ve never experienced anything like the hours I’ve spent with you.”

“Are you okay with how much I love you?” Faith whispered holding her close.

“I will die if you don’t love me as I love you,” Destiny admitted. “I’ve only known you a short time but can’t imagine living without you. I have looked for you my entire life.”

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“Good, we feel the same about each other,” Faith declared. “Can we have dinner tonight and plan our future?”

“Yes.” Destiny pulled Faith’s lips back to hers. “I love you Vicar Faith Seraph.”

##

Destiny talked about the hospital and her excellent surgical team as she led Faith to the hospital chapel.

“Do you have a confessional in the chapel?” Faith asked.

“Yes, but you aren’t a priest. You are a vicar,” Destiny noted, “only priests take confessions.”

“Not true, my brilliant lover.” Faith grinned. “I am a Lutheran Vicar, and we are closely aligned with the practices of the Catholic Church. Vicars hear confession and provide Holy Absolution. We perform communion, last rites, and most other acts of forgiveness practiced in the Catholic religion. The main difference between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church is that Lutherans believe that the scripture is superior to tradition and that it is the final law in the proclamation of the Gospel.”

Destiny linked her fingers with Faith’s as they entered the chapel. “This place often provides me solace when I pray for a patient.”

“It is lovely and very comforting,” Faith agreed. “You have a beautiful confessional.” She

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opened the door to the confessor's side of the booth so Destiny could enter, then followed her inside closing the door behind her.

"You are supposed to go on the other side," Destiny instructed.

"I know, but I wanted to do this." She caught Destiny's face between her hands and slowly kissed her, savoring the sweet softness of the doctor's lips. "And I want to confess my love for you to any god that might be listening." She kissed Destiny again, then opened the door and walked out.

Destiny collapsed onto the confessional bench and prayed that she was woman enough to keep up with the energetic angel.

The door to the confessional opened and Faith said, "You are being paged over the intercom. I will pick you up at your apartment at 7:00 p.m." She gave her a quick kiss then walked away.

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**“LET’S STROLL THE STREETS OF
PAHREE,” FAITH PRONOUNCED
PARIS AS THE NATIVES OF THE
CITY DID—WITH A SILENT “S.”**



*“She knows I think she is special,” Faith admitted.
You have no idea how special Venus is.
Destiny thought.*

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CHAPTER 14

“You have a date tonight?” Venus repeated the information Destiny had just given her. “Who? Where did you meet her and what does she do?”

“I tracked down the woman who raised my patient from the dead. Her name is Faith Seraph. She is a professor at the seminary, the vicar at Christ’s Chapel Church, and a volunteer at the hospital.”

Venus squinted her eyes and studied Destiny. “You spent the weekend with her, didn’t you? That is why you have been so happy.”

“Maybe.” Destiny shrugged as the buzzer sounded announcing Faith’s arrival. Venus assumed her cat form and curled up in the center of the sofa. “I must introduce you as Cat. I’m certain you will want to interact with the vicar in your human form. My cat and my daughter can’t both be named Venus.”

Destiny opened the door, and Faith presented her with a bouquet of red roses. “These are lovely,” Destiny cooed as she walked to the kitchen and put the flowers in a vase.

Faith sat on a stool at the kitchen island. Venus jumped onto the counter next to her and began rubbing her face against Faith’s arm as she purred loudly.

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“Oh my, you are gorgeous,” Faith exclaimed pulling Venus onto her lap. Something Venus never allowed anyone to do but she gloried in the soft stroking of Faith’s fingers.

“You must be special,” Destiny teased. “Cat never lets anyone hold her.”

“She knows I think she is special,” Faith admitted.

You have no idea how special Venus is. Destiny thought.

Faith ran her finger between Cat’s collar and her neck. “I see you have your phone number engraved on the gold plate embedded in her collar,” she noted.

“I would die if anything happened to her.”

Faith placed Venus on the stool next to her and stood to kiss Destiny. “I’ve been waiting all day to hold you in my arms she said as Venus bit her on the arm. “What the...?” she yelled as she shook Venus loose from her wrist.

“She loves you.” Destiny laughed.

Venus jumped to the floor and ran into the bedroom. Faith examined her arm and quickly vanquished the four puncture wounds in her skin.

“We should go,” she suggested glancing around for Destiny’s attack cat.

“If you could dine anywhere in the world, where would it be?” Faith asked.

“Paris, France,” Destiny replied. “I don’t know if it is still there, but I used to frequent an

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intimate restaurant in the center of the Parisian Golden Triangle. It was in a 19th century mansion. I believe it was called Le Clarence. I dined there about eighty-five years ago.”

“It was once exquisite,” Faith agreed, “but it is now more atmosphere than fine dining. I’m not a fan of their food. I must laugh at their address: Avenue Franklin Delano Roosevelt. I always expected something more Parisian.”

“Obviously you have been to Paris recently,” Destiny noted. “Tell me your favorite restaurant.”

“I’d rather show you.” Faith laced her fingers with Destiny’s, pulled her into her arms, and kissed her. When Destiny opened her eyes, she was amazed to find herself in the observation room at the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris looking out over the city.

“So much has changed since I was here last,” Destiny sighed.

“You were here at the end of World War II.” Faith did the math. “Paris has recovered.”

“While I do love Paris,” Destiny said. “I’m not a big fan of some of their most famous cuisine. Please tell me you don’t like Steak Tartare.”

“Raw ground beef has never appealed to me,” Faith admitted. “I lean toward medium cooked steaks.”

“What about foie gras?” Destiny asked. Faith made a face and gagged. “Just the

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thought of eating the liver of a goose that has been force fed to make it's liver enlarge disturbs me.”

“I do believe we are on the same page when it comes to the foods we like and dislike,” Destiny noted.

“Let’s stroll the streets of *Pahree*,” Faith pronounced Paris as the natives of the city did—with a silent “s.”

“I used to frequent a little bistro that had the most delicious Chicken Cordon Bleu,” Destiny said.

In a heartbeat they were standing in front of Bistro Saint Dominique. The night was pleasant and lovers were laughing and talking as they sat at tables outside the establishment. Faith grabbed Destiny’s hand and led her inside. “They have the best Chicken Cardon Bleu I have ever eaten,” she enthused. She waved over a server and ordered wine.

Destiny couldn’t pull her eyes away from Faith. The brunette’s eyes almost glowed in the dark and her smile was heavenly. “You are the most beautiful creature I have ever seen,” she murmured as Faith leaned down and kissed her.

“I’m glad you think so,” Faith replied. “I hope you never get bored with me.”

“I am looking forward to an eternity of evenings like this and nights like we had this weekend.”

“I’m not too much for you?” Faith whispered.

“You are perfect for me,” Destiny answered.

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**SOMEONE STOLE TWELVE PINTS
OF
BLOOD FROM THE BLOOD BANK**



“Twelve pints?” Destiny pondered out loud. “The amount of blood in the average human body.”

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CHAPTER 15

Dr. Monica Mayberry counted her stock again. “How can we be short twelve pints?” the blood bank supervisor asked her assistant. “When I signed out last night we had exactly forty thousand pints of blood. Now you are telling me that we only have 39,988 pints? Did we have an earthquake or some other catastrophe?”

“No ma’am,” nurse Cindy Raye mumbled, “but we did have a shooting at that dance hall in the stockyards in Fort Worth. Several people were injured and we rushed blood to Harris’ Downtown Hospital to save their lives. A single gunshot victim can require a hundred pints of blood, and there were over fifty people in their emergency room. I’m thankful their emergency room was overwhelmed instead of ours.”

“Get with the Red Cross and replenish our blood supply while I try to locate the twelve pints we have lost.” Monica directed.

“And Director Langley wants to see you immediately,” Cindy added.

“She can see me when we have this blood bank back to normal,” Monica responded.

Monica searched the bank’s logbook and tallied everything against the requests for blood, but she could find nothing to account for the missing twelve pints of blood. She finally drafted her report

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and walked to the hospital cafeteria for a late breakfast.

Dr. Destiny Sinclair was at the end of the cashier's line waiting to pay for her meal. "Would you sit with me while we eat?" Monica asked.

"Sure. What's up? You look like death warmed over." Destiny eyed the dark circles beneath Monica's eyes and her wrinkled forehead.

"I've got twelve pints of blood missing from the bank," Monica mumbled. "I've tried everything I know to account for it. The only thing I can think of is that someone loaded a case of blood onto the transport bus without filling out the paperwork and somehow bypassed the RFID trackers."

"Did you send blood to Harris' Downton in Ft. Worth?"

"Yeah. They are still trying to save as many gunshot victims as possible. I'll wait until things calm down then talk with their blood bank manager."

"Twelve pints?" Destiny pondered out loud. "The amount of blood in the average human body."

"Yeah," Monica croaked.

"Do you normally come up short?" Destiny asked.

"No more than a couple of pints a month," Monica replied. "We usually track them down to manual errors in withdrawals."

"Do we have the barcode scan system?" Destiny queried.

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“No, we use the Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and Internet of Things (IoT) to track every bag of blood from donor to recipient. RFID tags are attached to each blood bag enabling real-time tracking throughout the entire supply chain.”

“I’ve read about that tracking system,” Destiny said. “It’s similar to putting an Air Tag on my cat so I can track her with my cell phone.”

Monica laughed. “It is much more sophisticated than that, but it is based on the general idea.”

“So, the twelve bags were shown in your blood bank prior to the shootout in Cowtown and during the frantic effort to save everyone brought into the emergency room, those twelve bags disappeared without the RFID automatically registering their movements at any of the normal checkpoints they had to pass through to utilize them with a patient?”

“That sums it up,” Monica sighed. “There is no record of them leaving the blood bank, but they are definitely gone.”

“Has this happened before?”

“No, as I said one or two pints a month is common, but not a dozen at once. Enough about my problems. How are things in the emergency room?”

“Same as always,” Destiny answered. “They shoot or knife each other. We stop the bleeding and stitch them up.”

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“I heard about your miracle patient,” Monica said softly so no one could hear their conversation.

Destiny raised a questioning brow. “I don’t know what you mean?”

“The pregnant woman you resurrected.”

Destiny shook her head and took a deep breath. “I’m afraid my powers as a surgeon have been greatly exaggerated. I’ve never raised anyone from the dead.”

“Hmm,” Monica hummed.

“Is there a black market for blood?” Destiny asked.

“Not in the U.S., but third-world countries lose hundreds of patients a week who could be saved with a simple blood transfusion.”

“So, whoever is stealing your blood is not reselling it, but taking it for their own use,” Destiny theorized.

“It is a one-time thing,” Monica noted. “I’ll let you know if it continues.”

“Dr. Sinclair,” a melodious voice greeted Destiny, “Your head nurse said I might find you here.”

“Vicar Seraph, please join us. Do you know Dr. Monica Mayberry?”

“I haven’t had the pleasure,” Faith responded holding her hand out to Monica.

“The Vicar is volunteering in the chapel,” Destiny explained. “Dr. Mayberry is head of our blood bank.”

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Monica grinned. “Why are all the gorgeous ones married or pledged to God,” she teased.

“You have confused me with a priest,” Faith said. “I am a woman of God, but I wouldn’t practice abstinence if I fell in love with someone.”

Monica beamed. “Do you date?”

“I am dating someone,” Faith replied. “A person I have been searching for my entire life.”

“He is a lucky man,” Monica said.

“I didn’t say it was a man,” Faith clarified.

Monica blushed and pulled out a chair for Faith. “Please join us.”

Destiny was surprised to find that she was not jealous of Monica’s obvious infatuation with Faith. She hid her own smile as Faith’s dimples made an appearance when she laughed at Monica’s comments. *You are a beautiful woman, Faith Seraph,* she thought. *I can’t wait to get you home tonight.* She blushed as she thought about making love to the angel.

Faith stood. “I didn’t mean to interrupt your conversation,” she said. “Monica it is a joy to meet you. Dr. Sinclair, when you have time, would you drop by the chapel sometime today?”

“Of course,” Destiny replied. “I need to check with the emergency room and make certain we are ready to seize the day.”

“You didn’t tell me the new vicar was so enchanting,” Monica gushed as she watched Faith walk away.

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“Enchanting,” Destiny rolled the word off her tongue. “Yes, she is the most enchanting creature I’ve ever met.”

“I will definitely be visiting the chapel more often.” Monica grinned.

The intercom crackled, “Dr. Sinclair to the emergency room. Dr. Sinclair to the emergency room.”

“Keep me informed about the blood disappearance,” she requested before she downed the last of her coffee and hoped her next patient would be someone she could save.

##

Fortunately, Destiny’s patient only required sutures across the top of his scalp. “How did this happen?” she asked as she prepared to sew him up.

“My brother wanted to show me how accurate he is with a crossbow. So, my sister filmed while he shot an apple off the top of my head.” The patient beamed. “We are posting it on her podcast tonight.”

“You do know that an inch lower and I would be performing brain surgery on you instead of suturing the deep cut across the top of your head?”

The patient guffawed filling the air with his rancid breath.

“Why do I have the feeling there was copious amounts of alcohol involved in this incident?” Destiny scowled as she began stitching up her patient’s wound.

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**“PLEASE SAVE MY PATIENTS
BEFORE THEY DIE.”**



“Excuse me Vicar,” a young nurse approached Faith holding out something wrapped in a bloody towel. “I’m looking for the body that goes with this head.”

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CHAPTER 16

The shrill of her iPhone awoke Destiny. “Hello,” she mumbled into the offensive instrument. “How many? I’m on my way.”

She jumped from her bed, brushed her teeth, fixed her hair, and dressed in less than fifteen minutes. Being a powerful witch had its perks. She transported to her hospital office, changed into her scrubs, and opened the door. She smiled at the silhouetted figure standing in the doorway. Faith gently pushed her back into the darkness of her office, closed the door, wrapped her arms around her, and kissed her gently. “May I help? It’s a bus load of school children returning from a class trip.”

“If it is necessary, but please save my patients *before* they die,” Destiny cautioned her lover. “I do not want to get the reputation as a resurrectionist. I’d rather be known as a skilled surgeon. It is easier to explain.”

Faith laughed. “I will ask for permission to pray for them as soon as you give me the go-ahead.”

“Preferably before their heart stops beating,” Destiny reiterated.

##

Faith watched the doctor disappear through the doors leading to the operating rooms. “Excuse me Vicar,” a young nurse approached Faith holding

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out something wrapped in a bloody towel. “I’m looking for the body that goes with this head.”

“I’ll take care of it for you,” Faith cringed. “You go back and take care of the living.”

The nurse thankfully nodded, passed her gruesome responsibility to Faith, and ran from the hallway.

Faith quickly moved to one of the tables where a body lay covered in a bloody sheet. She pulled back the covering and placed the head on top of the gaping neck, said a silent prayer, and took her patient’s hand. The child’s eyes opened and she looked around.

Faith quickly picked her up and vanquished all evidence of an accident. The child was still trying to ascertain where she was as Faith carried her into the waiting room and looked around for her parents.

“Susan, my baby!” a distraught woman screamed at the sight of the girl. A large family crowded around Faith and the child. As her parents hugged and kissed their daughter, Faith disappeared from the group without being noticed.

##

“You look like you’ve been run over by a bus,” Java Stop owner Mindy Young placed a cup of coffee and a slice of strawberry covered angel food cake in front of her best friend.

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“Nothing this won’t heal,” Destiny declared placing a bite of the cake in her mouth and rolling her eyes at its heavenly taste.

“How many lives did you save today?” Mindy asked.

“All eighty of them!” An exhausted smile touched Destiny’s lips. “We had every surgeon we could find a table for, working to save them.”

“I watched the coverage of the wreck on the news,” Mindy informed her. “I can’t believe the driver had a heart attack and the bus stalled on the tracks in front of the oncoming train.

“The engineer did everything he could to stop the locomotive, but it dragged that bus full of terrified children three city blocks. The newscaster said that everyone was injured and some were mangled beyond recognition. Dr. Langley has been all over the news singing the praises of the emergency room professionals and the hours they have put in today.”

Destiny nodded.

“Um, is it true that she instructed the ambulance personnel to place the ones that had no chance of making it in the hallway outside your operating room?”

Destiny cringed as she tried to suppress the sight of the patient roller boards covered with mangled bodies that had lined up outside her surgical suite. As she kept her operating team busy, Faith touched the hopeless ones, healed them, then

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led them into the waiting room to reunite with their loved ones. No one questioned the beautiful vicar as she delivered the children to their families and prayed with them.

“Hello,” Mindy touched Destiny’s arm pulling her from her thoughts. “Where did you go?”

“Oh, I...I’m sorry. My mind flashed back to the bodies lined up outside my operating room.”

“So, the report was true. You did get the hopeless!”

“I wouldn’t say hopeless,” Destiny argued. “Newscasters tend to slant things toward the worst-case scenario. We were able to save everyone involved in the disaster.”

“That is incredible.” Mindy murmured in awe. “I can’t even begin to imagine...Whoa look at this.” She stared open mouthed at the exquisite dark-haired woman walking into her coffee shop.

“Destiny, the woman at the hospital information desk told me you might be here.” The ethereal being rushed to the doctor and hugged her shoulders. “Don’t get up. You must be exhausted.” She slid into the booth and snuggled against Destiny.

Speechless, Mindy grinned at the woman like a fool.

Destiny made the introductions before her friend began to drool. “Mindy Young this is my daughter Venus Sinclair.”

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“Venus,” Mindy repeated the name. “Of course, you would be named Venus. You are gorgeous.”

Venus caught Mindy’s hand in hers. “I am delighted to meet you. Destiny often speaks fondly of you. I love your bistro.”

Mindy tried to think of some reason to continue holding Venus’ hand but finally released it. “I didn’t know you had a daughter,” she blurted.

“I am usually away at the university,” Venus explained. “I’m home on summer break. I came as soon as I saw the interview with Dr. Langley. I want to lend moral support.”

“Thank you, dear,” Destiny squeezed Venus’ hand. “I am about ready to go home. I need to check with my patients in ICU. Would you like to walk with me?”

Venus surveyed Mindy. “I’d rather have coffee with Mindy, but I know you need my support so I will go with you. It is a pleasure to meet you Mindy.” She gracefully stood and held out her hand to Destiny.

The doctor let Venus pull her to her feet then linked her arm through Venus’ arm.

“Can I do anything to help?” Mindy offered.

“No. We’re just visiting my patients then going home,” Destiny replied. “Thanks again for the wonderful cake and coffee.”

“Anytime,” Mindy followed them to the door. “You two should let me cook dinner for you

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one night. I am more than a café cook. I'm a Certified Master Chef by the American Culinary Federation."

"Would tomorrow night be too soon?" Venus smiled.

"Tomorrow night is perfect," Mindy replied. "I'll call you tomorrow." She held out her cellphone to Venus. "Please call your cellphone so I will have your number."

Venus graciously did as Mindy asked and returned her phone so she could answer her own. "We will see you tomorrow night," she said as she opened the door for Destiny.

"Thank you for coming to check on me," Destiny said as they walked to the hospital.

"I was worried about you. The bus/train wreck is all over the news today. You must be exhausted. I came to walk you home."

"I appreciate that."

Venus glanced at Destiny. "Mindy is much prettier than you described," she noted.

Destiny nodded. "She is a beautiful woman, and she couldn't stop drooling over you."

"The attraction is mutual." Venus giggled. "You aren't going to be one of those overly protective mothers, are you?"

Destiny hugged Venus' arm tighter against her side. "You haven't had any experience with women or men," she noted.

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“Oh please,” Venus purred. “I am a cat not a nun. I did live in the dorm during my first four years of college.”

Destiny stopped and turned to face her raven-haired daughter. “You mean you’ve experimented?”

“Let me just say that I much prefer women over men. Men are ridiculously overrated and selfish lovers.”

Destiny laughed. “It seems you learned much more than I anticipated in college.”

“I am glad I have my own apartment this year,” Venus replied. “It was extremely difficult to maintain my human appearance especially when I got tired.”

“How did you manage that?”

“I always arrived before my roommates with a kitty carrier and a litter box and explained that my cat was under my bed. I was in a dorm that had a common space for the kitchen, laundry room and living room. There were four bedrooms and each of us had our own private bedroom and bathroom. There was some privacy. I always locked my door at night and slept in my natural form when I was alone.”

“I’m guessing you met some women you liked.” Destiny raised her brows.

“Oh yes. I soon discovered that I am extremely desirable.” Venus grinned mischievously. “I dated several women during my four years in

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college. I had a good time but I'm going to be more studious in obtaining my law degree."

"You had a four-point grade average," Destiny pointed out. "I was impressed. I don't know how you could do any better. I've always been extremely proud of you."

"Dr. Sinclair," Dr. Monica Mayberry called out as Venus and Destiny entered the ICU. "Congratulations on a remarkable job. I can't believe you are still here. I know you've been working non-stop for over twenty-four hours."

"I'm checking on my patients in ICU then my daughter Venus is going to walk me home." Destiny replied then introduced Venus to the blood bank supervisor.

"How is the blood bank holding up under the demand we had today?" she asked.

"We are dangerously low, but the Red Cross is already preparing to bring our supply back to normal."

"And everything is accounted for?" Destiny asked.

"When I did a quick check an hour ago, everything tallied properly," Monica responded, "and all the blood was accounted for."

They walked through the ICU quietly visiting, while Destiny checked her patients' charts. "Today was a good day," Destiny declared as she signed off on her last patient. "God was with us."

#

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Destiny showered, relishing the warm water running from the top of her blonde head and streaming down her body. It felt good to wash the horrors of the day from her skin.

Venus stretched out on her bed when she walked into the bedroom towel drying her hair. “One of my favorite things about being human is showering,” Venus declared as she stretched undulating her naked body.

Destiny pulled on her pajamas and slipped beneath the duvet. Venus assumed her cat form and curled up beside her. “I love you, little one,” Destiny said as she stroked the silky black fur of her pet.

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**BLACK ORBS GLARED AT HER AS
HIS GRIP TIGHTENED. “DON’T LET
ME DIE,” HE COMMANDED.**



“...sometimes evil does cloak itself in sheep’s clothing,” Faith said. “Evil is often extremely beautiful.”

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CHAPTER 17

Venus weaved herself between Destiny's ankles and sniffed her legs. She backed away from the doctor and morphed into a stunning woman. "You were intimate with that vicar today," she accused.

"Which is of no concern to you," Destiny reminded her. "I care for Faith and I want you to be nice to her."

"I plan to bite her the next time I see her," Venus threatened.

"Venus, please behave yourself. Don't attack her."

"Can I meet her in my female form?" Venus asked.

"Of course, but don't flirt with her. It will make her think badly of you. It would be wrong for you to fawn over someone I am dating."

Venus hissed. "I never fawn over anyone."

"You know what I mean. Please act like the lady I know you are. Faith is having dinner with us tonight."

"How will you introduce me?" Venus asked.

"I will tell her you are my adopted daughter that I adore and that I found you after some soulless creature tossed you into a dumpster when you were only a week old."

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Venus grinned mischievously, “I promise not to flirt with your new friend.”

The intercom from the lobby chimed. “That is Faith now,” Destiny guessed. “If you are going to meet her in your female form, you should go put on some clothes before she arrives.”

Venus giggled and ran to her bedroom to dress.

Destiny answered the call and pushed the button that would allow Faith to ride the elevator to her penthouse. She was waiting at the door when the brunette arrived and kissed her hello.

“I could get used to this kind of greeting,” Faith said as she held Destiny in her arms. “I’ve missed you.”

“My confession didn’t satisfy you?” Destiny teased.

“It only temporarily sated my desire for you.” Faith kissed her again.

“Well, hello,” a sultry voice warmed the room. “You must be the vicar Destiny is talking so much about.”

Faith released the doctor and turned to face the most sensuous woman she had ever met. Venus extended her hand to the vicar. “I’m Destiny’s daughter, Venus. It is a pleasure to meet you.”

Faith took the brunette’s outstretched hand between both of her hands and held it. “It is indeed a pleasure,” she murmured wondering where Venus had come from. Faith flinched as Venus dug her

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fingernails into the palm of her hand. She immediately released Venus' hand.

Venus smiled sweetly. "I hope you like stuffed halibut. Destiny makes the most delicious stuffing for her fish."

"I do love any type of stuffed white fish," Faith replied.

"Although a typical halibut can weigh between fifty and five-hundred pounds, they are classified as flat fish," Venus made conversation. "I wonder why?"

"Because both of their eyes are on the same side of their head." Faith responded wondering if the gorgeous woman was playing with her.

"Really!" Venus gasped. "I did not know that."

"Venus would you open the wine and pour everyone a glass while I put dinner on the table," Destiny said.

Faith watched Venus as she glided into the kitchen to get the wine. She was extremely graceful. The name Venus suited her perfectly. *Venus, the goddess of love*, Faith thought.

"I didn't know you had a daughter," Faith said after Venus disappeared into the kitchen.

"She is my adopted daughter," Destiny informed her. "I rescued her from a dumpster when she was a week old. Some heartless monster threw her away during a snowstorm."

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“I would have died if Destiny hadn’t heard me crying,” Venus finished the story as she placed the tray of wine glasses on the sideboard and held out a glass to Faith. “I love her dearly as any daughter would love a mother.”

“Venus will begin law school in June,” Destiny chimed in. “I am very proud of her.”

“One needs a law degree to navigate some of the insanity of today’s world,” Faith noted. She also noticed the choker necklace with Destiny’s phone number on it. *The choker is identical to the one worn by Cat*, she thought.

The three women maintained a robust conversation, discussing everything from government laws to the innovations AI was making in the field of medicine.

“Both of you should attend my sermon Sunday,” Faith invited. “I think you will find it interesting.”

“What is it about?” Venus asked tilting her head in the most alluring way.

“The Evil Among Us.” Faith smirked.

“Can you spot evil?” Venus asked.

“Yes, but sometimes evil does cloak itself in sheep’s clothing,” Faith said.

“Have you ever battled evil?” Venus grilled her.

“Every day,” Faith declared. “Evil never rests so I must always be vigilant. Evil is often extremely beautiful.”

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“Like my mother?” Venus nodded toward Destiny.

Destiny gave Venus a look of disapproval and the young woman bowed her head.

“Your mother is indeed extremely beautiful,” Faith agreed, “but she is not evil.”

“She is the finest person I’ve ever met,” Venus declared. She stood and picked up their dishes. “You two go to the theatre room and I’ll bring in coffee and dessert after I clean the kitchen.”

Faith and Destiny were sitting on the sofa quietly talking when Venus entered carrying a tray of dessert, coffee, cream, and sugar.

“I’m going out tonight,” she informed Destiny. “I’m not sure when I will be home.”

“Be safe,” Destiny cautioned.

“I will,” Venus replied as she left the room. She entered her bedroom and morphed into her most comfortable form. She jumped from the crumpled clothes on the floor onto her bed and closed her eyes. Cats require a lot of sleep.

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**“PLEASE DON’T TELL ME THAT I’VE
JUST SAVED THE LIFE OF SOME
TEXAS CRIME LORD,”
DESTINY PLEADED.**



“Just the opposite,” Jamie replied as she placed her tray on the table. “He is the pastor of a large church in Arlington.

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CHAPTER 18

Whitney Langley was pulling her physicians into a huddle before the day got crazy. “I want to tell all of you how honored I am to serve with you. What you did yesterday was a miracle. Sacred Heart Hospital is all over the news today. You are a remarkable group of surgeons, and I am proud to be associated with you.”

The doctors murmured their thanks, then headed toward their assigned posts ready to face the day.

“Doctor Sinclair, may I speak with you in my office?” Whitney asked.

Destiny nodded and followed her boss down the hall wishing she had a cup of hot coffee.

Whitney assumed her position behind her desk and gestured for Destiny to sit in the chair across from her. “I am having difficulty answering all the questions that have arisen from the train disaster yesterday,” she sighed.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean one of the nurses swears she carried a severed head into the hallway outside your triage area, but all the children and adults were accounted for, and were alive and well when the dust settled.”

“Yesterday was traumatic for all of us,” Destiny replied. “The injuries were bad, but not deadly. Some of the younger nurses vomited in the

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hallway. I think it was a little too much for them and they hallucinated.”

Whitney tilted her head as a smile played on her lips. “Yes, I’m going with traumatic hallucinations,” she agreed. “Be careful, Destiny. I don’t know how you save so many patients and I don’t really care. I don’t want others to begin pointing fingers at you. Do you understand what I mean?”

Destiny nodded. “Yes ma’am.”

Destiny hurried from the Director’s office to the hospital chapel. She wanted to pray. *Or if I am truly honest, I want Faith to make love to me in the confessional*, she thought.

She was disappointed to find the chapel empty, but she sensed Faith. She walked to the office shared by the various clergy that worked with the hospital’s patients and was thrilled to see the vicar sitting at the desk.

Faith smiled as she slowly looked up raking her eyes from the bottom of Destiny’s feet, up her long legs, across her flat stomach and lingered on her ample breasts. She licked her lips as her eyes locked with the doctor’s.

Faith rose from her chair, walked around the sexy doctor, and locked the office door. In one quick move, she hoisted Destiny onto the desk and trembled when the witch’s skirt pushed up around her waist as Destiny wrapped her legs around Faith and pulled her into her core.

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“I was hoping you would come see me before your day got too busy,” Faith whispered in her lover’s ear then kissed her way down Destiny’s neck to the softness between the doctor’s breasts. Her lips toyed with Destiny’s nipples as her fingers caressed her breast. Destiny’s whimpers of pleasure drove her crazy.

“Spend the night with me tonight,” Faith whispered as she gently stroked Destiny’s most sensitive spot then entered her.

“Yes! A thousand times yes,” Destiny moaned as Faith drove her pleasure higher and she cried out arching her body to meet each thrust.

“Deeper,” Destiny begged. “I’m so close.”

Static crackled in the room as the hospital intercom squawked. “Dr. Destiny Sinclair report to the emergency room.”

“Ooh,” Destiny moaned, “don’t leave me hanging vicar.”

Faith filled her mind and body with the most exquisite feelings she could imagine pushing Destiny over the top and satisfying her desires.

“I can’t wait to see you tonight,” Faith murmured as she moved from between Destiny’s legs and pulled her skirt down. “I love you Destiny.”

##

ER Head Nurse Rhonda Vincent met Destiny as she ran from the chapel. “I thought you might be

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in there praying,” she said as she jogged beside Destiny. “We have a forty-three-year-old man with a bullet lodged in his heart. They are preparing him for open heart surgery.”

Destiny nodded trying to concentrate on the task ahead of her but all she could think about was Faith, touching her, setting her body on fire, pumping, caressing, tongue exploring. Faith made her feel things she had never imagined.

##

Destiny scrubbed her hands and arms then slipped into the surgical gown Rhonda held open for her. Rhonda tied the gown then held Destiny’s sterile surgical gloves as the doctor slipped into them. “Let’s do this,” Destiny said, pushing everything from her mind but her patient.

