

# BOOKISH MAGAZINE

Read a Chapter Month



APRIL 2022



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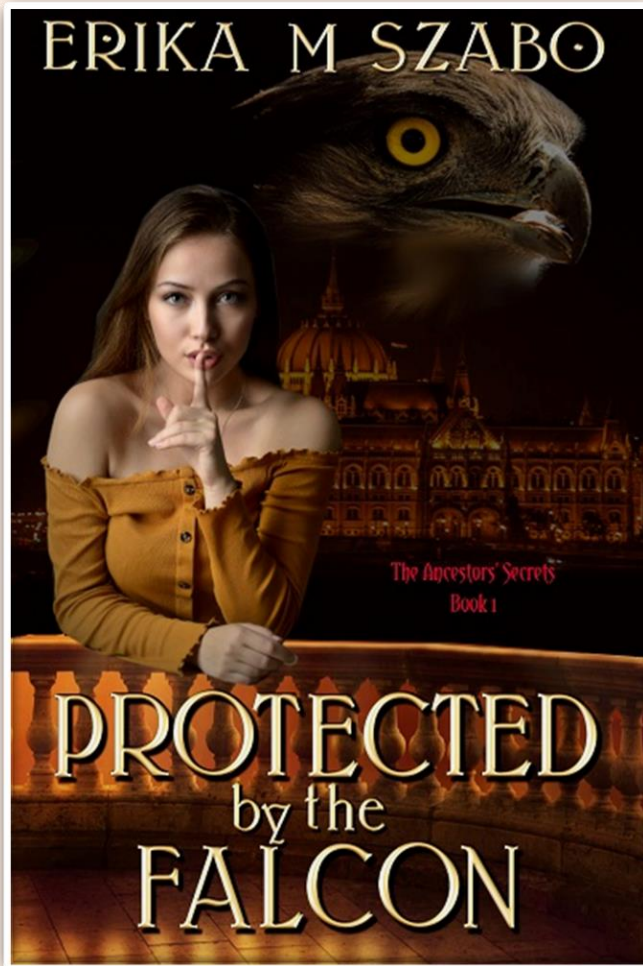




Reading improves memory and cognitive ability. When you read or listen to stories, visualize the characters and scenes, and feel the emotions of the characters, your brain releases the "feel good hormone".

This hormone, dopamine, is the primary driver of the brain's reward system. It spikes when we experience something we enjoy. There are plenty of books in this catalog to provide you with many pleasurable dopamine hits.

Choose from your favorite categories but be adventurous and explore other genres as well. You might find a few precious gems.



## **Epic fantasy, magical realism**

Ilona resigns to live the simple life of a small-town doctor, but her life goes into a tailspin on her birthday. She finds out she was born into a secretive, ancient clan still hidden among us. She starts to develop unusual powers which she finds exciting as well as frightening. She can slow time and heal with her touch, but how and why?

She struggles to find answers, but those who try to reveal the clan secrets are severely punished. A menacing man is following her and wants to kill her. Who is he?

**[EBOOK](#) [PRINT](#) [AUDIOBOOK](#)**

## **Chapter from Protected by the Falcon**

I remembered Mom telling me, “In the Dark Ages, the women down the line of our ancestors were called healers, midwives, and witches. Some of them were burned at the stake if their powers were found out. They all tried very hard to act normal and only heal using known methods of the time, but they couldn’t help slipping up and were occasionally discovered. Can you imagine what would happen if someone knew what you were capable of? There would be a circus of religious caravans and research labs with probing lab tests, and countless machines, trying to analyze the unknown phenomenon.”

No, I definitely didn’t want that. She also told me what would happen if I tried to share my secret with anyone. I didn’t believe her, but I found

out when I tried to tell Bela about it. As I started talking, I felt extremely painful cramps in my stomach as well as sharp, excruciating pains in my head. I couldn't concentrate on anything until I gave up the idea of talking about it. Then the pain stopped as fast as it had started. I learned after a couple of tries that it wasn't worth the pain and also that I would become mute if I attempted to discuss my gift. I understood then why Elza couldn't tell me things. She had the same built-in block that prevented her from talking about things she wasn't supposed to share.

*So, I have a 'gift,' but I have no idea how to use it.* I tried hard to remember what I did to that lady. According to my recollection, after I touched her, I felt the warmth, shooting from my fingers. I recalled the feeling of wanting to make her better and wished her pain to go away. I sat there feeling foolish, as if I were playing with the idea of magic, instead of fixing my broken toe, as a good doctor should. As I stared at my crooked toe and I noticed, startled, that I was humming a rhyme under my breath.



*Pain or fracture, you can touch,  
Fingers warm and glow. You'll watch.  
Make it better, make it gone,  
You won't need a magic wand.  
Little ones can do so much,  
They will give you magic touch.  
Wish it hard and do not stray,  
Pain and hurt will go away.*



*Whoa! Could there be something to these rhymes? Was Mom, teaching me all along by giving me instructions through these simple and easy to remember verses?* I've always been a realistic and logical person, not dense when it comes to learning, but now this whole experience made me feel as if I was slipping from reality into a fantasy world, and I had to learn everything without guidance.

Feeling stupid, but curious, I touched my toes with my fingertips and concentrated on the pain—hoping, but not expecting that it would go away as the rhyme had instructed. To my surprise, my fingers instantly became warm, and then turned hot. The glow came as soon as the warmth started to rise in my fingers. Strangely, I was more amazed than frightened, and then felt something I couldn't explain. My mind was in turmoil, and I felt a rushed and frantic searching from deep inside me. I didn't know what I was searching for, it was a dizzying sensation, but not in a physical sense. Suddenly, I felt content and satisfied, as if I had found something that was lost.

*“Now look what you have done! You have to ask permission!”* I heard an angry voice in my mind, and a misty face of an old woman swam before my mind's eye. It couldn't even register how much the sight and hearing the voice scared me when I heard a sharp yell through the closed door and my vision of the old woman abruptly ended. I looked down at my hand and watched the red glow disappearing as I felt my fingers cooling back to normal. I lifted my hand and gaped at it with increasing anxiety. There was no sign of burn or even redness on my skin. I looked back at my toe, noting with surprise that the pain was completely gone.

The woman who yelled in the locker room started cursing like a drunken sailor.

“This goddamned chair! I stubbed my damn toe. It hurts like flipping hell.” I recognized Lisa's voice.

I called out, “Are you okay? I'll be out in a second. I'll take a look.”

“It's okay, take your time. I'll have Zoltan take a look,” she said, and I heard the door slam a second later.

I averted my attention back to my toe. Alarmingly, it was aligning on its own. I couldn't tear my eyes away as I watched the crooked toe's slight movements, which were out of my control. I heard tiny crunches as the broken bone edges rubbed together. To my utter surprise, I didn't feel



any pain while the bones were moving. I heard little clicking and snapping sounds, after which I felt a slight pull in the tendons and muscles. Even the dark purple bruise faded, and my toe seemed as straight and healthy as it was before it was broken. I had mixed feelings of shock and delight, but mainly I was frightened. *This is totally wicked*, I mused, wiggling my toes carefully. There was no pain at all.

I was bewildered and whispered under my breath, “Only two minutes ago I had laid my hand on my broken toe, and now it is healed. This is exciting, almost unbelievable. Is it really possible that I can heal with a touch? People didn’t talk about my mom as a doctor; they referred to her as a Healer and this morning my mark changed. Is it possible that my mark is the sign of the Healer and mom’s mark was too? This word had a magical or supernatural ring to it... I have to explore this, and if it’s possible, use it.” Hearing my voice made the weird experience more real.

Suddenly, I remembered the paralysis I’d felt after touching the old lady when I was a child. I waited for it to come again, anxiously staring at my hands and moving my fingers. I felt fine, not even a tingle, I guess Mom was right. My body wasn’t ready back then, but I think it might be ready now.

I was really freaked out and nothing made sense, yet I was excited at the same time. I couldn’t explain the vision of the old woman either. *Why did she say I had to ask permission? Who from and why?*

“Dr. O? Are you in there?” I heard a knock and Robert’s timid voice outside the door. He’d never entered the locker room before; something must have happened.

“Yes, I’ll be out in a second,” I responded.

“It’s okay. I didn’t mean to bother you. It’s just that I have to go back to my office, and I thought... I didn’t want to leave the ER unattended. I apologize.” he stuttered.

“I’m okay Robert. I just need a minute.”

“Okay then, I’ll be in my office if you need me.”

Despite all that had happened, and that I was still in a daze, my sense of duty was strong. I took a couple of deep breaths to calm down and splashed some cool water on my face. It wasn’t easy. It took me a few minutes to get my racing thoughts and emotions under control. So much had happened in a short time that my head was spinning. I knew I had to get a grip; otherwise, I would lose it. I had to do something normal, something familiar. I couldn’t afford to freak out.

I opened the door and walked to the station to look at the charts, and when I composed myself enough, I headed out to examine my first patient, Mrs. Molnar. She was lying on a stretcher half covered by a crookedly hanging curtain. Part of the material was ripped; perhaps someone grabbed it for support when falling. They said she was waiting for me. I wondered how she knew me. According to her chart, she was a seventy-year-old woman in good general health who complained of abdominal, mid-chest and back pains with nausea.

I reviewed the X-rays of her abdomen on a portable computer before making my way to her bed. She clearly had a small bowel obstruction. When I pulled the curtain and looked at her, I saw that she had the mark of the Hunor, so I greeted her in our fashion.

“Oh, I’m so glad to meet you,” she gushed. “I was so happy when I saw in the Collective that you were coming of age yesterday, and I heard you were working in this hospital. Please heal me fast. I’ve been in so much pain for two days now, but I was afraid to travel all the way to the closest Healer in Boston.”

I was afraid to dwell on what she said—I knew I’d lose my mind if I did and began examining her, laying my hands on her abdomen to palpate. Suddenly, images started flooding through my mind, as if I were seeing a scope sliding between her intestines and moving around her liver and stomach. Startled, I broke contact.





## Contemporary fiction

On Etta's fishing ground in Foster, Rhode Island—deviant twists of fate with deaths resulting, arise from wild speculations and unwarranted suspicions. Blaze a trail to the point of no return where love and friendship shift ground to withstand the vagaries of life.

## EBOOK PRINT

### Chapter from Etta's Fishing Ground

Either the discordant symphony of katydids and crickets, or the aroma wafting from the cheesy sausage-and-croissant casserole under wraps on the passenger seat, broke Muriel's hypnotic trance.

*She wondered how long she'd zoned out after turning off the ignition and parked. Ten minutes? Fifteen? Her wristwatch indicated 7:55. Nearly 20! More than enough time to till her soiled childhood.*

Discarded by Uncle Reggie, Muriel picked up the pieces of a shattered psyche by focusing on grooming herself in advance of going the distance along the steep, winding incline of Etta's driveway. Flipping on switches to the overhead interior lights, she angled the rearview mirror to better assess collateral damage. She bit into her bottom lip. *Damn!* No cotton

swab at hand when you needed one! Not that her handbag left at home stowed any.

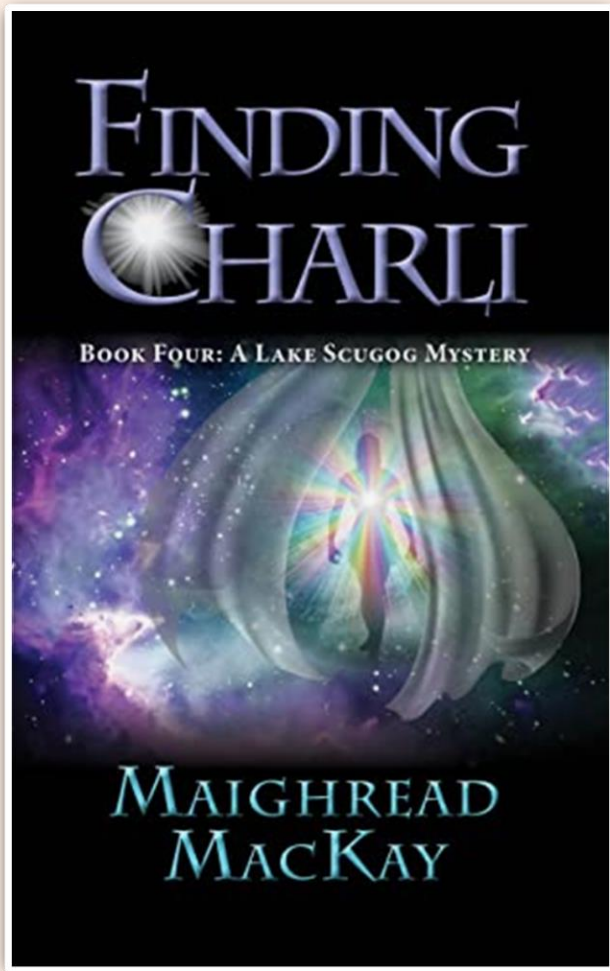
Scavenging a folded tissue from a pocket in her capris, she unfurled it and twisted a corner to ply her ingenuity. She dabbed at the inner corners of her eyes to stem the flow of oncoming teardrops. *Oh, dear!* A lethal combo of oil, sweat, and tears had caused her eyeliner and mascara to migrate south, forming dark smudges resembling raccoon eyes. She made amends the best she could with a primitive thingamajig, but failed to mete out justice. Thenceforth, a few rapid eye blinks would have to do for settling the score.

In a rush to judgment, she turned the ignition key, about to set four wheels in motion toward that point of no return Obie had alluded to earlier. As much as she abhorred her mother, Muriel parodied Lois's closed-mindedness and closed legs on matters related to coupling and copulating. Unable to think outside the box, prudery overrode prudence as she placed the gearshift in drive. A pity it hadn't crossed her mind to tread time by extending Keith the benefit of a doubt.

In retrospect, Muriel should have followed through on her white lie to drop off the casserole at her son's place before Keith's exit wound got the best of her. Or, called it a night by slipping under the covers after removing her dentures and depositing them in a glass on the nightstand. Either decision might have made a world of difference to Etta.

Just as she never stopped to consider the catastrophic consequences of her actions all those years ago, she threw caution to the sultry breezes on a July evening. Muriel inched forward to forewarn, spraying gravel along the ascent to the crest, blind in her devotion to a best friend, and forever indebted to her.

*After all, Etta had given her unconditional love and safeguarded the sordid details of her botched childhood, leaked during one of their sleepovers on a Saturday night at the semisweet age of seventeen.*



### Magical realism

In this fascinating tale filled with complex emotional intrigue and mysterious magical influences, we meet protagonist Charlotte Bancroft when she is at a crossroads in her life. Overcome by grief at the death of her grandmother, Martha, Charlotte finds herself in even more trouble when a winter storm sees her stranded at a strange hotel with a collection of people who are truly never what they seem.

[EBOOK](#)

### Chapter from Finding Charlie

The screeching wind hurled the horizontal snow and freezing rain down the deserted street. Charlotte Bancroft, Charli to her friends, held her arm in front of her face while trudging toward her old Jeep. Ice pellets bit her cheeks and crusted her eyebrows and lashes. The crunch of the snow beneath her boots sounded eerie on the empty road. Tears pooled in her eyes. No, dammit, she wouldn't cry and have her eyes freeze shut. She just needed to reach the car, turn on the heater and defroster and scrape the ice from the windshield. She pressed the key fob, opened the door, and slid into the driver's seat. Turning the key in the ignition, she sighed in relief as the engine turned over. Blessed heat soon poured into the car and Charli sat for a few minutes, letting the feeling come back to her frozen limbs. Grabbing the scraper from the back, she

climbed out and forced it across the windshield. The cracking of ice echoed from the surrounding storefronts. Finished, she climbed back into her car and threw the ice scraper into the rear. Stifling a sob, she clicked her seat belt in place, and prepared to drive away. Before putting the car in gear, the passenger door jerked open, and a man dressed in a hooded parka slid onto the passenger's seat. He threw back the hood. Thick dark hair enveloped a pleasant face, adorned with horned rimmed glasses. Dark brown eyes gazed searchingly at Charli.

“Ben! You nearly scared me half to death!” Charli gasped as her hand flew to her heart.

“Sorry. I saw you were about to head out and wanted to catch you before you left,” he said grinning sheepishly.

“Well, you're over an hour late, so I thought you weren't coming,” she bristled as she turned off the motor.

“Give me a break. I only got your text this morning. I couldn't get away from the office before now.”

“I've been calling and texting all week, but you didn't bother to reply,” Charli sneered.

“I wanted some time to think about you... us. I don't understand what the problem is. I love you and want to marry you. Is that so difficult to understand?” he said as he ran his fingers through his hair.

“No, but like I told you last week, what I don't get is, why now?” Charli responded. “We've only been together... what? Two years? I thought we were doing great. I don't want to change anything. I'm not ready.”

What had started out as a fun relationship now felt suffocating and her brain was screaming ‘no.’ She did love him. He was funny, generous, kind – all qualities she admired in a man. But she wasn't about to be pressured into a lifelong commitment when she wasn't ready. She undid her seat belt and turned to face him, waiting for his reaction. He scowled.



“Is there a time limit as to when you’re supposed to fall in love? A couple of years is long enough for me to realize I love you and want to spend my life with you,” he said glancing sideways at her. “You love me as well, right?”

“Yeah...,” said Charli hesitation sounding in her voice.

“What? Now you’re not even sure you love me?”

“No... no... that’s not what I said. I... I.”

“Guess that answers my question,” fumed Ben. He sat for a moment, bouncing his knee, and scowling at the floor. Charli waited holding her breath. Finally, he lifted his head, eyes cold and hard. “If you’re not sure you love me, then waiting for you to make up your mind is a waste of time. Think I should be moving along. So long, Charli. See you ’round.” He stepped out of the car and slammed the door.

“Ben, wait. Wait,” cried Charli struggling to get out of the car. By the time she had, Ben had gone into the restaurant, and closed the door.

Charli climbed back into the Jeep and wearily put her head down on the steering wheel. A tear trickled down her cheek. She brushed it away and slammed her fist onto the wheel. “Jerk. I am not going to let some man manipulate me into getting married when I’m not ready. If he wants it that badly, let him find someone else.”

She put on her seatbelt and backed out of the parking space. With the wind screeching in fury, the 4x4 fishtailed down the street onto Highway 12.

Ice pellets pinged the windshield. Her hands grasped the steering wheel as she chewed on her lip. The snow was falling more heavily now. Her stomach tightened until it felt like it was touching her backbone. Bile backed up in her throat. It was nearly impossible to see the side road to the ranch. Creeping along, she finally spotted the cut-off, and turned right. Surrounded by forest, this was usually her favourite part of the

drive, but not tonight. Leaning forward, she gripped the wheel harder following the road up and down hills for several kilometres.

In the forest to her left, she was distracted by a light shining through the darkening sky. Shaking her head to dispel the image, she peered at it again, but it had disappeared as quickly as it came. What was that? A shiver went through her. Shaking her head and focussing again on the road ahead, she spotted a clump of trees that marked the far edge of the ranch.