Garth Layne was sedated and prepped for his surgery. He was certain he was going to die. One surgeon had already tried to remove the bullet laparoscopically and failed. A masked doctor entered the operating room and nodded for the anesthesiologist to make Garth’s world go away. He slipped into nothingness as a nurse commented, “The bullet is lodged in his heart.”

“At least it is a single slug,” the surgeon noted, “not one of those things that explodes as it penetrates.”

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Destiny carefully enlarged the incision directly over the bullet. Forceps and various retractors were lined up and ready for use. Destiny nodded and highly skilled nurses began pulling back tissue and blood vessels were clamped to stop bleeding. Absorbable gelatin patches helped control the pooling of blood and advanced blood clotting. She skillfully eased her forceps around the bullet and pulled it from the heart. She quickly stitched any severed blood vessels together and nodded for her assistant to remove the blood from the wound. “Can you close, Rhonda?” she asked moving to make room for the surgical nurse.

“Yes, ma’am.” Rhonda took her place and began issuing instructions to those assisting her.

Destiny left the operating room, removing her gown, mask, and shoe covers. She tossed them into the trash bin and headed to the cafeteria for a cup of coffee. Her growling stomach reminded her she hadn’t eaten in several hours. She grabbed a tray and loaded it with bacon, eggs, blueberry muffins, and a large coffee then went to the most secluded table in the room.

“I thought I’d find you here,” the familiar voice of Detective Jamie Collins reached her. “May I join you?”

Destiny nodded. “Please don’t tell me that I’ve just saved the life of some Texas crime lord,” she pleaded.

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“Just the opposite,” Jamie replied as she placed her tray on the table. “He is the pastor of a large church in Arlington. I’m just trying to find out what happened to him. No one here knows anything about the shooting, and no one followed the ambulance here.”

“He had a bullet lodged in his heart. I’m certain you already have it. That is all I know.”

“I do and my CSI team has already worked the crime scene, but I still don’t know how the shooting occurred.”

“I can’t help you there, Jamie.” Destiny shook her head. “Does he have a family?”

“He does but they are on vacation in Florida.”

“I can have the nursing station call you as soon as he is able to talk,” Destiny volunteered.

“That would be helpful. I’d appreciate it.”

“I need to go to the Intensive Care Unit and check on him. I can call you and give you a report on his condition.”

“Please do. I’d like to have as much information as possible at my fingertips when my Lieutenant grills me.”

The atmospheric pressure in the room changed and Destiny knew that Faith had entered the cafeteria. She waved the vicar to their table and made the introductions.

“Lieutenant Jamie Collins this is Vicar Faith Seraph. Faith is volunteering in our chapel.”

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“It is nice to meet you,” Faith responded. “Are you here on police business or for the great food in our cafeteria?”

Jamie laughed. “Definitely not the food. Dr. Sinclair just operated on a shooting victim and I’m trying to get information on him.”

Faith turned to Destiny, “I thought I’d visit your patient in ICU and pray for him,” she said.

“I would welcome that. He needs all the help he can get.”

“Destiny, don’t forget to call me,” Jamie reminded. “Vicar Seraph, it was nice meeting you.”

##

“She is very pretty,” Faith commented as she watched Jamie stroll from the room.

“And competent,” Destiny replied. “She has something like ninety-nine percent closure on her cases.”

Faith touched Destiny’s arm as they walked down the hallway and peaceful feelings settled over the doctor.

“I think my patient is a pastor,” she informed Faith. “You may know him.”

“Do you know his name?”

“Garth Layne was the name on my computer file, but Jamie seemed to think that might not be correct.”

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“That is his real name,” Faith assured her. “He is the senior pastor of Open Door Non-denominational Church. I’ve never been formally introduced to him, but I’ve attended conferences where he was the featured speaker. He is very charismatic. I don’t know why anyone would shoot him. Was the wound self-inflicted?”

“No, he was shot by someone else.” Destiny answered. “The EMT said there was no gun at the scene when they picked him up, so whoever shot him took their weapon with them.”

The intercom made its usual crackling noise before announcing “Vicar Seraph please come to the chapel.”

“I’ll see you at your house in an hour or so,” Faith said. She smiled and walked away.

Destiny returned her attention to her patient and was pleased to see him sleeping peacefully. She squeaked as his eyes snapped open and his fingers closed around her wrist.

Black orbs glared at her as his grip tightened. “Don’t let me die,” he commanded.

Destiny stared into the blackest, emptiest eyes she had ever seen. There was no pupil, no sclera or iris, only solid shiny blackness. Destiny jerked her wrist from the man’s hand and stepped back from his bed. His eyelids closed but she couldn’t vanquish the soulless blackness of his eyes from her thoughts. She quickly made her rounds haunted by his eyes.

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She fought her desire to transport to Faith but knew her car in the parking garage all weekend would cause questions. She was uneasy until she was safely in her car and speeding toward Faith's home.

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**VENUS IS TERRIFIED
OF STORMS**



Destiny comforting her loved one.

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CHAPTER 19

Faith lay still savoring the softness of the woman sleeping in her arms. She buried her face in Destiny's silky blonde hair and inhaled the sweet essence of her. She had entertained other lovers over many millennia but never had she met a woman like Destiny Sinclair.

She was falling more deeply in love with the witch with each passing day. No one had ever filled her mind and dreams the way Destiny did. She hoped that Destiny's three-hundred years on earth was indictive of her eternal life. *To live without her would be eternal hell*, she thought.

Destiny made a soft mewling sound as she snuggled closer against Faith's body and fire shot through the angel. Desire so powerful that Faith gasped at the way it made everything else in the world disappear.

"Are you okay?" Destiny murmured.

"I'll never be okay again," Faith answered honestly. "I can only hope that you love me as much as I love you."

Destiny ran her hands over Faith's body. "Everything else in the world pales when compared to loving you, darling. You have very quickly become the center of my universe."

Faith pulled Destiny's body onto hers and gloried in the sheer joy of the witch's naked body

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covering hers. “Consume me,” Destiny whispered. “Use all of me to pleasure yourself, and know that no matter what you do, I will still want more.”

A low guttural sound came from Faith’s throat and rose to a howl as she flipped Destiny onto her back and kissed her until she couldn’t breathe while stroking every inch of her body with her hands.

She rose above Destiny and dragged her firm breasts back and forth against the blonde’s. The thrill of their nipples meeting with each passing stroke made them cry out.

“Take your time,” Destiny encouraged. “Make me beg.”

“I may be the one begging,” Faith whispered in her ear. “The things I want to do to you...”

“Um, and the things I want you to do to me. You may ravish me more than once today.”

##

The moon had deserted the sky, and a soft light on the horizon announced the coming of the sun when Destiny awoke. Had she been in Faith’s bed for one or two days? She slowly moved her body. Every inch of her was satiated a feeling she had never experienced. She rolled over on her back and moaned softly as the soreness reminded her of the things Faith had done to her. She clenched her

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thighs together and moaned. Incredible as it seemed, she still wanted more of the angel.

“Venus calling,” her cellphone announced. She reached for her phone as Faith entered the room carrying two cups of steaming coffee.

“Hello Venus, what’s up sweetheart?”

“Are you coming home soon?” Venus asked. “There is a storm heading our way and you know how storms terrify me.”

“Of course, I will be home before the storm hits,” Destiny promised. “I am having coffee with Faith right now, then I’ll be home.”

“Did you sleep with her?” Venus inquired.

“Sleep? No, not so much.”

“But you did spend the night with her?” Venus insisted.

“Yes-s-s,” Destiny hissed.

“I knew it!” Venus squealed.

“Can I pick up anything on my way home? Chinese, Italian, fish?”

“Oh yes, fish. I would love it if you would pick up orange roughy and cook it on the grill. I’ll put together a fresh salad and cook the asparagus the way you love it. Bring Faith. I bet she would love a home-cooked meal.”

“Works for me.” Destiny laughed. “Please put a couple of bottles of Chardonnay in the fridge to chill. I’ll be home in about two hours.”

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Faith scowled as she handed the cup of coffee to Destiny. "I was hoping to have you all to myself this weekend."

"Venus is terrified of storms. I'm sure it is the result of being tossed in a dumpster during a blizzard."

Faith smiled. "She is lucky you found her. You are a great role model."

"I have something to ask you," Destiny changed the subject. "Did you see the man that had a bullet in his heart?"

"Yes. He was resting peacefully. You are an incredible surgeon."

"Did his eyes open?"

"No, he never awoke." Faith replied. "Why?"

"He opened his eyes and they were solid black. I've never seen eyes like that. They were evil."

Faith scowled. "You are working too hard, darling. You need to take more time off."

"Don't patronize me," Destiny huffed. "I know evil when I see it."

"Drink your coffee," Faith encouraged, "then we can shower together. You'll feel better and my mouth is watering for that wine and orange roughy. I bet you are a phenomenal cook."

"I am," Destiny agreed, shoving the uneasiness from her mind.

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by Erin Wade

A ROLLING STONE
GATHERS NO MOSS



“It means that a person who is always busy and on the move doesn’t stay long in one place and doesn’t form committed relationships.” Mindy replied.

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CHAPTER 20

Venus had the wine glasses on the kitchen island and was uncorking the bottle when Destiny and Faith arrived. “Perfect timing,” she purred as she poured the Chardonnay. “I hope you don’t mind; I invited Mindy to join us. She has the grill ready to go.”

The balcony door slid open and a smiling Mindy joined them. “Oh, good you are right on time. The grill just hit the correct temperature.”

“Mindy, what a pleasant surprise,” Destiny beamed. “I’m so glad you could join us.”

“I promised you a home-cooked meal,” Mindy replied. “When Venus told me you were at the market picking up orange roughy, I volunteered to cook dinner.”

“This is Vicar Faith Seraph,” Venus grabbed Faith’s hand and pulled her toward Mindy. “She is the pastor at Christ’s Chapel Church and is a professor at the Dallas Theological Seminary.”

Mindy held out her hand to shake hands with Faith. “How do you know her?” she asked.

“I volunteer at the chapel in Destiny’s hospital,” Faith’s soothing voice brought a smile to Mindy’s face.

“A rolling stone gathers no moss,” Mindy teased.

“What does that mean?” Venus quizzed.

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“It means that a person who is always busy and on the move doesn’t stay long in one place and doesn’t form committed relationships.” Mindy replied.

“I’ve been in my current teaching position for ten years and have pastored Christ’s Chapel for fifteen years,” Faith informed them. “I think I’m pretty dependable.”

“Oh, I didn’t mean to offend you,” Mindy quipped. “One doesn’t usually meet a beautiful woman with so many commitments.”

“No offense taken.” Faith hoped her smile hid her thoughts of levitating the woman over the balcony railing and dropping her to the street below.

Venus passed out the wine glasses and held her glass high for a toast. “Here’s to good friends,” she said.

Everyone clinked their glasses and sipped the wine. “Perfect,” Mindy said. “This is perfect with orange roughy. Let’s get it on the grill.” She picked up the shopping bag Faith had brought and carried it into the kitchen. Venus followed her.

“Cheeky little snot,” Faith whispered. “Is she dating Venus?”

“I don’t think so,” Destiny choked. “We have been best friends for a long time. She owns the Java Stop Bistro across from the hospital. I usually have lunch there. The coffee is delicious.”

Faith refilled their wine glasses as Venus entered the room. “The fish is almost ready,” she

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said. “I’m going to place the salad and asparagus on the table. Mindy will be in soon with the orange roughly.”

##

Mindy carried the fish into the dining room and placed a serving on everyone’s plate. A low rumble of thunder filled the night sky. “I finished this just in time,” Mindy said. “It sounds like the storm is really coming our way.”

Dinner was a pleasant affair with no more sparring between Mindy and Faith. A gentle rain pattered on the penthouse roof as Mindy and Venus cleared the table and returned with dessert.

“Mom, do you want to have dessert in the study in front of the fireplace?” Venus asked.

“That would be lovely,” Destiny replied proud of how sociable and thoughtful Venus was.

Destiny sat on the sofa with Faith beside her. Two comfortable chairs were left for Venus and Mindy. Venus placed the coffee and dessert tray on the coffee table. She leaned down to pick up a plate when an earth-shaking roar of thunder and fiery flash of lightning lit up the world outside their window. Venus shrieked and jumped into Destiny’s lap.

“It’s okay, baby. Everything is okay. Mama has you.” Destiny comforted the scared girl praying she wouldn’t shift. She wrapped her arms around Venus and held her tightly all the time whispering.

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“It is okay Venus. Everything is okay. The storm is passing.”

Venus stiffened and hid her face between Destiny’s breasts as she fought to hold onto her human form. It took all the strength she possessed to keep from shifting to her cat form and running under the bed in her bedroom. Her body trembled as Destiny continued to stroke her back and hold her tightly.

“I’ve got you, baby.” Destiny cooed. “Mama has you. I won’t let anything hurt my baby.”

Destiny’s arms around her calmed Venus and the sound of her voice was soft and soothing. Venus concentrated on the reassuring words her mother repeated promising her she was safe and loved. She listened for any other evidence of the storm, but it had passed. Destiny continued to stroke her back and murmur soft words of endearment to her. Venus wished she could curl up in Destiny’s lap. She wanted everyone to leave.

“I believe the storm has passed,” Faith declared as she stood. “We should return to our homes before it changes its mind.”

“No, please stay for dessert,” Venus said as she slid from Destiny’s lap to sit on the floor between the blonde’s legs. “I apologize for being such a baby, but I am terrified of storms. I can’t help it. Mindy would you mind serving the dessert and coffee while I stay here in the safety of my mother’s legs?” She leaned her head against Destiny’s knee

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and closed her eyes as Destiny stroked her long black hair.

You could sit between my legs, Mindy thought as she served dessert and coffee to her friends.

##

“I really must leave,” Faith said as she stood and collected everyone’s empty coffee cups and dessert plates. “I’ll clean this up then head home to prepare for my sermon in the morning.”

“Just leave it,” Destiny instructed. “I’ll clean it up later.” She continued to gently stroke Venus’ hair as Faith carried everything to the kitchen.

Faith checked to make certain that no one had followed her into the kitchen, then moved her hand slightly causing all the dishes and cooking utensils to become clean and settled in their places. “All done,” she muttered to herself.” She quickly returned to the study and thanked Faith and Venus for an enjoyable dinner.

Venus gracefully sprang to her feet and Destiny followed her daughter as they escorted their guests to the door.

Mindy thanked her hostesses and followed Faith into the elevator that would take them to their cars in the parking garage.

“Venus is a little skittish,” Mindy noted.

“It probably stems from her early childhood,” Faith commented. “Destiny found her in a dumpster

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during a blizzard. Someone had thrown her away. She was only a week old.”

“Oh, dear God,” Mindy gasped. “What the hell is wrong with people?”

“Fortunately, for every cruel monster in our world there is someone like you or Destiny who will step forward and save those who are tossed aside.”

“There is a special place in hell for anyone who would toss a baby in a dumpster,” Mindy declared.

“Indeed,” Faith agreed. “You should attend our church in the morning. The service begins at 10:00 a.m. on the dot. My sermon is about how we should be our brother’s keeper. I’ll call Destiny and Venus when I get in the car and invite them. Perhaps we can all have lunch together after church.”

“Yes, I’d like that,” Mindy admitted.

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DESTINY AND HER
DAUGHTER VENUS



Lunch was a delightful affair with Mindy and Venus flirting and Destiny stroking Faith's thigh. "You're killing me," Faith whispered as she caught Destiny's hand and stilled it.

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CHAPTER 21

“Thank heaven they are gone,” Venus hissed after she locked the door behind Faith and Mindy. “It took all the control I have to maintain my human shape.”

Destiny put her arm around her daughter’s shoulders. “You did an exceptional job, my little kitten. Would you like a glass of warm milk before we go to bed?”

“I’d rather have a bowl of warm milk,” Venus admitted as her dress crumbled into a heap on the floor leaving a black cat standing in the center of them. Destiny scooped her up and carried her to the kitchen placing her on the island while she heated milk for her.

“I think we need to tell Faith about you,” Destiny said. “I’m falling more and more in love with her every day, and I know she feels the same way.”

Destiny’s cellphone rang and Faith’s beautiful face popped onto the screen as the phone announced, “Faith calling.”

Venus happily lapped the milk from her bowl as Destiny answered the phone then listened. “We would love to do that,” she answered.

Venus finished her milk and dashed into the bedroom to curl up in the middle of Destiny’s bed.

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“Faith wants us to attend her church in the morning,” the blonde announced as she let her clothes fall to the floor in much the same manner that Venus had. She slipped into the bed naked, turned on her side, and pulled the cover over her body. The cat curled up in the soft warmth of her stomach and went to sleep.

##

Faith finished her sermon notes and closed her notebook. She leaned her head against her chair’s head rest and closed her eyes. Visions of Destiny filled her thoughts. The way her dimples appeared when she smiled, and her lips parted slightly exposing even white teeth. Everything about the blonde witch was perfect. She had never experienced anything as exhilarating as holding Destiny’s voluptuous body against hers. She bit her bottom lip as she relived the soft sounds Destiny whimpered when they made love and the look on her face as she took Destiny over the top. She relived the way Destiny locked her legs around her waist and arched her body up to make more contact. She trembled as she recalled watching Destiny throw back her head and strain against her as she screamed Faith’s name. The look on Destiny’s face as she climaxed always took away Faith’s breath.

Faith ached to hold the witch in her arms and touch her. She clinched her thighs together trying to

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stop the desire that was building up throughout her body. She thought about materializing in the blonde's bedroom but decided that might be more intrusion than Destiny would welcome unannounced. She took a cold shower and went to bed.

##

The next morning Destiny sipped her coffee and watched Venus enter the kitchen. "You are absolutely gorgeous," she complimented. "That burgundy dress accentuates all your positives. Not that you have any negatives."

Venus laughed. "I wasn't certain how I should dress. I've never been to church."

"Um, my bad. I've never taken you."

"I'm not sure what to expect."

"Neither do I," Destiny admitted. "It has been several years since I've interacted with a group of Christians. The day my mother died was the last time."

"How old were you when your mother died?" Venus asked softly.

"I was six," Destiny muttered. "But that was a traumatic time in my life. Let's talk about something happier."

"You were six and the Christians took you in like you did me?" Venus insisted.

"Not exactly."

"Why not?"

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“Because I wasn’t cute and precious like you.” Destiny smiled as she stood and hugged her adopted daughter. “We should go. We will miss Faith’s sermon.”

##

Mindy was standing outside the church when Venus and Destiny arrived. “I waited for you,” she said as they approached. “I wanted to sit with you.”

Venus slipped her arm through Mindy’s as they entered the church. Heads turned as the three beautiful women walked up the aisle and sat on the empty third row. Faith walked to them and welcomed them. “I’m glad you could come.” She smiled.

The singers filled the choir loft as an organist began playing “How Great Thou Art.”

“Mom, look at the choir members,” Venus whispered in Destiny’s ear.

Destiny gasped as she moved her gaze from member to member of the choir. Their eyes were solid black and although it looked like they should be sightless, they were reading the song’s words from the hymnals in front of them. The doctor shuddered as she studied the choir. Something was not right. She closed her eyes to vanquish the vision of the dead-eyed choir members. As the song ended, she opened her eyes. The choir members were smiling, and their eyes were bright and alive like any human’s would be. She wondered if she should

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discuss the soulless choir members with Faith. She wondered if there was an enemy Faith was unaware of or maybe she was just seeing things.

Faith's sermon was joyous and uplifting as she shared antidotes of humans saving their friends and helping total strangers. She talked about being like the good Samaritan and how everyone should support each other for the sake of humankind. Destiny couldn't keep from glancing at the choir every few minutes, but their happy demeanor never changed.

Faith stood at the entrance of the church and spoke to each parishioner as they left the building. She called each of them by name and shook hands. She held Destiny's hand a little too long as she thanked them for coming and bent down to whisper the name of the restaurant where she had reservations for the four of them.

"Do you want to ride with me?" Mindy asked Venus. "We can follow your mom."

Venus nodded yes although she was dying to get alone with her mother to discuss the weird choir.

##

Lunch was a delightful affair with Mindy and Venus flirting and Destiny stroking Faith's thigh. "You're killing me," Faith whispered as she caught Destiny's hand and stilled it.

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“What do you have planned for the rest of your day?” Faith asked everyone.

“Venus and I are going to the hospital,” Destiny announced.

“Why?” Faith queried.

“Detective Jamie Collins comes every Sunday and visits the children’s ward,” Destiny explained. “She wears her police uniform and brings her beautiful Australian Heeler—I think we call them Blue Heelers in America. Her name is Bonnie and she is a perfectly trained police dog that Jamie was able to get when she retired at age eight. Jamie visits hospitals and schools with Bonnie where she discusses police work and the contributions dogs like Bonnie make.”

“I am working at the bistro this evening,” Mindy said. “One of my servers is ill.”

“I’m afraid I must take care of church business,” Faith added.

“I’m excited about meeting Bonnie,” Venus confessed. “She was featured in a search and rescue documentary that was extremely impressive. I can’t wait to meet her.”

Faith signaled for the check; they split it using Venmo and walked to the parking lot together. “Will I see you tonight?” Faith whispered as she opened the door for Destiny.

“I should spend some time with Venus tonight. Maybe tomorrow night.”

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“I would love that. Um, if you feel like making any confessions tomorrow, I’ll be in the chapel most of the day.” Faith’s eyes sparkled as she gave Destiny an impish grin and closed the car door.

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by Erin Wade

MEETING JAMIE
AND BONNIE



“I love soft butches,” Venus purred. “They take command in be—uh in restaurants.”

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CHAPTER 22

“Please drop me by the penthouse,” Venus requested as they pulled from the parking lot.

“I sincerely want you to go with me,” Destiny insisted. “It won’t take long and I want to check on my heart patient. He had the same dead eyes as Faith’s choir.”

“Seriously, Mom, what is that all about. They looked like zombies. How well do you know the vicar?”

Destiny jerked her head around to look at Venus but said nothing. She didn’t know much about Faith, only what the angel had told her. One thing she did know was that Faith was the most incredible lover she had ever encountered in the last three centuries. But she was treading in deep water. All she really knew was what Faith had told her. That and the incredible tour of the universe. *Maybe I should slow down things a bit*, she thought, *until I know her better.*

“I’ll go with you to the hospital,” Venus sighed, “but I can’t possibly stay for more than two hours. I need a nap.”

“Two hours is plenty of time for what I need to do. If it gets too boring, you can always curl up on the back seat of the car.”

Destiny parked the car in the parking garage, and they took the elevator to her office floor. “I need

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to put on my white jacket and grab my identification lanyard,” Destiny said as they stepped from the elevator.

A low growl greeted them as they stepped into the hallway outside Destiny’s office. “Down Bonnie,” a gentle voice commanded the dog.

Lieutenant Jamie Collins licked her lips as her tongue felt like a piece of sandpaper in her mouth. Dr. Sinclair was accompanied by the most gorgeous woman she had ever seen in her thirty-two years.

She prayed her ability to speak would return before they got to her. Bonnie growled threateningly at the two as they approached.

“Will she bite?” Venus asked.

Jamie shook her head no. *But I might she thought.*

Venus winked and smiled at Jamie. “I’m Venus Sinclair.” She stuck out her hand to Jamie and Bonnie moved into a crouching position ready to spring at her master’s command.

“Down, Bonnie,” Jamie reiterated. “I must apologize for my dog. She isn’t usually aggressive with strangers.”

“It is okay,” Venus replied. “I have a large black cat at home. I’m sure she smells her on me.”

Jamie nodded still trying to make her tongue work as she was engulfed in the most exquisite scent she had ever encountered. When Venus moved the fragrance filled the air around them.

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“May I pet her?” Venus asked.

Jamie nodded and Venus stooped down to get eye-to-eye with Bonnie. “We really need to be friends, Bonnie,” she whispered to the dog. “I think you and I will be in each other’s lives for a very long time.”

She softly stroked Bonnie’s back and caressed her ears. Bonnie licked her hand and settled quietly on the floor.

“I believe Bonnie and I are friends.” Venus smiled.

“Venus, this is Detective Jamie Collins I was telling you about,” Destiny introduced her friend. “Venus is my daughter. I wanted her to see how beautifully you and Bonnie interact with the children. I hope you won’t mind.”

“I would love it,” Jamie exclaimed.

“We must go to ICU first,” Destiny said. “We will meet you in the children’s ward when we finish.”

Jamie nodded and headed for the children’s unit as Destiny picked up her jacket and identification.

“Jeez Mom, you didn’t tell me she was gorgeous,” Venus squealed as the elevator door closed.

“She is a little bit butch,” Destiny noted, “gorgeous but still butch.”

“I love soft butches,” Venus purred. “They take command in be—uh in restaurants.”

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“You’ve been to bed with butch women?”
Destiny gasped.

“Never one as gorgeous as Jamie.” Venus pretended to swoon.

“I can’t believe we’re having this conversation.” Destiny scowled.

“Don’t worry, Mom, I won’t jump right into bed with her. I think she will be fun to tease.”

“Don’t toy with her Venus. She is one of the finest people I know.”

“Then you won’t mind having her for a daughter-in-law,” Venus continued teasing her mother.

“You do need to get some sleep,” Destiny replied, “you are getting delirious.”

##

Pastor Garth Layne kept his eyes closed and listened to those around him discuss his condition. He was going to live and he would be okay. They were praising the surgeon who removed the bullet from his heart for the remarkable job she had done. He opened one eye just enough to make certain his eyes were their normal grey and not the black mirror to his soul that always took over when he was angry. He knew the man that shot him and vowed to make his life a living hell. A soft hand touched his arm, and a mellow voice spoke his name.

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“Pastor Layne, how do you feel?” Destiny asked.

Garth batted his eyelids several times trying to focus on the two women standing at his bedside. Both were goddesses. One was obviously a doctor, and the other was uniquely beautiful. He opened his eyes wide. “I’m going to live,” he declared, “but I am having a lot of chest pain.”

The doctor studied his chart on the computer screen and replied, “I can make the pain go away. Let me look at my handiwork if you don’t mind.” Her touch was gentle and his pain ceased when she let her fingertips graze his chest.

Destiny temporarily made Garth’s pain diminish then increased the amount of his morphine drip. She pulled back the bandage covering the incision over his heart and said, “Everything looks good. You will make a full recovery.”

“Thank you Doctor. You saved my life.”

“We’re going to keep you in ICU another twenty-four hours then move you to a private room. There is a police officer here that wants to question you about the shooting. Are you up to talking?”

Layne closed his eyes and began softly slumbering.

“I guess that is a no,” Destiny said.

“Good, then we can go,” Venus declared. “I truly do want to see Bonnie and Jamie interact with the children.”

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by Erin Wade**

**A LOT OF LOVE AND
A LITTLE MAGIC**



“He is walking,” a doctor exclaimed. “He has never been able to walk. He has a severe case of Muscular Dystrophy.”

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CHAPTER 23

Destiny led her daughter to the children's ward where Bonnie and Jamie were entertaining the young patients. They could hear the children's laughter spilling into the hallway.

Venus slipped into the room and leaned against the wall. The children reacted to her beauty as all eyes turned towards her. Jamie felt her presence without looking for her. She smiled. "Bonnie, get Venus and introduce her to the children."

Bonnie trotted to the young woman and nuzzled her hand. Venus bent down and lovingly stroked the dog. Bonnie nosed Venus' leg pushing her toward the center of the room where Jamie was waiting.

"Boys and girls I want you to meet the goddess Venus," Jamie exclaimed as she bowed with a flourish.

Venus laughed and beamed at the children. "I am not a real goddess," she declared, "but I am a real magician." She raised her brows at Destiny letting the witch know that she expected her mother to make her tricks work."

"Oh God," Destiny mumbled.

"Who wants to be my assistant?" Venus inquired.

All the children responded with, "I do!"

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Venus walked to a little boy sitting in a wheelchair and took his hand. "I can't walk," the child whispered loudly.

"Of course, you can," Venus declared glancing at her mother to make certain Destiny was on board with her magic trick. Destiny nodded. "What is your name?" Venus asked.

"Ryan," the boy replied.

Venus gently pulled the boy from his wheelchair and hugged him. With all her heart she wished he was healed and could walk. She led him to where Bonnie was lying on the floor. "Who has a blanket I can use?" She called out.

A seven-year-old girl ran toward them with a pink throw. "What is your name, hon?" Venus asked as she hugged the child whose head was shaved. Her heart went out to the girl who was so happy to help.

"Ella."

"Okay, Ella you take one end of the blanket and Ryan you grab the other end and let's cover up Bonnie."

The children did as they were told and Jamie moved closer to make sure nothing happened to her dog.

"When I count to three," Venus said, "Ella, you and Ryan pull the blanket off Bonnie."

Ella anxiously waited to pull the blanket from the dog. She wanted to hug the gentle animal.

"Ready?" Venus asked.

Ella and Ryan nodded.

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“One, two, three,” Venus called out.

Before Ella could pull the blanket it fell flat on the floor. The two children dragged the throw to them, but Bonnie had disappeared.

A soft twitter filled the room as the children and adults tried to figure out where Bonnie was. “Look,” Ella pointed at Ryan’s wheelchair where Bonnie was curled up asleep.

“Yea,” the children yelled as their laughter filled the room. “Teach us how you did that,” they began yelling.

“I can’t do that,” Venus replied. “A magician never reveals her tricks.”

Ryan and Ella ran to Bonnie and hugged her as two adults in the room burst into tears and began crying and laughing at the same time. They ran to Ryan. “Son you are walking,” his father cried.

Doctors, nurses, and children surrounded Ella and Ryan. “He is walking,” a doctor exclaimed. “He has never been able to walk. He has a severe case of Muscular Dystrophy.”

Jamie made the hand signal for Bonnie to return to her side. She stroked the dog as bedlam broke loose in the unit. Stepping to the center of the room Jamie slipped two fingers into her mouth and emitted a loud wolf whistle silencing everyone. “How about a hand for Miss Venus, our wonderful magician.”

Everyone clapped and cheered for Venus then returned their attention to the children.

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Venus and Destiny slipped from the room with Jamie and Bonnie right behind them.

“I do believe you stole my thunder,” Jamie teased as the elevator door closed. “How did you cure Ryan?”

Venus searched her brain for a believable explanation. Finally, she said, “If I told you I’d have to make you disappear.”

Jamie threw her head back and laughed. Her eyes sparkled as she smiled at Venus and shook her head. “You are really something,” she said.

Venus blushed. “You and Bonnie are most impressive,” she complimented.

“Bonnie always steals the show,” Jamie noted. “Kids love animals, but I do believe you were the hit of the day. It’s not every day a beautiful magician cures a child of an incurable illness.”

“It’s all smoke and mirrors,” Venus replied.

“But he is cured permanently, isn’t he?”

“Yes, he is and I’d rather not discuss it again.”

Jamie shook her head. “Okay, but the least you can do is let me take you to dinner.”

“Not tonight,” Venus answered. “I have a prior commitment. Maybe tomorrow night.”

“Tomorrow night it is,” Jamie beamed. “I’ll pick you up at 7:00 p.m.”

“It’s a date,” Venus agreed as the elevator door opened into the parking garage.

Jamie and Bonnie walked them to their car. “I don’t know your address,” she reminded Venus.

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“I will text it to you,” Venus replied. “Right now, we must get home and see about our pet.”

“I can identify with that,” Jamie agreed. “See you tomorrow.”

##

“That was a tremendous show you put on,” Destiny said as she started the car. “I’m not sure how I will explain it tomorrow.”

“I just wanted you to move Bonnie from under the blanket,” Venus replied. “I had no idea you would heal Ryan.”

“I didn’t,” Destiny muttered.

“Mom, you nodded your head when I glanced at you. I thought you were doing magic,” Venus wailed.

“No, dear. I didn’t do anything but marvel at how wonderfully you handled yourself with the children. What did you think when you hugged them?”

“I thought how brave they were and that I wished they were healed and could run and play like other children.” Venus inhaled deeply. “If you didn’t heal them, who did?”

“It had to be you,” Destiny answered. “You must be a healer. Cats are known for their healing powers.”

Venus giggled. “You are just trying to make me feel special,” she said.

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“I am serious,” Destiny declared. “Cats reduce stress in humans and make them live longer. The University of Minnesota did a study that showed cat owners had a 60% lower risk of having a heart attack and a 70% lower risk of dying from other heart related diseases.”

“Wow! That is impressive,” Venus exclaimed. “You mean I may make you live longer?”

“About that, we should have a long discussion sometime about my mortality.” Destiny said as she pulled the car into the parking garage.

“There is no time like the present,” Venus insisted as she got out of the car and followed her mother into the elevator.

“You take your nap while I make dinner. Then we can talk.” Destiny flicked her hand and the fireplace ignited as they entered the penthouse.

Venus stretched. “Good idea. I am sleepy. May we have that delicious Shrimp Barataria that you make?”

“That sounds good. I’ll pop down to the fish market and buy some fresh shrimp. You take a nap.”

Venus’ clothes crumpled into a heap on the floor and the cat strolled from them to the cat bed in front of the hearth. She was asleep before Destiny could say anything else.

Going over in her mind the upcoming conversation with her daughter, she transported to

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the alley behind the fish market then walked into the store.

##

Venus was still sleeping when she returned with the shrimp. She slipped into her bedroom and called Faith.

“I was just thinking about you and hoping you would call me when you finished at the hospital. Did everything go okay?”

“It was a very enlightening afternoon,” Destiny replied. “We discovered that Venus is also a healer.”

“A healer,” Faith muttered into the phone. “How? I mean she seems to be your everyday, run of the mill incredibly beautiful woman. I would not have guessed she is a healer.”

Destiny thought about telling her lover that Venus was really a cat, but stopped, recalling that she wanted to know more about Faith. Venus’ story was hers to tell.

“Maybe it was a fluke,” Destiny backtracked. “I’ll see tomorrow when I visit the children’s ward. Gotta run. Dinner is about to burn. See you in the morning.” She hung up the phone and hurried to the kitchen.

##

“Um, something smells delicious,” Venus said as she strolled into the kitchen where Destiny was plating their shrimp on a bed of fried rice beside

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green beans. “You cooked all my favorites.” She hugged her mother’s shoulders.

Venus uncorked the wine and filled their glasses. “Now tell me about your mortality,” she insisted as they sat down at the table.

Destiny related her story in detail, telling Venus about the horrible way her mother was killed and how she escaped at age six.

“You already know I have magical powers,” Destiny reiterated the obvious. “What you don’t know is that I am immortal.”

Venus sipped her wine. “How old are you?”

“Over three-hundred years old.” Destiny admitted. “I have many powers you don’t know about, but I cannot magically heal people or resurrect them after death.

“I can control the elements and control earth, wind, fire, and water, but I have no control over life and death. The only way I can save someone or heal them is with my medical knowledge and ability.

“I never thought about you having the power to heal. We must protect you.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean mankind will lock you up and do experiments on you trying to figure out what makes you a healer. If they find out you are a shifter, they will treat you like an animal instead of a human. They can be very cruel. I think it may be time for us to move.”

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“I don’t want to move,” Venus whimpered. “My life is wonderful. I have you and I love our home, and I’ve been accepted into law school and...”

“And what?” Destiny demanded.

“And I really like Detective Jamie Collins. I think she may be the one for me.” Venus walked to her mother and kneeled beside her chair. “Please, Mom. Can’t we stay? I will be extra careful and protective of what we are. Who is going to believe you’re a witch and I’m a shifter anyway. We are way too beautiful.”

Destiny laughed. “We are very beautiful,” she agreed.

“Does Faith know about you?” Venus asked.

“She knows I’m a witch, but she has no idea how strong I am. I’ve never actually used my powers with her.”

“She is also a witch,” Venus declared.

“No, Venus. I think Faith is a god.”

“A god! She is more powerful than you?”

“Yes. She can raise the dead and transport us into the heavens where the earth is a spec in the universe. She existed long before there was a heaven or an earth. She watched the earth and its solar system being formed. She is fascinated by humans and feels responsible for them.”

Venus crumbled to the floor leaning her head against her mother’s leg.

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Destiny stroked Venus' soft black hair. "Have you thought about how Jamie might react to you being a shifter and a healer?" she asked.

"You are giving me a headache," Venus whimpered. "Can we go to bed so I can curl up beside you?"

"Of course, darling. Do you want me to read to you?"

"I would love that," Venus replied. "Could you read that book about the panther shifter and the woman who fell in love with her?"

"You mean 'Dark Justice'?"

"Yes. I love that story. It has a happy ending."

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by Erin Wade

NO CHANCE IN HELL



“You can accept my resignation right now. I don’t want to be associated with a hospital that doesn’t believe in the power of prayer.”

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 24

“Dr. Langley is looking for you,” Head Nurse Rhonda Vincent informed Destiny as she entered the nurses’ break room.

“Of course, she is,” Destiny mumbled making a U-turn and heading to Whitney’s office.

Whitney’s door was open and Destiny could hear voices as her boss argued with a hospital administrator. “Dr. Sinclair has single handedly raised the standing of this hospital,” Whitney yelled. “Our profit margin has tripled under her direction. She is an incredible surgeon. Family physicians want her to operate on their patients. She is booked solid for the next two months.”

Destiny stepped into the office. “You wanted to see me, Dr. Langley?”

“Yes, thank you Dr. Sinclair.” Whitney’s face was flushed and Destiny could tell her boss was angry.

“You know Elbert Lushby,” Whitney waived her hand in the direction of the portly man sitting on the sofa in her office.

He’s too fat to sit in a chair, Destiny thought as she smiled at Lushby. “Yes, it is nice to see you, sir.”

“Dr. Sinclair, we were just discussing you and your remarkable success in saving patients’ lives in the emergency room,” Lushby boomed.

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“I believe God and prayer should be given the credit for any success I might have,” Destiny smiled bowing her head and looking at him through her long dark lashes.

“Humph, ah yes. That is exactly what I have been telling your detractors,” Lushby lied.

Whitney rolled her eyes and shrugged her shoulders.

“But the reason for my visit today is about the magic show your daughter put on in the children’s ward this weekend.”

Destiny’s back stiffened as she prepared to battle for Venus. “I believe the children’s joy should be attributed to Detective Jamie Collins. She and her wonderful police dog Bonnie entertain the children every Sunday afternoon.”

“So, I’ve been told,” Lushby cleared his throat, “but I believe the magic was—how do I put it—unbelievable.”

“Surely not.” Destiny flashed her sweetest smile. “Any good magician can make animals disappear and reappear somewhere else.”

“I’m not talking about the blanket trick,” Lushby raised his voice. “I’m talking about the curing of a boy who has never walked and a young girl who has fought bone cancer all her life.”

Silence filled the room as both Lushby and Whitney waited for Destiny’s explanation. “What can I say,” she replied. “God is good. If we cease to believe God will answer our prayers, we will begin

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to question everything in life. We become savages with no belief in a higher power. No one to turn to when all hope is gone.

“I did see the boy with muscular dystrophy walk and I thanked God for the miracle, but I don’t believe my daughter had anything to do with that other than praying for him. I’m not aware of the girl’s condition.”

“She has lived most of her life with a form of bone cancer that is terminal,” Whitney volunteered. “When bone scans were run on her this morning, she was completely cured. She swears it was because Venus hugged her so tightly.”

Destiny smiled. “I *would* give Bonnie the Blue Healer the credit, but I fear esteemed scientists would want to dissect her or drink her blood,” she scoffed.

“You don’t hold our scientific community in high esteem,” Lushby noted.

“Some, I do but I’ve also met my share of quacks who will mutilate and maim in the name of science or for funding for some foolish experiment.

“The board wants to talk to your daughter,” Lushby demanded.

“No chance in hell,” Destiny growled. “You can accept my resignation right now. I don’t want to be associated with a hospital that doesn’t believe in the power of prayer.” She walked to the door.

“Dr. Sinclair, please wait,” Whitney called. “I’m certain Mr. Lushby didn’t mean to insult you,

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and we certainly don't want to lose you. Isn't that right Elbert?"

Lushby struggled to raise his rotund body from the sofa. "Please, Dr. Sinclair, the hospital needs you and our patients need you. I didn't mean to upset you."

Whitney's phone rang and she pushed the speaker's button. "Hello."

"Is Dr. Sinclair still with you?" An excited voice demanded.

"Yes."

"Please send her to ICU. Her heart patient is going into AFib."

Without a word Destiny dashed from the office running to the ward to help her patient. "God, don't let him die," she prayed.

She took one look at Garth Layne and grabbed the defibrillator. She pushed the button to begin the charge and placed the paddles on Garth's chest. She pushed the charge button and waited impatiently as the machine reached the desired power. "Clear," she yelled as she pressed the shock buttons on the paddles to shock Garth's heart back to a normal rhythm.

She handed the paddles to a nurse and continued to monitor her patient. "AFib can cause blood clots in the heart," she reminded a new nurse. "Thank you for calling me immediately. Keep an eye on him. I'll be in the chapel if you need me."

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by Erin Wade

Destiny slowly walked from the ICU unit mulling over the meeting she had with Whitney and Lushby. She hoped Faith was in the chapel.

Her thoughts ran wild as she thought about Lushby's demand to interview Venus. Perhaps she had been at Sacred Heart Hospital too long. Although she loved her coworkers and Faith was the answer to her prayers, she would do whatever was necessary to protect Venus.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**“I WILL MAKE THE WHOLE THING
GO AWAY, IF YOU TREAT ME NICE.”**



“You can’t go around killing everyone that makes you angry,” Destiny wrapped her arms around Faith’s waist and leaned her head on the vicar’s breasts. “Maybe I should hear your confession.”

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 25

Faith wasn't in the chapel or her office, so Destiny returned to the empty pews and knelt on a kneeler bowing her head in prayer. She was the only one in the chapel. She was deep in thought when a heavy hand clasped her shoulder. She looked up to see Lushby standing over her.

Destiny struggled to stand, but Lushby's hand pushed her back onto her knees. "I like you on your knees," he leered.

Destiny shoved the repulsive man away from her and rose to her feet. She considered killing him but gained control of her temper.

"I came to apologize," he snorted. "I didn't mean to upset you. You must admit your daughter has unusual powers. Some might even call her a witch."

Destiny glared at him. She could easily send a bolt of electricity through him causing him to die of a heart attack, but she fought her dark side and said, "Are you threatening my daughter?"

Lushby ran his clammy hand up and down her arm. "I will make the whole thing go away, if you treat me nice."

"I've always treated you with respect," Destiny feigned ignorance of his meaning. "I've always been nice to you."

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Lushby gripped her arm tightly, “Don’t play Miss Innocent with me, Destiny. A beautiful woman like you with a daughter. You know what I want.”

“Dr. Sinclair,” Faith yelled as she entered the church. “I’m sorry I am late. Mr. Lushby, are you also here for confession?”

Lushby jumped back from Destiny and turned to face Faith. “I was just keeping Dr. Sinclair company until you arrived,” he explained. “I must be going.” He shuffled from the chapel.

“What a waste of space,” Faith muttered as she watched the obese man waddle out the door. “Did he bother you?”

“He threatened to expose Venus as a witch if I wasn’t nice to him.”

“That’s what I thought.” Faith scowled. “He needs to meet his maker whoever that is.”

“You can’t go around killing everyone that makes you angry,” Destiny wrapped her arms around Faith’s waist and leaned her head on the vicar’s breasts. “Maybe I should hear your confession.”

Faith laughed. “I have great difficulty keeping my hands off you, but I do feel a bit uneasy making love to you in the confessional. Let’s take this into my office where we can lock the door.”

##

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“What did you do with my bra?” Destiny asked as she gathered her clothes from around the office.

“In my desk chair,” Faith replied. “Do you see my collar anywhere?”

“I am going to talk to Whitney,” Destiny said as she buttoned her blouse. “I want to know about Elbert Lushby and why he is a member of our administrative board. He seems like an embarrassment.”

“Do you want me to accompany you?”

“No, Whitney and I have been friends for years. She will be straight with me. She has always shielded me when the unbelievable happens. You know like when a local vicar places a severed head on a body and delivers a perfectly healthy girl to her family.”

“My bad,” Faith pulled Destiny into her arms and kissed her. “I could have been more creative with that.”

“Um, you are extremely creative where it counts,” Destiny muttered against Faith’s lips. “I love how you love me.”

“Will I see you tonight?”

“Count on it,” Destiny kissed her once more then left the chapel.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

JAMIE COLLINS AND HER DOG
BONNIE WITH DESTINY



Whitney shrugged, “What the heck, I’ve always wanted to be part of a threesome.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 26

Destiny opened the door to Whitney's office.
"Have you got a minute?"

"Come in," Whitney replied. "I wondered how long it would take you to return."

"I had to shake the slime off me first. Lushby followed me to the chapel. Thank heaven the vicar showed up.

"How did someone like Lushby get on the hospital board of directors? He isn't even a doctor."

"His wife is our Chief Operating Officer Darla Wagner. She comes from old oil money and is filthy rich. She is dedicated to Sacred Heart. The hospital has doubled in size, and our profit margin is the envy of every hospital in America."

"That doesn't explain why Lushby's behavior is tolerated."

Whitney unlocked her bottom desk drawer, pulled out a thick folder, and slammed it on her desk. "This is the file from our human resources department. It contains the many sexual harassment complaints filed against Lushby. I've been contemplating carrying it to my next meeting with Darla. I want Lushby banned from our premises."

"Again, I ask, why does she tolerate him? She is a gorgeous woman. Men and women fawn all over her."

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“I think he has something on her,” Whitney replied. “Have you met her?”

“Only from afar,” Destiny answered, “I attend her “State of Our Affairs” meetings every year, but I’ve never spoken with her.”

“You should come to the Hospital Benefit Ball this year. Darla hosts it in the ballroom of her mansion. It is a smaller and more intimate venue than the financial meeting and you will have an opportunity to visit with her. I’ll buy you a ticket.”

“I can pay for my own ticket,” Destiny responded. “I’ll invite the vicar. It will be a good opportunity for her to socialize with the city’s rich and famous.”

“I was hoping you would go with me,” Whitney clarified.

“Isn’t that against hospital rules?”

“Not as my date,” Whitney said, “but as a friend. I’d like to get your feedback on the ball and its attendees.”

“I would like that; I’d also like to get the vicar’s take on everyone.”

Whitney shrugged, “What the heck, I’ve always wanted to be part of a threesome.”

They both laughed as Destiny sincerely hoped her boss was teasing. “I believe the ball tickets are five thousand dollars each,” she said. “I’ll run to my office and get a check. If you want to order them together, it will get you some brownie points with Darla Wagner. I’ll write you a check for

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ten thousand dollars then you can write your personal check for three tickets.”

“That would definitely catch her eye,” Whitney agreed.

“I’ll run get a check.” Destiny left the office unsure of her boss’s sexual preference. *I hope she likes men*, she thought.

“Destiny, I was hoping to find you.” Jamie walked toward her. “I need to interview Garth Layne as soon as he is able to have a visitor. I can’t find anyone who knows what happened. I need to know who shot him in his church office.”

“Let me take care of one little errand and I will take you into ICU and see if he is able to answer your questions. He had a bit of a setback yesterday.”

Jamie made small talk as they walked to Destiny’s office. “Bonnie fell in love with Venus,” she noted.

“Every living creature seems to fall in love with Venus,” Destiny replied. “She is incredibly beautiful both inside and out. Venus is a calm, loving soul.”

“Yes,” Jamie agreed. “So does that mean I would be standing in a long line of suitors if I asked her out on a date.”

“You will have to ask her that. She is definitely her own boss.”

“Would you be okay with her dating a law enforcement officer?” Jamie asked.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“I can’t think of anyone I’d rather see her dating than you. Again, she is her own boss. It’s her decision. I should warn you that she dated several people in college and never introduced me to any of them, so I knew it was nothing permanent.”

“The most important question before I make a fool of myself is, does she date women?”

“You’ll have to ask her. As I said, I never met any of her dates.”

“I’ll just be a minute,” Destiny said as she unlocked her office. “Have a seat.”

She quickly wrote the check to Whitney, slipped it into an envelope, and put away her check book. “I need a favor from you,” she raised her eyes to Jamie’s. “It is personal but important to me.”

“If it isn’t illegal, you know I’ll do it,” Jamie declared.

Destiny wrote two names on her note pad: Darla Wagner and Elbert Lushby. She slid the note to Jamie who studied it carefully.

“Aren’t these the hospital’s CEO and her husband?”

“Yes. I need you to dig as far back as possible and see if there is anything in Darla’s background that could be used to blackmail her. I’d also like a rap sheet on Lushby.”

“Consider it done.” Jamie slipped the note into her jacket pocket.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Destiny studied Jamie for several seconds then said, "I must warn you that Venus is skittish. The least little thing will make her runaway."

"Understood!" Jamie exclaimed. "I will always be kind and gentle with her."

"Let me drop this envelop by Director Langley's office then we can check on Pastor Layne." Destiny said.

##

Garth Layne was sitting up in his bed talking on his cellphone when they entered ICU. "Our patient seems to be doing well," Destiny commented to the nurse as she scrutinized Garth's computer records. "No more AFib incidents."

"He keeps wanting to know when he will be discharged," the nurse replied.

"Doesn't everyone." Destiny chuckled. "This is Detective Jamie Collins. She needs to speak with Reverend Layne about the shooting."

The nurse nodded and Destiny led Jamie to Layne's bed. "Reverend Layne, this is Detective Collins. She needs to talk with you about the shooting."

Layne slowly surveyed both women then nodded his head. "Sure, anything I can do to help catch my would-be assassin."

Jamie pulled a chair close to the bed and pulled out a tape recorder. "Would you tell me what happened from the beginning?"

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“As I’m certain you know, I am the pastor of Open Door Non-denominational Church in Arlington. I was putting out hymnals when a person dressed in black wearing a covid mask entered the front door. I welcomed them then continued putting out the song books.

“The next thing I knew, the individual was standing beside me poking a gun into my chest. I didn’t even have time to pray. The gun thundered and I felt like a horse had kicked me in the chest. That is all I remember. I woke up here and was told that Dr. Sinclair had saved my life.”

“Was there anything familiar about the shooter? Was it a man or a woman?”

“I couldn’t tell the gender and there was nothing recognizable about the shooter.”

“Why would someone want to kill you?” Jamie asked.

“I am a Christian and a Republican,” either of those associations can get one killed in today’s chaotic political atmosphere.”

“Do you have surveillance cameras inside the church?” Jamie asked.

“Yes, we added them after that madman in Minneapolis gunned down children at the Catholic Church of Annunciation killing two and sending twenty-one others to the hospital.”

“Is there someone I can contact to get a copy of the surveillance footage of your attacker?”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Just call the church and ask for Mildred Wool. She is the church secretary and will provide anything you need. I will call her and let her know you will be contacting her.”

Layne called Mildred and instructed her to provide Detective Collins with anything she needed. He ended the call and leaned his head back on his pillow. “I’m very tired,” he mumbled as he fell asleep.

“We are keeping him sedated to avoid any additional problems with his heart,” Destiny explained. “I believe he has done all he can do for now.”

“It is enough. I will visit Ms. Wool today. I’d like to call Venus tonight if you will give me her phone number. We’ve been trying to arrange a date, but things keep getting in the way.”

“Give me your phone number and I will tell her you need to talk to her.” Destiny responded. “I don’t give out my daughter’s phone number.”

“That works for me,” Jamie agreed. “Saves me from embarrassing myself. If I don’t hear from her, I’ll know she isn’t interested.”

Destiny nodded in agreement.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO CALL
SOMEONE YOU LOVE**



“Mom,” Venus whined. “Why didn’t you tell me sooner. Is it too late to call her?”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 27

“Wow, something smells good,” Destiny called out as she entered the penthouse.

“We’re in here,” Venus answered.

“Mindy, I didn’t expect to see you here,” Destiny said as she entered the kitchen.

“Mindy has cooked dinner for us,” Venus explained. “Salmon croquettes with broccoli and rice casserole and roasted veggies. I’ve been tasting everything and it is delicious.”

“Your timing is perfect,” Mindy beamed. “We are taking the croquettes out of the oven now.”

“Give me a few minutes to wash my hands and freshen up,” Destiny begged as she headed for her en suite.

“I invited Venus to go to a musical with me Friday,” Mindy informed Destiny. “You are welcome to join us.”

“I am going to curl up with a good book and become a hermit this weekend,” Destiny declared. “You two enjoy the musical but have my daughter home before midnight.”

##

“Dinner was excellent,” Destiny complimented Mindy. “I will clean the kitchen and you two can visit in the study.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“I must go” Mindy replied. “I open in the morning and six a.m. comes early.”

“I will walk with you to your car,” Venus volunteered. “The parking garage is spooky after dark.”

“I parked right beside your elevator opening,” Mindy said. “I will be fine.”

“I’d like to see you to your car,” Venus insisted.

“I would like that very much,” Mindy agreed as Venus pushed the elevator button.

After the two left, Destiny used her magic to make the kitchen spotless then retired to her bedroom. She was in the shower when Venus returned.

“May I shower with you?” Venus asked. “I love it when you soap my back.”

“Of course, you can. The water is just right.”

“That was nice of Mindy to cook for us tonight,” Venus said as she handed Destiny her favorite body wash and turned her back waiting to be lathered and rubbed.

“It was delicious,” Destiny agreed. “Mindy is a good friend and a great cook.”

Destiny sprayed her daughter’s back washing away the suds and rinsing her silky dark skin.

“Will you read to me tonight?” Venus asked.

“I would love to.”

“Did Detective Collins find out who shot the preacher you saved?”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“She questioned him today then went to the church to review the security footage. Reverend Layne has no idea who tried to kill him or why. Oh, I almost forgot, Jamie gave me her number and asked that you call her tonight.”

“Mom,” Venus whined. “Why didn’t you tell me sooner. Is it too late to call her?”

“It isn’t too late. You go get ready for bed and I’ll forward Jamie’s number to you.”

Venus wrapped a towel around herself and hurried to her room for pajamas and privacy. Jamie Collins had haunted her thoughts all day. She took a deep breath and pushed the button to ring Jamie’s number.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**VENUS INTENTIONALLY LET THE
QUESTION FALL FLAT.**



“Oh, and Jamie, “I like everything about you too, especially Bonnie.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 28

Jamie's voice was rich and warm. A little thrill ran through Venus' body as she listened to it. *Play hard to get*, she reminded herself.

"Jamie this is Venus. Mom said you needed to speak with me about her patient that was shot."

"Um, I, uh, no, I wanted to thank you for helping Bonnie and me at the hospital. You were amazing. I was very impressed and Bonnie has fallen in love with you.

"You are very kind," Venus purred. "I enjoyed working with the children and Bonnie. They were wonderful and so were you."

"Thank you. I also wanted to ask you if you would go out with me tomorrow night?"

Venus intentionally let the question fall flat.

"Are you still there?" Jamie asked.

"Yes, I'm just checking my calendar," Venus hummed. "What did you have in mind for tomorrow?"

"We could play miniature golf, or go to that new bingo palace that just opened or—"

"I'd rather go out to a nice quiet restaurant where we can visit and get to know each other better," Venus hummed. "It is amazing how relaxed one can get over dinner and a bottle of good wine."

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God, I love this woman, Jamie thought as she relaxed and let the sweet sound of Venus' voice drive away all her anxiety.

"Do you have a favorite restaurant?" Jamie asked.

"I do. I can make reservations if you like."

"I like," Jamie could hardly hide her glee. "I like everything about you," she blurted. *So much for playing it cool*, she chastised herself.

"Pick me up at 6:30 p.m. I'll make our reservation for 7:00 p.m."

"Perfect," Jamie agreed.

"Oh, and Jamie, "I like everything about you too, especially Bonnie."

Jamie laughed. "You really are something."

##

"Come in," Destiny answered the soft knock on her bedroom door.

Venus scurried into the room and landed on the bed beside her mother. "I just got off the phone with Jamie," she announced. "She is so sweet and kinda shy for a law enforcement officer."

Destiny nodded. "Don't be fooled. Jamie is extremely capable. One of the things that makes her a great detective is her girlish good looks and 'aw shucks' attitude. People tend to underestimate her."

Venus giggled. "Good information to know."

"So?" Destiny raised her brows.

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“We have a date tomorrow night.”

“Why does that not surprise me? You know Mindy has a little crush on you,” Destiny informed her.

“Now who is being naive,” Venus smirked. “Mindy has the mother of all crushes on you, Mom.”

“No, I don’t think—,”

“Be honest, Mom.”

“But Mindy is a mortal,” Destiny blurted. “I can’t...”

Venus’ green eyes narrowed to small slits. “You can’t what?”

“Mindy is just a good friend,” Destiny waved her hand in the air.

“Aren’t we all mortals?” Venus stared into her eyes.

“Yes, of course.”

“I’ve never lied to you, Mom. You know all there is to know about me. I only know that I’ve aged twenty-two years and you still look as young and beautiful as the first day you held me to your bosom and threatened the gods if they let me die.”

“I, um ...”

“I’m going to ask you a question,” Venus murmured. “Tell me the truth. I know we have always joked around about being immortals, but for real, are you immortal?”

Destiny looked down at her hands and whispered, “Yes.”

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“Yes,” Venus repeated. “You are immortal?”

Destiny nodded. “That is why I embraced you being a shifter. I’ve met all types of creatures in my lifetime. I instantly fell in love with the tiny kitten I pulled from the dumpster and loved you even more when I discovered you were a little girl. You are the light of my life, Venus. I’d lived three-hundred years with nothing to love until you entered my life.”

Tears ran down Venus’ face. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“It isn’t something one shares freely. The opportunity never arose for me to say, ‘Guess what, Venus, I really am immortal!’” I kept trying to find a way to tell you.”

“I knew you could do magic. I knew you called yourself a witch to me, but I never dreamed you were immortal. That is why you never date anyone. If you fall in love with them, they will die and break your heart. You are a healer. You healed the boy and girl at the hospital.”

“I did not heal the boy and girl. That was you. You are a healer. Cats are known healers.”

“Am I immortal?” Venus asked.

“I don’t know. I aged until I was thirty-two. I pray that you are. I can’t imagine my life without you.”

“But you do have powers. I’ve seen you use them.” Venus insisted.

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by Erin Wade

“Yes, I can control earth, wind, fire and water, but I cannot magically heal or resurrect the dead.”

“Wow! This is a lot to assimilate. I’ll have to sleep on it,” Venus purred as she took her cat form, curled up beside Destiny, and went to sleep.

That wasn’t too bad, Destiny thought. She had always dreaded the day when she would have the talk with Venus. I’m certain it is not over. Knowing my inquisitive daughter, she will have a million questions for me tomorrow.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**LOVE IS A
TWO-WAY STREET**



“I’m sorry baby. It has been crazy around our house, but you are always on my mind.” She slipped Faith’s collar off as she pulled the vicar down onto the sofa with her.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 29

Jamie was waiting at the hospital entrance for Destiny. “The lady at information said you would be here any minute,” Jamie explained. “I wanted to catch you before you started healing people.”

“Go ahead. You have my full attention,” Destiny replied.

“The important thing first. I am taking Venus out to dinner tonight. Should I wear a dress or fashionable slacks and a blazer?”

“Which do you prefer?”

“Slacks.”

“That is what you should wear.”

“Will it be okay if I bring her flowers?”

“It would be perfect.”

Jamie beamed. “I am so nervous.”

“Don’t be. She is a lovely woman.” Destiny soothed her. “So are you. You will be a beautiful couple.”

Jamie did a little two step as she pushed the elevator to ride to Destiny’s floor.

“Jamie don’t be so apprehensive. I am sure you and Venus will enjoy each other’s company.”

Jamie exhaled the breath she had been holding. “She is so perfect almost ethereal.”

“She’s not a great cook,” Destiny tried to put her friend at ease.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“That’s no big deal. I love takeout.” Jamie declared. “I will take care of the meals.”

Destiny laughed as she opened the door to her office. “I’m assuming you are here on business and not just to pump me for information about my daughter.”

“Yes, I’d like to interview your patient Garth Layne again.”

“I believe he is in a private room. Let me get the number for you.” Destiny called the ICU and wrote down the room number on a note pad then handed it to Jamie. “You won’t need me to go with you. He is receiving visitors.”

“I will see you tonight,” Jamie said. “Oh, what are Venus’ favorite flowers?”

“Honestly, she loves the potted plants you can pick up at HEB. She keeps them alive forever.” She didn’t add that Venus liked to slap the blooms with her paws.

##

Destiny turned on her computer and logged into her patients’ reports. The click of her door lock made her look up. “I was hoping you would drop in,” she grinned as she walked around her desk to embrace Faith.

“You know you can transport to my place too.” Faith reminded her. “Love is a two-way street.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“I’m sorry baby. It has been crazy around our house, but you have always been on my mind.” She slipped Faith’s collar off as she pulled the vicar down onto the sofa with her.

Faith touched her face with gentle fingertips. “I never dreamed I’d find a woman like you,” she murmured as her lips met Destiny’s. It was a slow, searching kiss savoring the silky feel of the doctor’s soft lips. Tongues caressed as hands explored each other’s bodies. Destiny whimpered as she scooted beneath Faith loving the weight of her lover’s body on her.

Faith caressed Destiny’s breast’s as she continued kissing her. “You are an awesome kisser,” she muttered, as she unzipped Destiny’s slacks and slipped her hand inside her panties. “Oh my,” she sighed.

“I was thinking about you before you appeared,” Destiny admitted. “Just thinking about you turns me on.”

##

“Detective Collins is dating my daughter,” Destiny informed Faith as they dressed.