“Almost home,” she whispered. With adrenaline coursing through her body, she pushed a little firmer on the accelerator. The tires found a patch of black ice. Charli yanked the steering wheel hard to the right as the car spun out of control. It skidded off the road, onto the shoulder, and into the woods, bouncing, and accelerating as it clipped trees and bushes.

Screaming, and clenching the steering wheel tighter, the scene around her went by in slow motion. The passenger’s side of the car slammed into a large tree. Front air bags exploded. Without side protection, her head whipped sideways and cracked on the driver’s side window sending shards of light exploding inside her skull. The car shuddered to a stop. It went silent and dark. Nothing could be heard but the shrieking wind.



### Urban fantasy/crime thriller

Carol Ainsworth has her work cut out this time! Dealing with pissed-off Russians, the reborn builder of much of Victorian Victoria, a young girl claiming to be our aforementioned psychic and there's something wrong with Nathan, Carol's nephew that they saved from death. To top it all, why is Agnes' behaviour so weird? Even for Agnes, after she discovers a secret that she can't reveal to anyone, including herself, and how does one psychic stop another from hunting her down?

[EBOOK PRINT](#)

## Chapter from The Mystery of Ms. Teak

### Victoria, 1862

“Agnes I'm going to fricking kill you,” Carol blurted under her breath as her high, black, Victorian leather boots with lace inserts in the front sank an inch into the thick slop of Government Street in downtown Victoria, “when I get out of this.”

A large chestnut-colored horse whinnied as it trotted by pulling the open carriage. The smell of manure ripe in the summer warm air. She glanced at the front page of the Victoria Colonist newspaper. “1862? What? I'm supposed to be in October 1929.”

The sharp snap of a riding crop as the driver urged the horse through the fresh mud, flinging muck up from the carriage's large wooden wheels

to land on the high pleated hem of the lacy ankle-length dress Carol was trying to keep clean.

“Bastard!” she muttered, as she stepped onto the wooden sidewalk and swiped at the stinking mixture of manure and mud on the fabric with her dainty gloves. “It’s going to take hours to wash this off by hand.”

She sat down on the cast iron bench next to her, clenching her shawl around her as tears threatened. If I ever get out of this and get back.

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One week ago, present day.

“We’ve got two heat signatures in the water.” Dimitri glanced at the screen of his darkened luxury disguised cruiser in the dark waters of Victoria’s Inner Harbour. “Swing the ship around and eject the clean-up crew. There can be no witnesses to what happened here tonight, understood?” He spat at Ivan, his second in command and the other men in the control room. My bosses back in Moscow are not going to like this one bit.

He reached for his wireless mike. “Starboard 90 degrees. Prepare units one to five. Silent run.”

A rumble rolled through the ship as the side door lowered into the night sea. Dimitri caught the five blackened sea-doos, from his captains quarters, all armed by men in black scuba gear speed away to the fire still bellowing from the exploding cruise ship. No one had yet to come to the burning ship as sirens went off in the darkness, but he knew the Victoria Fire and Naval Rescue would be here in minutes.

“Blyat.” Dimitri swore as several blips went off on his radar screen. “What the hell is that, Ivan?”

Ivan strained at the sounds the boat could pick up through the external mikes on his earpiece. “Call them back, seychas.”

Dimitri stared at his screen. “Why?”



“I’ve got three other heat blips racing towards them. Moving extremely fast. Da.” He glared up at Dimitri next to him.

“Po Hooy, take them all out. I can’t have any witnesses.” He watched the exploding drug ship that they had boarded and taken down only an hour before, as instructed by his Mafioso contracts. Only they were supposed to board it and take over the drugs aboard, not sink the damn thing.

“They came from this ship here.” Ivan jabbed at the screen.

“What ship? Lisus Khristos, where did that come from??”

“Like us they’re using jamming equipment. I’m getting typical American signatures.”

“Fucking Americanos. Call my men back! I can’t have us tangling with American authorities in Canadian waters, the mob doesn't pay me enough for this.”

## **1862**

Moisture streamed down Carol's face as she crossed the muddy road in the middle of Douglas Street, Victoria looking for the nearest cool spot to relax in before deciding what to do next. God, I hate 1862, especially wearing these damn petticoats in the summer heat. I don't know how women do it. Or why. In a hundred years they'll be strutting about in miniskirts and cropped tops and the bloody person I'm supposed to be looking for probably isn't even born yet. Crap.

She turned as she heard the sound of a slap and a woman cried out. A man dressed in suit, tie and black bowler hat stood over a woman dressed in pink crenellated type dress bulging out from the petticoats under it, much like Carol's. She had dropped her sun parasol and was bending to pick it up as he berated her, her face red from the smack he'd inflicted. “Again, you do as I tell you and walk behind me. I am your husband.” He grabbed her arm and forced her backwards. The woman slipped on the rough surface stumbling.

Carol widened her eyes in rage. A flash of memory, like déjà vu. She'd stood there once before and watched a woman being brutalized and had done nothing. She gritted her teeth. Don't interfere! Don't do anything to affect the timeline. Be as inconspicuous as possible. This mantra-like rule had been drilled into her head by Agnes repeatedly before she sent her back in time through the vortex.

The man smacked the back of the woman's head again. Her lacy hat fell forward and tears steamed her cheeks as she struggled to get up. "Again, you will do as you are told. You are embarrassing me and look at yourself, so filthy."

That's it, 1862 or not, and to hell with the timelines, I ain't putting up with this kind of dehumanizing bullshit, especially against a woman. Carol she stormed over and offered a hand to help the lady up.

"Unhand my wife, woman. She belongs to me and I am about to miss my ship." He scowled at her as a young, well-figured woman stood quietly by, luggage in hand, eyes averted. Carol supposed her to be the maid.

"You son-of-a-bitch! You have no right to treat anyone, particularly your wife, with this kind of abuse."

His eyes opened in absolute shock, as did his wife's. "Abuse? She is mine to treat how I like. How dare you talk to me in such a manner!" He scowled his thick eyebrows down at her. "I am not used to being confronted by like this at all, and certainly not by a woman."

"Yeah, only I ain't a lady by this century's standards, nor do I take crap like this. And neither will she."

He sneered in sheer contempt. "I beg your pardon! If you are married I will inform your husband of this mortifyingly outrageous behaviour and leave him to deal with such a rude woman. If not married, you must be some kind of whorehouse madam. And I'll treat her like the bitch she is." He grabbed the woman's arm roughly. The lady cried out in agony.

Screw timelines. Man, I shouldn't do this, but I can't in all honesty let him do that to her and call myself a self-respecting modern woman. "Eat this, fucker."

Carol threw a punch with everything her anger could muster. His eyes opened in shock as she cracked him one on the nose. Blood spurted as he fell backwards into the mud of Douglas Street. She grimaced as pain surged in her fist and tried to shake it out.

"I'll fix you, you bitch." He began to get back up, blood streaming down his face. Carol decked him again before he could react and flattened him to the ground.

She took his wife by the hand as she stood there in shock. "Come with me, I need some help, and it is obvious do you too."

The woman smirked and put her hand over her mouth. "You just punched my husband in the face!"

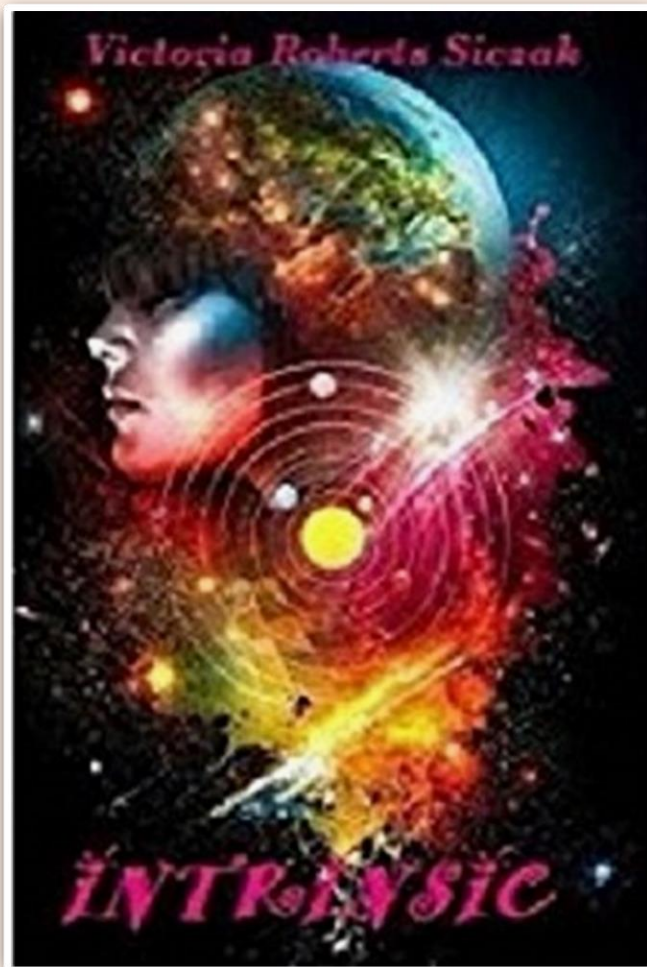
"He slapped yours."

"He is allowed to do so, so many husbands do without complaint and more."

"Lady, hang the laws of eighteen-whatever. Where I come from this is totally unacceptable behaviour and, in fact, against the law. Come with me, we need to talk." Carol pulled her along as they headed around the corner. She caught the maid trying to stem the tide of blood running from his nose as he coughed and tried to get up.

"Don't you dare leave with that whore," he spat as the maid tried to help him up.

With a smile spread across her face the woman never even looked back as they strode off.



## Metaphysical science-fiction

Catastrophic events have occurred throughout the Pacific Ocean in the region known as the Ring of Fire. Scientists, spiritualists, and mystics strive to find the causes for the Earth imploding, exploding and cracking itself open. What if the indwelling spirits of the Earth only way to save their continuance would be by eliminating the things that are destroying them...namely mankind!

[EBOOK PRINT](#)

## Chapter from Intrinsic

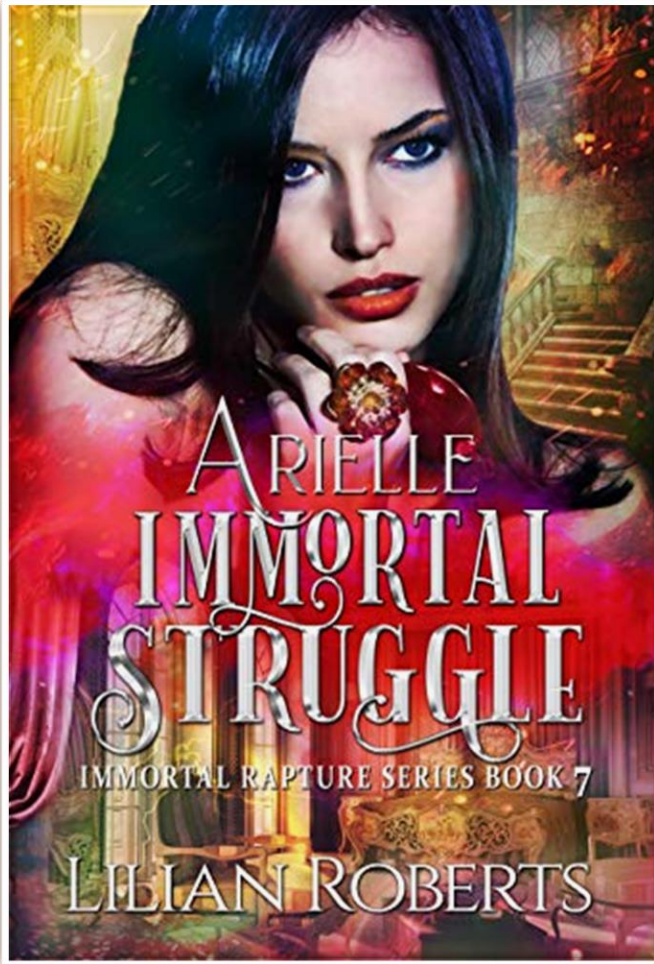
Ian sank down to the floor. He knew it would only be a matter of minutes before the massive waves crushed down upon them, destroying everything and obliterating everyone. His life passed through his mind in a blur, each instant recognized as a tribute.

Debra was collecting data from the computer information center in Washington D.C. Nations were collaborating, sending military forces, national guards and emergency personnel from areas not devastated by the upheaval of the earth's fury. "Cocos Plate sub-ducting beneath the North American Plate. There is seismic activity being recorded and evacuations are underway. If this volcano erupts, Mexico will lose over ten million people!"



Ian looked up. Now that he had accepted his fate, he was concerned about the fate of the rest of the world. She looked over at Ian. He was mouthing words, his eyes closed, and his hands clasped together. She frowned, concentrating on the movement of his lips, the quietness of his voice and the calmness of his stature. It appears he had accepted his fate and put his faith in his God.

That's it, Debra thought. The Christians believed that events such as these would signal the apocalypse. But the eschatological panic by the conflation of the religious and the political themes, increased political significance of religious identity since the onset of the culture wars. Protestants from denominations sought evangelicalism, and the revived rhetoric of opposition between Christianity and Islam since the year 2000, had entrenched Christian apocalyptic themes in current versions of paranoia. She knew from history and sciences, that humans had been supplementing the story of the beginning of mankind and prophesizing the end. Every religion had a Creator, a Garden of Eden, and final days...the end of the world, and the destruction of civilization. However, she knew from her philosophical studies, the Greek word apocalypse, meant not only destruction and the disruption of reality, but the dismantling of perceived realities. It was an ending of endings, a shocking tremor of revelation that destroyed all creation in its wake. It renewed as it destroyed, with its destruction bringing an epiphany about the universe, the gods, or God. She continued to speculate as the submarine darted and twisted through the lava rock and turbulent waters.



### Paranormal romantic fantasy

Sebastian Gaulle has been targeted by the Russian Mafia, who will stop at nothing to force him into giving up his company's most valuable secrets

He is consumed with worry and determined to rescue his only love, but even after she's safe in his arms the threat to her and everyone they love will not end until the criminal organization is eliminated for good. With the help of his immortal allies, he leads a coordinated strike on the Mafia's goons.

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT\*\*](#)

### Chapter from Immortal Struggle

While getting ready for class, they fell into a pleasant conversation. She was leaning over, adjusting her Nike laces, when his next question hit her like a ton of bricks.

“Have you seen that black Mercedes lately?”

She jerked her gaze from her shoe to Sebastian, and her smile slipped. For a short moment, she couldn't move. *Where did that come from? Why would he even ask a question like that?* “What?” she squeaked. Silence fell over the room while she stood there stunned and studied his face. She noticed the same tension that she had seen plaguing him for the past two weeks.

She had pushed the fact that something was terribly wrong into a far corner of her mind, and now was the perfect time to bring all the questions back and make him fess up to the truth. Her eyes closed, and she took a deep breath. Anger flared and stripped her self-control. “So you lied...you lied...you lied!” she shouted, the blood draining from her face. “You made up rubbish about Dylan and the Mafia and the company. You’re hiding something from me, Sebastian.”

His eyes widened in unmitigated surprise. He opened his mouth and closed it again.

“What in bloody hell is really going on?” she continued, clenching her fist to her side.

Sebastian stared at her, utterly astonished at her outburst. Of course, nobody had ever accused him of being a liar. As an immortal, he couldn’t lie. He could only give a different explanation of the issue in hand. The fact that Dylan had cautioned him about the Mafia goons, that they were after his company, and that they were going to do everything in their power to achieve their goal, all that was true. He merely left out a small detail, because he didn’t want to frighten her. Jorrit’s goons were going to try to use her as bargaining chip to accomplish what they needed from him. So she was in grave danger.

Another long moment of silence passed before he finally spoke. “I have no idea what you are talking about?”

Arielle stood up, and their gaze locked. She saw a bewildered shadow flash across his eyes and she felt a piercing twinge of remorse coursing through her. She didn’t have to yell at him in such a harsh manner. Her words came out with more anger than she had intended. She sighed, exhausted from trying to learn the facts. This had been going on for two bloody weeks.

“Arielle, you know that I can’t lie, so please have faith in me. I have my reasons for not giving you all the facts, and if you love me, you’ll have to trust me. Can you do that?”

She rose from the bed and gazed at him across the room. “I’m sorry, Sebastian. I’m just worried that something is going on, and as usual, you keep me in the dark. I’m a strong person, in case you haven’t noticed. *You just have to trust me and give me a chance.*” *And if this doesn’t have something to do with me, I’ll be a monkey’s uncle.*

Sebastian raised his brows, all pretend innocence and shock. “Why, Arielle, I do trust you. This has to do with both of us. It is our company in danger and, therefore, we are in danger.” He didn’t like arguing with her. He pushed away from the dresser--his eyes warm, loving--and slowly closed the distance between them. His shirt was still unbuttoned, exposing his beautiful muscled chest. He was stunningly handsome and she swallowed past the lump that lodged in her throat. Her eyes roamed over him, desire settling, drinking him in. He was now towering over her, and her mouth went dry, utterly transfixed by his nearness. Placing a finger under her chin, he lifted her face up to his, his lids half-mast. Lowering his head, he brushed her lips with his gently. “I do trust you, my love. Please put your clothes on; we’ll be late for class.” He lifted his eyes from her lips and the corners of his mouth kicked up.

She fixed him with a firm expression on her face. “You are not going to tell me, are you?”

“No,” he replied, a smile playing on his lips. “I have said all that I am going to say. And you have to accept it.”

She scoffed at his reply. She opened her mouth to argue, but he cut her off by lifting his index finger and pressing it against her lips. “Go—get—ready.” His voice was gentle, not annoyed. The composed gaze in his emerald eyes resigned her to the fact that this conversation was over. After several seconds of silence, he released her reluctantly. She frowned



and, shaking her head in exasperation, she turned and stormed into the bathroom.

“This conversation is far from over,” she mumbled, shutting the door behind her. She heard his soft chuckle.

As they drove on, heading for campus, the silence in the car fell thick and intense. Arielle was pouting. Reaching out, he clasped her hand and pressed it softly. “I wish that you’d stop being mad.”

She sighed and kept her eyes on the road. “I’m not mad.”

“Funny way to show it.”

“Sebastian, stop.”

“I will when you stop acting like you are right now.”

“And I will stop when you start including me in your troubles, which apparently you’re not doing right now,” she snapped. “Arielle, you shouldn’t be so quick to judge me. I’m trying to keep you safe and happy. That’s all I’m trying to do.” He pulled her hand to his mouth and pressed feather kisses against her knuckles. “Fine,” she said petulantly, unable to prevent mockery from touching the tone of her voice.