“Where did you fling my collar?” Faith asked as she held up Destiny’s bra. “I’ll trade you one bra for a collar.” She dropped the bra onto the desk and pulled the blonde back into her arms. “Let’s go to my home.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“I’d love to,” Destiny breathlessly replied. “I can’t. I’m on call in the emergency ward today.”

Faith moaned loudly. “Are you always going to be a doctor?”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean at some point in time can’t you be a movie star or a computer savant. Any job that gives us more free time together.”

“And what will you be doing? Being a vicar is also very time consuming.”

“I’ll just be your gigolo. You know a kept woman who will always be at your beck and call to do your bidding anytime you want.”

Destiny laughed. “That might be something we want to pursue.”

“Why don’t you see if you have any emergencies that require your attention, and I will check in at the chapel then we can meet in the cafeteria in an hour? I want to hear more about Jamie and Venus.”

Destiny tiptoed to kiss Faith’s lips. “I love you. Thank you for visiting me in my office this morning.”

“The pleasure was all mine.” Faith grinned then disappeared.

“You just keep telling yourself that,” Destiny muttered.

**When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade**

666

DEACONS OR DEMONS



*When we attended your church service Venus and I
saw the same soulless look in the eyes of your
choir.*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 30

The emergency room was surprisingly quiet, so Destiny made her rounds. As she walked down the hallway to her patient's room, she heard something akin to a Gregorian Chant. When she entered Garth Layne's room she was surprised to find half a dozen men dressed in black suits and black shirts with white ties.

"This looks like a gathering of the mafia," Destiny teased as she stood at the foot of Garth's bed.

The men turned in unison to face Destiny, and she was stunned to find all of them had the same vacant, black eyes she had seen in Faith's choir. She looked down trying to stop the word *soulless* from escaping her lips.

"These men are the deacons of my church," Garth informed her. "They want to know when I will be back at work."

Destiny braced herself and raised her eyes to face the men. They were smiling and their eyes were filled with merriment. "Thank you for saving the life of our beloved leader," one of them said as he held out his hand to the doctor. Destiny shook his hand and was surprised to find it as warm as his greeting.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Pushing the image of the men and their subhuman eyes from her mind, Destiny greeted them then checked Garth's vital signs.

"You are making an amazing recovery," she informed Garth.

"When may we take him home?" One of the men asked.

"If someone can stay with him twenty-four-seven for the next seven days, he can go home tomorrow. But you must call me immediately if he has the slightest fever or discomfort."

"We can do that," the man replied.

"I'll dismiss him in the morning. You may pick him up at 10:00 a.m."

"Thank you doc," Garth said. "I'm ready to get back to my flock."

"I don't think you should preach any sermons for several weeks," Destiny pointed out. "You need to regain your strength and return to your regular routine slowly. I'd like to see you in a week. Please make an appointment when you check out."

"I will," Garth assured her.

##

Destiny rushed to the chapel praying Faith would be there. The vicar was lighting a candle at the front of the church and turned to face the wild-eyed woman who threw herself into her arms.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“What is wrong, Destiny? You are trembling.”

“Faith, I must talk to you about something, and I need to know the truth. Don’t dismiss my concerns.”

Faith nodded. “I won’t.”

“When Garth Layne was regaining consciousness after his surgery, he grabbed my wrist with the strength of ten men and his eyes opened wide. They were like black, bottomless pools and I sensed evil so vile it was repulsive.”

“I don’t think—”

Destiny held up her hand to stop her lover from completing her sentence.

“Don’t patronize me. I know what I felt and saw. When we attended your church service Venus and I saw the same soulless look in the eyes of your choir. Just now, six deacons from Garth’s church were visiting him and for a second they had the same look. What is going on?”

Faith looked around. “We can’t talk here. Can you come to my house at 6:00 p.m. We can speak safely there.”

“Okay, but I must be home before midnight.”

“Before Venus gets home from her date with Jamie,” Faith guessed.

“Yes. I want to be there for her. She will agonize over the fact that she cares for Jamie. Also, she did heal the two children in the hospital ward,

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by Erin Wade

and she has abilities Jamie may not be able to comprehend.”

Faith kissed her one more time. “Until six.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**“I SUPPOSE IF YOU BELIEVE IN
GOD, YOU MUST BELIEVE IN
DEMONS.”**



*“I hope you like steak. I couldn’t bear the thought
of another fish dish.”*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 31

“Oh! You surprised me,” Faith jumped when Destiny materialized in her kitchen. I didn’t know if you would drive or transport.”

Destiny slipped her arms around her lover’s waist and pulled her into a warm hug. “I didn’t want to waste time driving.”

“I’m glad. I made dinner for us. I hope you like steak. I couldn’t bear the thought of another fish dish.”

Destiny laughed. “I love steak. It isn’t something Venus likes so we seldom have it at home.”

“If you will open the wine, I’ll plate our meal. We can talk over dinner.” Faith suggested.

“I’ll begin with the obvious. I’m sure you have wondered why I chose this particular point in time to make myself known to you.”

Destiny nodded.

“In all of my existence, I have never encountered beings with soulless eyes. They began appearing on earth about a hundred years ago. I’ve been trying to determine their origin and their purpose and I’ve failed miserably. Their number increases daily—slowly but surely. I think they must be demons. I suppose if you believe in God, you must believe in demons.”

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A chill ran through Destiny's body as she considered the impact of Faith's words. She had never been a believer in an almighty God, so she had never thought about the presence of evil except for the cruelty of mankind. "Are they as powerful as you?" She asked Faith.

"I don't think so, but they definitely outnumber me. I know they can't resurrect the dead. That is why they panicked and disappeared when Garth was shot. He is their leader."

"Do you know who shot Garth?"

"No, but now we know they can be killed with man's weapons."

"Why do your choir members have the same soulless eyes?"

"Those weren't my choir members. My church and Garth's church exchanged choirs the Sunday you attended so I had Garth's choir."

"Have you ever seen them do anything evil or hurt anyone?"

"No, but I think they are gathering their followers in one place and I don't know why. They have acquired a million-acre ranch in West Texas and seem to be moving in that direction."

"That is a god-forsaken area if there ever was one," Destiny commented. "But why choose now to make yourself known to me?"

"Because I'm not certain I can fight them alone if they attack earth. I want you to have my back."

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Only if your front is part of the bargain,” Destiny teased.

Faith laughed. “I love you and you know you have all of me.”

“You can count on me,” Destiny said seriously. “I never want to be without you.”

“Do you have the weekend off?” Faith asked.

“I do, unless there is a major catastrophe and I am called in.”

“I thought we would pay their ranch a visit,” Faith said.

“Sounds exciting. How do you want to approach them?”

Faith considered their options then said, “Transport. It will be to our advantage if they have no idea we are inside their operations. I just want to observe.”

“You are on my calendar,” Destiny declared as she walked to Faith, took her hand, and pulled her toward the bedroom. “We have four hours before I must be back at the penthouse. I trust you will make the most of our time.”

Faith inhaled deeply then exhaled slowly. “You can count on it, my love.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

MAGIC TRICKS AND CHERRIES



Venus popped one of the cherries into her mouth and quickly tied the stem in a knot using her tongue. She held out the finished trick in the palm of her hand. “I can do amazing things with my tongue.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 32

“I’ve never been here,” Jamie exclaimed as the hostess led them to a private alcove with doors that closed around their table and circular seating.

“I love the privacy it provides,” Venus said wrinkling her nose in the most endearing way.

“Please tell me I’m not one of many you have shared this with,” Jamie teased feigning sadness.

“You are the first,” Venus promised. “I found it on the internet and checked it out at lunch today. I know it will become my favorite dining place. Our place.”

The candlelight danced in Jamie’s eyes as she clasped Vanus’ hand. “Our place! I like the sound of that.”

A server knocked on the door. “May I take your drink order?”

“Do you have a favorite wine?” Jamie asked pushing open the double doors to talk with the server.

“Di Marco Toscana, red wine is wonderful with Italian food,” Venus replied.

The server nodded then closed the doors returning them to their own little world.

“Should we get the elephant in our little room out of the way?” Venus suggested.

Jamie touched Venus’ hand. “You don’t owe me an explanation about our Sunday performance

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in the children's ward. Stranger things than that have happened in Sacred Heart Hospital."

"Really! Tell me about them." Venus said softly.

"Well, there was a woman from a multi-car pileup who was pronounced dead, but when your mother prayed over her she miraculously revived unscathed."

"My Mom? Destiny?"

"Yes. Then there was the train/school bus accident where eighty people were injured. A nurse swears she carried a severed head into the triage area outside Destiny's operating room and handed it to someone. When the dust settled, all eighty people were alive and doing well."

Venus shrugged. "Obviously, the nurse had PTSD. That entire incident would have been extremely traumatic."

Jamie nodded and smiled. "Enough about your mom. What amazing tricks can you do?"

The server knocked on their door announcing the delivery of their wine. She uncorked the bottle and poured a sample into Venus' glass. "Perfect," the brunette announced after tasting the vino. "Would you bring me a small ramekin of stemmed maraschino cherries, please?"

The server filled their wine glasses then returned quickly with the cherries and took their order.

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“I was impressed by your blanket trick with Bonnie,” Jamie continued. “May Bonnie and I work with you to put together a magic show for the kids. They loved you.”

“I think not!” Venus scowled. “My mom was called on the carpet by one of the hospital directors because the two children we worked with recovered from their illness.”

“I heard about that.” Jamie hung her head. “I feel bad about that. You must wonder what kind of hospital administrator would complain about children recovering from their illness.”

“On a lighter note,” Venus chirped, “I did learn a good magic trick when I was at the university. Want to see it?”

“If you can do it here, sure.”

Venus popped one of the cherries into her mouth and quickly tied the stem in a knot using her tongue. She held out the finished trick in the palm of her hand. “I can do amazing things with my tongue.”

“Ooh,” Jamie groaned. “You are an awful tease.”

Venus stared at her with wide-eyed innocence.

A knock on the doors announced the arrival of their dinner.

They laughed and talked until the restaurant began dimming the lights. “I think that is our cue to

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leave,” Jamie noted as she placed her credit card in the bill folder.

“Let me pay my share,” Venus insisted. “The wine was expensive and we managed to drink two bottles.”

Jamie shook her head no, as she handed the folder to the server. “It is a small price to pay for an evening with you.”

“Aren’t you the silver-tongued devil?” Venus teased.

“Do you still have to be home before midnight?” Jamie asked as they walked to her car.

“I do. Mom will worry about me if I’m out after the bewitching hour.”

“Do you turn into a pumpkin?” Jamie teased.

“Something like that,” Venus giggled making light of Jamie’s question as she thought, *If only you knew.*

“May I see you again?”

“I am having a wonderful time with you,” Venus purred. “Of course, you may see me again.”

“Would I seem too eager if I show up on your doorstep tomorrow night?”

“Let me check with Mom. Perhaps I could cook dinner for you. Do you like orange roughy?”

“I love any kind of fish.” Jamie’s enthusiastic reply pleased Venus.

##

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“I guess this is where I say goodnight,” Jamie said as she pushed the button that would send down the penthouse elevator. She looked around to make sure they were alone then leaned down and kissed Venus’ lips. They were just as soft and sweet as she knew they would be.

“Don’t forget to call me after you talk to your mom,” she murmured as she stepped back from the brunette. “Please call me tonight no matter how late. I won’t be able to sleep until I hear from you anyway.”

“I will call,” Venus promised as she stepped into the elevator.

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**“DO YOU KNOW WHAT
ARMAGEDDON IS?”**



*“Venus pulled feet into her mother’s lap. Please
rub my feet. Shoes make my paws hurt.”*

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CHAPTER 33

“Did you have a good time?” Destiny inquired as Venus walked from the elevator into their living room.

“I may be in love,” Venus pretended to swoon, “but first ...” Venus shed her clothes, changed into her cat form, and ran around the room three times.

“Zoomies,” Destiny laughed. “I assume you enjoyed your date with Detective Collins.”

“Oh, so much,” a breathless Venus declared as she assumed her female form and fell onto the sofa beside Destiny.

Destiny pulled the throw from the back of the sofa and wrapped her naked daughter in it. “Tell me all about it.”

“She is so sweet, Mom. Honestly, she is wonderful, thoughtful, and gorgeous. She really turns heads both men and women.”

“Of course she was walking beside you darling. You also turn heads.”

Venus grinned. “What can I say. We are a beautiful couple. May I cook dinner for her tomorrow? You could invite Faith and we will have a wonderful time.”

“That does sound like fun,” Destiny admitted. “I will invite Faith. What time?”

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“Would 6:00 p.m. be too early? We could eat and play games.”

“That would be perfect. I will be responsible for dessert.”

“Venus pulled feet into her mother’s lap. Please rub my feet. Shoes make my paws so sore. How was your evening with Faith?” Venus asked.

“Unsettling. You know the people we have briefly seen with fiendish eyes. Faith believes they are a threat to mankind.”

“What does she know about them?” Venus queried.

“They materialized about a hundred years ago—”

“I am afraid to ask how old Faith is,” Venus interrupted.

“That is a story for another time.” Destiny shrugged. “As I was saying they showed up around a hundred years ago and their number has increased significantly over the years. She has seen them in every country, and they are beginning to be antagonistic in other parts of the world.

“They purchased a million-acre ranch in West Texas and have built a city there. They are coming from all over the world to gather at the ranch. The ranch is larger than most countries in the world. A million acres is one-thousand-five hundred-sixty-two square miles. Do you know that there are one-hundred-eighty-three countries in the world that are

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smaller than Texas and many of them are smaller than the ranch they purchased?”

Venus’s eyes narrowed to slits as she digested the information her mother had just shared with her. “It sounds like the soulless ones are carving their own country out of Texas.”

“That is what Faith fears.”

“We must stop them,” Venus declared.

“Do you know what Armageddon is?”

“Yes,” Venus whispered as if afraid someone might hear her words. “It is the final battle between good and evil on earth.”

Destiny nodded as her daughter snuggled closer to her weighing the facts her mother had presented her. “Where is Armageddon?”

“According to Faith, it is associated with a city located in northern Israel called Megiddo.”

“Then why are they gathering in Texas?” Venus pondered.

“We don’t know.”

“Wow Mom, I thought my evening with Jamie was earth shaking, but you just pushed it way down to the level of folding clothes. Forgive me, I’m going to become a cat and let you humans worry about keeping me alive.”

With that statement Venus became a ball of fur curled up in Destiny’s lap.

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by Erin Wade

**HOSPITAL CEO DARLA WAGNER
VISITED WITH DR. SINCLAIR**



Destiny smiled. “I like you Darla Wagner,” she said. “You aren’t like most of the CEOs I have worked with.”

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CHAPTER 34

Darla Wagner and Whitney Langley were visiting the emergency room when Destiny stepped from the elevator.

“Dr. Sinclair, we were just heading to your office,” Whitney said. “Have you met Darla Wagner our CEO?”

“I haven’t had the pleasure.” Destiny held out her hand and was surprised at the strength of the other woman as she grasped her hand and shook it vigorously.

“It is a pleasure to meet the superstar of our emergency room,” Darla complimented. “No one told me you are movie star gorgeous.”

Destiny blushed and smiled. “You are very kind. Would you like to see the operating theater?”

Darla nodded.

Destiny liked the gregarious CEO and showed her every nook and cranny in the operating room. “I hope I didn’t bore you,” she apologized as she ended the tour. “I’m afraid I get carried away sometimes. I am very proud of our state-of-the-art facilities. I know I have you to thank for them.”

“It is important to me that our hospital be the best,” Darla admitted. “It’s your responsibility to save the lives of the wounded and sick that come here, but it is my responsibility to make certain you have the equipment needed to do it.”

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Destiny smiled. “I like you Darla Wagner,” she said. “You aren’t like most of the CEOs I have worked with.”

“Where have you previously worked?” Darla asked as they walked to Whitney’s office.

Destiny searched for an answer to Darla’s question.

“Dr. Sinclair, I have been looking for you,” Faith saved her.

“Vicar Seraph, have you met Darla Wagner our CEO?” Destiny blurted happy to dodge the past employment question.

“I have heard wonderful things about you,” Faith said as she shook Darla’s hand. “But no one mentioned that you are brilliant and beautiful.”

“I didn’t know we had a female clergy working with us,” Darla replied.

“I have only been here a short time,” Faith explained. “I volunteer for a few hours every day to give Chaplain Criss a break.”

“You should bring Dr. Sinclair and Vicar Seraph to our benefit ball,” Darla turned to Whitney. “It never hurts to have impressive women representing the hospital staff.”

“I have already purchased tickets for them,” Whitney replied.

“Then I am looking forward to visiting with you ladies at the ball,” Darla said. “Whitney, you promised to show me the new tracking method you have installed in the Blood Bank.”

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“She is married to Lushby?” Faith mumbled as the two women walked away.

“Unbelievable,” Destiny said. “She is delightful. He is a lowlife.”

“Will you dance with me at the ball?” Faith asked.

“Yes, that may be the only thing I haven’t done with you,” Faith giggled. “Venus is cooking dinner tonight and asked me to invite you. Jamie will be there.”

“Didn’t they go out last night?”

“Yes, and they had a wonderful time.”

“Sounds like it is already serious. They are a beautiful couple. I will bring wine. What time is dinner?”

“They want to eat and play boardgames so 6:00 p.m.”

Faith looked around to make sure they were alone then leaned down and kissed her lover. “Thank you for last night.”

“Truly, it was my pleasure.” Destiny murmured.

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DR. MONICA MAYBERRY
AND MINDY YOUNG



*“You could practice it on me,” Monica smiled.
“Or I could take you to that new Japanese
restaurant that opened in Sunset Square.”*

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by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 35

Destiny performed an emergency appendectomy and stabilized the crushed ankle of an equestrian whose horse had stepped on his leg. “Dr. Adams will take over the patient this afternoon and replace his ankle,” she informed the ICU nurse. “I’m going across the street to The Java Stop for lunch if you need me.”

“It is about time you showed your lovely face around here,” Mindy greeted her enthusiastically.

“It has been crazy at the hospital. I am almost hesitant to tempt fate by saying this but today has been fairly routine.”

“We have your favorite beef stroganoff today.”

“My day just keeps getting better,” Destiny said as she sat at her favorite table in the corner. “Coffee, lots of coffee.”

The door chimed as Dr. Monica Mayberry entered the café. “Monica, come join me,” Destiny invited.

“Do you have anything stronger than coffee?” Monica joked with Mindy. “I’ve had the day from hell.”

“What’s going on?” Destiny asked as the blood bank supervisor pulled out a chair.

“Our CEO and Whitney spent the morning with me. Mrs. Wagner wants me to implement a

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new tracking system that I find inferior to the system we have. I have talked with blood bank supervisors across the country and all of them are sold on our current tracking system.

Destiny leaned across the table and said softly, “Has your product continued to come up short?”

“Yes. Every time there is a major catastrophe we lose track of a dozen pints,” Monica sobbed. “It must be an employee—someone who knows how our system works and has the knowledge to move the containers out of the bank unnoticed.”

“Do you suspect anyone?” Destiny asked.

“No. Out of my own pocket, I had video cameras installed that only I am aware of, and no one has ever shown up on the surveillance tapes when product disappears.”

“I will talk to Vicar Seraph. The next time we have a catastrophe, I will get her to hide in the blood bank and see if she can catch anyone stealing from you.”

“That would be great,” Monica agreed. “She is stealth.”

Mindy placed their lunch on the table and refilled their drink glasses. “I have an old family favorite I’d like to cook for you and Venus,” she said.

“That would be delightful,” Destiny said, trying to figure out how to tell Mindy that Venus was smitten by Detective Jamie Collins.

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“You could practice it on me,” Monica smiled. “Or I could take you to that new Japanese restaurant that opened in Sunset Square.”

Mindy’s eyes sparkled. “I have been dying to go to the Hibachi Grill.”

“Tomorrow night okay?” Monica asked. “I know you close the bistro at 7:00 p.m. I could pick you up at 8:00 p.m.”

“It’s a date,” Mindy agreed.

“A date...yeah it’s a date,” Monica agreed.

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**VENUS PAID NO ATTENTION
TO THE WHITE VAN IN THE ALLEY**



“Help me!” A woman screamed as she beat on the back doors of the vehicle.

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CHAPTER 36

Venus dressed in a mauve pullover and a pair of slim-fitted black leggings. She admired herself in the full-length mirror as she ran a brush through her long black hair. She buckled the black choker around her neck. She knew she looked sexy and would leave Jamie tongue tied.

She giggled as she pulled on her shoes then slipped her cellphone with its holder for her drivers license and a credit card into her hip pocket. The beautiful detective was always so confident and self-assured when they were with a group of people but became bashful when they were alone together. Venus had that effect on a lot of people.

It was a perfect day, so she decided to walk to The Whole Foods Market eight blocks away.

“Looking good today, Miss Venus,” Tony the doorman commented as he opened the door for her.

“Thank you, Tony.”

Venus loved the warm sunshine and leisurely strolled past the women’s boutiques and restaurants as she cut through a small shopping center. Jamie consumed her thoughts as she walked past a white van parked beside a dress shop.

“Help me!” A woman screamed as she beat on the back doors of the vehicle.

Venus rushed to the van and twisted the handle to open the door. As the door swung open a

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woman leaped from the vehicle knocking her backwards into the arms of a large muscular man who swiftly pulled her hands behind her, handcuffed her, and lifted her into the van.

“We will get a good price for her. She is a real looker,” the woman crowed as the man tied Venus’ ankles together. The woman shoved a dirty rag into her mouth and pulled a strip of duct tape across her lips.

“Yeah, I’m gonna’ have a go at her before we sell her,” the rancid smelling man guffawed like a hyena.

“She is the fifth one this week. That’s ten-thousand dollars for one week’s work. This is a great gig.”

Venus assessed her situation as the woman slammed the door. She knew she could get away by reverting to her cat form but hesitated to do that. As a cat she had no way to carry her cellphone and didn’t want to leave it and her identification with the two criminals.

“I’ve gotta’ take a leak,” the man grumbled as he pulled the van into a convenience store. “Grab us a cold six pack of Shinner and three hoagies. I’m hungry.”

The woman leaned around the seat and looked at Venus. “Yeah, she ain’t going nowhere,” she cackled as she opened her door.

Venus immediately shifted shedding her clothing and bounds. She changed back into her

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human form and hid everything in the spare tire compartment along with her clothes, shoes, and cellphone. She assumed her feline form, jumped into the front passenger's seat and watched out the window as the woman juggled the food and a six pack of beer. As the criminal opened the door, Venus jumped onto her face, dragging her claws from her forehead, across her eyes and lips to her chin.

“The woman screamed and threw the beer and food in every direction as she tried to pull Venus off her face. Venus jumped down and ran to the back of the store where she hid behind a dumpster.

“You're bleeding something awful,” the man cried as he tried to wipe the blood from his companion's face. “Where did that rabid cat come from?”

“I don't know, but our meal ticket is gone,” the woman bellowed. “She got out somehow.”

“I'm taking you to a clinic,” the man insisted. “You are bleeding badly.”

“Yeah, I think that monster put out one of my eyes. I can't see.”

##

Venus slinked around the back of the store trying to figure out where she was. They hadn't driven far after they kidnapped her. She ran down the sidewalk in front of the stores heading back to

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The Athena. She didn't see the car making the turn as she ran into the crosswalk. The driver slammed on her brakes and her car skidded toward Venus.

God, surely this isn't what you have planned for me, Venus thought as she tried to evade the black tire screeching toward her. She shrieked in pain as the wheel pinned her paw to the pavement and rolled over it.

Like a fish out of water, Venus flopped around, shrieking loudly as the driver jumped from the car, immediately took off her blazer, and caught Venus in it. "It's okay little one. It's okay. I'm going to take care of you."

Venus continued to howl as the woman secured her in the jacket so she couldn't move then held her on her lap as she drove to a nearby vet clinic. She parked her car and ran inside with Venus.

"July, I ran over this pitiful thing. I need to X-ray it," the woman called out as she hurried toward the back of the clinic.

"I'm right behind you, doc." July yelled.

Venus clinched her teeth as the woman gently removed her jacket from the cat. "Don't be afraid little one. I won't hurt you," she soothed.

Venus believed her until a sharp pain in her hip made her yowl. July gave Venus a shot and everything went black.

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by Erin Wade

DR. DANICA DAWSON
AND DESTINY



Destiny tried to push the thoughts of Venus being alone on the streets of Dallas from her mind. She never left the house in her cat form so something traumatic must have happened for her clothes and cellphone to be in the back of a van.

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CHAPTER 37

Dr. Danica Dawson said a silent prayer as she examined the X-ray of the black cat's paw. Her prayers were answered. The feline's paw was flattened, and blood had burst from the bottom of the paw pads, but no bones were broken and the damage would heal.

Danica dressed the paw knowing the animal would immediately chew off the dressing when it awoke, but she could keep it sterile until then.

She gently stroked the cat admiring her shiny coat, white teeth, and beautifully trimmed nails. "Someone loves you and takes good care of you," she muttered. She noticed the gold plate on the animal's collar. She unfastened the collar and looked at the engraving.

"A phone number," she chuckled. "Someone is frantically looking for you right now." She called the number and reached an answering machine.

"You have reached the private number of Dr. Destiny Sinclair. Please leave your name, number, and a brief message. I will return your call as soon as possible."

"This is Dr. Danica Dawson from Dawson Animal Clinic. Your cat has been in an accident, and we have her at our clinic. She is slightly injured but okay. If you will call me, I will be delighted to bring her to you."

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##

“Venus, I’m home,” Destiny announced as she stepped into the penthouse. She was surprised to find all the lights out and the drapes still closed. She walked to the kitchen then checked her daughter’s bedroom. There was evidence of Venus showering and dressing to go out, but no sign of the woman.

Panic clutched her heart as her call to Venus’ phone went to the answering machine. She activated her Follow Me App and was surprised to see Venus was at the hospital. *She is probably looking for me*, Destiny thought as she quickly transported to her hospital office. She called Venus again but reached the answering machine.

She tapped her Follow Me App and followed the directions leading her to Venus. She was surprised when the app led her outside the emergency room doors and to a white van parked under the porte-cochère. She opened the door of the van, but Venus was not inside. Her app pointer homed in on Venus’ cellphone and Destiny opened the spare tire space. Venus’ clothes, shoes, and cellphone were shoved into the space beside the wheel. Venus had been in the van, but where was she now? If she was naked she must have assumed her cat form.

Destiny grabbed her daughter’s belongings and ran back into the emergency entrance. “Was

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someone brought in from the white van under the porte-cochère,” she asked.

“Yes,” the attendant replied. “A woman whose face had been ripped to shreds by a cat. She is in operating room four.”

“Would you put these things into a bag and hold them for me?” Destiny asked the man as she handed him Venus’ belongings.

She ran to the surgery, but no one was in number four. “Was a woman just brought in here?” she asked.

“She is in ICU. Dr. Royce stitched her up,” the nurse informed her. “Her face looked like it had been put through a meat grinder.”

Destiny tried to push the thoughts of Venus being alone on the streets of Dallas from her mind. She never left the house in her cat form so something traumatic must have happened for her clothes and cellphone to be in the back of a van. Had she been struck by the vehicle or worse, kidnapped by the van’s owner.

Dr. Royce was typing information into the computer beside the bed of a woman whose entire head was wrapped in gauze bandages leaving a space for her eyes to be covered in a different type of bandage.

“What happened to her?” Destiny said calmly.

“I’m not certain but it looks like a rabid cat got hold of her,” Royce answered.

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“Who brought her in?” Destiny asked.

“I don’t know. I was about to go to the visitors waiting room to see if anyone was there for her.”

“May I go with you?”

“Of course, I always welcome a little moral support when I have bad news for someone,” Royce replied. “I don’t even have a name for her. I can tell you that hygiene was not one of her priorities.”

“Bad news?” Destiny questioned.

“The woman is blind. The cat literally scratched her eyes out and badly ripped up her face and sliced off half of her bottom lip.”

A filthy man with long hair and a shaggy beard sat in the corner of the waiting room. “I’m guessing he is with the woman in our ICU,” Royce muttered.

“Sir, did you bring in the woman with the facial wounds?” Royce inquired.

The man nodded and Destiny waved over hospital security.

“How is she?” the man asked.

“The surgery went well,” Royce replied, “but I’m afraid her eyesight is gone.”

“Jesus,” the man exclaimed, “the last thing I need is a blind woman hanging on me.” He stood to leave but the two security guards detained him.

Destiny called Jamie and informed her Venus was missing and that hospital security had the couple who had kidnapped her. Jamie was out the door before they finished talking.

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Destiny disconnected the call and noticed she had voicemail. She listened to the message and exhaled the breath she had been holding. She ran to her office, locked the door and transported to the Dawson Vet Clinic.

Danica Dawson was checking on the sleek black feline she had hit with her car when a gorgeous blonde woman charged into the clinic.

“I must see Dr. Dawson,” Destiny declared.

Danica walked from the exam room to the waiting room. “I’m Dr. Dawson,” she said.

Did you have to be so gorgeous? Destiny thought. “I am Dr. Destiny Sinclair; you left a voicemail on my cellphone.”

“Do you own a black cat?” Danica asked.

Destiny’s heart stopped beating. “Yes, she is missing,” she whispered dreading the vets next words.

“I have her and she is fine,” Danica assured her. “She dashed in front of my vehicle at an intersection, and I ran over her front paw.”

Destiny felt as if all her bones were melting as she sagged into a waiting room chair. “May I see her?”

Danica held her hand out to Destiny and pulled her to her feet. “She is sedated, but you are certainly welcome to check on her,” Danica led the way to her office where she was keeping watch over the animal. “Are you okay?”

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“I am now. I have been frantically searching for her.”

Danica continued to steady her blonde client as she took her to the cat that was soundly sleeping. “She will probably sleep through the night,” Danica explained. “She has no broken bones, but my right front tire did hit her left paw and burst the pads.

“I glued them back together and bandaged the foot all the way up her leg. Hopefully, she will stay off the leg.”

“May I take her home?” Destiny asked. “She will be scared and frantic if she awakens in a strange place with the scent of dogs and cats.”

“And monkeys,” Danica teased. “We treat all types of animals.”

Destiny laughed. “I’m sure you do. Please forgive me if I seem a little ignorant about your practice. I have gone crazy with worry over my cat.”

“What is her name?”

Destiny hesitated. “Cat,” she muttered.

“Cat? Just Cat?” Danica repeated. “How original.”

“The important thing is that she is okay,” Destiny pointed out, “and I adore her.”

“I’m sure you do” Danica agreed. “I didn’t mean to make light of her name, but I couldn’t help myself.”

Both burst into laughter.

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“Please let me pay my bill and take her home,” Destiny pleaded. “I would like to get her home before the sedation wears off.”

“There is no charge,” Danica replied. “After all I did run over her. Let me get a carrier for her. You can return it later.”