Sebastian’s jaw tensed. A sinking sensation gripped him. *What the devil is she thinking? I absolutely cannot, and will not, divulge all the grim details about the danger that is about to be thrust upon us.* He was sure that he would be able to take care of all the problems that came along and avoid putting additional anxiety and discomfort on Arielle. He was going to keep her safe, but in the meantime, he hated to see her troubled and worried. He shook his head and muttered his exasperation in that immortal way that she was never able to follow. Silence stretched. She felt the weight of his gaze on her, but she turned away, resting her head against the headrest.

“Are you all right?” he asked.

“Yeah. I’m fine.” She fell silent again, her thoughts churning wildly. *Oh, how I wish that I could read his thoughts.* She knew it was an outlandish thought that would go unsatisfied, but she could dream. She released a soft sigh and closed her eyes. Sebastian’s mobile ringing broke the silence. He let go of her hand and hit the accept button on the screen.

“Hello,” he answered blankly.

“Sebastian, it’s Nathan. I have the report that you asked for.” “Hi, Nathan, I’m in the car with Arielle, going to class. I was planning on coming to the office later this afternoon. Is it urgent?” “No, it’ll keep.”

“Fine. Thanks, Nathan.”

He pressed the disconnect button, set the mobile back down on the hand rest, and clasped her hand gently once again. He didn’t miss that the tightness in her lips increased.

“What?”

She glanced at him, eyes narrowed to slits. “I’m bloody sick and tired of being kept in the dark.” *There, I told him.* His eyes widened. “What the devil are you talking about?” he asked. She could hear the surprise in his voice.

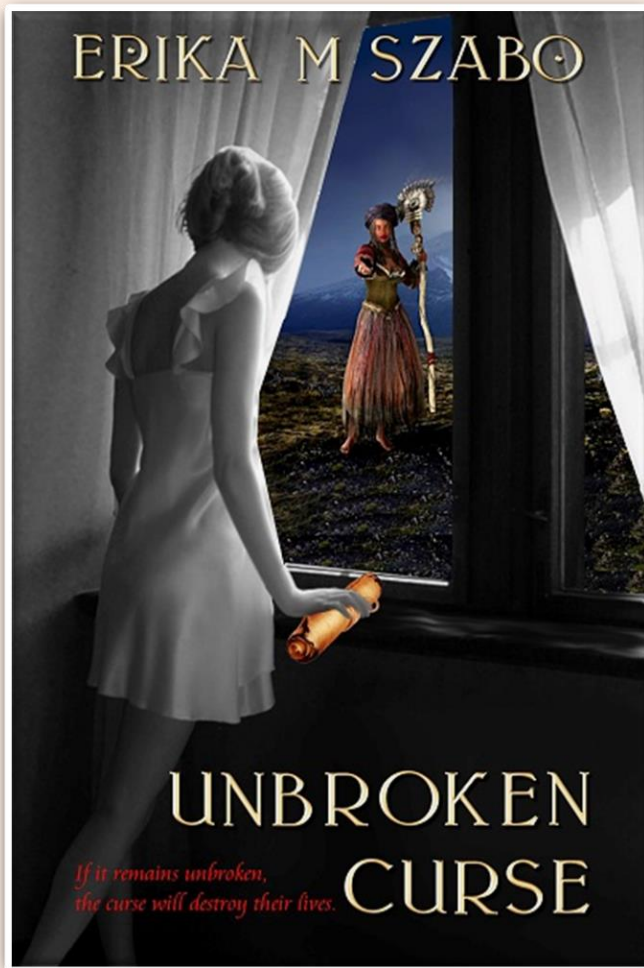
“Um,” she started to say, but she stopped. She just stared at him. “What?” he pressed on.

“What did Nathan want?”

He didn’t answer right away. The question clearly surprised him. He shook his head in exasperation. “Is this really about Nathan’s call or is there something else that’s bothering you?”

“Um...well, it is that, and Dylan’s calls, and all the other calls with Troy in that weird immortal language of yours. I want to know what’s going on.”

Keeping his eyes on the road, he started to laugh. “You think that I’m weird?”



### Alternate history suspense

A powerful curse cast sixteen hundred years ago destroyed the lives of their ancestors for centuries. If it remains unbroken, the curse will ruin the lives of future generations as well. Jayden's life is in danger. When he finds a crude leather book in his grandmother's secret room that was written in 426 by a Shaman, his sister, Sofia, deciphers the ancient runes. They learn about their family curse and dark memories of their childhood start to surface.

Is it possible to break the ancient curse and save Jayden?

[EBOOK PRINT](#)

### Chapter from Unbroken Curse

The old stone mill quarry in the mountains on the Northeast side of Hungary had been buzzing with activity for days. Archaeologists found 16<sup>th</sup> century artifacts the year before, but when they restarted the site in the spring and dug deeper, they'd unearthed an ancient burial site in the six-foot-deep layer. As the initial assessment estimated, this layer had been buried since the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

The excited murmurs of a group of archeology students at the bottom of the large, six feet deep hole sounded muffled. But when a lanky young man in dusty overalls ascended the stepladder and yelled out to the lead archeologist standing by the tent, his voice boomed, "Helen, you have to see this!"

A middle-aged plump woman with salt and pepper hair pulled into a tight bun froze for a second, and then started running toward the student. “What did you find?” she wheezed, her chest tightening by the sudden excitement and anticipation.

“Come down and see!” The student hurried down the stepladder giving space to Helen to descend into the deep, large space.

“Damn!” she exclaimed when her shaky legs missed a step, but the young man broke her fall and steadied her on her feet. “Thanks,” she mumbled.

“Look!” One of the female students pointed at the white horse skull poking halfway out of the soil. “Look at that beautiful bridle!” She looked up at Helen beaming with joy.

“It’s magnificent!” Helen whispered. “The finest craftsmanship I’ve even seen.” She carefully ran her fingers through dry, hardened leather. “The usage of gold and alloy of copper and zinc proves that this warrior had a funeral fit for a noble leader.” She knelt by the skull and took the brush from her student. “I got this. You three start unearthing the rest of the skeleton,” she pointed and added with a stern look on her face. “Be careful!”

The other two holes they dug days ago were occupied by students kneeling in the dirt, brushes, and fine chisels in their hands. They carefully scraped away the dirt layer by layer. Next to them laid out on a weathered tarp were weapons, jewelry, and everyday items from around the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. They had been working in the hole since dawn knowing it would be too hot to work close to midday when they would be forced to take a break until around mid-afternoon.

*What are they buzzing about?* A gangly, middle-aged man in a security guard uniform peeked into the deep pit planting his feet firmly to the ground. *Good! Them keep finding stuff is my job security.* He straightened up with a grunt and turned to find his partner. *That fool is*



*sleeping again!* He walked over to the tent and punched his stocky partner's shoulder who was softly snoring in a fold-up chair under the shade of the tall oak tree by the tent. "Hey, sleeping beauty!"

"Uh, what? Jesus! I ain't sleeping. Just restin' me eyes," the balding man sat up straight and wiped spittle from the corner of his mouth with the back of his hand.

"If they catch you snoozing, you can say goodbye to this well-paying cushy job," the lanky man warned his friend.

"Yeah, yeah," the heavysset man mumbled. "They're in the holes busy brushing dirt off of old stuff. And who would come up to this place to steal anything, anyway?" He stretched his hands over his head and let out a loud yawn before reclining once more on the fold-up chair with obvious intent to resume his slumber.

"Just keep your eyes open! I'm gonna drive down to town to pick up the breakfast from the coffee shop."

"Okay, hurry up. I'm starving."

The tall man walked down the path between the thick bushes to the clearing where the archeological team parked their cars. Despite his promise, his porky partner's chin dropped to his chest as soon as he was out of sight. *I'll just close me eyes for a moment*, he thought. His breathing slowed as he fell asleep.

Jayden, a young American archeologist worked in the fourth pit alone. Although Helen wanted everyone to concentrate on the three holes they'd found the artifacts, Jayden convinced her to let him try the abandoned pit again. He pulled a crumpled handkerchief from his dusty overall's pocket to wipe the sweat off his forehead. "Phew! It's already hotter in this hole than in the witch's oven." He mumbled under his breath while he pulled a hairband off his wrist and tied his shoulder-length auburn hair into a man bun. "I should get a haircut."

A few minutes later his chisel made a welcomed sound as it touched metal in the ground. Energized by the excitement of his discovery, he began the painstaking work of carefully scraping the packed dirt off the rusty handle of an ancient sword. “Come on, beautiful! Show me your glorious body,” he whispered.

As he changed position and knelt back down, a small black snake wiggled toward him from the dark corner of the ten feet wide hole. “Geeze!” he exclaimed and threw himself backward, not sure if the snake was poisonous or just an innocent garter snake that had fallen into the pit by accident. The moment his elbows hit the dirt and feet still up in the air, an arrow hit the exact spot he was kneeling a second ago with such force that the wide obsidian arrowhead nearly disappeared into the dirt with the shaft violently vibrating.

“What the hell!?” he cried out in fright and looked up. Six feet up at the mouth of the hole he saw his sister staring down at him holding a recurve bow. She let out a furious scream and disappeared. “Sofia? When did you... how did you get here? Wait!” He yelled and scrambled to get to the stepladder as fast as he could. “Sofia! Wait!” he shouted as he climbed out of the dig hole.

The stocky security guard woke to the high-pitched scream, jumped to his feet feeling confused and dumbfounded. “Hey! What are you doing there?” he yelled at the young girl running from the pit. She glared at the guard with a murderous expression on her face. Clenching her fists, she growled and ran toward the path between the thick bushes and soon disappeared from sight. The guard grunted and stomped after her as fast as his heavy body could move.

Jayden finally out of the hole looked around frantically but didn’t see his sister anywhere. His teammates climbing out of the larger pit ran toward him and looked at him questioningly. “What happened?” one asked. “What’s going on?” others shouted.

“A woman just tried to kill me! She fired an arrow into my hole,” Jayden said running toward the narrow path. He couldn’t tell them his suspicions without proof about the woman being his sister.

His teammates followed, and they saw the small red car speeding down the dirt road and disappearing behind the bushes at the curve. Jayden fished out his keys from his pocket and jumped into his beat-up jeep.

“I’m coming with you!” the guard yelled and stuffed his large behind into the passenger seat.

“When did that woman get here?” Jayden questioned the guard.

“Uhm... I... I was in the tent putting away some tools when I heard the scream. By the time I got out of the tent, she was running toward the cars. I chased after her, but she was running so fast that I could only get a glimpse at her.” His eyes shifted from Jayden to the side mirror as he wiped the perspiration off his forehead.

“Where is your partner?”

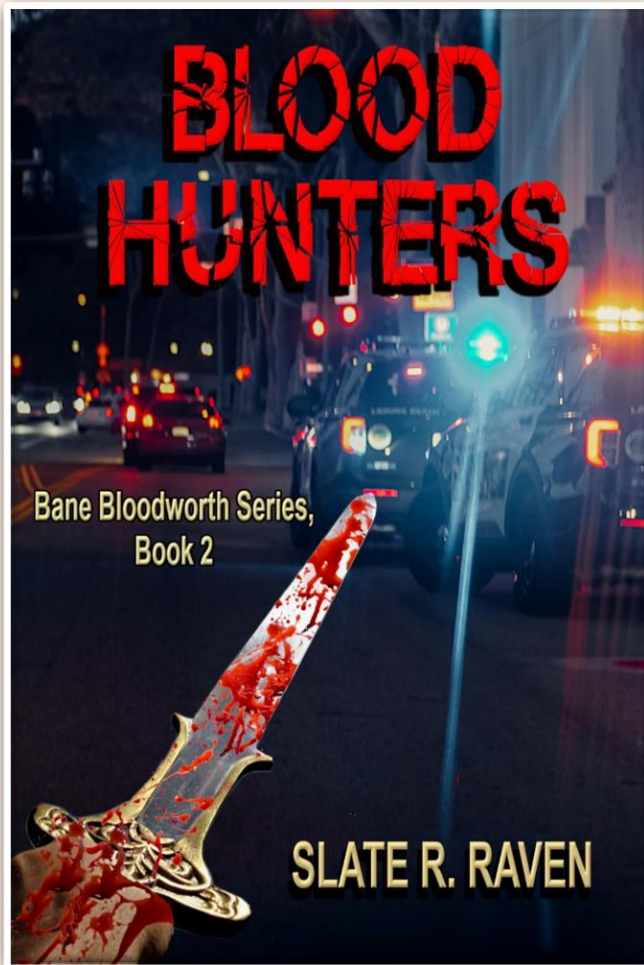
“He drove to town to pick up the breakfast.”

“Oh, right!” Jayden shook his head. “But you shouldn’t have gone into the tent when everyone was in the holes.”

“I’m sorry, I apologize,” the guard mumbled feeling relieved that nobody saw him sleeping on the job. “I couldn’t go after her because my partner gave me a ride this morning. I don’t have a car,” he added his excuse.

The jeep accelerated as Jayden pressed the gas pedal harder. *What the hell is going on? Did my sister just try to kill me? But how did she get here? She’s supposed to be in New York!* Frantic thoughts chased each other in his mind while driving downhill like a madman. “Did you see her firing the arrow into the hole?” he asked the guard.

“No... Man, you’re driving like a devil. Slow down!”



## Supernatural thriller

Bane Bloodworth is back! Once again, something has unleashed the beast within—vengeance. When his blood rage takes over, who dares to stand in the path of the hurricane? Working as one, can the team hope to survive the insane mission that Bane has set before them? With danger ahead and bridges burned behind him, there's only one path back home—through victory. His previous battle against the paranormal had left many bodies in its wake. How many will die now? Will one of them be Bane himself? [EBOOK PRINT](#)

## Chapter from Blood Hunters

The television was unplugged, as were most of the appliances every time Bane went out of town for more than a day or two at a time. He considered it to be not only economical but practical to do this each time. Mainly because if an appliance was unplugged, it held less of a chance to start a fire. Many people considered him to be overly paranoid, but a fire started due to electrical devices in his youth; this started a compulsion in him that took hold as he packed up to leave his house for days on end.

Although the television had no electricity, it suddenly turned itself on.

The image was of his ex-wife, as though she were reporting the news for a local cable network. She sat behind a desk that came up to her abdomen, and Carrie stared straight forward as if into the lens of a



camera. Exceptionally bright lights, coupled with very dark clothing, made Carrie look extremely pale. A slight smile danced at the corner of her mouth; however, her eyes held a sadness of one mourning a terrible loss. Bane knew Carrie so well that even her smallest movement spoke volumes to him.

She glanced nervously from right to left, as though she didn't want anyone else to hear what she was about to say. Deciding she was safe to speak, Carrie did just that.

“Bane, I know this seems strange to you. Just listen to me and keep an open mind, please.” She paused as if knowing he'd say something sarcastic.

He didn't disappoint her. “Yeah, like I'm gonna be able to speak intelligently with a ghost! Which might not differ too much from some of the conversations we've had over the years. But hey, I'm always up for a good lecture. Even if it's a delusion from my mind, instead of my ex-wife nagging at me from beyond the grave.”

“I'm not one of your delusions. Consider this a warning from the dead. Bane, don't go flying off the handle and come out to avenge me. Not everything is as it seems. I moved on with my life; I thought you had too! I'm gone now. You must continue with your life.” Carrie tilted her head, and her shoulders slumped a little. “Before I go, I just wanted to tell you how sorry I am about the things that happened between us.”

“Let's not go through all the stuff again, huh? I prefer my delusions to be free of sappy lies that didn't ring true the first time they were uttered, let alone the final time. This isn't just about you, ya know. I pledged to protect you, and in that, I failed; you know as well I do that it's something I can't allow to go unanswered.” Bane shook his head. “For crying out loud! What am I saying? I'm talking to a television that's not even on; with an ex-wife who is not even alive!”

“You're right. There is no sense in drudging up all those old issues. Can't you put aside your pride and your vengeance for once?! Damn it, Bane! Things aren't always what they appear. Just walk away!” Carrie glanced to the side in fear, then whispered, “Please, Bane, just walk away!”

Abruptly, the screen went dark, and the room seemed to creep back into his field of view. Bane nearly leaped out of his skin when someone thumped heavily on the door behind him. His heart pounded arduously against his chest. Bane's pulse had skyrocketed. He noticed his skin had become cold and clammy. His shaking hands instantly fled to the safety of his Ruger nine-millimeter.

Without drawing his gun, Bane moved to one side of the doorway. He listened carefully. His eyes darted rapidly from side to side, taking a mental inventory of everything in the room. Although he basically knew what the room contained, he still took stock to ensure he forgot nothing. Of course, several weapons of varying types were stashed in each room in his house.

In addition to the standard type of weapons, Bane truly believed in the old warrior's adage that any object could become a weapon. A simple pencil could be used to pierce the flesh into an artery. Or a lamp could be used as a club, inflicting bashing wounds to a potential foe. Even any electrical device with the cord ripped out could become dangerous. One could use the cordless object as a thrown item or the electrical cord still attached to the outlet to shock the enemy with the exposed wires. Plus, the cord could be used as a whip. The number of potential weapons in any decorated room was limitless.

Again, the door was thumped on, and the knob rattled, gently testing to see if the door was locked. It was. Bane pulled his Ruger from its shoulder holster. Flipping off the safety, Bane drew back the hammer.

Doing his best to keep his voice from shaking, Bane shouted out, “What do you want?”

“Man! Are you deaf or what?! I've been knocking on that door for five minutes!” came Rokon's muffled response.

Once Bane recognized Rokon's voice, he opened the door. Rokon simply looked him up and down, concern creasing his face when he caught sight of the readied gun. Then he studied Bane's face like a cartographer would a map. Bane, in response, uncocked, flipped on the safety, and holstered his weapon. He moved back across the room, checking the outlets behind his television. As he suspected, he hadn't forgotten to unplug it, so he could only conclude he had suffered a mental lapse, a delusion.

“You look spent. What's the deal?” Rokon asked.

When Bane started to reply, confusion washed over him. Everything he was about to say seemed to have clouded over in his mind. What was I going to mention? Did I just see Carrie? Was it a delusion? A daydream? Could she have sent a message to him? Where did I just see her again? Oh geez, I was going to tell Rokon about the... the... what? His only answer was something to the effect of, “what?”

“You really don't look so good; maybe you ought to sit down.” Rokon took Bane by the arm and led him to the soft leather sofa that ran along the back wall of the room. While Bane threw himself onto the tan leather couch, Rokon pulled up a chair.

“You really look like you are half dead,” Rokon repeated. “Tell me what happened.”

“Nothing. Forget it.”

“Bane, look at me. We've been friends for how long now. Close to seventeen years, give or take a month. In all that time, I don't think I've ever seen you look quite so out of sorts. Sure, you were pretty messed up after the whole divorce thing, and I've seen you bloody and beaten. But this looks far more painful or terrifying than any of those things. Nothing

you can say will make me think less of you. I've never judged you, and I never will. So, what the hell is going on?"

Bane and Rokon spent a few minutes in relative silence. Rokon didn't speak again because he knew Bane would explain. Bane spent that time trying to collect himself; he attempted to mentally piece together what had just occurred. Once Bane got started, he didn't slow down to take a breath once. The entire scenario was explained in a rapid and somewhat frantic state of mind. Rokon listened intensively, drinking in the entire story; once the tale was told, he took a few moments to put himself in Bane's position.

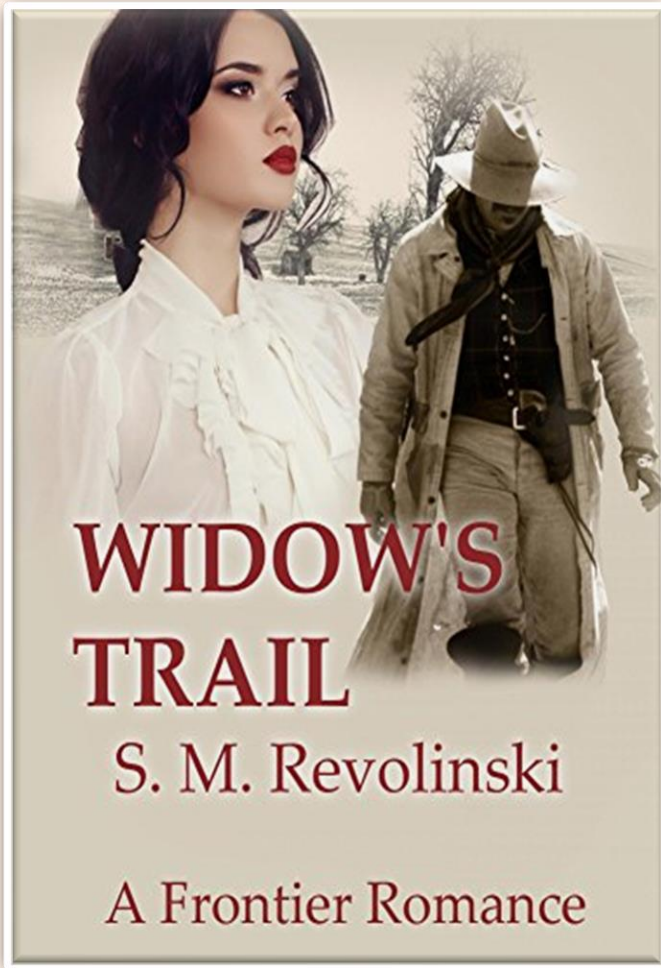
"I've got to admit, with all the strangeness we've encountered so far, it's not too far-fetched. Although, we shouldn't rule out the possibility of it having been brought on by too much stress. The question now is, do we continue on or stop here?" Rokon asked after taking a few more seconds of reflection.

"We're going to continue on from here," Bane said. "Have you ever known me to back away from a challenge? I refuse to be frightened off by anyone, not even my dead ex-wife!"

"Let me tell you about a man who walked out of the darkness into the light. Most said he'd fail; many said he'd be back in less than six months. He made a substantial living when running in shadows, doing things most others fear to attempt. However, he made as much, if not more, working in the light. Which is truly rare, no matter what the storybooks say! You're willing to throw all that away after you struggled so hard to get out?!"

"I walked out of the shadows once to live like a normal person. It took years to clean up the messes of my past, so I could lead an average life. The difference is, back then, I was making up for spending years in that world."





## Western romance

Lovers find each other on the Oregon Trail... Following a hasty marriage of convenience, Gertie joined her husband on the life changing journey to the Oregon Territory. As the mind-numbing drudgery of the Trail became the new bride's daily routine, life dealt Gertie a harsh blow and launched her into a struggle to survive. A romantic adventure story, this book is spiced with Indians, shoot-outs, murder, and hangings — along with the dull daily routine of survival on empty American Frontier. [EBOOK PRINT](#)

### Chapter from Widow's Trail

“I do,” Gerturde proclaimed, just as her father had instructed.

After her seventeenth birthday, he had insisted she marry. She had dreamt of having a loving husband and children. However, Cupid's arrow had never found her heart. Not only was her father unwilling to continue her support, Gertie was blocking the marriage of her younger sister. It was socially unacceptable for the younger sibling to marry first, and Ida had already accepted a marriage proposal. Their mother's remedy had been to locate Mr. Berg for Gertie to marry.

As her mind wandered, Gertie became aware of a sudden silence. The Preacher was staring at her; he nodded toward Peter. Gertie had missed

the Preacher's announcement that they were now man and wife. She had missed his statement: "And now you may kiss the bride."

Gertie turned to her new husband. He was an inch shorter than her five and a half foot tall frame. She bent her knees ever so slightly to bring their noses to the same height. Peter Berg lifted her veil. She looked upon his round face and bushy black beard. She looked deeply into a man's eyes for the first time ever. He held her shoulders. She stood stock-still as he leaned forward and brushed his lips with hers.

Gertie did not move as he backed away—smiling. It was her first ever kiss on the lips, and it was not entirely unpleasant. Her mother had promised she would come to love her new husband—eventually. "He's a fine man from a solid German family," Gertie's mother had said. She had gone on to explain that his first wife had died in childbirth six months earlier. Being the ripe age of seventeen, Gertie would have to settle for an older, previously married man. Peter was twenty-three. The soon-to-be-married couple had been introduced and spoke briefly. There had been no long sighs or deep piercing looks. They had awkwardly held hands. Her father had slaughtered a pig for their hastily arranged engagement party. Gertie had danced with her new fiancé, Peter. And now, they were married—all within the short span of a week. Her life had become a foggy dream and she had no control over what would come next. Gertie's life was changing.

Tugging on her arm, Peter pivoted his bride to face the small gathering of family and friends. She forced herself to smile. He took a half step forward, and tugged her arm to pull her along beside him. Gertie remained rooted for a moment before taking her first step as man and wife. Arm in arm, the newlyweds slowly walked between the stained oak pews and outside, to the church rose garden.

They greeted their well-wishers. The men kissed the new Mrs. Berg on her cheek, and slipped coins and banknotes into the purse dangling from her wrist. Someone began playing a violin. Their previous dance

had been a square-dance in her father's barnyard. This time, they danced a waltz. Gertie enjoyed having Peter's strong hands hold her. He held her very close against his chest. Her pulse raced; Gertie had never before been permitted to hold a man so close.

Maybe Mother is right and marriage won't be too bad at all, she thought to herself.

Gertie was beginning to enjoy being married.

The newlyweds ate, drank wine, and danced as the sun drifted into the west. Twilight settled and the men gathered around Peter to smoke cigars and drink whiskey. Gertie's mother pulled her aside.

"Dear, I need to tell you about tonight—your wedding night," she whispered into Gertie's ear. "Mr. Berg has been married before, and he will know what to do. You must simply lie still and let him have his way."

"What?" Gertie whispered back, though she knew exactly what her mother was referencing.

The Preacher interrupted, with Peter in tow. "It's time for me to give the newlyweds their private blessing," he said.

Peter took her arm and they followed the Preacher into the church. He closed the door. Gertie and Peter sat while he stood over them. The three held hands in a circle.

"My dear," he looked down upon the new bride, "as you know from your Bible study, Ephesians Chapter 5: Verses 22 through 24 outlines a wife's designated position of submission in marriage." He cleared his throat. "Yes, this New Testament verse prescribes to us: Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, and He is the savior of the body. Therefore, as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything."

The man wiped beads of perspiration from his glistening forehead, although it was a cool spring evening.

“Gertie,” he continued, “do you understand what this means?”

“I think so.”

“It means,” he ignored her response, “that you may discuss any conflicts that you have with Peter, but in the end, you must do as he decides. Should a wife fail her husband, the Lord instructs the husband to correct her as appropriate. Now, do you understand?”

Gertie had understood him the first time. She was aware her father ruled the household and her mother, as the Lord prescribed. Thus, she nodded her comprehension of the Preacher’s instructions.

“Excellent. And you Peter, do you understand your obligation to Gertie?”

“I do, sir.”

Again, the Preacher ignored the response. “It is written that the husband’s duty is to ensure that his wife is obedient to himself and thus to God. In doing so, he presents his love for his wife. For there can be no greater love than God’s love for his chosen people. The chosen people pledged love and obedience to God and God rebuked them when they failed in their commitment. Therefore, as a wife has pledged love and obedience to her husband.”

Peter nodded.

Undaunted, the Preacher continued, “Peter, it is also written that you must love your wife as you love your God. This means you must put her wellbeing before all others—before your own. If after toiling all day, you can only put one meal on the table, that meal shall be hers. In this way, you two,” he paused to radiate a smile down upon them, “are united. Caring for each other, as the Lord cares for you. You two are now joined as one. Bow your heads.” Placing his hands on their heads, he completed the blessing.



“Amen,” the three said in unison.

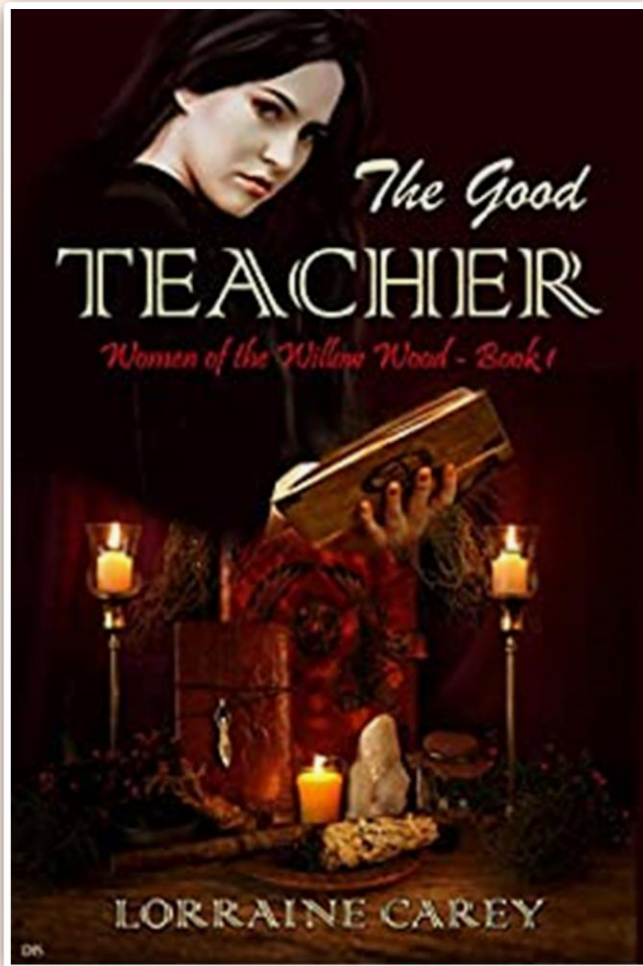
During the lecture, the wedding party had prepared their buggy for departure. When the couple exited the church, the rows of cheering family and friends showered them with rice and confetti. Peter escorted Gertie to the waiting buggy. Waving goodbye and grinning from ear to ear, Gertie watched her mother and father fade away.

She was alone with her new husband. She had never been alone with a man before. Silence and darkness surrounded them. Gertie pulled her shawl tightly around her shoulders and pressed her body towards Peter’s warmth.

“As you know,” he swallowed before saying her Christian name for the first time, “Gertie, I have already sold my house. We will stay in the boarding house where I have been living until the end of the week.”

“Yes... Peter.”

Gertie watched the street lanterns of Cincinnati spread to the horizon as the buggy descended the hill on the northwest side of town. Ohio had been her home since she turned eleven years old. She could remember no trepidation when her family had emigrated from Germany to America in 1840. They had been poor, starving tenant farmers in economically depressed Germany. The past eight years had been the happiest of her life as the farm that her father actually owned had thrived. Now, she was not only having to adjust to married life, she was going to have to adjust to living in the Oregon Territory. The German immigrants followed the Old World customs and Mr. Berg was a second son and not eligible to inherit the family farm. He was employed at a dry goods store, but had sold his property in preparation to take the Oregon Trail west before his first wife had died. They had intended to seek out land for themselves. In marrying him, Gertie was accepting this fate. And this, as much as the looming wedding night, was giving her chills. Peter guided the buggy along the waterfront road. The clattering iron wheels on the cobblestones of the wharf-front road alerted Gertie to the end of their trip.



## Supernatural thriller

A first-year teacher will uncover dark secrets at her school in New Mexico along with those in her family. An underground cult of women who use ancient magic will make her a new inductee which she will have no choice in—she will need to save her soul and her dead father's. This Supernatural Thriller will have you engaged page by page.

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT AUDIOBOOK\*\*](#)

## Chapter from The Good Teacher

“Some strange things have been happening lately. I shouldn't say lately—I seem to have had some experience with some of these issues years ago.”

“I remember. It’s what finally broke you and landed you with Adrian Moreno,” Aunt Miranda confessed.

“That was an era I want to erase forever, so let's not go there. If it wasn't for you, Auntie, I most likely would have perished in that house.” I reached over and kissed her on the cheek.

“This is about my students. I have a few that are in dysfunctional homes and one, in particular, is being hurt right now, along with his mother.”

“Did you report it to your principal?”

“That’s another issue in itself.” I went on to tell her the story.

Aunt Miranda scooted her chair next to mine. She had that look in her eye like she was about to tell me something bad. “I need to tell you something I’ve been putting off for too long.”

“What? Mom’s not dying, is she?”

“No. Not at all. It is *you* we need to talk about.”

I looked at her, knowing somehow that she was aware of all that had gone down with the crows and the rest of the things that had happened. I told her about the crows and the dream of the cemetery.

“I’ve known you were a highly emotional and empathic child since day one. You’d always get sick when your brother was ill or felt the pain your mother felt from your father’s abuse. He’s reaching out to you and that dream was his way of connecting with you. His soul needs help. It takes a lot of energy for a spirit to do this from the other side. He is suffering Daniella.”

“Good. He needs to see how it feels.”

“Let it go. You’re doing good deeds working with those children. Once you’ve accomplished your mission, his soul will be put to rest, along with yours.”

“Mine? Why does my soul need forgiveness? Let him suffer.”

“Forgiveness is the most powerful virtue ever, Daniella. Before you can forgive others, you need to forgive yourself first. None of us has time to wait until the afterlife to gain redemption. We are here on earth for lessons, be they hard or easy, but we must comprehend and attain a higher knowledge of this or we suffer when it’s too late. Far too late. God knows how I’ve cursed your father for years—the things I used to wish on that man. It had a tremendous effect on my health and on your mother’s. It’s what led me to Josephina.”

I had to admit she was on to something there. “So, what do I do? How can I help myself?” I sat there awaiting her response.

“There is no cure for this gift you possess, only a means to control it. That's the secret—to control and use it for the good of all intended. I happen to know Josephina Deluna has a class over at Desert Mirage for sensitives and empaths. You'll learn how to ground and protect yourself there.”

Something told me she knew much more about this than she was letting on. I flashed back to my day at the shop when Josephina's eyes had lit up at the mention of my aunt's name.

“So, who's this Josephina lady, anyway?”

“I told you: I met her years ago when I attended the Old San Ysidro Church in Corrales where we had a close-knit group for women. The two of us seemed to hit it off, and one day she invited me to her shop. I even took a few of her classes. She's what you would call a white witch.”

“You...you took classes? And from a witch?” I was taken aback by her confession—my family was devout Catholics.

“She's well-versed in the art of the old ways of the Women of the Willow Wood and their worship to Santa Muerta. I'm still a Christian, Daniella. Do you think I'd have a shrine to our Lady if I weren't?

“This gift runs in the family. It can be of great benefit if you use it wisely. If you don't, it can destroy your life and the lives of those around you.”

I looked at her in amazement. “Tell me about these Women of the Willow Wood,” I said, picturing women with long robes, traipsing around the woods at midnight.

“It's somewhat of an underground group for those who possess special gifts. It's comprised of healers, lightworkers, Curanderas, witches, shamans, empaths, and intuitives. They all work together to help those



who are in need of spiritual recovery or help with a family member or friend.”

Somehow, I was not surprised. More pieces of the puzzle were coming together. When this puzzle was finally assembled, it was going to be quite intriguing.

I watched Auntie punch in the numbers to Desert Mirage to speak with Josephina, wondering why she'd answered when the shop had closed at 5 p.m. I remembered reading the shop hours on a sign in the window.

Auntie spoke with Josephina and made arrangements for me to attend a class that Saturday. Things were moving very quickly.

The more time I had to digest all of this information, the more questions I had. “And what about Mom and Gabriel? Do they know about this gift I have?”

“Me, your mother, and Grandmother Morales. Grandma Morales had the same gift. Seems it affects more women than it does men. That's why your grandmother made that protection pouch for you as a small child.”

It was getting late. I had to get home to Luke. I also had papers to grade. I snuck into Mom's room, but she was sound asleep. I so wanted to chat with her but hated the thought of waking her. I watched her lie there and thought about the years I'd been robbed of having a normal mother-daughter relationship, which only brought me back to hate. It was a place I didn't want to go right then, so I tiptoed out of the room and into the hallway to light another candle. I thanked Aunt Miranda for everything and felt a sense of peace knowing there was a reason behind all of the madness. Even with Auntie revealing her secrets to me, I felt a sense of relief. I had hope that things would be getting better for me and for the others I was now responsible for protecting.

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As I turned onto Coors Boulevard and noticed a black pickup that seemed to be tailgating me and slowed down a bit. The truck was right on my bumper.

“What the hell’s with this guy?” I said as I switched lanes. He switched lanes as well.

Great. A night stalker. Just what I needed.

I kept looking in my rearview mirror but couldn’t make out who the driver was. He followed me at a steady speed all way to the entrance of the complex. Surely, he’d follow my car inside after I’d punched my code in.

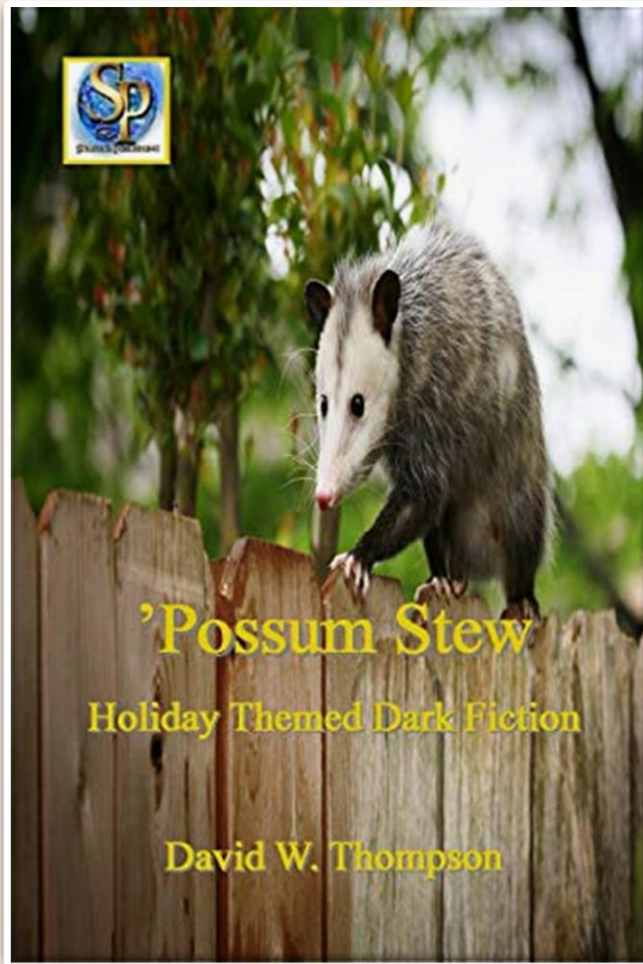
I panicked and called Luke. “I’ve got a nutcase following me home!” I told him. “I’m at the gate. Please open the garage door and meet me there!”