“I will,” Destiny promised.

Danica left the room and quickly returned with a hard-plastic carrier completely lined with soft furry material. “I have found that animals love this type of carrier,” she said. “They tend to stay in the carrier even after the sedation wears off.”

The vet carefully placed ‘Cat’ into the carrier, closed the door, and slowly lifted it from her desk. She walked in front of Destiny. “I will carry her to your car for you.”

As they stood on the parking lot of Dawson Vet Clinic, Danica looked around at the empty space. “Where’s your car?”

“I grabbed a taxi from the hospital,” Destiny explained. “Obviously, I failed to ask him to wait for me.”

“No problem. Let me inform my staff that I am taking you and Cat home.” She handed the carrier to Destiny and was gone before the blonde could stop her.

“My baby girl, it looks like we are getting a ride home whether we need it or not,” Destiny exclaimed as she suppressed the urge to transport to her penthouse.

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A silver BMW turned the corner and stopped beside Destiny as the window lowered. “Your chariot awaits, princess.” Danica grinned as she pushed open the passenger’s door.

Destiny got into the car and held the carrier on her lap. “I live in The Athena. It isn’t far.”

“I know where it is,” Danica replied. “I have a few clients who live there. I’ve even made house calls there.”

“Really? I didn’t realize vets made house calls.”

“I do if one of my patients is in a life-or-death situation. How long have you lived there?”

“About fifteen years. My daughter attends Deadman School of Law so it is convenient to the university and Sacred Heart Hospital where I work.”

“Here we are,” Danica noted as she pulled her car under the porte-cochère. “I’ll carry Cat to your apartment.”

“That won’t be necessary,” Destiny said as she opened the car door. “I can take it from here. Thank you so much for taking care of my baby.”

“I will follow—” Danica’s comment fell on deaf ears as Destiny closed the door and rushed into The Athena.

Tony immediately opened the door for her. “Is everything okay Dr. Sinclair?”

“Yes, Tony. I had to take my cat to the vet for her annual shots.” She scowled as she saw Jamie

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parking, and Danica pulling away. “See that blonde woman parking her car. Tell her I am not home.”

She hurried to the elevator willing it to open as she approached it. She ran inside and closed the door eager to get it to the penthouse.

She carried Venus into her bedroom, gently placed the cat on her bed, and called Jamie. “Jamie, I wanted to let you know that I have Venus with me and she is okay. She escaped from the kidnappers and came home. Please keep that man in custody. We will be at the police station to file charges against him and the woman in the morning. Venus is terribly upset. I gave her a sedative and she is sleeping, so she isn’t up to talking to anyone tonight.”

“Oh,” a disappointed Jamie muttered, “but she is fine? They didn’t hurt her?”

“She has a broken finger, but otherwise she is in good condition. I’m sorry we must cancel dinner.”

“Don’t give it another thought. I am just happy Venus is okay,” Jamie assured her. “If you need me for anything at all, don’t hesitate to call me.”

“Thank you. You are a good friend. Goodnight.”

Destiny hung up the phone and walked to the kitchen where she filled a water glass with ice then covered it with Dubonnet. “Not very kosher but it calms the nerves,” she said out loud. She returned

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to her bedroom and relaxed in her recliner so she could watch Venus sleep.

She tamped down the terror she had experienced when she couldn't find Venus. She didn't know what was more dangerous, a svelte black cat running frantically into downtown traffic or a beautiful woman walking alone when the world was so full of monsters.

Her phone announced a call from Faith, and she quickly silenced it as she left the bedroom. "Hello," she said softly.

"Destiny, are you and Venus okay?"

"Yes we are fine."

"May I come to you?"

"I would love that more than you will ever know." She disconnected the call as Faith materialized in her kitchen.

Without a word Faith gently pulled the blonde into her arms. "Everything is okay, I'm here," she assured her as Destiny burst into tears.

Faith soothed her lover taking away her fear and giving her peace of mind. "Why don't I make dinner, and you can tell me what happened to Venus."

##

As Destiny related the events of the day, the darkness that had possessed her mind disappeared and lightness took its place.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Jamie has one of the kidnappers and the other one is in the hospital. Venus clawed out her eyes,” Destiny finished her story.

Faith sat still as she processed the information Destiny had accidentally shared with her. “You have never told me that Venus and Cat are one and the same. Venus is a shifter.”

Destiny stared at her. “Yes, but it wasn’t my secret to share. Venus is the only one that should tell you that.”

“I suspected it. The choker with your phone number engraved on it gave it away. You need to get your story straight before you file a complaint with Jamie tomorrow.” Faith pointed out. “I wouldn’t mention the cat. Just say Venus got away and came home. No one needs to know how she did it.”

“I’ve been trying to decide how to tell the story. You know we will have to testify against them in court. I was worried about that.”

“We can work it all out in the morning when Venus is awake,” Faith said. “You need to get some sleep. Get into your bed beside Venus and I’ll watch over both of you.”

Destiny touched Faith’s face with the tips of her fingers. “I love you, Faith.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

AN INJURED VENUS
AND
VICAR FAITH SERAPH



*“We must go to Jamie’s office and file a complaint
against the man and woman that kidnapped you,”
Destiny informed her daughter.*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 38

The smell of freshly brewed coffee pulled Destiny from her sleep. She was immediately aware of Venus curled up beside her. She gently touched the cat and Venus opened her eyes.

“How are you this morning, my little love?” Destiny asked.

Venus stretched and slowly morphed into a beautiful raven-haired woman. “Much better.” She examined the bandage that was wrapped from her elbow to the tips of her fingers. “I’m badly hurt!”

“I don’t think so.” Destiny smiled. “Faith is here. She can fix it.”

Faith entered the room carrying a tray with three cups and a carafe of coffee.

“It is good to see you are awake,” she said as she placed the tray on the nightstand. “How do you feel?”

“Pretty good for someone that was almost crushed by a car,” Venus replied and held out her arm. “Can you fix this?”

Faith nodded and gently unwrapped the bandage from Venus’ arm. “You do have a broken finger,” she reported as she touched it making it whole again.

Venus wiggled her fingers then clenched and unclenched her hand into a fist several times. “It feels much better. Good as new.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“What will you tell Dr. Dawson?” Faith asked.

“That my cat is doing fine,” Venus answered. “She has never met me, only Cat. Did you meet her?”

“No. Your mother brought you here then called me.”

“She is very attractive,” Venus reported. “Not as beautiful as you but pretty enough.”

“Unless something happens to Cat, I doubt we will ever see her again,” Faith noted.

“We must go to Jamie’s office and file a complaint against the man and woman that kidnapped you,” Destiny informed her daughter.

“Yes, they are evil,” Venus hissed. “They were going to sell me to someone. I don’t know who, but apparently they kidnap young women and sell them into slavery for two-thousand dollars each.”

“Can’t I just kill them?” Destiny grumbled.

“No!” Faith exclaimed. “We must find out how many women they have kidnapped and who has them.”

“I need to call the hospital and let them know I won’t be in today,” Destiny said. “Then we must go over the story we are going to tell Jamie when we file charges against the miscreant pair.”

“I must take a shower.” Venus trembled as she thought about the filthy criminals that had kidnapped her, then her run in with the tire and pavement.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“I’ll make breakfast,” Destiny replied. “Then we will go see Jamie. Do you want me to call her and make an appointment to meet her or do you want to call?”

“You do it,” Venus said. “I’ll hop in the shower.”

Destiny’s phone announced a call from Detective Jamie. “She beat us to it,” she noted as she answered the phone.

“Jamie, I was just about to call you. What time do you want us to come to your office?”

“Sure, we can be there. Thank you.”

“She wants to see us at 10:00 a.m.” Destiny informed them.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**DESTINY, FAITH,
JAMIE AND VENUS**



“They talked about selling me to someone for two-thousand dollars. They said my sale would mean they had made ten-thousand dollars this week.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 39

Detective Jamie Collins studied the crime board in her office. It was full of photos of women who had disappeared in the last year. She hoped the man and woman that had accidentally shown up on her radar would be the link she had so desperately been, seeking.

Someone knocked on her door as they pushed it open. “Knock, knock.” Venus’ smile lit up Jamie’s office.

The detective rushed around her desk and hugged the woman that now owned her heart. “Are you okay? Did they hurt you?” She took both of Venus’ hands and looked into her green eyes.

“I am fine. Just a little traumatized,” Venus replied as Faith and Destiny followed her into the office.

“Let’s go into the interrogation room so I can record your statements,” Jamie suggested. “That way you will only have to tell your story once.” She grabbed a note pad and pen then led the way to an empty room.

The four women sat down at the table and Jamie turned on the recorder. She announced the date and time then noted that she was interviewing Venus and Destiny Sinclair in connection with the kidnapping of Venus.

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Venus related the details of her abduction and that she had gotten away when the pair stopped at a convenience store to use the restroom and purchase beer and hoagies. “I hurried home because I knew Mom would be worried about me. In my haste, I left my purse in the van and Mom tracked my phone to the vehicle.” Venus reported.

“They talked about selling me to someone for two-thousand dollars. They said my sale would mean they had made ten-thousand dollars this week.”

“I was frantic,” Destiny took up the story. “She wasn’t at home when I arrived there and I tracked her phone to the hospital. I was shocked to find it in the back of the van. When I saw the man I had hospital security detain him and call you.”

They ended the interview and returned to Jamie’s office. “I want to show you something,” she said as she flipped the sheet that covered her crime board. “Twenty women have gone missing in the past six months. They have disappeared from the face of the earth. All of them are between eighteen and twenty-five. They are extremely attractive with above average intelligence. Four of them went missing this week. I believe the man and woman we now have in custody are being paid to kidnap women for someone who is sex trafficking them.”

“Oh, dear God,” Venus gasped placing her hand over her heart. “What can we do to help?”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Your testimony is enough to put the pair away,” Jamie replied, “and hopefully they will cooperate with us and tell me who they are working for.”

“Have you interviewed the man?” Faith asked.

“Yes, but he acts like he is stupid and swears he has no idea who he was working with. He said they gave the women a sedative and took them to a roadside park where their cash was in an envelope underneath the trashcan in the women’s restroom. They would leave the women in the last stall, lock the door and his partner would crawl under the stall door to get out.”

“Can you get him to cooperate with you?” Faith asked. “He could take Venus to the roadside park, and we could catch them picking her up.”

“I’ll have him brought into interrogation and you can watch through the one-way mirror,” Jamie suggested. “You will see what I’m up against. He acts like he doesn’t comprehend anything. He has requested an attorney.”

“I am an attorney,” Faith said. “I will offer him my services. You know, a court appointed attorney.”

“Let me try to get the information from him without us tricking him. If I can’t, I’ll will offer you as his attorney,” Jamie agreed.

“Aren’t you full of surprises,” Destiny teased Faith, “an attorney, huh.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“When you’ve lived as long as I have you have been everything.” Faith responded.

“How long have you lived?” Venus queried.

“It’s a long story,” Faith replied. “We will save it for another time when the three of us can sit around, sip wine and share our life’s stories. I have a feeling that we have a long future ahead of us.”

##

They gathered in the observation area as Jamie took the criminal, who looked half-way decent, into the interrogation room. He had bathed and his head was shaved along with his face. His orange jumpsuit was clean.

“He almost looks human,” Venus muttered as she watched him walk into the room.

Jamie turned on the recorder. “Please state your name, age and address,” she requested.

“Leach Turner, forty-five, 731 Murphy, Fort Worth, Texas 76101.”

“Mr. Turner, we have a witness that says you and your wife kidnapped and drugged her yesterday.”

“She ain’t my wife,” Turner blurted. “I ain’t ever been that hard up. Well, maybe once.”

“The woman in the hospital says she is married to you. On the hospital forms she filled out she put Turner as her last name.” Jamie insisted.

“Naw, her name is Mable Yack.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“Don’t you live with her?”

“Yeah, but just to save money.”

“As I said, the district attorney’s office is going to press charges against you for kidnapping the young woman you abducted yesterday.”

“I didn’t abduct nobody.”

“We have your fingerprints on her belongings that we found in the back of your van and on the duct tape you taped across her mouth.

“Her fingerprints are all over your van where she tried to escape. You are going away for a minimum of twenty years, my friend. We also believe that you and Ms. Yack are involved in more than twenty kidnappings of other women.

“Best of all, Ms. Yack has agreed to testify against you.”

“That lying bitch,” Leach howled. “She arranged the whole thing. It was her idea.”

“Tell me where the other women are and I’ll cut you some slack.”

“I have no idea. We dumped them in the women’s bathroom at a roadside park. We never met our employer.”

“Is your employer expecting you to deliver another woman to them this week?”

“Yeah, but you screwed that up.”

“I’m going to give you your cellphone. I want you to call your contact and tell them you have a woman for them. We will be waiting for them when they show up.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“Oh, hell no! I’ll rot in prison before I’d double cross my employer. He is a mean bastard. He would find a way to get to me, even in prison.”

“I guarantee you that we will put you in solitary confinement so no one can get to you. I will even post a guard outside your cell door.”

“Yeah, like you did Epstein!” Leach snorted.

“Epstein wasn’t in solitary confinement. He was on suicide watch.”

“We both know how that worked out for him. Nope, I ain’t helping you in any way. That would be signing my own death warrant.”

Jamie joined her friends in the observation room. “He is scared to death. I don’t think he will ever agree to help us.”

“May I talk to him?” Faith requested. “I think I might be able to convince him it is the thing to do.”

“Just don’t offer him legal advice,” Jamie pleaded. “We could get into trouble doing that.”

Faith nodded and followed the detective back into the interrogation room and sat down beside Leach.

“I’m Vicar Faith Seraph,” she introduced herself. “I thought you might like to confess your sins.”

Leach burst into tears and let his forehead fall hard against the table he was shackled to. “Yes. Yes. I do want to confess Vicar.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Faith placed her hand on his arm and listened as he confessed to every crime imaginable short of killing a puppy.

“I can give you absolution, if you will help Detective Collins,” she said softly.

Leach nodded. “I will help her.”

Jamie glanced at Faith and shrugged.

“Detective, please tell Mr. Turner what you want him to do.”

“Do you always take the women to the same place?” Jamie asked.

“Yeah.”

“I will need you to show me where and tell me exactly how the transaction takes place.”

“Okay.”

“I’d like you to show me right now.” Jamie continued.

“Okay.”

Jamie opened her eyes wide in disbelief at Leach’s cooperation. “Let me get my partner and we will take the Vicar with us.”

Leach nodded in agreement.

“I’d like to go too,” Venus insisted. “He did kidnap me.”

“You and Faith go,” Destiny agreed. “I will wait for you at the penthouse.”

“Are you sure that is okay with you?” Jamie asked.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“Yes. You don’t want to show up at a rest stop with a large entourage,” Destiny pointed out. “I know you will take care of my daughter.”

“I will,” Jamie declared. “I would give my life for her.”

Destiny loved the blonde-haired detective. She knew how much Jamie cared for Venus. She also knew that Faith wouldn’t let anything happen to either of them.

“Mom is right,” Venus acquiesced. “Too many of us roaming around the rest stop might draw attention. I’ll stay with her.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

LEACH MURPHY
KIDNAPPER



Leach stayed close to Faith holding onto the sleeve of her jacket. “You promised me absolution,” he muttered.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 40

Leach led them to a roadside park between Burluson and Alvarado, Texas. It was neatly manicured and everything was clean and functioning. “The women’s side of the latrine is in the back,” he directed them.

Jamie was surprised by the cleanliness of the facility. They followed Leach as he pointed out the last stall in a row of four. All the doors were on working hinges and had slide bolt locks.

“They put my money under this trash can,” Leach informed them as he tilted the receptacle and looked under it. “I haul the women into that stall and sit them on the bench where the crapper hole is. They are drugged so they never move. I walk out and Mable stays inside to throw the bolt lock then she crawls under the door, and we leave.”

“Why do you lock the stall from the inside?” Jamie asked.

“To keep some idiot from wandering in and finding the woman before my client picks her up.” Leach explained.

“How do you carry the women?” Jamie asked.

“I just throw them over my shoulder like a sack of potatoes and haul them in here.”

Jamie checked all the stalls and an exit that went out the opposite end from the one they entered.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Let’s get Leach back to the station and set up a meeting for tomorrow with his employer,” Jamie said as they walked back to the car.

##

Leach stayed close to Faith holding onto the sleeve of her jacket. “You promised me absolution,” he muttered.

“As soon as this is over,” Faith agreed.

Leach called the burner phone of his contact and arranged to leave a woman in the usual place at 10:00 a.m. the next day.

Jamie turned Leach over to a trusted jailer with explicit instructions to keep him in a cell by himself and post a guard with him every second of the night.

“If anything happens to Leach, you will be mopping the cells for the rest of your life,” she threatened as the guard led the handcuffed man away.

“Should we arrest the culprit or let him take Venus to the place where the other women are being held?” Jamie discussed plans with Faith.

“Venus!” Faith exclaimed. “We’re not giving them Venus. Destiny will be the one we leave in the restroom. She is better suited for this type of operation. She has nerves of steel. Although she did manage to escape from her kidnappers, Venus is still

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

a little young to put into a dangerous situation like we will face tomorrow.”

A relieved Jamie nodded in agreement with the vicar. “Destiny is a beautiful woman. I’m sure they will be thrilled to get her.”

Are you going to Venus’ home now?” Jamie asked.

“Yes, we need to work out the logistics of the operation with Destiny.”

“May I go with you?” Jamie asked.

“Yes. I need to catch a ride with you. We arrived in Destiny’s vehicle and she is gone.”

Faith called Destiny to let her know they were on their way. “If it is okay with you, I thought we would pick up Chinese food from your favorite restaurant. Of course, I know what you like.”

Faith’s giddy laughter made Jamie wonder if they were still discussing Chinese food.

When their friends exited the elevator into their living room, Destiny was sitting in a chair with Venus sitting on the floor between her legs as her mother gently brushed her long black hair.

“You are not a minute too soon,” Venus declared springing to her feet and running to hug Jamie. “I am famished.”

Jamie hugged her longer than necessary, reluctant to let her go. It was their first full body hug, and she loved every inch of it.

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“We have a plan,” Jamie began as Faith and Destiny placed the boxes of food on the kitchen island along with plates and silverware.

“I have never mastered chopsticks,” Venus confessed as she spooned chicken chow mein from a box.

“What is your plan?” Destiny asked Jamie.

“At 10:00 a.m. tomorrow, Leach will carry Destiny into the women’s bathroom at the roadside park and leave her. We will surveil the park and follow the perp that picks up Destiny. She will have a tracker on her person so we can follow at a distance without being spotted.”

“Why Mom! Why not me?” Venus wailed. “Why are you putting her in danger?”

Destiny shot Venus a look that silenced the young woman. “I’m sure Jamie and Faith have considered all the angles,” she said.

“Oh, I love the chicken eggrolls,” Venus pretended to be easily distracted. She had no idea what Faith and Jamie had planned but knew they were avoiding putting her in danger. *I don’t like putting Mom in harm’s way*, she thought.

Venus ate quickly then announced that she was tired and was going to bed.

“I was hoping we could visit a bit,” Jamie said.

“We can go out tomorrow night, when this is all settled,” Venus replied. “I’m too distraught to be pleasant company tonight.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Jamie nodded her understanding. "I'll be running along."

"No, please finish your dinner," Venus insisted as she left the room.

The three of them ate in silence. Finally, Jamie couldn't stand it. "Did I do or say something to upset her?"

"No, I believe she is upset that we are using her mother for bait," Faith pointed out.

"I think Venus could handle the assignment," Jamie replied. "She is extremely smart and talented."

"Trust us on this, Jamie. Destiny is the one to play the role of a damsel in distress." Faith insisted. "We will be at the station at 9:00 a.m. tomorrow. Venus can ride in your car if you want to take her with us, but Destiny is the one we need kidnapped."

Jamie downed the last of her food and carried her plate and utensils to the sink. "At least let me do the dishes," she volunteered.

"Nonsense," Destiny exclaimed. "You are a guest in our home. You have more important things to do, and you must be tired. I know you have been on the job since 6:00 a.m."

Jamie didn't argue but walked to the elevator. "I will see all of you in my office in the morning."

Venus poked her head out of her room to make sure Jamie was gone then ran to her mother. "Why you?" she asked.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“Because I can do this,” Destiny bowed her head and disappeared.

“Oh yeah, there is that!” Venus mumbled as her mother reappeared.

“If I find I am in real danger, I will simply transport to you and Faith. My main purpose is to find out where they ship the women.”

Venus shrugged. “Good point, but I do get to ride along with Jamie and Faith.”

“Of course, you do,” Faith assured her.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**LEACH CARRYING DESTINY
INTO THE RESTSTOP**



Someone is here, Destiny thought. She hung her head and pretended to be drugged.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 41

“I always duct tape their wrists and ankles together,” Leach instructed as they helped Destiny into the back of Leach’s van. “Then a strip of tape across their mouth.”

Jamie did as she was instructed then placed a tracker the size of a dime on the back of Destiny’s neck under her long blonde hair. “These things stick on just like a Band-Aid,” she explained.

“Remember Leach, if you try anything funny I will shoot you on the spot.” Jamie reminded him.

Leach touched Faith’s arm, “You promised to give me absolution when this is over.”

“I will,” Faith reaffirmed.

“She must appear to be drugged, dead weight, when I carry her into the restroom,” Leach reminded them.

“I can fake that,” Destiny replied as she pushed herself against the van wall.

“Put duct tape over her mouth so she can’t scream for help,” Leach reminded them.

Faith leaned in and kissed Destiny. “Do I have your permission to mind meld?” she whispered.

“Oh, yes. That will be perfect.”

“Good. I would like to know what goes on in your beautiful mind.” She pressed a strip of duct tape across Destiny’s mouth.

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

I love you. Destiny's thought was so strong it made Faith close her eyes.

I love you too, darling, she thought back.

##

Destiny braced herself for a rough ride in the back of the van that still reeked of body odor

I'll bathe you when we get back home, Faith thought.

Destiny jerked when her lover's thoughts filled her mind. *I'll let you, only if you get into the tub with me,* she thought back.

Um, the possibilities are endless, Faith thought back. *I can give you a massage then we can slip into bed naked.*

The two exchanged thoughts to take their minds off the fear of what they might find when they located the kidnapped women.

"I'm pulling into the rest stop," Leach announced as he slowed the van.

We're pulling into the rest stop. Destiny passed the information on to Faith.

I know, we just drove past you. Keep in touch.

Leach opened the van's doors and wrapped his large hands around Destiny's ankles. "I'm going to throw you over my shoulder. Don't wiggle around."

Destiny whimpered as he dragged her across the van's metal bed. He pulled her to the end of the

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

van bed then bent over and hoisted her onto his shoulder. She relaxed and let her arms hang limply down his back.

Leach carried her into the restroom and dumped her into the last stall. He pulled the door closed but couldn't lock it. He took the envelope of money that was beneath the trashcan then left.

Destiny listened for any sound from her kidnapper.

We are parked a mile away, Faith thought. Leach just drove past us.

The sound of footsteps echoed in the restroom.

Someone is here, Destiny thought. She hung her head and pretended to be drugged.

Like Leach he hefted her over his shoulder and carried her to his waiting car. He popped open the trunk with his key fob, dropped Destiny into the vehicle, and slammed the trunk lid.

We are moving, Destiny thought. He's headed in your direction.

##

Destiny wiggled around trying to find a bit of daylight that would allow her to look outside the car's trunk. It seemed like they had been driving for hours. *Where are we?* She thought to Faith.

In the middle of nowhere, Faith returned. We're north of Fort Worth driving through a town named Decatur. The highway signs say we are

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

heading to Bowie then a place called Henrietta. I have no idea where he is taking you. We have driven for an hour and a half.

Can you get into his mind? Destiny thought. I'll try.

Destiny squeezed her eyes shut tightly and clenched her teeth as visions from Faith bombarded her mind. Scenes of people being subjected to electroshock therapy and doctors performing lobotomies on their patients bombarded her senses.

Stop! She screamed silently, and the pictures disappeared from her mind. *Dear God, Faith what did you just show me?*

The thoughts in your kidnapper's mind, Faith responded.

It was more like a horror scene from 'The Texas Chain Saw Massacre.'

I know. I dread to think about what we will encounter at the end of this journey. I am so glad you and I are in this together. Faith looked around at her companions in Jamie's car trying to think of a way to tell them what they were about to see.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

***THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE THE SET
FOR A HORROR MOVIE***



The room was filled with a wind that blew the papers around like a tornado as shadows and ghosts swirled around the room wailing and pleading for her to release them.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 42

An hour later Jamie drove past a sign that said Wichita Falls City Limits Population:102,112.

“I wonder why he is taking her to this little bump in the road,” Jamie said. She drove past an imposing, unkept building as the van carrying Destiny turned into the driveway and disappeared behind the institutional-looking structure. “This must be where they are keeping the woman prisoners,” she noted.

“What do we do now?” Venus asked.

“I’ll go in and look around,” Jamie replied. “You two stay here.”

Faith’s hand on the detective’s shoulder stopped her. “Maybe we should wait and see if the kidnapper leaves Destiny here and goes about his business. If there are people in there watching the captives we will be greatly outnumbered.”

“Good point,” Jamie agreed, “but if he doesn’t leave soon I should go in. We have no idea what he is doing to Destiny.”

Venus squeezed Jamie’s hand. “My Mom can take care of herself. I promise you.”

Faith leaned back and slipped into Destiny’s mind. *What’s going on?*

This place looks like the set for a horror movie. Women are locked in cells and are wailing

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

for help. I'm in with four other women. I'm trying to find out if they know what is going on.

I'll be quiet and observe, Faith volunteered.

Destiny approached the calmest woman and asked, "How long have you been here?"

"Two weeks," the woman furtively whispered. "Some have been here a month. I think they are getting ready to move us somewhere else."

Destiny looked around to see if anyone in the room might be a mole that would report everything they said. Everyone seemed genuinely terrified.

"How did you get here," Destiny asked.

"A low-life couple kidnapped me from a shopping mall. The woman pretended to be locked inside a white van and was crying for help. When I opened the door, she grabbed me and pulled me inside where a man quickly handcuffed me and taped my mouth shut."

"That is what happened to me," Destiny shared.

"Every woman here was kidnapped like that," the woman replied.

"My name is Destiny. What is your?"

"Rose. Rose Gonzales."

"Are any of your captors guarding this place?"

"Yes. There are five men with guns and whips. They molest the prettier women. Thank heaven I am plain. You are beautiful and clean. You can expect a visit from them."

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Destiny swallowed the bile that had risen in her throat as she listened to Rose's story.

After hearing the same story from all the women, Destiny crawled into a corner and pretended to sleep. Closing her eyes, she mentally contacted Faith.

Are you getting the picture? She asked Faith.

Yes. Are you okay?

I've been better. When everyone goes to sleep I'm going to find the guards and try to find out what they have planned for us.

Be careful, my love. Can you transport invisibly?

I've never tried to. That is something I can work on another time.

Stay where you are and I will get the information. I can visit the guards invisibly.

##

Faith knew Jamie was so intrigued with Venus that she wasn't paying her any attention. She pretended to fall asleep then she transported to the other side of the heavy double doors leading to a huge front room that was filled with old furniture. *This must be the main hall*, she thought.

She walked into a room that was filled with musty-smelling books, and tables and chairs. *Must be a library.*

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

A light flashed through the door on the other side of the room as two men with flashlights walked into the room.

“The woman Rip just brought in is a real looker,” the smaller man said. “Let’s take her to the hospital before the others see her. The three of them will want to have a go at her, but we will beat them to her.”

Faith nodded her head and both men fell to their knees. “Jesus, my penis is on fire.” The smaller man howled.

“Mine too.”

They rolled on the floor whimpering and clutching at their manhood.

“What the hell is going on?” A giant of a man walked into the room.

“Jake, my penis is on fire,” they chimed.

“Probably some sexually transmitted disease. You two poke those things into anything that comes in here.”

The larger man placed his light on the table and pulled down his clothes clutching his penis.

Jake flashed his light on the man’s privates. “Good lord,” he growled. “That thing is covered in open sores. If you have infected these women with an STD, they will castrate you.”

Both men began to howl louder. “Damn, this is killing me,” one of them screamed. “I’m going to that twenty-four-hour clinic.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“What are you going to tell them?” Jake asked.

“That I’ve been infected by some whore.”

“Law requires they report STDs they treat. There will be an investigation,” Jake informed him, then he shot both men in the head.

“What’s going on in here?” A blonde man charged into the room. “What happened to them?”

“Bubba, I shot them. They have syphilis or gonorrhea or some awful STD.”

“We need to get rid of their bodies,” Bubba declared as he kicked one of the men over on his back.

Faith blinked her eyes and maggots crawled from the man’s genitalia.

“That is disgusting. Get them out of here.” Bubba commanded.

“I’m not touching them,” Jake declared. “I’ve never seen anything like that.”

“Get two pairs of gloves and a roll of that thick black plastic from the operating room. I’ll help you roll them up in plastic. You can reach into his pocket and get his car keys. Put their bodies in the trunk of their car and park it at that graveyard we passed on our way into town. I’ll follow you and bring you back here.”

Faith followed them to the parking lot and watched as they put the two bodies into the trunk of a car.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Go to the far back of the graveyard. Drive as deep into the bushes as you can.” Bubba instructed then walked to his car. Faith settled into the back seat of his vehicle.

##

The men hid the car containing the two dead men in a huge clump of Netleaf Hackberry bushes. “I could use a beer,” Jake suggested as they pulled back onto the main highway.

“So can I,” Bubba agreed. “I’ll stop at that convenience store. You go in and get a six pack.”

When Jake returned, they popped the top on two beers and chug-a-lugged them down without stopping.

“That was the most awful thing I’ve ever seen,” Jake declared. “I can’t wait for them to pick up this batch of women in the morning.”

“Yeah I’m not sure these guys are the kind of people we want to work for. They give me the willies.’

“Let’s get our money tomorrow and disappear,” Jake suggested. “There are easier ways to make a living.”

“Where do they take the women anyway?” Jake asked.

“Some god-forsaken ranch they own down around Marfa.” Bubba replied. “I have no idea what they do with them.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“It is almost morning,” Jake noted. “We need to get the women ready for pick up. The transport will be here around 10:00 a.m.”

Have you heard all their conversation? Faith thought to Destiny.

Yes, I need to stay with the women. Marfa is about four hundred miles from here. Tell Jamie to fill her car with gas.

Faith returned to her body in Jamie’s car and pretended to awaken. “Oh, I am so sorry. I fell asleep,” She yawned and stretched. “Has anything happened?”

“Nothing,” Venus replied.

“You should fill your car with gas,” Faith suggested. “Just in case we have to follow them.”

“Good idea,” Jamie agreed. “Maybe we can grab a cup of coffee while we are at it.”

Faith opened the car door. “I’ll stay here and keep watch.”