My heart pounded. Sure enough, the idiot followed me all the way into the driveway. Luke was a welcoming sight standing there in the garage. I pulled into the garage, leaving the black, Silverado pickup at the end of the driveway.

When I got out of my car, Luke had me go into the house and headed for the truck. I watched the scene unfold from the living room window. A man got out. The streetlight cast just enough light for me to see that it was Mason Greene.

I heard him shouting and wanted to go out there but didn’t know what to do. Luke didn’t deserve this. I wondered if I should call 911, but then I heard someone call my name and decided to face the monster.

Luke yelled for me to go back inside but I did what my intuition told me to do, and that was to face Mason Greene, head-on. I walked to the end of the driveway where Luke was yelling at him, my heart racing.



## Short stories-dark fantasy

Brace yourself for a journey in time to face a Native American Wendigo! Or let the creatures in the dark woods stir your blood. Fairies are sweet, gentle creatures...right? Let's not diminish the terrors of day-to-day life; they're here too. 'Possum Stew feeds your thirst for dark adventure. Are you brave enough to turn the page? The collection of short stories follows the major holidays. From dark tales inspired by ancient mythology to those flavored with cutting edge technology. How much spectral spice do you desire?

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT\*\*](#)

## Chapter from Possum Stew

Kate poured out her anger and frustration on the book cradled on her lap. Her pen dug trenches into the paper, twice cutting through to the next page.

“Dear Mom,” it began. From there, her anger waxed and waned as the words spelled out her version of their recent fight. A red mist framed the edges of her vision. After penning several pages of venom, she scanned her writing. Her eyes misted over. This isn’t me. I don’t hate my mother, I just...

Kate shook her head and concluded her entry with:

“I don’t think I can share this letter with you. I started it as a journal entry to get some stuff off my chest, but I sound like such a ...hateful child. I can’t abide your seeing me so needy...again. I’m trying so hard not to be... I just...I hate this, Mom! I hate it! Don’t you? You were always there for me—for everything! If we could just sit together and talk—like we used to? Except as woman to woman? Maybe together we can find common ground.

I’m going to take the skiff out on the river to clear my head. Maybe after...?

Love ya,

Kate

Kate closed her journal and slipped it under her mattress. Like nobody would look there. She thought her secrets were safe enough. Her little brother Tim wouldn’t dare tempt her wrath and doubted her mother’s interest after their argument. She scribbled a hasty note and placed it on the stovetop.

“Mom, On the river—out to Dennison’s Creek. Later, Kate.”

The river was the one place she felt free. Something she wished her mother could share with her. Maybe if her mother came out here...but no. The water was Dad’s thing. Her mother never understood. Worse, she didn’t think Kate should either. She thought young women should engage in “feminine pursuits.”

The outboard motor started on the first pull and she guided the skiff out of the dock area into the river’s open water. She opened up the throttle and bounced against the tide. It was no speed boat, but Kate wasn’t the type to race across the water anyway. She thought the river was what the pundits meant when they advised “savoring the journey.” Still, she had to admit that the breeze in her hair helped clear her mind.

What had happened? She and her mother had been so close. She couldn’t blame everything on hormones. What she says and does is



because she loves you. But in this latest fight Kate went too far. She knew that. Sometimes the smallest comment sent her into a tailspin. Her anger flared and vile words were set free, irretrievable.

She knows you love her.

Yeah, sure. Why does my inner voice always have to be so wise?

You never noticed the voice is your Mother's?

I hurt her. I hope she knows how I feel...

Her mind drifted off to her childhood days, reminiscing with herself, while navigating the submerged sandbars around Purdy's Island. A section of river requiring a boater's full attention and demanding respect.

Remember that picnic when you were 6 years old or so? Your mother didn't like the water much, but she took off a day from work and brought you to this very island. It was a day like this. It was like you had the whole river to yourself, with no other boat in sight for miles. You'd been feeling left out since Tim was born. Your mother found a sitter for him so she could give you that day just for you. You had so much fun...until the sea nettle stung you. Your mother pulled out the meat tenderizer to kill the pain. Remember? She always had whatever you needed in that huge blue purse. Then she took you home the long way so you could stop at that dock near the ice cream shop. Then, when you were ten...

The front of the boat heaved upward, then slapped back down on the sandbar. The engine sputtered and died. Just great!

With her lone emergency oar she pushed the boat away from the sandbar. When the prop was clear, she yanked the engine to life.

First time, every time!

She turned the throttle handle forward and the engine raced, but the boat didn't move. She killed the motor, and raised the engine's lower unit out of the water. The prop was intact, but a closer examination verified her suspicions—a broken shear pin.

I'm glad Dad threw a spare one in the tool box.

Kate pulled the seat cushion from her chair to access the compartment for the tool box, but it was gone.

She yelled at the darkening sky. "Timmy, I've asked you to leave my tools alone! I guarantee they're sitting in the garage beside your bicycle!"

The sky lit up for a moment. Heat lightning. I hope the real deal is a long way off.

This far from home, the only way she'd see her own bed tonight was if she could flag down a passing boater. She considered dropping anchor, but her boat's drift carried her towards the middle of the river. There was a better chance of being seen there. She flicked the switch to turn on the boat's lights and began paddling.

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Night fell on the water bringing with it a stiff wind out of the west. The incoming tide and the wind were in opposition to each other, and her stranded craft sat stagnant in the water. Her lone oar did little to aid her advance. Whenever she noticed some small progress, a gusty breeze spun her small boat around. A crescent moon hovered on the horizon but provided little light.

A distant flash followed by a crack of thunder announced the storm's arrival. When the next lightning seared across the sky, she counted. One, two, three, four...Nine full seconds until the boom of the thunder.

The storm's less than two miles away. I shouldn't have tried to head toward home. I was so close to the island on the far side of the river. If I'd gone there and sought shelter...

When the next bolt of lightning struck, her marker lights flickered. She wiggled the battery connection and they levelled out.

Thank God. The last thing I need is for another boater to plow into because they couldn't see me...the lights flickered again and died.

Kate recognized the peril of the situation. She was near the deep water, the ship's channel. An errant boat could easily smash into her—especially on a night as dark as this one! Her clothes were wet from the occasional wave breaching the boat's gunnels, but the night was warm. The shivers that racked her body came from another source.

Keep your head about you, Kate. You can get through this.

Another blast of lightning punctuated her thought. This time it was so close the static caused her hair to stand on end! A wave crashed over the boat and threw her from her seat. She huddled on the floor. Kate looked up at the next flash of light and spotted a red light at water level—a channel marking buoy. The next wave pushed her closer and she made out the number “8” stenciled on its side.

“Doing great with number eight.” That’s what her Mom said to remember when she was returning from the island and heading home all those years ago. Funny she’d remember that at a time like this!

They say your life passes before your eyes...

Shut up!

The waves increased in fury. Water puddled in the floor despite her efforts at bailing it out with an old Maxwell House can. The boat rocked from side to side—each threatening to capsize the boat. Thunder boomed on either side, like being in the front row at a hard rock concert.

Can you swim in water this rough?

I’ll soon find out. I wish we’d had that last chance, Mom...

“Kate!”

Dear God, now I’m hearing voices. But her curiosity prevailed and she lifted her head to see. It was another boat! It danced toward her on the crest of the waves as if by magic. The boat’s driver maneuvered as close as was safe and tossed her the end of a stout rope.

“Kate. Are you OK?”



## Ghost fiction

In this epic haunting family vacation set in Virginia that effects a couple of lives that will last forever...A golden doubloon lands on Ginger's feet while walking up the beach of Virginia's Chincoteagues Island. Ginger and her husband, curious about the medallion, visit a local museum seeking artifacts. A chance encounter with a wharf, a local historian, and a coin collector, brings them to uncover the historical significance of the medallion. But soon enough the couple discovers a trove of secrets about the island since the seventh century.

[EBOOK PRINT AUDIOBOOK](#)

## Chapter from Island Secrets

Chincoteague, Virginia! On the last day of May, my husband and I booked a rental on the island for a week. We couldn't wait to get there.

I needed to get away this year. I needed to unwind. One of my favorite places to go to was the beach.

The alarm went off. I hit the snooze button, turned over and cuddled with Beau for a few minutes. I reached over, put my fingers through his freshly-cut-buzz cut, whispered in his ear, “It’s time to get up, Honey. Are you ready to get out of here and go to the beach?”



He moaned, stretched out, and flipped the covers up off of him. Sighing, he put his hand over his mouth and said, “Let’s get ready, Ginger. You go first.” He smiled over at me.

I got up and went to the bathroom, excited for our trip. Showered and dressed, I dried my long, wavy hair, the color of ginger cookies. In the mirror, I noticed signs of weariness but hoped to alleviate this during the next week. Dabbing on a few of my favorite cosmetics, throwing my hair up in a ponytail, and blowing a kiss in the mirror, I was happy.

While my husband crawled out of bed, I walked down the hall towards the kitchen to start the coffee. I forgot my watch and went back to the bedroom to grab it and saw Beau struggling with his aqua blue tank top. I laughed and helped pull it over his head, kissing his cheek.

To get us on the road, I fixed our coffees in travel mugs, and rinsed the pot out, before putting it in the sink. I grabbed my sweater off of the coat rack, and met Beau at the front door, as he slipped on his brown sandals.

“I’m glad that we packed the truck last night,” he said.

“Me too.” I grabbed my purse and hung it on my shoulder. I said, “Honey, it’s going to be sunny all day. And, I checked the weather for Chincoteague. Going to be in the seventies all week.”

“Sounds like we picked a good time to take a vacation.” He slipped on his ball cap. “No stress dealing with the contractors to finish up the buildings. My right-hand man is doing that job.”

Key in the door, I smiled. “I’m glad. You need a break.” We both did.

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We drove for several hours through Pennsylvania towards Harrisburg in our new red Nissan truck. The sun came up, and it was around nine in the morning. Lush fields passed by the windows, and I saw the windmills and colorful flowers. *So much better than the snow.* Somewhere off the

highway, Beau pulled into a rest-stop, and we scurried off to the restroom.

Meeting in the lobby, I said, “I'm hungry, can we grab a bite to eat?” Through the expansive windows, I glanced across the road. I immediately saw a pizza parlor. I pointed over to the restaurant. “How about pizza?”

His eyes widened, “You know I love a good pizza. Hop in, Sugar, and let's go eat lunch.” I climbed in the truck and shut the door.

An excellent driver, to be honest, probably better than me, Bae pulled out of the parking lot. Road rage wasn't in his vocabulary. That was my husband, my rock, a patient man in everything. He waited for passing cars, saw an opportunity, and we jetted over to the pizza parlor.

Upon walking in, a hostess greeted us with a big smile. “Hello, two of you today?”

We said in unison, “Yes.”

She grabbed two menus, and we followed her to a booth. Beau held my hand.

A middle-aged Asian woman, wearing jeans and a bright pink shirt, came to the table. She had big black dark eyes with long lashes and a flawless complexion. I admit I was a little jealous. My skin never looked that good. She looked up from her notepad, and said, “My name is Mia, I'll be your server, what can I get you two to drink?”

Beau set down the menu, looked over at me with his bluish-green eyes, and ordered my favorite splurge drink. “You can get my wife a diet Pepsi, and I'll take an unsweetened iced tea.”

He shrugged his shoulders, glanced over at the buffet, and said, “I think I'm going to check out the buffet.”

“Let's go over and see what's available,” I agreed.

He stood up, put his fingers through his gray hair, and let me out of the red leather booth. We both bobbed around the buffet, turned around the corner, smacking our lips.

“All of this looks good.” I pointed my finger at the food. “Hey, look, raspberry pizza for dessert.” They had salad, six different pizzas to choose from, breadsticks, and so much more.

He snickered, grabbing two plates, and handed me one.

“*Mmm...Looks good.*” I stood by the salad and set it on my plate with the prongs.

Beau filled his plate to the max! Back at the booth, I spoke up, “I guess we were hungry.” I sunk in the seat, scooted over, and grabbed my flatware.

While eating, I brought up the rental on my cell phone and scanned the rooms on the website. Everything was sleek and renovated, with clean lines, perfect for relaxation. “I’m excited to go stay at the house on the island.”

Diving into our food, we chatted about the drive ahead. Stomachs full, Beau got up and paid the bill. We walked out to the truck and got back on the road.



## Fantasy

He is both feared and respected by friend and foe alike. In war Elven Warriors shout their battle cry, 'Eagle Claw' as they race to attack their enemies. Their foes quake at the sound for they know who they will soon be facing. He is Gabriel, High Lord General of the Combined Elven and Fae Armed forces. He has no equal in the land. This is the story of how he came to power to become the legend that was Eagle Claw.

[EBOOK](#)

## Chapter from The Eagle Claw Legend

“Danaë!” Tyrian called out to his Heart Mate. He had rushed to be at her side the moment he heard she had gone into premature labor. It was three weeks too soon, and he feared the worse. She had not had an easy time bringing Lorenth into the world when she had given birth to their first child, and he was worried this one would be even more difficult. Would he lose her? It was possible.

Danaë took a moment from looking at the baby she was holding to shift her attention to her Heart Mate. With a loving smile, she reached for Tyrian, “You must have ridden like the wind to get here so quickly. I would like you to meet our son, Gabriel. He is the most beautiful child I have ever seen.”



Tyrian was more interested in making sure Danaë was well. She seemed somewhat wane, but outside of this, she was in good spirits. His instincts screamed for him to hold her and tell her how relieved he was that she was well. It was not to be. He needed to wait until she set their son aside first.

“I came the moment I heard,” Tyrian informed Danaë.

“Meet Gabriel,” Danaë insisted, as she turned her attention back to the small bundle in her arms. She carefully lifted the corner of the blanket surrounding the child and smiled with loving pride.

To pacify Danaë, Tyrian turned his attention to their son. It wasn't that he didn't care about their child, but he had been so worried about her that the baby took second place. The moment the cover was removed from the newly born baby, he could tell this was no ordinary child. “He is perfect, you have done well.” He took the boy from her so that he could get a better look at him.

Gabriel opened his little eyes the moment he sensed the change of the person holding him. Tyrian could see the strength of his different talents. His eyes widened, as he noted each different one and spoke to Danaë in his surprise. “His load will be a heavy one. Especially if the Fates felt he needed to be so heavily gifted.” They had already known their son was going to be well endowed, but what he was seeing went beyond what they expected.

“What do you see?” Danaë wondered. She had not been able to read him in the way she knew Tyrian could.

“One of his talents is to become a Master Swordsman,” Tyrian began.

“Like his father,” Danaë spoke with the pride of an Elven woman for her mate.

“He also has the talent of a Master Strategist,” Tyrian added.

No one needed to tell Danaë how rare it was for an Elf to have more than one major talent. If something like this was the case, one of them

usually was stronger than the other. She could tell this wasn't the case. Not only had Gabriel been equally blessed with two high level talents, but they were ones that spoke of a future that could be filled with danger. She was afraid to think about what this might mean for her child. She looked at Tyrian's expression and could tell he was thinking much the same. She got the feeling this was where their thoughts on the matter differed. Tyrian wouldn't only be considering Gabriel, but also what it meant for the entire Elven world.

Danaë knew her Heart Mate well. Tyrian was looking at their son in a way that told her he was planning something. She was certain she knew what he had in mind, but Gabriel had just come into the world. He needed time to grow, be a child, and play. He was a unique and shining star looking at them from a black sky. Like the star, he would try to chase away the darkness on his own, she could see it in him. He was going to do all he could to live up to everyone's expectations. It wouldn't matter how difficult the task, she knew they would expect her son to be able to work miracles.

With a sense of desperation, Danaë reclaimed her child. She would be the buffer that shielded him from the rest of the world. She would move Heaven and Earth to make sure her child had the right to a proper childhood. No one was going to take this from her Gabriel, not even his father, and she could tell that it was exactly what Tyrian was planning. She wasn't going to allow him to take their child's youth from him. She would fight him on this. It wasn't something an Elven Female did, but she would.

Tyrian looked at Danaë in surprise as she reclaimed the baby. He couldn't imagine what was going through her mind. She looked at him like he was a monster and insinuated her body between him and their son, as if she would protect the baby from him. Whatever she was thinking it had to be wrong. She needed to know this. "I would never hurt our child," he said.

“You will want to take him from me. He will know no softness, no love in his life. He will only know war. I want our Gabriel to know what it is like to be loved and to play like other children. He will have laughter in his young life.” Danaë cried out. She narrowed her eyes at Tyrian, and she warned him. “You are not going to take these things from him. I. Will Not Let. You.”

“Our child is special, Danaë,” Tyrian tried to explain. “The Fates have given him these gifts for a reason. This is a warning to us that our people are in danger. He will one day be our salvation. But, before this can happen, he must be trained. He is too young for us to think about this yet. But, in the not-so-distant future, his lessons must begin. We cannot stand between him and his destiny, no matter how much we might want to. The choice is not ours to make.”

“His destiny,” Danaë came close to spitting the words out. “He is only a few hours old and already you have his future mapped out for him. I will not allow you to deny my Gabriel a childhood; I won’t let you. He has a right to run and play with other children.” Her reaction to what she thought Tyrian wanted to do made her feel as feral as a tiger. She would protect her child if she had to. She would give her life for him.

“There will be time for this Danaë,” Tyrian tried to reason with her. “But, before we do anything, Gabriel needs to be taught how to use his talents. It is not such a simple thing. It will take years to teach him all he needs to know. We are short of time, every moment counts.”

Danaë didn’t feel the same way, nor was she willing to back down. Her child was not going to leave her side until she felt he was old enough to begin his training, not before. She had no intention of listening to reason, not Tyrian’s, not on this. “I warn you, Tyrian, I will fight you on this, I will not have you taking him from my side before it is time.”

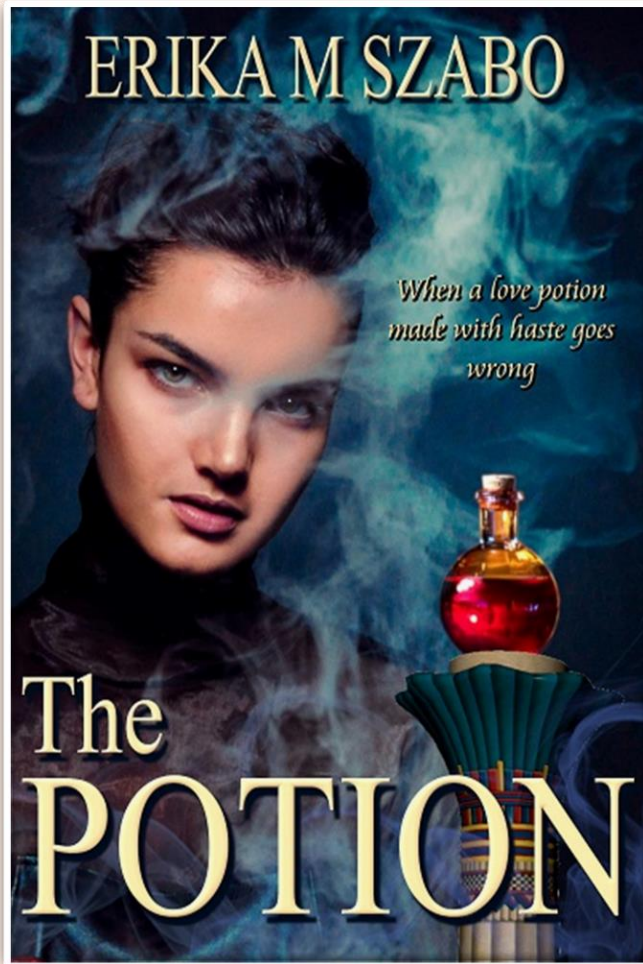
“I have no intention of depriving you of our baby, Danaë,” Tyrian tried again to reason with her. “We are fighting over something that won’t happen for a long time. It makes no sense.”

With those words, Tyrian took Danaë and their son into his arms to hold them close. She needed him to hold her, to comfort her. She was not herself after the long period of labor she had gone through. She was also allowing her imagination to get the better of her.

It took a while for Danaë to settle down, but eventually, she did. When this happened, she began to feel slightly silly. Tyrian was right. Gabriel was much too young to be taken from her. She was getting worked up for no good reason, and it wasn't good for either her or their baby. She needed to get herself back under control or little Gabriel would also become unsettled. This would not be a good thing.

As Tyrian felt Danaë calm down, he smiled, assured by this lull in their relationship that the matter of Gabriel's future training was settled. To make sure the peace remained, he would wait until she relaxed her guard, then he would carefully measure his son's body so he could make the tools the child would need in order to teach him how to hold the weapons he would need for his lessons. He would have to be very careful what he made these items look like in the beginning. Any signs of them being associated with a weapon would split the fragile truce like a ripe pumpkin that he was currently enjoying with his Heart Mate. He would like to bask in their love for at least a few more years without her declaring war on him.

There was no doubt in Tyrian's mind that when the time came to begin to seriously train his son, Danaë was going to rage at him. She would make him bleed in anyway possible for taking her Gabriel away from her. It, however, needed to be done. The Elven people needed him too much.



## YA supernatural fantasy

A love potion made with haste out of jealousy puts Dorian into a comalike state. A rare orchid that blooms only once a year could save his life, but the precious flowers are fiercely guarded by Liam and his werewolf pack. The acolytes of the coven are forbidden to enter the forest and the young apprentices volunteer to make the journey that will test their loyalty and courage. Will they succeed?

[EBOOK AUDIOBOOK](#)

## Chapter from The Potion

Cordelia, the high priestess of the Ravenwood Coven, stood in front of the altar lighting the candles one by one. The room was dark, and the flickering candlelight cast eerie shadows on the walls. Her hair was pulled into a bun, and her statuesque figure hid under her long, hooded cape. She held her arms high, reciting a prayer.

*Lady of the Moon  
Let my mind be attuned  
I need your guidance  
Lord of the Sunrise  
Hear my humble cries  
I need your guidance.*



Cordelia flipped her long cape, turned around with three silver goblets on a tray, and stared for a long moment at the nervous-looking young women and man sitting side by side. Her stern expression sent deep shivers down their spines. She reached them with a few small steps and stood over them before handing them the goblets. “Drink!” Her booming voice filled the room.

Olivia, a slender, dark-haired young woman; Candice, the athletic-built blonde; and Dorian, a dark-haired young man, exchanged nervous glances. They took the goblets with shaky hands, lifted them to their lips and drank the ruby red liquid. Their expressions changed. They seemed to be in a deep trance.

The High Priestess watched the trio for a minute and then asked, “Do you wish to become apprentices of the Ravenwood Coven?”

“Yes, I do,” came the reply from the three young acolytes in unison.

“Do you promise to follow the Coven rules and promise to practice only white magic?”

“Yes, I do,” the three answered.

“Do you promise to be loyal to the coven and its members, and promise not to compete with each other or be jealous of others?”

“Yes, I do,” Olivia and Dorian replied without hesitation, but Candice’s answer came a second later: “I’ll try.”

Cordelia drew a sharp breath. *I’ll give her a chance because her grandmother is an Elder, but I’ll keep a close eye on her.* She clapped her hands, and the young acolytes snapped out of the trance, looking a little dazed and confused.

“Welcome to Ravenwood Coven,” Cordelia announced. “You’re now apprentices. It will be a long road, and the next months will not be easy. You will study and practice hard before you can become witches and a warlock. Good luck to you all.”

When Olivia passed the entry exam and was accepted as an apprentice into the Coven, it was the best day of her life. Her father and grandmother had been preparing her since she was a little girl, despite the objection of her mother. Her parents were happy together and lived in harmony, except for occasional fights between them about the family tradition.

Her mother, Gloria, objected. “Why does she have to be a witch? I’m not, and we’re happy!”

“Because this is our family tradition, and you knew it when you married me. Remember?” Xavier, Olivia’s father, patiently replied.

“Why did you marry me? You knew I was different and never wanted anything to do with witchcraft.”

“Because the blue butterfly told me,” Xavier said.

“A what? Are you losing your mind?” Gloria asked, feeling alarmed and concerned.

“I never told you this...because I never wanted you to look at me the way you’re looking at me now.” He bowed his head and swallowed hard. He then looked into his wife’s eyes and continued, “My family is protected by guardians, and they communicate with us by making different colored butterflies appear to show us the right path. The blue butterfly they sent me the day I met you was to show me that we were soulmates.”

“That’s so sweet! Scary, but sweet. And yes, we are soulmates, darling. But I don’t remember seeing a butterfly,” she said, staring at her husband.

“Only we can see them. They function as detectors of people’s intentions. You’re a good, honest, and loyal person. That’s why the guardians showed me the blue butterfly.”

“Aw... But still, Olivia doesn’t have to be a witch,” she protested weakly, folding her arms across her chest.

“I told you before we got married that our children will join the Coven when they turn eighteen, and you agreed,” Xavier argued.

“Yes, but...but I was hoping you’d change your mind,” his wife replied in a quieter tone of voice. “Okay, okay! It’s just... I don’t have to like it.”

“You should be proud of her, honey. She did very well on the entry exam. She’ll be a great witch.”

“I’m proud of her, and I know she wants to follow in your footsteps. It’s just, I had a different future in mind for her. She loves science, and I was hoping she might want to follow that path.”

“And she will. She can be a great scientist or researcher, and a witch, too.”

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Candice enjoyed being popular and never really wanted to become a witch, but because her grandmother insisted, she applied for the apprenticeship. Her mother was absent most of the time, following fleeting dreams and ideas. The only steady person in Candice’s life was her grandmother.

Although Candice passed the entry test, which made her grandmother happy, she was more interested in partying than studying spells and potions. The idea of following the strict rules and studying all the time bored her, but her interest flared when she found out Dorian had joined the Coven as well.

She preferred partying with the athletic boys of the football team, but when she noticed that Olivia and Dorian were developing more than a friendship, she grew jealous of their closeness and quiet happiness. She wanted to be happy like them; she wanted him. She tried starting conversations with him, asked him to go to a party with her, and asked

him to study potions and spells with her. Dorian gave her a polite excuse every time.

Feeling frustrated, Candice confided in her grandmother. “They’re spending all their free time together and started dating! How could he like her? She’s so plain and weird. Okay, she’s a caring person, but still. I’m a cheerleader and the prettiest girl in school. How could he not like me?”

“You’re the prettiest, love,” her grandmother cooed, hugging her. “He’s interested in her, so leave them be. There are other boys. Looks like the family curse follows you too like a shadow.” Her grandmother sighed.

“What curse?” Candice asked.

“We’re cursed with always wanting what we can’t have.”

“No, Grandma! I want him! I want him to go on a date with me, to return my feelings. I want to be his girlfriend, but no, he had to ask Olivia, sweet and boring Olivia. All she cares about is school and being boring. I’m popular and full of zest for life. What does she have that I don’t have?”

“Nothing, dear. She’s just a plain and boring girl, just like her grandma was. They make a good pair; Dorian is not an interesting person either. Even if he’d have asked you out instead of Olivia, you’d grow bored with him in no time.”

“No, Grandma. I want him! I’ll find a way to make him fall in love with me.”

“And, the family curse continues...” the old lady muttered under her breath, feeling sad and frustrated.

# *Hugs - Love and Great Karma*



## **Poetry**

Life's road is filled with pitfalls and potholes. But one smile, one act of kindness can fill the darkness with light. With these poems I offer glimpses of beauty you may be missing.

## **EBOOK PRINT**

### **Poems from Hugs-Love and Great Karma**

#### **A WATERFALL OF FAITH**

Life is such a hard road to travel  
Potholes and pitfalls litter the way  
Sadness and heartache fill the horizon  
Hiding the laughter and love from view  
My body trembles as I raise my foot  
Another step into the abyss that is the future  
My will is slowly fading as burdens increase  
Family estranged, my health declining



What is the point of it all  
Why do I still try so hard to live  
Then I look up into the dark sky  
The sun's rays peeking through the clouds  
Showing me beauty I had forgotten  
God's love shared with all  
Washing away my woes and anger  
In a waterfall of faith

### **A RIVER OF HOPE**

One drop  
That is all it takes to start  
Just a minute amount of faith  
Slight belief in the possibility  
The chance that things could go right  
Everything could work out for the best  
One drop of hope  
Turning into a storm  
A chain reaction of “mights”  
Replacing the worried “what ifs”  
Slowly multiplying  
Joining together  
Building in strength and power  
Becoming a waterway  
Flowing into hearts

Giving all the will to try  
Showing them success  
Is found when you travel  
The River of Hope

## **I SEE YOU**

Wait a minute  
Don't pass by so fast  
Look at me  
Come on, you can do it  
Lift your eyes  
Take a peek  
It isn't scary  
I could never hurt you  
Please, look at me  
See you as you truly are  
Experience my honest viewpoint  
It is unbiased, uninhibited  
I offer you truth  
Look and see the tenderness  
The hope within your eyes  
See the shine of love on your cheeks  
Look at your smile, feel its warmth  
See the lines marking time  
Wisdom gently revealed

Laughter shared is evident near your eyes  
Notice the tracks of your tears  
See how they soften your face  
Inviting others to open up to you  
Showing you are not afraid to feel  
To be human  
Please look up  
Look closely at me  
See how beautiful you are

## **REALM**

Dreams and fairy dust  
Hopes and wishes too  
Create a realm of magic  
I'd like to explore with you

We could dance with the pixies  
Or listen to Elves talk of olden times  
Let the music of the wind fill our souls  
While fairies add to it their rhymes

Dew-kissed flowers sparkle  
In the rays of the rising sun  
Laughter and love overflow  
Everyone playing and having fun

Oh the realm of wonder  
Created within a poets mind  
Is a wonderful treasure  
Few even attempt to find

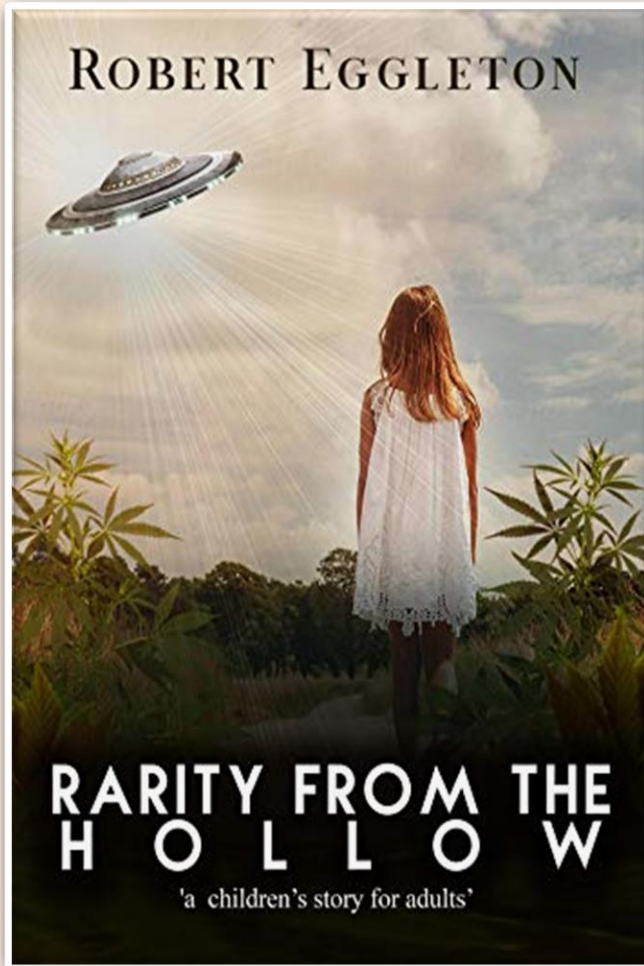
### **MAY THE SUN**

May the sun rising at dawn reach inside of you  
Lightening the darkness in your world  
Its rays spreading warmth to melt the coldness,  
The ice chamber that now encases your heart  
As the pain of loss and betrayal breaks your will  
May you find comfort and hope in its presence  
Realizing it cares not what anyone says or does  
It shines for all, free from the burden of self-doubt  
The burden that weighs so heavy on your shoulders  
Clouding your path to the future before you  
May its brightness cut through the shadows  
Guiding you to move forward, one step at a time  
Your destiny lies ahead

## **PERFECT VERSE**

A poet, a bard  
A captor of dreams  
With the use of a pen  
Striving, wishing  
Hoping to entice a reader  
Wanting to touch them  
Let them see, feel,  
Breathe his words  
Have his verses play  
On their heartstrings  
Creating a song for their soul  
Becoming one with the reader  
Enlightened whole  
Releasing their fears and pain  
Creating a vision of peace  
One that can be felt, lived  
The one perfect rhyme that  
When read will touch everyone  
Uniting all in a perfect world  
One filled with love and hope  
A living paradise for mankind





## Sci-fi adventure

Lacy Dawn's father relives the never-ending Gulf War, her mother's teeth are rotting out, and her best friend gets murdered by the meanest daddy on Earth. Life in the hollow is hard. She has one advantage - an android was inserted into her life and is working with her to cure her parents. He wants something in exchange. It's up to her to save the Universe. Lacy Dawn doesn't mind saving the universe, but her family and friends come first. Filled with tragedy, comedy, and satire -- a children's story for adults [EBOOK PRINT](#)

## Chapter from Rarity from The Hollow

Inside her first clubhouse, Lacy Dawn glanced over fifth grade spelling words for tomorrow's quiz at school. She already knew all the words in the textbook and most others in any human language.

*Nothing's more important than an education.*

The clubhouse was a cardboard box in the front yard that her grandmother's new refrigerator had occupied until an hour before. Her father brought it home for her to play in.

*The nicest thing he's ever done.*

Faith lay beside her with a hand over the words and split fingers to cheat as they were called off. She lived in the next house up the Hollow.

Every other Wednesday for the last two months, the supervised child psychologist came to their school, pulled her out of class, and evaluated suspected learning disabilities. Lacy Dawn underlined a word with a fingernail.

*All she needs is a little motivation.*

Before they had crawled in, Lacy tapped the upper corner of the box with a flashlight and proclaimed, “The place of all things possible, especially you passing the fifth grade so we'll be together in the sixth.”

*Please concentrate, Faith. Try this one.*

“Armadillo.”

“A, R, M, ... A ... D, I, L, D, O,” Faith demonstrated her intellect.

“That's weak. This is a bonus word so you'll get extra points. Come on.”

*I'll trick her by going out of order – a word she can't turn into another punch line.*

Faith turned her open spelling book over, which saved its page, and rolled onto her side. Lacy did the same and snuggled her back against the paper wall. Face to face, a foot of smoothness between, they took a break. The outside was outside.

At their parents' insistence, each wore play clothing -- unisex hand-me-downs that didn't fit as well as school clothing. They'd been careful not to get muddy before crawling into the box. They'd not played in the creek and both were cleaner than the usual evening. The clubhouse floor remained an open invitation to anybody who had the opportunity to consider relief from daily stressors.

“How'd you get so smart, Lacy Dawn? Your parents are dumb asses just like mine.”

“You ain't no dumb ass and you're going to pass the fifth grade.”

“Big deal -- I'm still fat and ugly,” Faith said.

“I'm doing the best I can. I figure by the time I turn eleven I can fix that too. For now, just concentrate on passing and don't become special education. I need you. You're my best friend.”

“Ain't no other girls our age close in the Hollow. That's the only reason you like me. Watch out. There's a pincher bug crawling in.”

Lacy sat almost upright because there was not quite enough headroom in the refrigerator box. She scooted the bug out the opening. The clubhouse door faced downhill, the best choice since nothing natural was flat in the Hollow. If it had sloped uphill, too much blood in the brain would have been detrimental to studying spelling or any other higher calling like changing Faith's future. Faith watched the bug attempt re-entry, picked it up, and threw it a yard away into the grass. It didn't get hurt. Lacy smiled her approval. The new clubhouse was a sacred place where nothing was supposed to hurt.

“Daddy said I can use the tarp whenever he finishes the overhaul on the car in the driveway. That way, our clubhouse will last a long time,” Lacy said.

“Chewy, chewy tootsie roll. Everything in this hollow rots, especially the people. You know that.”

“We ain't rotten,” Lacy gestured with open palms. “There are a lot of good things here, like all the beautiful flowers. Just focus on your spelling and I'll fix everything else. This time I want a 100% and a good letter to your mommy.”

“She won't read it,” Faith said.

“Yes she will. She loves you and it'll make her feel good. Besides, she has to or the teacher will call Welfare. Your daddy would be investigated, unless you do decide to become special education. That's how parents get out of it. The kid lets them off the hook by deciding to become a SPED. Then there ain't nothing Welfare can do about it because the kid is the problem and not the parents.”

“I ain't got no problems,” Faith said.