As soon as the car disappeared, Faith transported back to the building. She closed her eyes as her mind was attacked by visions of people crying, begging for relief from pain, and committing suicide. Souls that were trapped in the building. She shook her head trying to rid it of the apparitions. *What was this place?* She thought.

I think it was a hospital, Destiny thought back.

I am going upstairs to see what I can find, Faith replied.

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The place was badly neglected, and Faith was thankful she didn't have to walk up the crumbling stairs to the second floor. She followed a hallway covered in filth and paint peeling from the walls. At a door marked, "Director," she turned the doorknob and entered. Papers were scattered across the floor. File cabinets were turned over lying on their sides with their drawers pulled out. She picked up a file folder and a brochure from the floor and placed them on a rotting desk.

The brochure hawked a state-of-the-art facility known as Wood Grove Sanitarium. According to the brochure Dr. Grove opened his insane asylum to provide more humane treatments for the mentally ill.

The hospital offered a setting that resembled a home more than a prison. Instead of being locked in cells, tenants were allowed to wander freely throughout the asylum. It was more like a college sorority house than a place of confinement.

A cold wind blew open the file folder and Faith read the medical report on a patient that had died years ago. The report detailed treatment of the patient that had been subjected to electroshock therapy and a lobotomy that resulted in the complete loss of her mind. According to the report the poor woman had wandered the halls of the asylum screaming from the pain in her head. She eventually committed suicide by hanging herself.

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Although Faith had seen the atrocities of mankind, the medical report deeply disturbed her. Something yanked the folder from her hands and threw it on the floor. An apparition floated around her. The agony on the woman's face and the hole drilled in her forehead told Faith it was her folder.

A flash of light struck the wall in front of Faith, and an invisible hand wrote the word "Exorcism" on the wall.

"You want me to perform an exorcism to free you from this place," she said.

The room was filled with a wind that blew the papers around like a tornado as shadows and ghosts swirled around the room wailing and pleading for her to release them.

Faith, what is going on? Are you okay? Destiny's sweet voice filled her head.

I am fine. I just need to take care of something. I must disconnect from you.

No! Please, I am afraid. Destiny admitted but Faith had already deserted her.

Faith transported to the library and frantically searched for a Bible. One flew from the shelf and landed at her feet. She opened the book and yelled "In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave this place and rest in peace." She began to read the Bible.

Matthew 8:16: "And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many

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demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.”

The walls shook and the wailing and gnashing of teeth became deafening. Everything in the room was drawn into a vortex that whirled through the roof and disappeared into the heavens.

The silence was earth shattering. Faith inhaled deeply and seemed to grow in stature as the room disappeared and she found herself standing where Jamie and Venus had left her.

Destiny are you okay? She thought.

Yes. Are you okay, my love?

I am. Faith replied. *I truly am.*

Faith looked down at herself and was surprised to see she no longer wore her black suit and vicar's collar. Instead, she was dressed in some sort of costume that moved freely with her like a second skin.

This is a joke, she thought as she checked out the bracelets on her lower arms. *I look like a cross between Wonder Woman and Thor. All I need is a hammer and a rope.* She nodded and was dressed in her usual vicar's attire again.

It briefly disturbed her that someone had been able to change her clothes, but she had more important things to worry about now.

The sound of airbrakes and the rattling of a large, enclosed horse trailer drew her attention. *I believe your transportation is here,* she informed Destiny.

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Faith transported to Destiny's side. *I will materialize the first chance I get. Hang back so that you and I are the last to leave this room.*

##

The trailer pulled behind the asylum and lowered a ramp. The guards opened the cell doors one at a time and loaded the captive women into the hauler. The group with Destiny and Faith were the last to load. The women who had been at the hospital longer than Destiny's group seemed to be drugged or hypnotized. They loaded like cattle, found a place to sit, and huddled together.

Destiny made a quick count. "There are over a hundred women in here," she whispered.

Destiny's group was alert and they held hands drawing strength from one another. Rose Gonzales clasped Destiny's hand. "Do as they say," she whispered, "or they will hurt you."

Faith grabbed Destiny's other hand and the three of them sat on the floor of the trailer.

Where are Jamie and Venus? Destiny thought to Faith.

I sent them to get gas. I don't think they are back yet. It is best they do not witness what we are going to encounter.

Can you mind meld with Venus? She will be crazy with worry. Just tell her we are okay and to go home and wait for us.

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I will try. Keep holding my hand. Two of us are better than one.

Faith closed her eyes and concentrated with all her power.

##

Venus jumped when someone else's thoughts entered her mind.

Venus don't be afraid. This is Faith. Act natural. Jamie doesn't need to know you have voices in your head. Your mother and I are fine. We want you to go home and wait for us there. It is imperative that you do as I ask. We will explain everything when we get home.

Venus rolled her eyes and thought, *Okay.*

Good, we love you.

Jamie drove back to the asylum and parked. "Where is Faith? She was supposed to wait for us. Surely she didn't go into that place by herself."

"We should check on my mom," Venus insisted.

"I agree."

They moved through the trees that grew around the hospital. When they reached the back of the building they were shocked to see no vehicles were there.

"We've lost them," Jamie exclaimed.

"Let's go inside."

The back door complained loudly as they opened it on rusted hinges. They walked through the

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downstairs then carefully navigated the rotting stairway. They checked every room but found nothing. “They are gone,” Jamie cried. “We’ve lost them. Sex traffickers have your mom and Faith. What is that word written on the wall?”

“Exorcism,” Venus read. “Faith must have performed an exorcism.”

“We need to go back to the station and choke their destination out of Leach,” Jamie cried.

“No, you would lose your job and have charges brought against you,” Venus reasoned. “Let’s go to the penthouse and wait for them. They’ll come home eventually.”

Jamie nodded and followed Venus back to the car. For some reason she knew the two women would be okay.

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by Erin Wade

WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
ARE THEY CLONES?



Faith observed as the other women were locked into their small cells. “What is this place?”

“Hell,” Rose responded.

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CHAPTER 43

Destiny couldn't remember the last time she slept. Rose's head rested on her shoulder as the woman slumbered softly. Faith's arm rested against her own and she let her head fall against the brunette's shoulder. Faith rested her head against Destiny's and the three women slept until the airbrakes squealed and the trailer jerked to a halt.

Faith raised her head and looked around as Destiny and Rose roused. The other women were still asleep.

"We must be at their ranch," Faith surmised. "Try to look vacant."

The double doors of the trailer opened and men with rifles entered the area. "You," one of the men waved the barrel of his gun at Rose, "get up and follow me. The rest of you follow single file. No talking."

Destiny and Faith fell into line behind Rose and the other captives lined up behind them as the line of women streamed from the trailer into the darkness.

The man led them to an electric gate that swung open as they approached. The gate keeper smirked as he looked Faith and Destiny up and down. "You boys did good this time. They are gorgeous."

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“Don’t touch them,” the man with a rifle warned. “The boss will want these two for himself.”

The women were taken into an enormous two-story building where six-by-eight cells stretched as far as they could see.

“Fill the top first,” a guard instructed the man leading them.

The three women stayed together and were in the three cells farthest from the entrance. Faith observed as the other women were locked into their small cells. “What is this place?” she said.

“Hell,” Rose responded.

Destiny noticed that the other women lay on the cot in their cell and pulled the blanket over them, their still, black, empty eyes staring at the ceiling.

“Do as they do so the guards will think we are drugged too,” Rose cautioned.

The three women lay on their bed and pulled the blanket over them pretending to sleep when the guards make their last check.

##

Destiny, can you transport without your body? Faith thought.

I’ve never tried.

I’m coming to you, but I will be invisible. When you feel me take your hand, hold tightly onto mine. I’m going to see if we can transport invisibly together. I want to see what is going on in this place.

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I'm game, Destiny encouraged.

A warm hand clasped Destiny's and she squeezed it. *So far, so good,* she thought.

Good now concentrate on transporting to the gate we entered, Faith encouraged.

A serene calmness spread through Destiny as she realized her mind had bonded with Faith's and they were standing in front of the entrance gate of the ranch.

We have just done something I've never experienced before, Faith thought. *We accomplished a marriage of the minds. Dear God, you are so beautiful. I'd like to—"*

I like knowing what you are thinking, Destiny interrupted, *but right now we need to find out what this place is all about.*

"I agree, there is an enormous building behind the prison we were in. Faith nodded toward a building that was thirty floors tall and was as wide as they could see. *It is larger than the Luxor Hotel in Las Vegas.*

It is brightly lit, Faith noted. *Shall we?*

They instantly transported into the lobby of the building. *It looks like an apartment building.* Destiny thought.

They entered an apartment and were surprised to find a man and woman having dinner. The woman was waiting on the man and catering to his every whim. He laughed and talked and she

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responded with all the right words, but her eyes were black and void of any expression. “

I’m going to watch television while you clean up the kitchen,” he said as he rose from the table. “When you finish, you can give me a massage and then I’ll give you a little something-something.”

“I’d like that,” the woman replied.

The man caught both her hands in his and said, “Sweetheart, you are supposed to be happy when you interact with your husband. You need to smile and laugh when he talks to you. Let’s try to be more appreciative of my requests and overtures.”

The woman’s expression changed. She smiled and began to clear the table and carry the dishes into the kitchen.

I’m thinking Stepford Wives, Destiny admitted. I believe he is programing her.

Let’s see if we can get into her mind, Faith suggested.

There’s nothing here, Destiny noted as they tried to pick up the woman’s thoughts. Is she a robot or an AI automation?

“No, I can sense her heartbeat and the blood coursing through her body. It’s just her mind that is not functioning properly.

Is there any way we can transport her with us? Destiny thought.

“I don’t know. I’ve already accomplished things I wasn’t certain I was capable of. Let’s see if

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we can find a woman like her that isn't attached to a man. Maybe she won't be missed.

They visited several apartments and encountered the same interaction between the couples.

There is another large building we haven't visited, maybe it contains women who haven't been paired with a man yet. Faith suggested. No matter what happens, don't let go of my hand.

They entered the large building. *This is a hospital*, Faith declared.

They followed a surgeon in scrubs into an operating room and observed the surgery that was being performed.

He is placing a chip the size of a grain of rice into the parietal lobe and one in the frontal cortex. Destiny thought. The parietal lobe is the brain's decision-making area and is associated with free will. The frontal cortex controls cognitive functions like self-control and planning. It plays a major role in a person's decision making.

These women are losing their ability to think for themselves, Faith responded.

Let's return to our bodies and get out of here, Faith thought. *We need to find out more about this place.*

We must help the women. Destiny looked around when blinding lights lit up a full-sized football field and a roar filled the air.

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They transported to the field and watched as armies of perfect men marched up and down the field and a drill sergeant yelled instructions. The men had the same soulless stare as the women.

What the hell is going on? Faith groaned.

There is a headquarters sign, Destiny noted.
Let's see if we can find any answers in there.

Although lights were on, no one seemed to be manning the headquarters' offices. Faith led them to a door marked 'Sales.'

Sales brochures touting the wonders of Artificial Intelligence lined the shelves along the walls and portraits of beautiful women and handsome men hung behind a desk.

They entered a door marked "Private" and surveyed the rows of locked file cabinets. *This must be where they keep all their records,* Faith thought. *I'm surprised they don't have everything stored on their computers.*

A stabbing pain made Destiny cry out as Faith's mind flashed through a huge room filled with rows and rows of computers from floor to ceiling.

I'm sorry, Faith thought. *I forget your mind isn't used to shifting gears as fast as mine. Did you see what I just saw?*

Yes. They do have everything computerized. Maybe these are older files they haven't entered into their database yet.

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Faith concentrated harder. *Give us what we need to know to fix this*, she pleaded with anyone who might be paying them any attention.

Destiny gasped as information filled her head. A locked file cabinet drawer flew open, and a thick packet of papers slammed down on top of the desk in front of them. The label across the front of the packet had one word, “EVE.”

Faith grabbed the packet and a handful of pamphlets. *This is the beginning*, she thought. *This packet holds the answers. Let's get out of here and find out what we are dealing with.*

I want to get Rose, Destiny thought.

Faith nodded and they returned to their bodies then transported to Rose's cell.

Rose was sitting on her bed scrunched up into the corner with the covers pulled over her head.

“Rose.” Destiny gently touched the woman.

Rose peeked from under the blanket. “I thought you were dead,” she cried. “I kept calling your names, but you laid still in your beds.”

“Do you trust us?” Destiny asked.

“Yes.

“Then take my hand and give Faith your other hand.”

Rose followed Destiny's instructions and Faith took her hand. Clutching the packet from the headquarters' office in her free hand, Faith nodded praying they could take Rose with them.

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by Erin Wade

**BADLY DESIGNED
SALES BROCHURES
PROMOTED AI PERFECT LOVERS**

THE PERFECT LOVER



When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 44

“Where are we?” Rose asked as she observed the burlled wood walls of the penthouse elevator.

“We did it,” Destiny gasped. “We brought Rose with us.”

The elevator doors silently slid open and Venus rushed to them. Jamie was right behind her.

“Mom, Faith, thank God you are safe. I have been worried sick about you.”

Destiny hugged her daughter tightly. “I have been so worried about you and Jamie. Are you okay?”

“Yes, no one kidnapped us.” Venus pointed out.

Destiny hugged her daughter again then made introductions. “This is Rose Gonzales she was one of their prisoners. Rose, this is my daughter Venus and our friend Police Detective Jamie Collins.”

“Is anyone going to tell me what is going on?” Jamie asked.

“I want to know how we got here?” Rose cried.

Faith placed her hands on Jamie and Rose as both smiled and chorused, “It doesn’t really matter.”

“I would love a good cup of coffee,” Destiny said as she walked to the kitchen. “Then we can all

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sit around the island while Faith tells you what we discovered at the criminals' ranch.”

“Fix your coffee and give me a few minutes to study this packet of information.” Faith replied.

Faith entered the library where she sat down at Destiny's desk and opened the folder she had confiscated and pulled out the study that had been conducted in a facility in Alaska.

“Unbelievable,” she exclaimed as she finished absorbing the information. She read the sales brochures on the AI androids that were advertised as being capable of doing anything a human could do.

Armed with a complete understanding of the production and sales of the AI humanoids, she joined her friends at the kitchen island. Destiny placed a cup of coffee in front of her and sat on the stool beside her.

“I don't know where to begin,” Faith admitted. “This entire thing is like something from a horror movie directed by a madman.

“The people we are dealing with own a company named Artificial Intelligence Models. It is a multi-billion dollar per year operation. It is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and is one of the highest-priced stocks in existence. They specialize in AI robots designed to fulfill the wishes and desires of mankind. The cost of their creations starts at one hundred thousand dollars and goes up to the millions, depending on the android's capabilities.

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Basically, one can purchase a life-like android for the price of a new Tesla. If a small country has enough money, they can buy a formidable army.

“The cheapest models are maids or grounds keepers. They are perfect at what they do and can be programed to do whatever the buyer desires within their programmed abilities.

“The top-of-the-line models are so perfect one cannot tell them from a human. They can do anything an intelligent person can do including mind-blowing sex.”

Jamie choked on her coffee. “Are you serious?”

“Yes, and this is where they got themselves into trouble. A truly beautiful woman can start at a million dollars and go up. A handsome, virile man is in the same price range. They can be anything, i.e., movie stars, models, airplane pilots, racecar drivers, engineers, construction builders, etc.

“Artificial Intelligence Models or AIM as everyone calls the company hasn’t perfected the perfect lover. Unfortunately, for them, that is the AI they have gotten the most orders for. Apparently there is just no comparison to the feel of a real woman.”

A soft giggle spread through the group.

Faith opened the brochure for *The Perfect Lover* on the counter. “When they mailed these brochures to the world, they took orders for over two hundred fifty billion dollars’ worth of *The*

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Perfect Lover. Something they can't deliver but have already spent the money trying to develop.

"If it gets out they can't deliver the perfect lover and don't have the money to refund the orders, they will be the failure of Wall Street and probably spend the rest of their life in prison. Their failure could also cause the market to crash. To deliver their promised product they kidnap real women and implant AI chips in their brains to make them do what the buyer orders.

"The problem is that the chips require electricity to function, so they drain it from the body's own electricity produced by the movement of ions from sodium and potassium across membrane cells. That is why *The Perfect Lover* is only guaranteed for ten years. The bodies age twice as fast as normal, then they must be returned for free maintenance.

"According to the scientific paper I read, the twenty-year-old bodies they are using now will be in their forties when they are recycled."

AIM figures they can create an AI that will function as advertised in less than ten years then they will begin recalling the real bodies and return a robot to the buyers."

Silence filled the room as the women digested the information Faith had given them.

"That is heinous," Jamie said softly.

"Abhorrent," Venus mumbled.

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“What will happen to the women and men they are using now?” Destiny asked.

“What can we do to stop them?” Rose asked.

“I’m not sure what they plan to do with the human bodies. There seems to be a group of scientists who want to return the women where they came from. They will simply remove the chips, and the women will be good as new only much older with no memory of the past ten years.

“And the other scientists?” Destiny raised her eyebrows.

“They want to burn the current men and women so that no evidence of any kind lingers.” Faith said. “They don’t know if the humans will have any recall of their lives as robots and don’t want to take a chance on being outed.”

“Their orders are from all over the world,” Faith informed them. “Whatever we do, it has to be something that doesn’t harm the women and men but destroys the vile scientists responsible for this crime against nature.”

“That is why they kidnapped you,” Jamie placed a protective hand over Venus.’ “You are the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Venus’ laughter broke the somber mood around the table. “Flattery will get you nowhere,” Jamie Collins.”

Everyone laughed but quickly returned their thoughts to the problem at hand. “Let’s all get a good night’s sleep and meet back here in the

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morning,” Destiny suggested. “Rose where were you kidnapped from?”

“Cleburne, but I doubt anyone has missed me. I’m single and my parents live in Kansas. I am a novelist and keep my own hours. I’d like to help you in any way I can.”

“We have a guest room you are welcome to stay with us until we come up with a plan,” Destiny offered.

“Thank you, I would like that.”

Destiny led Rose to the guest room and made certain she had fresh linens. “There are pajamas in the top drawer of the armoire and sweatsuits hanging in the closet. We should have your size there.”

“Who are you?” Rose asked again.

“I am a physician.” Destiny replied honestly. Then thought, *a three-hundred-year-old physician.*

“Whatever you are, thank you for taking me in,” Rose said.

“We are glad to help. We must stop the monsters. They kidnapped my daughter Venus too, but we rescued her. That is how we discovered their monstrous activities.

“Sleep as late as you like. All of us must go to work tomorrow so make yourself at home.”

Destiny returned to the living room as Venus and Jamie opened the elevator doors. “I’m going to take Jamie to the lobby,” Venus informed her mother.

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by Erin Wade

“Because Jamie can’t find her way alone,”
Faith teased causing Jamie to blush.

“Because I want to kiss her goodnight
without you two watching.” Venus winked and
pulled Jamie into the car as the elevator doors
closed.

**When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade**

**CUDDLING VENUS
WE HAVE A VISITOR**



Venus purred loudly and rubbed her face against her mother's arm. She curled into a ball, safe and happy in Destiny's lap.

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CHAPTER 45

“Thank you for keeping me company while Mom was gone,” Venus said as the elevator slowed and stopped.

“You must know that I care for you,” Jamie declared. “I mean really care for you.”

“You mean as in, you love me?” Venus teased.

“Something like that.” Jamie smiled then bent down to kiss the woman who haunted her dreams. “There is something about you that is so different from other women.”

If only you knew, Venus thought. She pulled Jamie’s lips back to hers as Jamie hugged her tightly.

##

“May I spend the night?” Faith asked as the elevator doors closed leaving them alone.

“Of course,” Destiny agreed. “I have so many questions for you.”

Faith reached for the blonde but jumped back as the elevator door began to open.

“I’m exhausted,” Venus cried as she entered the suite. “I have maintained my human form for forty-eight hours. I’m going to lock myself in my bedroom and sleep until I can’t. Please do not wake me.”

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She hugged Faith and Destiny then dashed into her room.

Faith looked questioningly at Destiny.

“She sleeps in her cat form. That is when she is most relaxed and her true self.” Destiny explained. “She is probably dead to the world by now.”

“Good because we need to talk, but first I must shower and get the stench of the horse trailer off me.”

“May I join you?”

“I was hoping you would ask.”

##

Faith and Destiny embraced, thrilling to the feel of each other’s softness as the hot water ran down their bodies. “If there is a heaven,” Faith murmured in Destiny’s ear, “this must be it. Holding you while warm, cleansing water covers us from head to toe.”

Destiny relaxed and let her cheek rest on Faith’s chest luxuriating in the feel of her lover’s soft breasts and the cleansing water all around them. Faith’s arms tightened around her and Destiny’s fears disappeared. Together they could face anything.

Faith’s hands began to move gently up and down Destiny’s back stoking the fire that always burned for her.

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Destiny nuzzled her face between Faith's soft breasts as Faith bent down to kiss her. "I have never loved anyone," Faith admitted, "but I love you more than I could ever say."

Their kiss was slow and exploring, eager to know all there was to know about one another. "Let's take this to bed," Faith murmured.

##

It was almost dawn when Faith turned onto her side and pulled Destiny's back against her stomach. Wrapping her body around the blonde's she slowly ran her hand over Destiny's hip then down to her leg and across her knee. "You are so perfect," she whispered into Destiny's ear as she gently caressed her lover's thighs.

"Um, and you make my wildest dreams come true."

Content in each other's arms, they fell asleep.

##

Soft scratching at her bedroom door awoke Destiny. She nodded her head dressing Faith and herself in pajamas, then slipped from their bed and opened the door for her daughter who was still in her cat form. She reached down and picked up the sleek black animal and carried it back to the bed.

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She slipped under the covers, leaned against the headboard, and cuddled Venus in her lap.

“Why don’t you join us in conversation?” Destiny asked as she stroked the beautiful feline.

Venus purred loudly and rubbed her face against her mother’s arm. She curled into a ball, safe and happy in Destiny’s lap.

“We have a visitor,” Destiny told Faith as the brunette stretched and looked down at her pajamas.

“Oh.” She laughed. “I wondered why I was wearing PJ’s.” She reached over and scratched Venus’ belly. Venus playfully slapped her hand away.

“Oops, sorry,” Faith apologized. “Was I too familiar?”

Destiny’s phone announced that Jamie was calling. Venus jumped to the floor and ran into her room as her mother answered the phone.

“I’m sorry to bother you,” Jamie said as soon as Destiny answered. “I’m trying to contact Venus, but she isn’t answering her phone.”

“Try her again. I think she was showering.”

“How would you feel about going to my home?” Faith asked. “I’d like to discuss everything with you in private without interruptions.”

“I would love that. I must work the 2:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. emergency room shift tonight, but we should be able to resolve this before then.

“I will leave Venus and Rose a note telling them we have gone out for breakfast,”

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by Erin Wade

DESTINY AND FAITH
RELAXING AT FAITH'S HOME



“You could have prevented the Holocaust?”
Destiny gasped. “Why didn’t you?”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 46

Destiny and Faith clasped hands and transported to the kitchen of Faith's mansion where fresh coffee was waiting for them. "I also have fresh cherry Danish," Faith informed her lover. "Your favorite. Let's sit on the patio. It is so beautiful today."

They drank their coffee and looked out over the countryside. "It is soul soothing to sit here," Destiny noted.

"Yes, it is."

"But I sense unrest in your soul," Destiny continued.

Faith took a sip of her coffee then began. "I've always existed," she reminded Destiny. "I've never interfered with mankind. I have saved a life every now and again when I knew I should, but I've never tipped the scales in their wars or their rush to build weapons of mass destruction. I didn't even step in when I could have prevented the Holocaust."

"You could have prevented the Holocaust?" Destiny gasped. "Why didn't you?"

"I didn't want to die. I witnessed the death of another like me. He raised the dead, healed the sick, made the crippled walk and the blind see. He even cast out demons. He taught love and kindness. In the end mankind crucified him because they could find no fault in him.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“If I had revealed myself to prevent the Holocaust I might have died.”

Destiny gasped, as she recalled how cowardly she had sneaked off to New Zealand, putting as much distance between her and Germany as possible to keep from witnessing the atrocities that were being inflicted on the Jewish people.

Faith grimaced, “A shame we both share.”

“Were you afraid?”

“No, not afraid. As I told you I try not to tip the scales.”

“I was terrified,” Destiny admitted. “I had watched a village stone and burn my mother because she saved a room full of school children when it caught on fire and they couldn’t put it out.

“With the slightest twitch of her hand she caused a torrential rain to pass over the school extinguishing the fire. A woman who disliked my mother starting screaming she had caused the rain and was a witch.

“It didn’t matter that she had saved the children or that she had never hurt anyone. Everyone was terrified of the witch. She didn’t even try to save herself.”

“Humans kill the things they don’t understand and can’t control,” Faith agreed. “Their love affair with artificial intelligence will be their demise. I’ve been searching the universe for another place to live so I can leave earth and its humans behind.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“If you did want to help the people who have unwilling been turned into half human and half AI, what would you do?” Destiny asked.

“I’d wave my hand and extract the chips from every man, woman, and child they have turned into a robot, and fling them into the universe where they would burn up in the atmosphere.

“It would cause utter chaos in the world. Soldiers would wonder why they are in a strange land. Domestic help would suddenly walk out and return to their homes.

“Women would kill the men trying to rape them. Men who thought they owned robots not real women.

“Children who had been sold to pedophiles would cry for their parents as the men who thought they had purchased humanoid dolls tried to hide them.”

“And those responsible for the insanity would rush to their elite meeting place in Switzerland or some private island to try to figure out what went wrong.”

“And that is where we will kill them,” Destiny declared. “Do you have the power to return the victims to their families, so they aren’t left wandering around lost?”

“Yes, I can return them to their respective places, but Destiny, I don’t think I can kill the ones responsible for this nightmare.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“You take care of the victims. I will take care of the perpetrators.” Destiny promised.

“To get AIM’s attention, we will need to remove the chips from a thousand people, toss the chips into the universe to destroy them, then return the people to their homes,” Destiny planned out loud.

“Buyers will immediately go crazy wanting to know where their AI humanoids have gone. They will flood the social media outlets causing AIM to move quickly to find the source of their problems. AIM will gather all their geniuses in one place to solve the problem along with their finance people to stop the hemorrhaging they will experience when people begin demanding a refund. That is when I will remove them from the face of the earth.”

“How will you deal with them without the world knowing what you are?” Faith asked.

“I’ll figure out something.”

“Can’t we just walk away and let mankind suffer the consequences of their greed and actions?” Faith pleaded. “There are plenty of other civilizations in the universe. Most of them are older and more civilized than earth.”

“There must be a reason for our existence,” Destiny argued. “We need to do this then we can leave mankind to fend for themselves. I can’t walk away with a clear conscience if we don’t stop what AIM is doing.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“If we don’t interfere, AIM will work out their problems, create robots that do as advertised, replace the temporary ones now in place and no one will be the wiser. We won’t destroy the world that is now depending on artificial intelligence to live.”

“Only the innocents now captive to their brain implants will pay the price with their lives,” Destiny argued. “And big tech companies will rule the world.”

“I will help you save the AI infected humans,” Faith agreed, “but I want no part in destroying the genius behind the crime.”

“That is all I ask,” Destiny replied. “When can we begin?”

“Tonight,” Faith said. “We will remove the chips from two thousand people tonight and return them to their homes. It will take about a week for the bean counters to realize the enormity of their financial problems and call an emergency meeting of all their brain trusts.”

“They will gather in their fortress in Switzerland or one of their private islands where I will have a surprise waiting for them,” Destiny forecasted.

Destiny’s cellphone announced, “Whitney calling.”

“I must go to work,” Destiny squeaked as she realized it was 2:00 p.m.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“Hello Whitney, I am just on my way to see you. Yes, of course.” Destiny disconnected the call, kissed Faith, and transported to her hospital office.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

YOU TRULY CAN
DO ANYTHING



*“I’m going to concentrate on the United States.
Americans will be extremely vocal when they
discover their toys are gone.*”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 47

Destiny slipped on her hospital jacket and ran down the hallway to Whitney's office. She knocked on the door as she opened it.

"Destiny, thank you for coming by," her boss welcomed her.

"Is anything wrong?"

"No, nothing wrong. I just wanted to give you a heads up about Darla's fund raiser. She has decided that instead of her usual fancy-dress affair, she is having a costume party. I thought you should know before you waste money on an expensive gown."

Destiny laughed. Her relief at being in Whitney's office discussing normal, mundane things was overwhelming. "I have just the costume," she said.

"Can you let the vicar know?"

"I'll tell her the next time I see her. She visits my patients every day."

"Thank you. I have no idea what to wear." Whitney huffed. "What are you going as?"

Destiny grinned. "A goddess, of course."

"Of course, you are." Whitney laughed.

##

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Before her dinner break Destiny performed an emergency appendectomy, extracted shrapnel caused by an exploding bullet in a police officer's shoulder, and removed a large piece of rebar from a construction worker who had been impaled by the falling rod. The patients were doing well, so she skipped the hospital cafeteria in favor of The Java Stop so she could visit Mindy.

"She lives," Mindy squealed as Destiny entered the bistro.

"Just barely," Destiny joked. "I have missed you."

"I figured you were swamped with people trying to kill each other," Mindy replied. "How is your daughter?"

"Venus is wonderful. She is chomping at the bit to get back in school so she can graduate. She wants to start practicing law so she can contribute to our income."

"She is unusual. Most young people want to get a job so they can move out of their parent's home."

"I try not to interfere with her life and I welcome her company, so living together works good for both of us. I'm gone so much, she practically has the apartment to herself anyway."

They visited while Destiny ate dinner and downed a Dr Pepper. "Hopefully things will slow down next week," she forecast. "It seems like we have been running a mile a minute."

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

The appearance of Nurse Helen Roper's face on her cellphone alerted her to another emergency. "I'm on my way Helen," she answered. "Catch you later, Mindy." She called over her shoulder as she hurried out the door.

"I know your shift ends in an hour," Helen met her in the sterilization room, "but this is an unusual injury, and I think you should handle it."

"What is it?" Destiny slipped on the sterile gloves Helen held out for her.

"An attempted suicide gone wrong," Helen replied. "The woman on the operating table had a fight with her girlfriend and stuck the barrel of a .22 pistol to her forehead and pulled the trigger. The bullet didn't penetrate her skull enough to kill her. Her girlfriend said she was in such pain she fired another shot into the first one. She is prepped and ready for you to remove both pieces of lead from her skull."

"Stupidity knows no boundaries," Destiny huffed. "I'll do the surgery, but please don't give me anyone else tonight."

"I won't. The problem is I have no one else working emergency tonight that has your ability."

Destiny removed the bullets from the woman's head and sent her to ICU. "Let's put her on suicide watch," she told Helen. "You might want to handcuff her hands to the bed rails so she can't injure herself. She is going to have a hell of a headache."

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Destiny dropped her gloves, surgical mask and gown in the trash can and headed for her office. She transported home in her scrubs and showered. Faith was waiting for her. Tonight, they would do something that would change the future and hopefully save mankind.

##

“I’m glad you are here,” Faith murmured as she pulled Destiny into her arms and kissed her. “I miss you every minute I am away from you.”

Destiny reveled in Faith’s kiss loving the soft, firm lips and silky tongue that tangled with her own. “I will never tire of kissing you,” she whispered.

“As much as I’d like to just enjoy you,” Faith released her, “we should do our deed.”

“This is your bailiwick tonight. I’m just along for support and honestly to see how you do this.”

“I’m going to concentrate on the United States. Americans will be extremely vocal when they discover their toys are gone.

“Take my hand. I am going to take us high enough in the universe to see the entire earth, but I will be concentrating on the Northern Hemisphere.

“First I will extract the AI chips and pull them to me. As they travel through the solar system, they will disintegrate to nothing. Then I will move all the people to where they were when they were kidnapped.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“You truly are capable of anything,” Destiny said in awe as they ascended into the heavens.

When they were high enough to see everything clearly, Faith held out her hands. Tiny shards of light began to shoot toward them, flaring then burning out as they passed through earth’s atmosphere. A river of light flowed from the earth into outer space and disappeared as the chips melted into the nothingness of the universe.

Lights turned-on all over America as families discovered their missing loved ones were home. “This is incredible,” Destiny declared.

“My work here is done,” Faith exclaimed. “You take it from here. I will stand by you, but I won’t harm anyone.”

“I understand. Now all we have to do is wait for the programmers and scientists to discover they have a problem and gather in one place to solve it.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

FAITH MAY BE GOD!



*“Do not share it with anyone, not even Jamie,”
Faith cautioned. “The three of us must never
become known. Mankind would find a way to kill
us.”*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 48

Destiny turned on the television the next morning as she and Venus ate breakfast. Newscasters, podcasters, and law enforcement entities were in a dither as happy people reported the return of their loved ones and furious owners reported the theft of their AI robots.

Soon the world discovered the anomaly had only taken place in the United States. A popular cable newscaster theorized that the androids had been recalled by the manufacturers.

Android owners began locking their AIs in closets at night or chaining them to immovable objects to keep them from being recalled.

The stock market went into freefall as wealthy buyers of AI androids flooded companies with complaints about the unexpected recalls.

Astrophysicists were ignored as they tried to get someone to listen to their discovery of an aberration in the universe. No one cared that they had discovered a lighted pathway from the United States into the depths of the solar system. After all no one saw it but them.

“So, what did you and Faith do last night?” Venus asked her mother.

Destiny smiled. “Unbelievable things,” she replied.

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Venus laughed. "I mean what did you two do to the universe."

Destiny smiled. "Faith truly is amazing. She controls everything. She pulled the two chips from two-thousand human/AI robots in America and cast them into the universe. Of course, they burned up in earth's atmosphere and were minuscule particles of dust that disappeared completely.

"Then she returned the humans to the place from which they were kidnapped."

"Wow! Mom, is she more powerful than you?"

"Much more. Venus, she may be God."

"I think both of you are gods," Venus declared.

"What happens now? What about all the human robots in all the other countries on earth?"

Destiny studied her daughter and shrugged. "I suspect she will do the same thing to all the other humans that have been sold as AI androids."

"May I watch?"

"You can watch from earth," Destiny replied. "We will let you know before it takes place."

Venus shivered. "It is sobering to think that I might have been one of their victims."

"I doubt it. You would have changed to a cat and escaped. I promise you, I would have found you."

"Did I hear someone use my name?" Faith materialized in the kitchen.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Faith,” Venus ran to her hero and hugged her. “You are wonderful,” she exclaimed.

Faith glanced at Destiny, “Has your mother been filling your head with wild tales?”

“Have you watched TV this morning?” Venus asked as she pointed to the screen where people were trying to break through the gates of one of the Silicon Valley fortresses that housed the main AI production center.

“It is always nice when humans react as expected.” Faith smiled. “You watch the heavens tonight and I will put on a light show just for you.”

“What time? Venus asked. “I don’t want to miss it.”

“Do not share it with anyone, not even Jamie,” Faith cautioned. “The three of us must never become known. Mankind would find a way to kill us.”

“I know,” Venus hung her head. “That is something I learned at a very young age.”

“When you were a tiny kitten?” Faith gently touched her shoulder. “That is why you waited so long to shift in front of Destiny.”

“Yes.”

Faith hugged the young woman tightly. “Midnight tonight,” she whispered in her ear.

Destiny wrapped her arms around both of them. “Group hug, my loves.”

“May I go into the universe with you?” Venus asked Faith.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“All three of us will go up after dark,” Faith promised, “so you can see how wonderful the universe is and tiny earth is. Then we will bring you back to the penthouse and you can watch from the balcony at midnight.”

“You would do that for me?” Venus gasped. “You truly are wonderful. No wonder Mom loves you like she does.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

**THESE AI TYPES ARE
USED TO PLAYING GOD.**



Faith wrapped her arms around Destiny, and they slowly floated in the universe. “This is truly the only place that is endless,” Faith said.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 49

Faith and Destiny observed as the top names in the artificial intelligence world readied their private jets to travel to an unspecified location.

“They aren’t clearing their calendars,” Faith informed Destiny. “That means things haven’t reached the critical point in their world.”

“That will change when you finish with them tonight,” Destiny forecast.

“Let’s hope so. These AI types are used to playing god. They are still trying to figure out what happened. When we achieve the same thing in the rest of the world, things will truly go to hell in a handbasket.”

##

“I am going to Faith’s,” Destiny informed Venus. “It is almost midnight.”

“I will be watching,” Venus walked onto the balcony of their penthouse. “I can see everything from here,” she noted. “Should I look in any particular direction?”

“Just look up. Faith will light up the midnight sky with her arrays. She will pull the AI chips from every human on earth. I have a feeling it will be spectacular.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“Everything Faith does is spectacular,” Venus noted. “You two are so lucky you found each other. I worry that I am falling in love with Jamie and that she will leave me when she finds out I’m a shifter. I’m not sure I can bear that.”

Destiny hugged her daughter. “We can talk about this when I return, baby. If you want, I am certain Faith can take away your shifting ability. Think about it.”

Venus hugged her mother. “Be safe and know that I will be watching and praying for you.”

##

“I love that you are always on time,” Faith praised Destiny as she pulled her into her arms for a smoldering kiss.

“If you kiss me like that again, I promise you we will not make your midnight deadline,” Destiny replied.

Faith laughed and reached for her lover’s hand. “Ready to rid the world of evil?”

“Most definitely.” Destiny laced her fingers with Faith’s and tightly gripped her hand.

The pair rose into the heavens passing over Labrador and Greenland until they were positioned so they could see every country on earth by turning around. Faith gripped Destiny’s hand. “Ready?”

“Yes,” the witch whispered.

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Faith moved her hand as she rotated in a circle. The entire world lit up, and points of light began to rise from every country into the universe then widened as more and more chips joined the flow of light.

Destiny held her breath as rivers of light streamed toward them joining together into a huge flow of light that headed directly for them. She stiffened as the light got closer and closer and her fingernails dug into Faith's palms. The light passed through earth's atmosphere into the heavens and slowly disappeared as the chips dissolved into dust.

"Don't be frightened," Faith said. "I would never let anything hurt you."

Faith wrapped her arms around Destiny, and they slowly floated in the universe. "This is truly the only place that is endless," Faith said. "Like God there is no beginning and no ending. It truly makes one feel exceedingly small and unimportant."

Destiny tried to swallow the lump in her throat so she could reply but failed miserably. She clutched Faith tighter to her.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“WHAT IS YOUR END GAME?”



*I can promise you the punishment I have planned
for them will equal the crime.”*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 50

Venus was hypnotized by the streams of light that emanated from all over the earth and joined together in one bright stream that disappeared into the heavens. She stood for an hour wondering how Faith had made the incredible light show happen. Finally, she pulled herself from her mesmerized state and looked around hoping to find her mother in the penthouse, but she was nowhere in sight.

“Please, God, let them be okay,” she prayed.

“We are fine,” a thought entered her head.

“Come home so I can see you,” Venus thought back and it worked. The pair materialized in front of her.

“Are you okay?” Venus cried rushing to her mother and embracing her.

“I will be,” Destiny whispered, “as soon as I get my heart out of my throat and back where it belongs.”

“You did that?” Venus stared at Faith.

“With your mother’s help,” Faith replied. “The two of us together. We held hands and combined our powers then I bid the chips to come to me. We knew the atmosphere would destroy them, but it was touch and go for a few seconds.”

“Were you afraid?” Destiny asked.

“A little,” Faith admitted. “I’ve never done anything of that magnitude. Were you scared?”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“No, I was astounded but I felt safe with you. It was the most beautiful thing I’ve ever witnessed.”

“Let’s turn on the TV and see if the world is going crazy,” Venus suggested.

“They aren’t,” Faith insisted. “We calmed them. They can freak out tomorrow when they find all their AI androids are gone.”

“What is your end game?” Venus asked.

“That is your mother’s decision,” Faith replied. “I’ve done my work.”

“What do you have planned, Mom?”

“The makers of those chips and sellers of humans marketed as AI androids who are *The Perfect Lovers* is a desecration to everything we believe. They sold innocent men and women into sex slavery in order to make a fortune. I’m sure they would have perfected their AI human bodies eventually, but greed made them take a short cut with no thought of the pain and suffering they caused the loved ones of the people they kidnapped and turned into robots. I can promise you the punishment I have planned for them will equal the crime.”

Venus yawned. “You two have worn me out. I’m going to bed. She morphed into her cat form and strolled into her bedroom leaving a pile of clothes in the middle of the room.

“Does she do that often?” Faith asked.

“Only when she is tired or bored,” Destiny explained her daughter. “Do you want to spend the

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night so we can watch the news together in the morning?”

“Yeah, sure.” Faith grinned mischievously. “That is why I want to spend the night.” She swept Destiny into her arms and carried her into the bedroom.

##

Destiny silently searched for pajamas, left a pair for Faith on the bed, slipped into hers, then walked into the kitchen where Venus was watching television. “What are the talking heads saying this morning?”

“No one is mentioning your marvelous light show,” Venus exclaimed, “but they are giving the manufacturers of the missing robots hell.”

“Has anyone connected the dots yet?”

“No, but the people who’s loved ones have returned home are all over the talk shows discussing how their daughters or sons just came home. The people who were kidnapped have no recall at all.”

“That’s probably for the best,” Destiny replied as she poured herself a cup of coffee and refilled the cup in front of Venus.

Faith joined them, yawning and stretching. “What a night!”

Destiny filled a cup with coffee and handed it to her. “Have they called a meeting?” she asked.

Faith scanned the calendars of the criminals they wanted to get into one place. “Yes, two weeks from Friday they are meeting at Lāna Lèaha Island.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Good. I will be there,” Destiny promised. “But in the meantime, we have a costume ball to attend this coming Friday.”

“A costume ball!” Faith exclaimed. “I hope you are talking to Venus.”

“I don’t do balls, parties or large gatherings of adults,” Venus declared.

“It is a fundraiser for my hospital.”

“Definitely not going,” Venus grumped.

“I’ll go,” Faith volunteered, “but I thought it was a fancy-dress ball.”

“Nope, Darla decided a costume ball would be more fun. I do have a ticket for you.”

“I have just the costume to wear.” Faith smiled as she recalled the costume that had materialized on her. “Who will you go as?”

“A goddess,” Destiny replied. “I have the perfect outfit for it.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

HE IS A MONSTER



“I’d like to neuter him with a rusty hacksaw blade,” Whitney confessed.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 51

“I want her fired right now,” Elbert Lushby commanded Whitney as Destiny entered the room.

“What did she do?” Whitney asked.

“She slapped me.” Lushby whined.

“Why?”

Lushby stared at her in disbelief.

“Why did she slap you?” Whitney repeated.

“I have no idea,” Lushby lied. “Fire her.”

“I will talk to her,” Whitney informed him.

“If this is another one of your sexual harassment actions, I will note it and I will not fire her. I just hope she doesn’t sue us because you groped her.”

Lushby shoved Destiny aside as he charged out of her office. “Who has he molested now?” she asked.

“The new nurse on your shift, Laura Rider.”

“Why is he even in the hospital? He has no business here. He doesn’t do anything but proposition the female nursing staff.”

“I don’t know. I don’t know why Darla tolerates him. He is a repulsive drunk.”

“I’ll smooth things over with Laura, but we must do something about him.”

“I’d like to neuter him with a rusty hacksaw blade,” Whitney confessed.

They broke into laughter at the thought of Lushby getting his just rewards.

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“Do you need something?” Whitney asked.

“No, just double checking that tonight is a costume ball,” Destiny replied. “I don’t want to be the only one in costume.”

“I promise it is a costume ball. I’m actually looking forward to it.”

“The Vicar is picking me up then we will pick you up. She has a gorgeous vehicle compliments of her church.”

“Sounds good to me,” Whitney agreed. “Pick me up at 7:00 p.m.?”

“We will be there. I’ll go talk to Laura now.”

##

Destiny found Laura Rider crying in the nurses breakroom. “Hey, what’s going on?” she asked.

“Nothing,” a tearful Laura wiped away her tears with a tissue.

“You don’t cry for nothing,” Destiny pressed. “Tell me what is wrong.” She placed her hand on Laura’s and the woman relaxed and let the tears flow.

Destiny let her cry until her sniffles were dry snorts. “Talk to me.”

“That filthy drunk that is married to our CEO. I believe he would have molested me if I hadn’t hit him in the head with a bedpan.”

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

Destiny burst out laughing. “That couldn’t happen to a nicer guy. He is a slime ball. I will talk to Ms. Wagner and see if we can’t keep him away from the hospital.”

“If you could do that, it would be wonderful. All the nurses are tired of looking over their shoulders. He is always poking them or running his hand up their skirts. He is despicable.”

“I will take care of it I promise.”

“Thank you. I feel blessed to be on your shift. Everyone says you are incredible and the best surgeon in the world. May I ask you a question?”

“Of course.”

“Did you really sew a child’s head back on and she lived?”

Destiny laughed. “I’m afraid people give me credit for much more than anyone could ever do. No, I did not do that.”

“That’s the way it is with legends,” Laura declared. “The tales are much bigger than the people. I guess that’s what makes them legends.”

“I guess so,” Destiny agreed.

“I’m going back to work, Dr. Sinclair. Thank you for walking me through my breakdown. I promise it won’t happen again.”

“I doubt that Lushby will bother you again, but just in case he does, you have my permission to beat him over the head with a bedpan. I have a feeling when this story gets out you will be a legend.” They laughed as they parted ways.

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

“Dr. Sinclair,” Dr. Monica Mayberry hailed her as she walked out of the breakroom. “Got a minute. I’ve got to talk to someone.”

“Sure,” Destiny replied. “You look distraught. Let’s take this to my office.”

Monica talked as they walked. “Blood is still missing from my blood bank.” She exclaimed. “It is driving me crazy. It happens every time we have a major emergency or must provide blood to another hospital to help them out. I am at my wits end. I’ve discussed it with Dr. Langley, and she tells me not to worry about it. That she is looking into it, but nothing seems to be happening.”

“Do you have any suspicions about who the thief might be?” Destiny asked.

“I...I’d rather not say at this time.”

“You must talk to me, if I’m going to help,” Destiny encouraged.

“I think it might be Dr. Langley.”

“Whitney!” Destiny blurted. “What makes you suspect Whitney?”

“I keep reporting the shortage to her and she keeps telling me not to worry about it. I was checking my back records, and all the shortage reports I filed have been replaced with a report that says, ‘all blood accounted for and the funds are in the account to cover the missing blood.’ Dr. Langley and I are the only ones authorized to go back in the files. We are the only ones with the password.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

“So, no one is stealing the blood,” Destiny clarified. “They can’t purchase blood, so they take it then pay for it, so the hospital isn’t losing money.”

“It doesn’t make sense,” Monica agreed.

“I will look into the matter.” Destiny scowled, reluctant to suspect her friend of black-marketing blood.

Destiny walked Monica out the door of her office so she could transport home to get ready for the ball. She smiled as she thought about how Faith would react to her low-cut white goddess gown.

“Don’t worry, Monica, I will get to the bottom of this,” she promised.

**When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade**

**EVERYONE WILL
THINK WE'RE LESBIANS.**



“I can’t believe you are wearing a Wonder Woman costume,” Destiny chided Faith.

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 52

Destiny materialized in her own bedroom and yelled, “Venus, I’m home.” She jumped into the shower and washed her hair. She wanted to take Faith’s breath away.

She spent several minutes in front of the mirror styling her hair and applying makeup, then she slipped into the dress that was icing on the cake. Cake she hoped Faith would want to eat.

She was buckling her heels when her cellphone announced, “Faith calling.”

“Hello Darling,” she answered using her sexiest voice.

“This evening just got a hundred percent better,” Faith responded. “I am two minutes away from The Athena. I will be up in two shakes of a lamb’s tail.”

Destiny laughed. “Don’t come up, hon. I will be at the front when you arrive. We still have to pick up Whitney.”

Destiny grabbed a light cape and wrapped it around her so Faith wouldn’t see her costume. She wanted her lover to get the full effect of the dress, long legs, and sexy heels when she removed the cape at the ball. She smiled at Tony as he opened the door for her.

Faith leaned across the passenger’s seat to push Destiny’s door open. “You look wonderful,”

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she exclaimed. "I can't wait to see what is under that cape."

"Why do I have the feeling that you are hiding something spectacular under your cape?"

"Definitely not my usual attire." Faith grinned. "Do you want to give my Destination Assist Whitney's address?"

Destiny pushed the button that asked for her destination. She gave the address then settled back in the seat as Faith followed the directions to Whitney's home.

Destiny phoned Whitney. "We are turning onto your street now," she informed her boss.

"Coming right out."

Whitney slid into the back seat of the car and joyfully greeted them. "I am excited about tonight. Darla has at least two hundred guests with extremely deep pockets. If things go as expected we will raise enough funds to build our new Neonatal Intensive Care Unit."

"Is there any chance she has sent Lushby out of town?" Destiny asked. "He has got to be an embarrassment to her."

"I'm sure he will be there. He is always trying to get her friends to invest in one of his hairbrained schemes. Anyone who has talked to him for very long knows he is an idiot.

"Which reminds me, how was your visit with Laura Rider?"

When We Were Gods **by Erin Wade**

“Good. She was a little hysterical at first but calmed down as we talked. I promised her she could be permanently assigned to my surgical team and that she had my permission to knock Lushby in the head with a bedpan anytime he bothered her.”

Whitney laughed hysterically, then caught her breath. “You didn’t really tell her she could hit him, did you?”

“Yes, I did.”

“Hopefully he will not bother her again.” Whitney choked.

“I hope Destiny doesn’t have to fight him off tonight,” Faith said.

“You two are so covered up I can’t see your costumes,” Whitney noted.

“Mine is just something from the closet,” Destiny replied. “I think Faith actually purchased a costume.”

“It is the least I can do since you two got me a free ticket.” Faith shrugged.

“You are approaching your destination,” Faith’s Destination Assist informed her.

“Wow! Look at this place,” Faith exclaimed. “It looks like an English castle.”

“It is impressive,” Destiny agreed. “When you said Darla comes from old money, I had no idea she was royalty.”

Whitney laughed. “I don’t think she is royalty, but she is loaded.”

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

Attendants dressed in black suits and flowing capes stepped forward to open their car doors.

“I think we are surrounded by Count Dracula, vampires,” Whitney squealed holding out her hand as her valet helped her from the car.

Music wafted from the open doorway that led to a landing then three steps down into the ballroom. As the attendants removed Destiny and Faith’s capes, a gasp filled the room as all eyes turned to the beautiful women surveying the guests.

Destiny looked over Faith and swallowed. *I have never wanted you more*, she thought.

The feeling is mutual. Faith smiled. *Don’t stare at me for too long*. Everyone will think we’re lesbians.

Destiny fought to pull her eyes away from her lover and look around at the crowd of merrymakers. They descended the stairs and melted into the crowd.

“I can’t believe you are wearing a Wonder Woman costume,” Destiny chided Faith as they found a table against the wall that appeared to be empty. “You look incredible.”

“Let me guess, you are Aphrodite Greek Goddess of Love.” Faith ran the tip of her tongue between her lips. *I want so badly to kiss you right now. If you are having this effect on me I can only imagine what these mere mortals are thinking*.

“You two certainly know how to make an entrance,” Whitney reminded them she existed. “I

When We Were Gods by Erin Wade

would not have received that much attention if I had walked in naked.”

The three burst into laughter as a young lady held a tray of champagne in front of them. “Champagne makes me...” Whitney stopped as someone called out their names.

“Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Langley and Vicar Seraph, thank you so much for coming to our little soirée,” Darla Wagner warmly welcomed the trio. She wore an Elvira costume.

“Let me guess who you are,” Darla continued. “Whitney, you are the redheaded nurse from “Grey’s Anatomy” and Vicar you have to be a superhero. Wonder Woman, I’m guessing. Dr. Sinclair, you are either a Roman or Greek goddess, so I’m going to go with Aphrodite.”

“Right on all guesses,” Destiny declared.

“Now, guess who I am?” Darla commanded.

“I know, I know,” Whitney exclaimed. “You are Yvonne De Carlo’s character, Lily Munster.”

“Wrong,” Darla glared at her.

“Morticia Adams,” Whitney tried again.

In her most mysterious sultry voice Faith said, “Elvira, Mistress of Darkness.”

Darla smiled at Faith and grabbed her hand. “Congratulations Wonder Woman, you win the first dance with me.”

She dragged Faith onto the dance floor as the band began to play a lively song. *At least she isn’t rubbing against my woman*, Destiny thought.

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The server returned with more champagne. “I’ll have another,” Whitney said as she took two glasses from the tray and handed one to Destiny.

The music ended and Frankenstein grabbed Darla’s hand and pulled her away from Faith.

“Sorry about that,” Faith apologized to her friends. “She took me by surprise. I guess in the costumes one can dance with either sex.”

“It looks that way,” Whitney winked at a pretty fairy as she sashayed past them. “I think I’ll take my chances.” She caught up with the fairy, and they disappeared into the crowded room of dancers.

“Do you want to dance?” Faith asked.

“Yes, but I want a slow dance so I can rub up against you.”

“We could go for a walk in the gardens and make out,” Faith suggested.

“We should control ourselves,” Destiny whispered. “Although I’m having trouble not jumping your bones.”

Faith laughed softly. “You say the nicest things. You are spending the night at my home aren’t you?”

“Oh yeah,” Destiny breathed.

“What is he doing?” Faith muttered.

Destiny turned her attention to the dance floor as an intoxicated Lushby staggered across the room headed toward his wife.

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They watched as Lushby shoved Frankenstein away from Darla and clumsily pulled her into his arms.

“Who is he supposed to be?” Faith asked.

“Humpty Dumpty. He certainly looks the part. He is hanging onto her to stand up.”

As they watched Darla gave her husband a gentle shove to get out of his arms.

“Don’t shove me.” Lushby bellowed. “I’ll let you go when I’m good and ready.” He slapped the woman nearest him on the rump and roared with laughter.

Darla grabbed his fat hand and led him out of the ballroom. “We should make sure she is okay,” Faith suggested. “He is disgustingly drunk and could be abusive.”

They walked into the gardens but didn’t see the couple anywhere. A scuffling sound from a nearby gazebo caught their attention and they hurried toward it.

“Get your slimy hands off me,” Darla commanded. “I want you out of this house and out of my life.”

“When I get through with you everyone will be out of your life,” Lushby threatened shoving her to the ground.

“Is there a problem here?” Faith asked.

“Nothing that is any of your business.” Lushby slobbered.

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“Ms. Wagner, they are looking for you inside,” Destiny chimed in.

Faith took Darla’s hand and pulled her to her feet. With her walking between them they escorted her back to the ballroom.

“I apologize for my husband’s behavior,” Darla said. “He isn’t himself when he is drinking.”

They nodded and walked in silence.

“Darla, I’ve been looking all over for you,” Whitney met them. “They are starting the pledge drive and want you on the microphone.” She shoved a pledge card into the hands of Faith and Destiny.

Faith pulled Destiny aside. “Let’s kick this off for her so others will follow. I’ll commit to a personal donation of a million dollars. Can you do the same?”

“When you’ve lived as long as we have, you accumulate money in every country. I’ll match your donation.”

Both materialized a check for a million dollars and slipped them to Whitney. “Please do not out us,” Faith pleaded. “Just say the donors request that we not mention their names.”

“I know you are wealthy,” Whitney addressed Destiny, “but I thought you had to take a vow of poverty, Vicar.”

“You have me mixed up with a Catholic priest,” Faith explained. “Vicars take no such vow. Not all Priests take vows of poverty, just certain members of religious orders.”

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“Whatever,” Whitney replied, “we are so thankful for both of you.” She made her way to the platform where her boss was speaking into a microphone and welcoming everyone. She waved the two checks in the air to get Darla’s attention.

“It looks like we have some early birds,” Darla hummed into the mic as she bent down to hear what Whitney wanted to tell her.

She took the two checks, examined them, and raised her brows. “From two donors who wish to remain anonymous, I have two checks for a million dollars each.”

The roar from the attendees shook the light fixtures as they clapped and hooted.

“Now, do I have anyone that can match these two generous donations?”

“We will,” hands went up throughout the crowd.

“You are all so wonderful,” Darla praised them. “Our fantastic Hospital Director Dr. Whitney Langley will be right over here at the donation table, where you can fill out a donation card or give her your check. There is also a small card where you may request the band play your favorite song. Dr. Destiny Sinclair will make certain your song is performed during the evening.”

“We’ve been drafted,” Whitney laughed as she grabbed Destiny’s arm and steered her toward the table where two lines were already forming.

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“I will write a two million dollar check right now,” a Texas politician called out, “if I can have a dance with Dr. Sinclair.”

Darla bowed her head then looked at the audience and smiled. “I’m sorry, as much as we need your donation, we don’t auction off our physicians.”

“I meant no insult,” the man said heading toward Whitney’s table. “I’m on my way to write my check right now. I apologize if I was crass.”

“You should ask him to dance,” Faith encouraged as he wrote his check.

Destiny nodded then walked to the band and asked them to play a swing number.

“Can you swing dance, Congressman?” She smiled as she held out her hand to him.

“Can I swing dance?” the congressman replied. “Doctor, I was born in Nashville.”

The party goers cleared the floor as the pair *tripped the light fantastic*. The band ended the song, and everyone applauded as they lined up to dance with the two incredible dancers.

“Please,” Destiny placed her hand over her heart. “I must catch my breath. Congressman, you are the most fantastic dancer I’ve ever had the pleasure of dancing with. Thank you so much for a great dance and your generous donation.”

“My pleasure, ma’am.” He bowed as another woman grabbed his hand and yanked him onto the dance floor.

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Destiny collapsed into the chair beside Faith. “Did he really tire you?” Faith asked.

“No, but I don’t want to dance with anyone else but you. I’m thinking a nice slow, hold me close dance.” Destiny’s eyes sparkled as Faith bit her bottom lip.

The swing dancing and costumes seemed to give everyone permission to let loose. They began line dancing, circle dancing, and two-stepping. Faith walked to the band leader, tipped him generously and whispered. “A nice slow waltz, please.”

The beautiful strains of “Unchained Melody” filled the hall as Faith held out her hand to Destiny. “My turn to dance with you,” she said.

Destiny slipped into the arms of the woman she loved and leaned her cheek against Faith’s breast. “This is where I’ve wanted to be all night,” she murmured.

Faith tightened her arm around her partner’s waist and pulled their clasped hands between them. “They are still lined up writing checks,” she noted. “I think your boss is going to be very pleased with you and Whitney.”

“I just want to go home,” Destiny confided, “but we can’t leave without Whitney.”

Their dance ended as a path opened on the dance floor. Lushby staggered toward Destiny. “I want a piece of that action,” he bellowed.

Faith stiffened.

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“Don’t,” Destiny said. “I can handle this.”

The merry makers quieted and stepped away from Destiny and Lushby. Lushby grabbed Destiny’s wrist and she pulled away from him. “I don’t wish to dance with you.” She declared.

“Too bad. I happen to be your boss’s husband.”

“That’s her problem, not mine,” Destiny replied wrinkling her nose.

It started as a twitter then broke out into raucous laughter as the guests pointed to Lushby who was standing alone in the center of the floor soiling his pants.

“Oh Jeeze,” Darla cried as two manservants grabbed Lushby’s arms and dragged him from the room.

“Texas line dance,” Faith called out as she joined Destiny and the Congressman took her hand. The band played a popular song and soon everyone joined the line dance.

##

“That was some party,” Whitney exclaimed as she leaned against Faith’s back seat. “And we raised more than enough money to build our neonatal unit.

“I feel sorry for Darla. Married to that loser. She was mortified when he soiled himself.”

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“He may be black mailing her,” Faith pointed out. “He does seem to have a hold over her. How long have they been married?”

“Five years,” Whitney replied. “She took a month-long vacation, visited Romania, and toured Bucharest. She came home married to Lushby. Of course, he was much slimmer, muscular, and more handsome. At first she seemed crazy about him, after a year they both seemed to hate each other.”

“Why don’t they get a divorce?”

“I’ve wondered that too. I don’t know if Darla has a prenuptial agreement or not. I do know he swore he would never give her a divorce.”

“You have arrived at your destination,” Faith’s vehicle announced as she pulled into the driveway of Whitney’s residence.

“Thank you so much for driving me,” Whitney said. “I can’t remember when I’ve had so much fun. Vicar, I have to say you are so hot in that outfit.” She opened the door and got out of the car before they could reply.

“Where did you get the costume?” Destiny asked as Faith backed from the driveway.

“It just appeared on me when we were at the old insane asylum in Wichita Falls. I kind of like it. It is great when I travel through the universe. It doesn’t melt. I believe it is indestructible.”

“I can’t wait to take it off you,” Destiny murmured.

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“I feel the same way about the gorgeous dress you have on. It is incredibly sexy. Poor Lushby, he didn’t stand a chance against you.”

Their cellphones began to ding and chime. “What the heck?” Faith cried as the phones filled the car with a cacophony of sounds.

“That’s just great!” Destiny declared. “We raise billions of dollars for a new unit at the hospital and the social media outlets are on fire with photos of Lushby soiling himself and me looking like I’ve never seen body fluids before.”

Faith laughed. “Sometimes you are so funny.”

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TERRORIST DETONATED A BOMB



“Oh, and Destiny. If anyone is dead, do not bring them back to life.”

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CHAPTER 53

“I’m going to take my time removing your costume,” Faith said as she lowered Destiny onto the edge of her bed and fell to her knees.