“Then pass this spelling test.”

“I thought if I messed up long enough, eventually somebody would help me out. I just need a place to live where people don't argue all the time. That ain't much.”

“Maybe you are a SPED. There's always an argument in a family. Pass the test you retard.” Lacy opened her spelling book.

Faith flipped her book over too, rolled onto her stomach and looked at the spelling words. Lacy handed her the flashlight because it was getting dark and grinned when Faith's lips started moving as she memorized. Faith noticed and clamped her lips shut between thumb and index finger.

*This is boring. I learned all these words last year.*

“Don't use up the batteries or Daddy will know I took it,” Lacy said.

“Alright, I'll pass the quiz, but just 'cause you told me to. This is a gamble and you'd better come through if it backfires. Ain't nothing wrong with being a SPED. The work is easier and the teacher lets you do puzzles.”

“You're my best friend,” Lacy said and closed her book.

They rolled back on their sides to enjoy the smoothness. The cricket chorus echoed throughout the Hollow and the frogs peeped. An ant attempted entry but changed its direction before either rescued it. Unnoticed, Lacy Dawn's father threw the tarp over the box and slid in the trouble light. It was still on and hot. The bulb burned Lacy's calf.

*He didn't mean to hurt me -- the second nicest thing he's ever done.*

“Test?” Lacy announced with the better light, and called off, “Poverty.”

“I love you,” Faith responded.

“Me too, but spell the word.”

“P is for poor. O is for oranges from the Salvation Army Christmas basket. V is for varicose veins that Mommy has from getting pregnant every year. E is for everybody messes up sometimes -- sorry. R is for I'm always right about everything except when you tell me I'm wrong -- like now. T is for it's too late for me to pass no matter what we do and Y is for you know it too.”

“Faith, it's almost dark! Go home before your mommy worries,” Lacy's mother yelled from the front porch and stepped back into the house to finish supper. The engine of the VW in the driveway cranked but wouldn't start. It turned slower as its battery died, too.

Faith slid out of the box with her spelling book in-hand. She farted from the effort. A clean breeze away, she squished a mosquito that had landed on her elbow and watched Lacy hold her breath as she scooted out of the clubhouse, pinching her nose with fingers of one hand, holding the trouble light with the other, and pushing her spelling book forward with her knees. The moon was almost full. There would be plenty of light to watch Faith walk up the gravel road. Outside the clubhouse, they stood face to face and ready to hug. It lasted a lightning bug statement until adult intrusion.

“Give it back. This thing won't start,” Lacy's father grabbed the trouble light out of her hand and walked away.

“All we ever have is beans for supper. Sorry about the fart.”

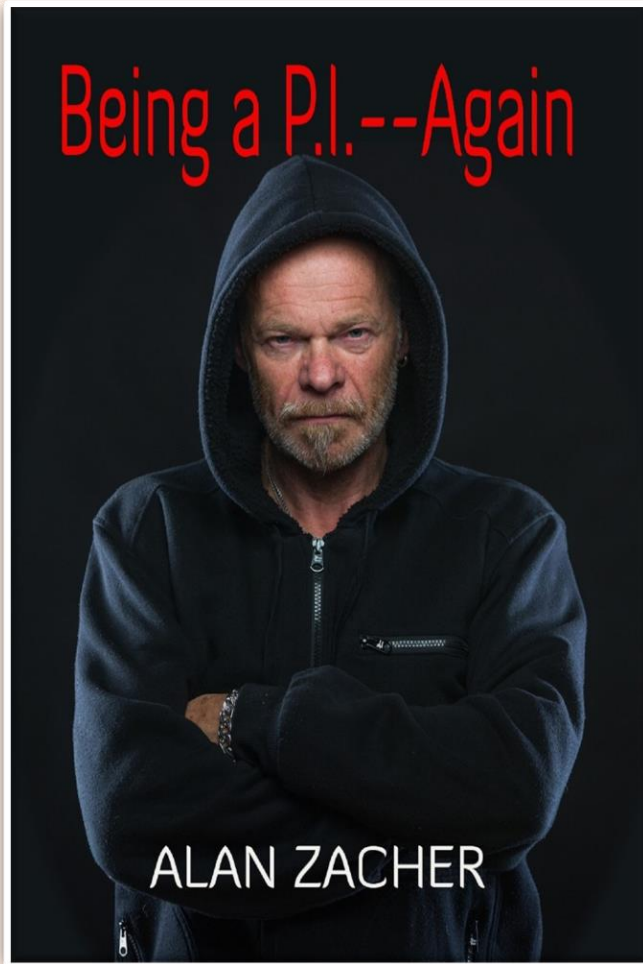
“Don't complain. Complaining is like sitting in a rocking chair. You can get lots of motion but you ain't going anywhere,” Lacy said.

“Why didn't you tell me that last year?” Faith asked. “I've wasted a lot of time.”

“I just now figured it out. Sorry.”

“Some savior you are. I put my whole life in your hands. I'll pass tomorrow's spelling quiz and everything.





### Private investigator mystery

Tom Mayor is a man in his mid-fifties. Never had a steady job living off his parents, and he was a closet drunk. Then, as a joke, he told his mother that he had “the stuff” to be a private detective. After some difficulties, he solves the murder. The case made him famous—and rich! The father of the murder victim gives him a million dollars. Life, for the first time in his miserable life, is good for Tom. But now, someone is trying to kill him. Who? Why? To find out, Tom must become a P. I.—Again!

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT AUDIOBOOK\*\*](#)

### Chapter from Being a P.I.-Again

“Oh, Mom,” I cried. “I don’t want to die!” I, like Mom, was bound with grey-colored duct-tape to an old wooden chair. We were about three feet from each other and facing each other. We were in a dusty room on the third floor of a long-ago abandoned factory on Wharf Street, near downtown St. Louis. Against the north wall of the room was an old metal table. On top of the much dust-covered table was an old alarm clock, with large, black numbers on its face. I could see that the alarm was set for eight pm, which was in seven minutes. Attached to the clock, by duct-tape, were three sticks of dynamite.

I should have never involved Mom in any of this. I mean, the poor, old, pudgy, white-hair, old dear. She’s eighty-six-years-old.

“After all of those years of wasting my life,” I cried, “I finally have reasons to live—I got money; I’m finally healthy and in shape; I’m dating, and now I’m going to die!”

“Stop your crying, Tom, and get us out of this!” Mom shouted at me, angrily. “You’re a detective—a famous detective; so, think! Think! Be a man! Get us out of this!”

Well, let’s back-up a minute here. This happened a few nights ago, so, obviously, we didn’t die.

It’s twenty minutes after midnight, Saturday, Halloween, and I’m sitting at my desk, which is butt-up against the east wall, under the window, and faces the street below, in my bedroom of my parents’ two-story, old house in Lemay, South County of St. Louis, Missouri. I have lived here all my life. I’m fifty-seven-years-old, and up until two years ago, in 2007, I was a real loser—a bum who never worked; secretly got drunk in my room night after night; told lie after lie; never dated or left the house unless I had to and had no future at all. Then, two years ago, that all changed; I solved two murders.

Now, I’m no P. I., gumshoe. No. It was a joke. A joke that I was playing on Mom. See, two years ago, my dad’s Alzheimer’s got to a point in which Mom and I couldn’t take of him any longer. We hated it, but Mom placed him in a nursing home, Living Care of South County, which is only two miles east of here. Mom placed him in there at the end of summer, and, boy, was that first Thanksgiving and Christmas without Dad here awful. Just awful. It was so lonely. Mom and I drove there every day to be with Dad and feed him lunch. Mom still does that, but I don’t anymore. About a year ago now, I just couldn’t look at him anymore, being like he is—a vegetable; a body with no mind; a zombie. Anyway, like I said those two holidays were rough on us—well, especially rough on Mom. What with all of Mom and Dad’s brother and sisters being dead from disease and old age, and what with my two older sisters, Mary and Eve, living in different states—Mary living in Santa

Monica, California, and Eve lives in Chicago, Illinois. So, yeah, it was rough on Mom. Two weeks before Christmas, I was really feeling lonely and sad; really missing Dad, and I knew Mom was feeling the same, sad and lonely. So, instead of going directly up to my bedroom after supper, and getting drunk, I began staying downstairs and keeping Mom company, watching TV with her. And, boy, was that boring.

We'd sit on the long, old, brown-cloth sofa that's butted-up against the west wall of the living room, with our heads turned at a ninety-degree angle to our left,--because the old colored TV is butted-up against the south wall, between that corner of the room and the fireplace—and watch old movies. And this is what got me into that mess. Mom loves watching old detective movies from the '40's—like Humphrey Bogart as Sam Spade or Basil Rathbone as Sherlock Homes and on and on. But one she likes watching the most are “The Thin Man” movies, with Myrna Loy and William Powell. They made six of them, and two Christmases from the time we are speaking of, I bought Mom the entire DVD collection of them for her—and I bet that she has watched them a million times.

Now, Mom doesn't have Alzheimer's—well, for the past six months now, Mom has an all-consuming fear that she now does have Alzheimer's, and we're going to deal with that. But two years ago, no, she didn't have Alzheimer; no; she just forgot things. I mean, com-on, she was eighty-four-years-old! People that old forget things. Well, I started watching those Thin Man movies with her, and by the third night of doing this, I got bored out of my mind. So, I played a little joke on her. Knowing that she always forgets the ending of them, I told her that I was fed-up with my life and wanted to finally do something with it. I told her that I thought I had what it takes to be a private eye, and to prove this to her, by the time this movie was over, I'd name the killer and why he, or she, did it. This I did. Mom was quite impressed. I thought it funny. So, I did it again the next evening, and again the night after that night. Mom says to me: “Why, Tom. You're as good as Nick Charles. Maybe you should go into the detective business.”

Still keeping the joke going, I replied: “Yes, I want to, Mom. If I could just get that all-important first customer. The word-of-mouth would get out about me, and I’d be set.”

And the next morning, the ‘word-of-mouth’ did get out, and I regretted having played that joke on Mom; I regretted ever having even heard of “The Thin Man” movies and most of all, I regretted ever having been born. What a mess!

Like I said, the next morning, about ten O’clock, I was lying on the sofa, still in my pajamas,—which is a white T-shirt and my grey sweat-pants—reading the newspaper, and harboring my usual morning hangover, when, suddenly, Mom comes flying into the house, all out of breath and excited, and shouts: “Tom, the Lord has answered your pray. Claire wants to hire you. She wants you to find-out who really murdered Tyra. Isn’t that great?!”

“Yeah,” I replied, feigning joy, but silently screaming: *Oh, shit! What do I do now?!*





## Supernatural Horror Crime Thriller

Detective Mikael Ruskoff hunts the brutal killer of little girls. The pressure intensifies when the killer strikes again, grabbing two young sisters right from under their father's eyes. Mikael knows the killer will dump one girl's body in hours if he's not stopped. He discovers a satanic cult and the leader is his own father. He approaches Mikael with a deal that has a steep, personal price tag that requires Mikael's submission. Will Mikael give up his life for theirs?

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT\*\*](#)

### Chapter from Death Most Wicked

As he rolled up his street, Buzz King, former Rookie of the year, again cursed the money he had squandered on gambling over the years. He had picked up the habit when he was playing ball. He had to admit that the worst part of his gambling was that he loved betting on himself, mostly because he was a sure bet at the time. It was a secret that only he and a favored bookie knew about. He loved winning on the field and in his bank account. He felt he was a god who could do no wrong.

But after his forced retirement, he no longer had sure bets. Once he was no longer playing, gambling became a love/hate thing for him. It wasn't long before he began to joke that it was like meth, try it once just for fun, and you're hooked. Everything revolved around gambling now.



He found himself betting on everything, even when his gut said no. It had become a curse that was so exhilarating that he couldn't live without it.

Buzz knew... just knew... a single bet could put him on easy street and his gut told him that bet was right around the corner. His bones agreed. Or did they? He was beginning not to trust himself anymore and feared he'd never get his life out of the crapper. One wrong wager and he'd have to auction off the house. And once the house was gone? Well, he won't be living in a box. Not right away, anyway, but his savings was nil so he'd be forced to sell his Super Bowl rings. He didn't want to think about what would have to happen after that.

There was one obstacle standing in the way of him and his buddy, Caleb, pulling off the biggest deal of their lives... Mr. Ivanovitch and his demands. If they weren't able to shake the old guy off their backs, they were both screwed no matter what they did. Buzz hoped that Caleb had come up with a good excuse for Mr. Ivanovitch that would buy them some more time but he hadn't heard from Caleb for a few days. He had already decided that if he didn't hear from him by tomorrow at the latest, he'd have to call Caleb's old lady and see if she could get a message to him. He couldn't wait much longer than that because he knew that Royce dude didn't mess around and he had already warned them once.

As Buzz rounded the bend, he glanced at the silhouette of his house. He didn't see signs of any intruders tonight. However, Caleb had warned him many times that Mr. Ivanovitch might decide to send someone after him just to prove he was the one in control over them. Since Buzz wasn't stupid, he knew that vigilance was critical to his survival.

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After he parked in the garage, Buzz reset the alarm system, entered the mansion, and reset the second system. He figured a man couldn't have enough security when he had dangerous characters in his world.

Walking into the kitchen, he opened the fridge to grab a chilled beer. As Buzz popped the cap on the beer, the howling wind outside rattled the

sliding glass door. He walked over and checked the lock. He was about to turn back when a smudge of black dirt on the tiles caught his eye. He bent to touch it. The soil felt fresh, it was in the shape of a footprint. He looked up and saw there were more and they led across the floor.

Goddamn Patrick. How many times have I told him not to drag shit into the house? Damn slob. Buzz griped to himself.

It was a good thing his roommate had left for a two-week vacation before he got home or he'd have to beat the little twerp's ass. Furious, Buzz made a mental note to jack him up when he got back in town. Grabbing a broom, he swept the dirt into the dustpan, muttering a stream of obscenities under his breath.

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Later on...

With the light turned low, Buzz slid into the swirling waters of the hot tub. He leaned back with his head resting on a folded towel wedged against one edge. Closing his eyes, he let the jet streams soothe his aches and pains. It wasn't long before he dozed off.

A scraping noise, like a chair being dragged, jerked Buzz awake. He sat up and waited. No more noise, no one jumped out. It must have been a dream, he thought.

Buzz toyed with the idea of grabbing another beer and settling back in the hot tub to continue his soak. And he would have, but it occurred to him that he better be honest with himself for once. His gut was telling him that something was about to go down.

He began to think again about Caleb and his disappearance. Either Caleb had been able to finagle a deal with Mr. Ivanovitch and had gone sailing with him to seal the deal, or Caleb was dead, and one of Mr. Ivanovitch's goons would be coming soon to hunt him down. If the second thing happened, well, he'd have to kill himself because he sure as hell wasn't going to let them put any of that red shit on him. Either way,

he needed to be ready with a clear head and steady hands, so he better get his ass moving.

No longer interested in soaking, Buzz climbed out of the tub and dried himself. As he did, he noticed the taste of stale beer on his tongue. Another pet peeve of his, the level of irritation was right up there with crap left on his kitchen floor. Now he'd have to brush his teeth before curling up between the sheets.

Buzz padded his way into his master bathroom. As he flipped the light switch, he knew something wasn't right.

He scanned the room. There was a slight smudge of mud on the floor in front of the vanity. Opening the medicine cabinet, he thought, the bastard, has been snooping again.

But for what? His friends and business associates all knew he gave up the pills a long time ago, and he kept what little money he had in his safe. The only jewelry he owned, he wore, except for his Super Bowl ring which he kept in a safe deposit box at the bank.

Okay, that's it, he decided. First thing in the morning, I'm calling around and getting myself a new roommate. I'll find a chick who cooks. Yeah, one with a sweet tight ass, too.

Buzz picked up his toothbrush and toothpaste. While he squirted toothpaste on the brush, he scrutinized his face in the mirror. for

Jesus, another a wrinkle? Christ, I better get Stephanie to squeeze me in for a couple pricks of Botox.

He put the toothbrush in his mouth. The toothpaste had a strange, offensive texture to it. With the brush tucked in his cheek, Buzz picked up the toothpaste tube. Wait a minute. This shit is red, but the description says white paste. What the hell?

Buzz threw the toothbrush in the sink and spit into the porcelain bowl. He rummaged through the cabinet until he found a bottle of mouth disinfectant. Frantic, he screwed it open and gargled a mouthful.

Swishing it around, he tried to get it into every crevice, but he still didn't feel clean. He spit it out, took another swig, and repeated.

Damn, Patrick. He's trying to poison me. But why? Did one of those Russian guys from last month hire him? They were sure as hell pissed when they lost. But who wouldn't be with a hundred Gs on the line?

And then he felt it... a twitching, squiggly sensation under his eyelid. Buzz leaned closer to the mirror to inspect the twitch. He could see the black hairs of a tiny black, squirming thing peeking out. He fumbled through the vanity drawers, grasping for anything that could grab hold of it. His fingers latched onto a pair of needle-nose tweezers.

Jesus, let them do the job.

Buzz pried his eyelid open and jammed the needle-nose tweezers around the thing's tail. He yanked hard, sweat rolling down his forehead, blinding him. He wrenched and twisted until the thing released its pincers.

He held the tweezers up to the light to inspect it. The hideous mutation squirmed and snapped at him.

Buzz threw the monstrosity in the toilet and flushed, watching it swirl around the drain.

Then a weird sensation on his tongue grabbed his attention. He opened his mouth wide and tried to examine his teeth and tongue.

Oh shit, oh shit —

Buzz felt a crawling tickle. Something was caught in the membranes of his throat. Jamming two fingers down his throat, he forced himself to vomit. He puked until his insides felt like they might come up through his chest.

Grabbing the edges of the vanity with both hands, Buzz tried his best to keep himself from spewing any more of himself into the sink.



## Speculative fiction collection

It's all about the boy...

The boy who must destroy the world so he can save humanity. The boy who sweeps the girl off her feet. The boy who brings two lovers together. The boy who grows into a bad man and changes a woman's life. The boy who won't let death stop him from getting what he wants.

Which of these boys will capture your sense of wonder, rage, romance, or perhaps even fear?

You decide.

[EBOOK PRINT](#)

### Chapter from Legend of the Boy in the Window

He woke with a jerk. His vision swirled and there was a slight pain in his head. It was tender to the touch. He was in an intensely lit, bright and padded room, about six square feet wide. He squinted his eyes, trying to focus. Reaching to rub his head, he quickly realized that he was unable to move. He lifted his head, or at least he tried, but lowered his eyes against the weight and pain. Straining to focus, the boy took in his surroundings, understanding that he'd been bound and detained somehow. Shaking his head clear and ignoring the tears in his eyes, the boy could see that he was strapped to a chair. His hands, his arms, his chest, his forehead, and neck were all fastened back. His lap, his legs, and even his feet were all tied down. With panting breaths, a sense of panic began to rise within him.