“No wonder every man at the ball wanted to dance with you,” she said. “You really shouldn’t wear ‘fuck me heels’ with an outfit that is slit up to your perfect derrière.” She unbuckled the sexy shoes Destiny was wearing, massaged her feet then kissed her way up the blonde’s leg that was exposed where her gown had fallen aside.

Destiny closed her eyes as she clasped Faith’s head and guided her lips to where she needed them. “Oh, baby,” she gasped, “I’ve waited all night for this.”

“I’m just thankful you wore panties, scanty as they are.” Faith murmured against her thigh as she removed the flimsy silk undergarment.

Destiny pulled Faith’s lips up to her own and teased her tongue as she unzipped the back of Faith’s costume. She pulled her feet onto the mattress and pushed herself to the head of the bed, taking Faith with her. She wrapped her legs around her lover and pulled her into her warm, wet core. “I love you Vicar,” she whispered.

“You will love me more after tonight,” Faith promised her.

##

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Destiny awoke slowly, glorying in the strength and stamina of the woman wrapped around her. She had never felt safer in her entire life. Faith made her want to run naked through dandelion fields and swim nude in a lazy flowing stream waiting for Faith to ravage her.

She closed her eyes and relived every touch, every kiss, every caress of the night before. She turned in Faith's arms until her lips found the nipple she was searching for then she began to tease and suck it.

"Oh God," Faith breathed as she slipped her hand between Destiny's legs. "Somehow I knew you'd be wet. I do believe you are insatiable."

"Is that a bad thing?"

"Not at all. It is a wonderful thing. I can't get enough of you. I can't hold you tight enough or kiss you long enough..."

"Or ride me hard enough," Destiny giggled.

"Yeah, that too, but I'm going to continue working on it."

Faith's strength took away Destiny's breath as she pulled the blonde on top of her then lifted her breasts to her mouth. She sucked one breast, then the other as Destiny wrapped her arms around her head and begged. "Harder Faith. Suck me harder."

Like a feather, Faith flipped Destiny onto her back and put her knee between the blonde's legs. "I hope you have no plans for today," she murmured

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in Destiny's ear, "because this is going to take a very long time."

##

Destiny's cellphone pulled her from a deep sleep. She snuggled into Faith's arms as Whitney began recording a message. "Destiny we have an emergency. All hell is breaking out. A bomb exploded at the...

"Whitney, what is going on?" Destiny cried.

"Terrorist detonated a bomb in the Myerson Symphony Center downtown. The place was packed with ticketholders for the matinee performance. I have no idea how many are injured. I'm on my way to the hospital now. Please hurry. We will need all hands on deck."

"On my way," the doctor promised.

"Oh, and Destiny. If anyone is dead, do not bring them back to life."

Faith was already pulling on her Vicar's garb as Destiny searched for her clothes. "You can't wear what you wore to the ball," Faith reminded her.

"Oh, yeah, I forgot. You've messed with my mind, Vicar." Destiny waved her hand and was instantly clothed in a white button-down shirt and a pair of jeans. "I'll see you at the hospital." She tiptoed to kiss Faith then disappeared.

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**SHE IS BARELY BREATHING,
BUT WE CAN DO THIS.”**



*I'm glad you are here, she thought.
Remember if they are dead, we must let them go.*

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CHAPTER 54

Destiny materialized in her office, yanked on her white hospital jacket, and charged out the door.

All the women she depended on were lined up in the scrub room waiting for her: Blood Bank nurse Cindy Raye, Head Night Nurse Helen Roper, and Emergency Room Head Nurse Rhonda Vincent.

“Where do you want me, boss,” Emergency Room Nurse Laura Rider their newest team member asked.

“Fill me in. Helen, Laura, help me with my gloves and surgical gown. Cindy, do we have blood on standby?”

“Yes ma’am, you are going to need it. I have the transfusion hooked up.”

Helen stepped closer. “The patient has a piece of glass that has entered his body in the stomach and part of it is sticking out his back. He has deep cuts to his face and a broken arm. We need to move fast to stop the bleeding internally.”

“Is anyone on hand to take care of the bone work?” Destiny queried.

“Dr. Baker and his team are already working on the arm. He should be out of the way by the time we enter the operating room.” Helen informed her.

Rhonda Vincent stepped forward. “We are ready to receive your patients in ICU,” she assured Destiny.

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“Helen, can you take care of stitching up his face while the rest of us remove the shard of glass?”

Helen nodded. “I can, but I’m going to help you remove the glass first. We have no idea which organs are involved, and I have a feeling it is going to be a blood bath.”

Destiny grinned. “Helen, I love it when you talk sweet to me.”

The rest of the team chuckled as their leader helped them relax and do what they did best; save people’s lives.

Destiny felt a peacefulness flow over her and knew Faith was in the operating room. *I’m glad you are here*, she thought. *Remember if they are dead, we must let them go.*

Okay. Was the short response.

Destiny lost count of how many times she rescrubbed and stepped back into the surgery suite. When the flow of bodies stopped, she bowed her head and said a short thank you to the powers that be, then stepped from the scrub room into the hall where Venus was wailing over the person on a gurney.

“Venus,” she rushed to her daughter. “What are you doing here?”

Venus howled louder and pointed to the body that was covered head to toe with a bloody white sheet.

Destiny knew without looking that Jamie was beneath the sheet. “Oh, baby, I am so sorry.” She

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comforted her daughter as she pulled her into her arms.

“You can save her,” Venus hissed in her ear.

“I can’t” Destiny said truthfully.

“You must Mom. I love her more than anything in this world. Don’t let them take her from me.”

Destiny wasn’t certain who “them” was, but she knew one person that could breathe life into Jamie. She hoped Faith would disobey her.

She pulled the sheet back from Jamie’s beautiful face and leaned down to kiss her cheek. A soft breath moved the strand of her hair that was hanging loose. “Helen, this patient is breathing get her on a ventilator and let’s rush her into surgery.”

Dr. Baker rushed to them. “She has a metal bolt lodged in her heart,” he informed her. “She stopped breathing before I could remove it. I didn’t even close her up.”

“Help me save her Steve. She is barely breathing, but we can do this.”

The exhausted surgical team followed the two surgeons back into the theater and watched in amazement as Steve Baker extracted the shrapnel from Jamie’s heart and Destiny reconnected arteries. The steady, “thump, breath,” of the ventilator was the only sound in the room as they waited for Jamie’s vital signs to kick in.

“Her pulse is picking up,” Helen exclaimed.

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“Her heart is beating,” Steve fist pumped the air as the heart monitor made a steady beep, beep, sound. Blood pressure is good and oxygen level is coming up. We did it Destiny.” He grabbed his coworker and hugged her. “We did it.”

Destiny fought back tears as she walked from the room and collapsed in a chair in the hallway. She bowed her head and thought, *Thank you Faith. I love you.*

“Mom, is Jamie okay?” Venus knelt beside her chair. “Please tell me you saved her?”

“Dr. Baker and I were able to start her heart beating regularly. She is fine, hon.”

Venus rested her forehead against Destiny’s leg and cried. “I knew you could do it. I just knew it, Mom.”

##

Destiny tossed her gown and gloves into the can inside the scrub room, slipped on her jacket, and walked with Venus as she followed Jamie’s gurney to ICU.

“Will she be okay?” Venus asked. “Maybe I should live with her to take care of her until she recovers.”

“Um, I don’t think that will be necessary. I will keep her in the hospital until she is completely recovered. We need to monitor her.”

“Okay,” Venus gave in easily because she couldn’t think of a good way to tell Jamie she was a shifter and she could only tolerate her human form

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for so long then she changed to her beloved cat persona. “Will they let me sit with her in ICU?”

“No baby, it is against the rules. You can stay with her until I leave. Then you need to go with me. You look exhausted.”

“I am. I don’t know how you keep the hours you keep. Oh, wait. Yes, I do, but that is our secret.”

##

They arrived in the penthouse to find a note from Rose. “I have returned to my home. I want to write all of this down before I forget it. I’m pretty certain I am about to write my first really big best seller. Call me if you need me.”

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by Erin Wade**

**“SOMETIMES THE BRUTALITY
OF MANKIND OVERWHELMS ME,”**



*“I have just been informed that a
whistleblower has notified the DOJ that AI
billionaires are leaving the United States and are
headed for Lāna Lèaha Island.*

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CHAPTER 55

Venus ran to her room and closed the door. Destiny knew her daughter was now a sleek black cat who would sleep for hours.

She walked to the TV room and turned on the local news to see if the police had caught the terrorist who had planted bombs in the symphony hall. Two men and a woman had been arrested and charged with the heinous crime. Destiny would never understand how someone could plot and kill total strangers. She could understand striking out in anger or the urge to kill a cheating mate, but to kill just for the pure joy of killing was beyond her comprehension. She couldn't comprehend hatred that intense.

"Deep thoughts for such a beautiful lady," Faith said as she materialized in the room.

"Sometimes the sheer brutality of mankind overwhelms me," Destiny admitted as she caught Faith's hand and pulled her down beside her on the sofa. "Thank you for taking care of Jamie today."

"It wasn't her time," Faith replied. "She wasn't supposed to be in the Meyerson. Why was she there?"

"I don't know. I thought she was with Venus." "Oh God, Venus was in the auditorium too. That's why she was at Jamie's side at the hospital. I could have lost both of them because of three lunatics."

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Faith kissed her briefly. “I am going to get us some wine.”

The TV news station caught their attention. “Pandemonia continues to rock the AI world as thousands of owners around the globe report the disappearance of their AI robots. The department of Homeland Security is investigating the phenomenon.”

“On a happier note, thousands of missing men and women have suddenly returned home. Unfortunately, they have no memory of where they have been. A whistleblower from big tech has told authorities that the missing robots are actually the missing humans that have returned home after having AI chips removed from their brains.”

Faith grinned. “It is beginning to unravel.”

“I want to see in prison everyone responsible for the atrocities suffered by the people whose lives were stolen from them,” Destiny vowed. “I want them to know that humans are more important than dollars or huge stock portfolios.”

“I believe your wish is coming true,” Faith said as she gestured toward the TV screen where officers were handcuffing the CEO of a fortune five-hundred company.

“Looks like we have something to celebrate,” Faith noted. “I’ll bring the entire bottle of wine.”

Destiny switched to the top cable news channel and inhaled deeply as the newscaster welcomed the head of the Department of Justice.

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“Madam Attorney General can you tell us how many warrants your agents are serving right now?”

“That information is not for release at the moment,” the head of the DOJ replied. “We will release that when we have arrested everyone involved.”

“Are the warrants related to the disappearance of the thousands of robots from around the world?” The newscaster continued.

“I can only positively speak for the United States, but I do believe other governments are also arresting CEOs of AI companies.”

“What are they being charged with?” The newscaster pushed.

“Fraud, kidnapping, in some cases murder. You name it, these kingpins have apparently done it all. They think they are untouchable, but that is for the courts to decide.”

“What!” the newscaster exclaimed as he pressed his earpiece to his ear to be sure he understood what someone was feeding him. “I have just been informed that a whistleblower has notified the DOJ that AI billionaires are leaving the United States and are headed for Lāna Lèaha Island. Isn’t that the island owned by AIM co-founder Raymond Armond?”

“Yes,” the DOJ replied. “I must leave you.” Her screen went black as the newsman mumbled something and the station cut to commercials.

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Faith walked onto the penthouse balcony and closed her eyes. Destiny joined her and took her hand but was instantly shocked backwards by the power flowing through her lover. She waited until Faith came out of her trance and turned to her.

“All of them, the heads of every internet, computer and software company in the world are gathering on an island off the coast of Hawaii.

“The island is a hundred and forty-square miles, with its own ecosystem and is guarded by a huge AI army. It is designed to withstand the apocalypse and defeat any army on earth.”

“What do you think they are planning?” Faith asked.

“They definitely aren’t planning to allow any government to incarcerate them. I’m certain they will negotiate their way out of the mess they have made in the world. Collectively, they have more wealth than any nation on earth. They will pay off enough corrupt politicians to make this go away. In the meantime, everything is breaking down. The internet, the electric grid, television. Everyone will be in the dark. Destiny, this could cause the apocalypse, and they will emerge after humans have killed each other. AI controllers will rule the earth.”

“All of them are on the island now?”

“No, not yet.”

Destiny’s cellphone screen flashed Whitney calling, and she answered it. “Whitney, where are you?”

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“At the hospital. Our electricity has gone out, but the natural gas generators have kicked in. Thank God for natural gas. The entire city has blacking out one block at a time, and traffic lights aren’t working. We will probably be swamped with auto accidents.”

“Do you need me?”

“Not if you and the Vicar have something more important to do,” Whitney declared. “Please say you have a handle on this mess.”

“You hold down the fort. We are trying. Call me if you encounter anything you can’t handle.”

“I will. Darla and Steve Baker are here with me. I think we can handle it.”

“What can we do?” Destiny asked Faith as she ended the call.

“I cannot kill,” Faith reminded her. “I can’t stop them with violence.”

“Take me where we can see them,” Destiny pleaded. “We can’t stand by and let them destroy life on earth.”

Faith gripped her hand and nodded her head. In an instant they were floating in space watching the earth below them. Private airplanes from all over the world were flying to Lāna Lèaha Island.

As soon as a plane landed its occupants were ushered into a magnificent underground bunker, and the plane cleared from the runway as another one approached. For hours, the two immortals watched the rats abandon the earth and secure themselves in the safety of the shelter buried deep underground.

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“Let’s give them the benefit of the doubt,” Faith suggested as she took them into the bunker.

We’re both invisible, she thought. *Don’t let go of my hand. I am hoping they are planning some way to save mankind.*

Faith’s hope for the billionaires’ redemption quickly faded.

“Where are the women?” One of the men yelled as he drank from a thousand-dollar bottle of Macallan Eighteen-year-old Single Malt Whiskey. “If the women you’ve procured for us is as good as your liquor, this is going to be a great meeting.”

“They are enroute. I have a few fourteen-year-olds,” their host boasted, “but first we must hold a meeting to discuss how we will handle this mess and what caused it. How did our human robots suddenly shed their AI chips and how are we going to regain control of them?”

I’ve heard enough, Faith thought. She returned them to the universe, and they watched until all the traffic to the island stopped.

“I don’t know how to handle this,” Faith admitted. “I never dreamed men could be this cruel. They have no concern for the lives they have ruined.”

“I want to throw up when I think that those animals could have sold my Venus into white slavery disguised as an AI robot. If they had implanted chips in her brain, it would have killed

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her. Cats and humans have vastly different physiology.

“They are safe and secure in the bunker,” Destiny noted, “with no concern for the rest of the world. May I take over?”

Faith chuckled. “Of course, darling. I’d love to see what you have planned for the animals.”

Destiny and bowed her head. In her mind she conjured an ocean wave so high and so strong nothing could stand in its way. It sucked the Pacific Ocean from the coast of California gathering height and curl as it rolled toward Hawaii.

“What the hell is that sound?” Armond yelled above the thundering cacophony of screeches and earthquakes.

“It is probably the helicopters bringing the women, sir,” his assistant calmed him.

“I know that sound,” a Japanese businessman screamed. “It is a tsunami.”

The roar of the ocean coming for them struck horror in the hearts of those who had chosen the bunker as their tomb. The raging ocean wrapped its fingers around Lāna Lèaha Island, ripped it from its ancient tether to the ocean floor and dragged it into the deepest depth of the Pacific Ocean to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

The men screamed and pleaded as the pressure on the ocean floor burst their eardrums and the ocean seeped into their watery grave.

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Destiny opened her eyes and looked where the island of evil once existed, and smiled at the smooth, quiet ocean now covering any remnants of it. “I’ve done the heavy lifting,” she teased Faith, “now you need to sooth the earth.”

Faith moved her hand slightly and lights came on across the world. “Electric grids repaired,” she announced as she activated the internet. “Humans can take it from here.”

“We should check on things at the hospital,” Destiny suggested.

“Yes, they may be overwhelmed.”

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

THE BLOOD BANK
WAS SPOOKY



*“What is this. It looks like a slobbering vampire.
Look at those fangs!”*

When We Were Gods
by Erin Wade

CHAPTER 56

They materialized in Destiny's office where she slipped on her hospital jacket. "Let's let Whitney know that we are here. It will ease her mind," Destiny said.

Whitney was helping the nursing staff, managing the workflow in ICU. "Thank God you are here," she exclaimed as her two friends walked in. "The electricity is on and everything is functioning properly, but as I feared, there were several auto accidents. I think Dr. Baker and his team have managed to take care of the most severely injured, but you might check to see if he needs any help."

"We are going to check on Jamie first," Destiny informed her.

Jamie was sleeping peacefully, unaware of the chaos that the world had just experienced. Destiny checked her vitals and smiled. "She is doing well."

"I can speed up the process, and you can take her home," Faith volunteered. "I'm certain Venus will be happier."

Destiny smiled. "It would be nice to take her home with us tomorrow. Let's see how she is in the morning."

"I'm going to the chapel," Faith informed her.

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“Several families are there praying for their loved ones.”

“I’m going to check on the blood bank to see if our supply is meeting the demand.” Destiny remarked. “Then check in with the emergency room.”

##

Destiny decided to transport to the blood bank instead of walking. To avoid being seen, she stepped into a restroom then disappeared.

The blood bank was spooky, with its dim lighting and cool temperature. Destiny materialized in a corner and stood for a minute to get her bearings. A movement in the center of the room caught her attention.

She froze as she watched a familiar figure move toward the refrigerated units where the bags of blood were stored. The storage units had glass fronts on them so attendants could easily see how many bags were available. The light from the units confirmed her biggest fear.

The intruder opened the door and pulled out a bag of blood, careful to block the automatic eye that read the large barcode on every bag. They fumbled with the bag, tore the tube from the top of it and drank the blood. They slipped the empty container into a plastic trash bag and sealed it.

Destiny stood motionless until the thief keyed in the code to open the door and slipped from

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the room. She didn't want to explain how she had materialized inside the blood bank.

She transported to her office and sat down at her desk. She was conflicted about her newly acquired information. The scene she had just witnessed was incongruent with the person she knew. A knock on her door drew her thoughts away from the thief.

“Come in,” Destiny called out.

“I'm so glad you are here,” Whitney exclaimed. “I just checked on Detective Collins, and all her vitals are perfect. She could be dismissed, but there is a note to discuss her case with you before releasing her. Truth is we need her bed in ICU.”

“I can take her home with me,” Destiny volunteered.

“Great, that will give us just enough beds in ICU to handle our serious cases.”

Destiny pulled her keyboard closer. “I'll do the paperwork right now, then take her home with me.”

“I don't know what I'd do without you,” Whitney declared.

“Please close my door on your way out. I don't want visitors.” Destiny called.

She finished typing the release information into the hospital's database and turned off her computer. She walked to the chapel to find Faith

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kneeling at the altar. She waited for the brunette to stand then approached her.

“I am taking Jamie home with me,” she said. “I’ve got to get a car to drive her home.”

“I’ll get the car,” Faith volunteered. “You get Jamie ready to take home. I will let you know when I’m out front.”

Destiny tiptoed to kiss the woman that had become the center of her life. “I don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“If I have my way, you will never find out,” Faith kissed her back then looked around to make certain they were alone. “I’m out of here.” She disappeared.

Loud arguing in the hallway outside the chapel made Destiny hurry to the door. Lushby was gripping Darla by the upper arms and shaking her. “If you don’t do as I tell you, I will make certain the entire world knows what you are.”

“I despise you,” Darla growled. “You are repulsive.”

Lushby shoved her to the floor and kicked her. “What’s going on here,” Destiny stepped into the hallway.

“I’m just teaching the little woman some manners,” Lushby snorted. “Nothing that concerns you.”

“Anytime a man mistreats a woman half his size, it is my concern,” Destiny replied as she held out her hand to pull Darla to her feet.

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Lushby pulled back his fist to strike the doctor then fell to his knees clasp his chest. Destiny shoved him over and pulled Darla to her feet. "Let's leave your husband to cool off," she said.

"I think he is faking a heart attack," Darla said as they walked away from Lushby. "He does that all the time."

A snarling, growling sound grew louder behind them and Destiny whirled around to face a charging monster. "What the hell?" she screamed.

"Run, Darla," yelled. "He will kill you."

Destiny moved her hand slightly and the monster froze in its place. "What is this. It looks like a slobbering vampire. Look at those fangs!"

"It is," Darla admitted. "He will kill you."

"Can he be destroyed?"

"I don't think so. Heaven knows I've tried."

"How did you end up with him?"

"It's a long story for another time. Why is he frozen like a statue?"

Destiny shrugged wishing Faith would materialize but knowing it would be unwise for her to appear before Darla.

"Call hospital security," Destiny instructed. "Tell them to bring a straight jacket. We will have him committed in his present state. He doesn't look like anyone I know."

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Four hospital security men ran toward them stopping in their tracks at the sight of Lushby. “Holy hell,” one of them exclaimed.

“He is a mental patient,” Destiny explained, “and he is extremely dangerous. He thinks he is a vampire. Put him in the straight jacket and take him to the Dallas Behavioral Healthcare Hospital mental ward. I will give him a sedative before you leave so he will remain calm until you can turn him over to a healthcare professional. Give them my card and tell them I will be in tomorrow to fill out the paperwork for him. Emphasize that he is extremely dangerous and they should keep him sedated.”

“Will do, Doc,” one of the guards said as they wrapped Lushby in the straight jacket and strapped him into a wheelchair.

“What will happen to him?” Darla asked.

“He will die in the insane asylum” Destiny said. “He will never bother you again.”

“I don’t know how to thank you.”

“You could start by telling me how you became involved with Lushby and why you steal blood from the blood bank.”

“May we go into your office?”

Darla began her story as they walked to Destiny’s office. “Five years ago, I went on vacation in Romania and toured Bucharest and Transylvania. I was fascinated by Bram Stoker’s novel *Dracula*, so I toured Dracula’s castle which really had no

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connection to the book at all. It was just an old castle the locals used to attract tourists.”

They entered Destiny’s office and sat down.

“When I met Elbert. He was handsome, attentive, elegant, and fascinating. He was introduced to our tour group as the owner of the castle. Dracula’s Castle was extremely impressive, and the furnishings were spectacular. I could honestly see myself living there several months out of each year. To make a long story short, Elbert wine and dined me, and I fell in love with the man I thought he was. We were inseparable the month I was there and he escorted me all over Romania giving me detailed information about the country and its many ancient castles. “When my trip was nearing its end, he presented me with a huge diamond ring and asked me to marry him. I was certain I’d met my soulmate and accepted his proposal. We opted for a small, intimate wedding and honeymooned in Dracula’s Castle where I was bitten by a rabid bat. I immediately went to the local medical clinic where I was given rabies immune globulin. I took the first of the four rabies shots then came home for the other three spaced over a fourteen-day period.

“Elbert was anxious to get to the United States, especially Texas. He had seen numerous cowboy movies set in Texas and was certain our state was the wild west, home to rough and bawdy

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cowboys. As it turned out that is what he preferred to women.

“We had been home ten days when two men from the state department paid me a visit. They explained that Elbert had stolen an expensive heirloom from the owners of Dracula’s Castle.

“I thought he owned Dracula’s Castle, I responded. That is when I found out it was all part of the show. He was only the tour guide. I graciously gave them the diamond ring he had stolen to propose to me and they didn’t press charges.

“Elbert was an alcoholic and didn’t try to hide it once we were in the states. He had no money and spent most of his time in gay bars running up my credit card.

“I thought I was losing my mind. I couldn’t think straight. Visions of sucking fresh blood from the neck of a human drove me crazy. I ate raw meat and did everything I could think of to satisfy my craving. Then one night a salesman came to our door. I invited him in and offered him a drink. I flirted with him and kissed him then sank my teeth into his neck. He was almost dead when Elbert came home and discovered us. He pulled me off the man and carried him to the nearest all-night clinic and dropped him at the door. I have no idea what became of the man.

“I lived in horror of him showing up with the police but that never happened. Unfortunately, I gave Elbert the hold over me he needed. When I

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demanded a divorce he said he would tell the authorities I was a vampire and they would lock me up for observation. I knew that eventually my fangs would come out and verify his accusations.

“I craved blood. The kind of craving that drives one insane and I developed these.” Darla hissed as her lips drew back exposing long fangs. “It took me a while to realize that Elbert was also a vampire. He preferred big muscular men because he could suck blood from them without killing them.

“I was determined I’d never attack another human being and began stealing bags of blood from our blood bank. Sometimes I would require a bag every other day and other times I only needed a bag a week, depending on the stress I was grappling with.

“Elbert discovered my secret and he began stealing from the blood bank too. He has no self-control and often drank six to eight pints a day.”

“Of course that caught the attention of Dr. Mayberry. She installed cameras to catch the thief, but vampires don’t show up on cameras, so she never caught us.

“Whitney discovered my awful secret and helped me cover it up by changing the monthly reports. Of course, I paid for the blood, so the accounting was always perfect and withstood the quarterly audits.

“I think we have solved your problem with Lushby,” Destiny said. “I’m certain you can get a

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divorce due to his diminished capacity. I suspect they will keep him in a cell and only approach him after he has been sedated. I will recommend that to his keepers. What happens when a vampire can't get blood?"

Darla blew out the breath she was holding. "He will suck blood from his own radial artery in his wrist. He will eventually kill himself. They will think he committed suicide by ripping open his own artery. Similar to slashing his own wrist."

Destiny shivered and shook off the vision of Lushby's eminent death. "I am sorry you are going through this, but on the bright side, you won't have to bother with a divorce."

"It's my own fault," Darla admitted. "I should have known he was after my money."

"I may be able to help you," Destiny volunteered. "Let me check on a few things and see."

"Right now, I must take Jamie home so we can free up a bed in ICU."

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IMAGINE ETERNITY
WITH YOU



“I’ve been offered the opportunity to head up a teaching archaeological dig for Oxford,” she said softly. “I think it is time for me to relocate. Too many inexplicable things have happened around us.”

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Destiny helped Jamie into a wheelchair then wheeled her to the waiting car. “Is Venus okay?” Jamie asked anxiously.

“Yes, from the reports of others at the scene, you shielded her with your body. You almost died,” Destiny informed her.

“I feel good as new,” Jamie declared.

“Three terrorist threw three homemade bombs into the crowd. They were filled with nails, razor blades, bolts, and screws. You are one of the lucky ones. Some were killed and others maimed for life.”

Jamie closed her eyes trying to comprehend how anyone could be so evil. “To kill and maim just for the pure joy of it,” she muttered. “It is the foulest kind of evil.”

Destiny pulled her car under The Athena’s porte cochère. Venus charged out the entrance and pulled open Jamie’s car door. “Thank God you are okay,” she cried. “I was so scared I’d lose you.”

Jamie stood and pulled the dark-haired woman into her arms. “You will never lose me, Venus.”

Venus leaned over to speak to her mother. “I’ll take Jamie to the penthouse. Are you just dropping her off or are you coming up after you park the car?”

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“I’m coming up,” Destiny replied.

“Good. You need to see the latest news.”

Venus took Jamie’s hand and led her to the elevator. “Are you okay?”

“Good as new,” Jamie declared. “Your mom is a miracle worker. The ICU nurses said I would be dead if not for your mom’s skills and Dr. Baker’s too.”

“Sacred Heart is fortunate to have many great doctors,” Venus agreed.

They walked into the penthouse as the television declared that the world’s brain trust was now somewhere at the bottom of the ocean.

“Not just the bottom of any ocean,” the female newscaster exclaimed. “Their destruction proof bunker has come to rest at the bottom of the Challenger Deep portion of the Mariana Trench, the extreme deepest part of the world’s oceans. We don’t know if they are alive or not although experts tell us it is impossible to survive the pressure that deep so the bunker may have imploded on itself or exploded. The more we learn about these criminals, the less we care. No attempt is being made to salvage what is left of them or their bunker.

“Scientists are still trying to explain the tsunami that sucked the Pacific Ocean from the coast of California, picked up Lāna Lèaha Island. and hurled it thousands of miles to the bottom of the Mariana Trench.”

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“On a happier note,” her male counterpart took over, “scientists and AI geniuses are stepping up to the task of monitoring and maintaining all the AI programs that make our lives easier. There was nothing wrong with the AI programs. The problem was with the greedy people who controlled them.

“Programmers are working with congress to put guardrails in place to prevent a few greedy men from benefiting from the world’s artificial intelligence.”

“If they are the men responsible for your kidnapping?” Jamie mused. “They got what they deserved.”

Venus shrugged. “I don’t know anyone who can suck the Pacific Ocean from the beaches of California.”

The elevator door opened and Destiny entered with Faith. “I’ve got pizza,” the brunette announced.

“Pizza” Jamie clapped. “After eating Jello and apple sauce, pizza sounds like a steak dinner.”

“You stay where you are,” Venus instructed. “I’ll grab plates, napkins and cold beer.”

The four women gathered around the coffee table watching the news as the world tried to make sense of the events of the past week.

##

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Jamie stood and stretched. "As much as I enjoy the company, I do need to go home. My neighbor is taking care of Bonnie, and I need to let her know I am okay. Bonnie grieves when I am away from her."

"I will drive you home," Venus volunteered. "I'd love to see Bonnie."

Venus hugged her mother goodbye and whispered in her ear. "Don't wait up for me."

The two left and Faith moved from the floor up to the sofa to sit beside Destiny. "I've been offered the opportunity to head up a teaching archaeological dig for Oxford," she said softly. "I think it is time for me to relocate. Too many inexplicable things have happened around us."

Destiny nodded. "I know. I've been thinking the same thing. There is one more thing I'd like you to do for me."

"Anything." Faith smiled as she kissed the blonde.

Destiny explained Darla's problem. "Can you do anything to make her normal again?"

"I will do that if you grant me a huge favor," Faith bartered.

"Okay."

"Will you go with me?"

Destiny pulled the woman that rocked her world into her arms. "I was afraid you weren't going to ask."

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“You know, gods can marry,” Faith informed her. “Will you marry me and be bound to me forever?”

Destiny closed her eyes.

“Why are you closing your eyes?”

“I am trying to imagine all the adventures we will have together. The possibilities are as endless as the universe. I do want to marry you. For as long as I live, I want to be with you.”

“From past experience, I think that will be a very, very long time.” Faith smiled. “What will Venus say?”

“She will love having the penthouse to herself. She is excited about law school, and I doubt we could drag her away from Jamie.”

“You know, there are other worlds we can explore,” Faith said. “Before we check out new worlds, I must find out what Garth Layne is up to with his soulless-eyed followers.”

“You know I will explore the universe with you, but right now, the only thing I want you to explore is me.”

The End

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The Dark Side of Midnight
Here's to You, Mrs. Anderson
Who Wrote the Thriller Anyway?
Little Lester the Christmas Donkey – Short Story
Relative Stranger
Left for Dead: You Should Have Killed Me
My Sister's Keeper
Coming in 2026
When We Were Gods
Promise Me Tomorrow