The boy's eyes darted back and forth as he pushed against his restraints. The already small space seemed to be getting smaller and smaller. After a short while, a voice greeted the boy from a place beyond his sight. "Hello."

The voice seemed to hesitate in its introductions and sounded pleasantly feminine, but also very stern. The boy called out to the ominous voice, slightly rocking about on his four-legged cage. "Where am I? Why am I all tied up?"

Without addressing the boy's concerns, the voice spoke calmly, almost rhythmically, subtly relaxing the frazzled youth. This voice was clever, speaking in a manner that suggested the boy would feel better simply by complying with the voice's concerns, dismissing his own questions. "Don't you want to tell me who you are? Where do you come from?"

The boy was eager to answer, but his voice cracked as he replied. "I don't know. I don't know anything. I don't remember anything." The boy caught a breath and held it. The realization of his loss of memory, shook him. How do I know I don't know?

The boy began to tremble and shake from side to side, as much as he could. His restraints were strong enough to keep him upright, as he continued to heave his body up and down in panic. Maybe his chair had even been bolted down to keep him from falling over. Soon the boy's body was covered in chill bumps, sweat, and flailing drool from his mouth. In an instant, everything went black.

Again, the boy woke with a start. Quickly catching his breath, the boy discovered he was lying flat on a white bed in yet another white room. His sense of panic now mingled with paranoia as he visually searched around the space. He thought the room resembled a hospital room, but then he wasn't quite sure. He couldn't remember. How do I know hospitals?

The boy angrily accepted that he was once again strapped down, but was pleased to realize he could move his head and bend his knees. Soon the boy remembered the voice and lashed out to whoever might be listening and or watching him. "Let me out of here!" He jerked his shackled feet about at the foot of the bed and inhaled for another roar. "I've done nothing wrong!"

"Ah, but you have," replied the voice, once again calling out from beyond the boy's view. "We can't let you go until we understand what you are." The voice's sultry feminine charm from before was quickly fading away.

Annoyed and confused, the boy decided to play along with whatever sick game the voice was playing. "What do you think I am?" There was a silence folded within a subtle hum. The voice was there; just not responding. Starting to anger, the boy called out again, "Who are you to do this to me? What is it that I've done?"

A few moments of silence screeched to a halt when the boy heard the sound of joints squeaking and knobs turning. There was a slow vibration settling along the boy's spine. He realized that he was moving. The bed he had been strapped to was slowly ascending to an upright position. The boy was frightened and bewildered. He waited in anticipation as the knobs continued to turn, the joints continued to squeak, and his bed continued to eerily rise. Once upright, the boy glanced around, darting his eyes, aware of the sweat that may drip into them. At first he saw nothing except a white wall across the room. Then he felt a tugging below him, like a child reaching for a mother's hand. There were wheels attached to the base of the bed struggling to achieve motion, like a train moving uphill.

Suddenly the bed jolted, jerking the boy's body back and forth as the bed rolled across the room with a menacing screech. He shook his head in desperation. His nose flared and cheeks reddened in anger. What is the meaning of this? Pushing stiff breaths between his lips, the boy

considered belting out obscenities, but then the wall began to move. It was sliding away, revealing a clear glass pane behind it. Brows furrowed, the boy took a breath assuming he would look out and see some great horror.

The bed finally ended its monotonous journey across the room, placing the boy within a fogging breath of the pane. He could touch the pane with the tips of his nose and toes, and even stretch his fingers out to feel the coolness of the outside air brush against the glass as it chilled. Finally, the voice returned to provide an explanation. The voice shouted at the boy as though it were trying to cover up a sense of sorrow. “Look for yourself! Look out the window to see what you’ve done.”

The boy looked up first to a gloomy cloudy sky, and then gradually turned his eyes downward. In the sky, he saw dark smoky gusts of wind blowing away from his position, as well as some strange fluttering debris that seemed to be suspended in the air. Then, the boy stretched his eyes further down to the ground, almost holding his breath in anticipation. Then he saw it. Nothing; nothing except a hole the size of a city. It actually looked quite beautiful. It seemed to be a canyon, not unlike any other. It was wide and vast. An amazement of nature, the boy thought. Though he couldn’t recall the name of the canyon, he wasn’t too obliged to think it up. It wasn’t that impressive.

The boy snapped, lashing out at the voice, “You’ve filled me with suspense, and now I want my money back.” He rolled his eyes. “A cloudy day, some smoke, and a canyon; really? If you’re not going to tell me what you think I’ve done, then let me out of here!”

The voice puffed out a breath, sighing heavily against its mic, and replied, “This is no canyon.” There was another brief silence and then the voice roared with disgust, “This is what’s left of Providence, Rhode Island after you came crashing down onto it.”

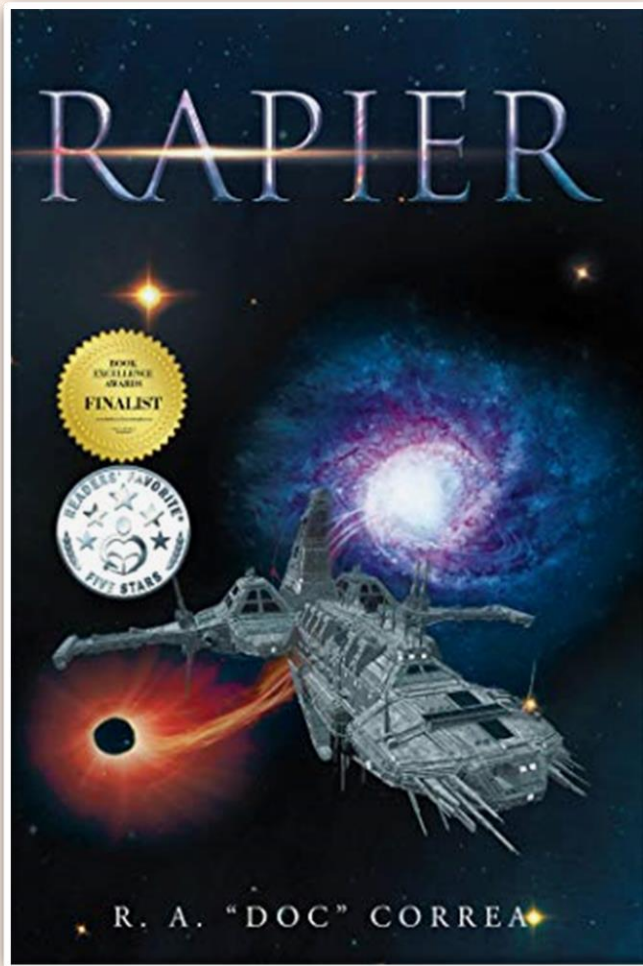
The boy looked around frantically and pleaded, “This doesn’t make any sense. There’s no way I could have done this. This ... this ... this

hole's been here for centuries, eons even. I just, it just ... this makes no ...” The boy's words were cut off by his frantic shaking. His eyes rolled to the back of his head and he, again, lost consciousness.

Slowly the boy lifted the lids of his eyes, already aware of the blaring brightness on the other side. A bold white light had been strategically positioned over his head to block out the figure of a presence near him. The boy could feel the warmth and pull of a body, an itch to make contact. Soon, though, he felt the pull all around him and he knew he was surrounded. A group of people crowded him, talking amongst themselves and seemingly paying no attention to the rousing boy.

Now accustomed to his bondage, the boy took in his new setting. There were tubes and sensors all over his body and he sensed a delicate ache pulsing through his veins. He felt strange, and thought to himself, I wonder what kind of drugs they're pumping into me? The boy lifted his head as best he could, struggling to extend his neck around and strain his eyes to focus. Anger reddened his skin at the sight of fresh stitches and bandages across his chest. Only a growing fear of what had and would happen kept him from lashing out.

Finally, he called out to the group gathered around him, “What's wrong with me? What have you done to me?” The group continued to converse amongst themselves, ignoring the boy. He shed a tear and cried out once more. “Don't ignore me. What are you doing to me? Someone tell me something, please!”



## Space opera sci-fi

Kathy Masters never expected to journey to the stars. When she does, she experiences the adventure of a lifetime. That all changes when she is selected by the prestigious Galactic Geographic Society to photograph and record the flora and fauna of a newly discovered class M planet. Filled with hope and enthusiasm, she boards the S.S. America for the trip to Beta 3 Epsilon to begin her new project. On the way she is abducted and brought aboard the privateer Rapier.

[EBOOK PRINT](#)

## Chapter from Rapier

“Shit, I’m going to be late!”

Kathy hops out of the bathroom of her tiny flat, pulling up her pantyhose. She looks at them as she does. “Damn, I’ve got a run in them,” she growls at the streak on her right thigh. Maybe no one will notice. *You’d think that with all this new technology, being able to travel among the stars, that someone could invent pantyhose that don’t run.* She frowns at the thought. Kathy adjusts her skirt so the patch she sewed will be covered by her coat.

Kathy looks in the mirror. Her dark-brown hair has a graying streak by her right temple, but her deep brown eyes are still bright and full of life despite everything. *Everything—space battles, raids, sword fights—*



*and all this time trying to raise a young girl among battle-hardened raiders. It's amazing that all my hair isn't gray.*

Her white blouse is fraying in places, so to keep it covered, Kathy puts on the leather bustier he gave her. It still fits like the first time she wore it. Her figure hasn't changed much at all, even after having a baby.

For a moment she thinks of him, a tear forms in her eye. Kathy rubs his wedding ring, which she wears on her ring finger. "No time for this!" she admonishes herself. Still, she can't help see the dark- brown eyes, salt-and-pepper mustache, graying hair, and devilish smile—a smile Kathy sees every night in her dreams.

Kathy looks around her flat. It's small and sparsely furnished, barely enough room for the three of them, and she can't even afford this. Still, it's better than the cells the Americans kept her and the others in. The bastards, how dare they. There was a deal, a deal that has given them the edge in the current war, and they didn't even try to keep their end of it.

Since her "rescue" (that's how the Americans touted it in the media when they released her, Cindy, and little James—the Americans rescued them from pirates), she's been trying to get by. The brothers gifted her almost all their loot. It was washed very clean by it being passed through numerous corporations, off-planet banks, and other entities. But the Earth government, particularly the Americans, has kept it from being released to her, claiming it was the ill-gotten gain from piracy. Piracy, that's almost funny; it didn't seem like piracy at the time. Somehow it seemed like justice. Justice for those that were abandoned, justice for those who were senselessly slaughtered, justice for those enslaved.

The truth is, the Americans don't want it known what happened to the people they wouldn't fight for and the Chinese definitely don't want the truth of what they've done to come out. They know more colonies will join the war against them.

Oscar looks lazily at her from the table.

“If you don’t have anything helpful to say, don’t say anything,” she says to the cat. He just rolls over, keeping his eyes on her and answers, Meow.

“Thanks,” she replies mockingly. Oscar responds with his usual indifference. Kathy hears the cab honk for her and rushes out the door with her bag and coat. She waves bye to little James and shouts, “Thanks, Mrs. Fuji. I love you, James.”

“Good luck, Kathy!” Mrs. Fuji shouts in reply. Little James waves and says, “Bye, Mommy.”

“The Galactic Geographic building,” she tells the driver as she enters the cab.

“Yes, ma’am,” the cabby replies as he swiftly cuts into traffic.

The cab drops Kathy Masters off in front of the Galactic Geographic building. It’s been over eleven years since the last time she was here. It looks the same as it did the first time she saw it. But she is definitely not the same as when she first was here.

She enters the lobby, walks to the lift, and pushes the call button.

The last time Kathy was here, it was just her. A twenty-year-old gifted photographer being offered the chance of a lifetime, to photograph the creatures of a newly discovered planet before full colonization begins. Now it’s Kathy, her son James, and Cindy.

The lift doors open. She enters and punches the button for the thirteenth floor. Her thoughts continue.

Cindy, her adopted daughter, a very brash and creative sixteen-year-old. The two of them have been together since she was five, but she’s definitely not five now. They’ve been back on Earth for just over two years, and she’s proven to be quite a handful. Five times now, Kathy’s been called to school because she’s been fighting. Not the silly

girl fights most high school girls have, no. She's been kicking the butts of the boys in school, specifically the jocks. She likes fighting wrestlers and football players the most. One time, Kathy entered the principal's office to find she had beaten and tied up three eighty-kilo linemen.

And the capers she's pulled off—a floating gambling ring at school, the fake-diamond scam, and her favorite, the Gibb switch. That one nearly got her arrested by the Feds. Yet whenever Kathy looks at her, she still sees the frightened five-year-old she shared a cell in the brig of the *Rapier* with—the young girl she raised among a crew of the roughest raiders in human space. Their princess, their daughter, their lovely child that they entrusted to Kathy to teach how to be a woman.

The lift door opens, and Kathy steps out into the hallway.

Kathy has tried to work as a photographer since she returned, but no one will hire her. They all look at her with the same expression, but it's their eyes that tell the truth of what they are thinking. She's a pirate, a thief, and a cutthroat. They all fear her. *Good, she likes it that way. Who needs them anyway?*

But her heart hasn't been in it. Still with the Feds holding her money, she's broke. She can't take care of little James, Cindy, and herself this way. So she's decided to play her last card. The pics. *I sure hope this is the time the gods spoke of, please let it be.*

Kathy walks into the Galactic Geographic offices, walks up to the receptionist, and announces, “Kathy Masters for Mr. Baker.”

“One moment, Miss Masters,” the receptionist says coldly. Kathy can hear it in her voice, *pirate. She can go to hell!*

The pictures, they're all Kathy has left from those nine years. As difficult as they were, Kathy and Cindy think of them as the best of their lives, and she misses them. She misses all of them—especially him, Commodore Black.

The receptionist says, “He’s ready for you, Miss Masters.” She points down the hall. It’s there again in her voice, *pirate*. But she’s not just any pirate—no, indeed. She’s the pirate that caused the war. She survived to tell part of the story—that and what was recovered with her was all it took. And now the colonies of seventeen nations are at war with the Chinese, and it’s been the most bloody of conflicts.

Kathy knocks on the door. A man opens it. “Come in, Kathy. Please have a seat. How long has it been?”

“Eleven years,” she replies.

“Yes, I remember. I gave you the assignment for Beta 3 Epsilon. That was the beginning of your adventures.”

“Yes, yes, it was,” Kathy says.

“Well, what can I do for you?” She looks at him and can tell he plans to blow her off, just like the others. But she hasn’t shown him the pictures yet. Pictures and vids of life as a privateer, a life she never expected, a life unknown here on Earth.

“I know it’s not your usual fare, Steve, but I have an exclusive for you. One I know your readers will eat up.”

“Really, and what would that be?”

“The exclusive story of my nine years on the *Rapier*. Logs, journals, and pics, plus vids.”

“Pics of everyone?” he asks.

“Yes, everyone.”

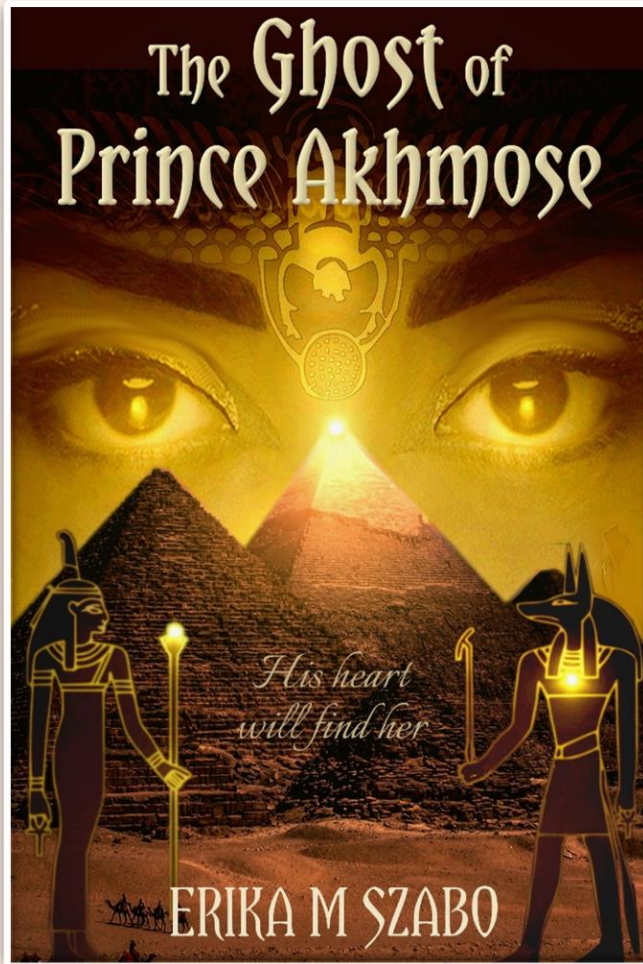
“Even him?”

“Him who?”

“You know, him.”

“Why can’t you people say his name?”

“I don’t think that’s important.”



## Paranormal ghost story

A powerful curse cast thousands of years ago by the Grand Vizier. Tanakhmet cursed Prince Akhmose to never enter the Field of Reeds, the heavenly paradise. Why did he want him to linger as a restless ghost among the living, forever? By reading the hieroglyphs, Layla breaks the curse and frees the ghosts of both Prince Akhmose and the Grand Vizier whose thirst for revenge is stronger than ever. With Layla's help, can Prince Akhmose finally cross into the afterlife?

**EBOOK PRINT AUDIOBOOK**

## Chapter from The Ghost of Prince Akhmose

The old church bell chimed twelve times, the sound echoed through the silent museum, weaving its way into Layla's half-dark studio. Akhmose stretched and sat up feeling groggy and disoriented. He looked around the large room that was lit by the full moon through the window. *Where am I? What is this strange place?* he thought, feeling confused. *How did I get here?*

He looked toward the window. The pale moon and the chirping sounds of the night birds and insects spoke of serenity. Akhmose stood up and started walking toward the window but felt as if he was walking on air. Looking down at his legs, he realized that his feet didn't touch the ground. Startled, he concentrated on standing with feet firmly on the



ground. When he descended, he felt the floor under his bare feet. *What is going on? Am I dreaming?*

As his eyes adjusted to the moonlight, he looked around and saw a sarcophagus in the middle of the room. *How strange. This place doesn't look like a burial chamber.* He walked back to the sarcophagus and dropped his hand to the surface, only to watch his fingers sink into the solid wood with no resistance. Yanking his hand back, he stared at the large sarcophagus in total confusion. He could see the face painted on the exterior, and at that moment, he realized that the sarcophagus was made for him. *But I'm not dead. I'm dreaming.* He sighed in relief. *That's it! This place is not a burial chamber and can't be the beautiful place of the afterlife, the Sekhet-Aaru. And besides, even if I were dead, the sarcophagus shouldn't be closed, not until my body was placed inside.*

“Where am I?” His voice echoed in the room, but it was only met with silence. Panic started to set in, not knowing why he was brought to this strange place. He buried his face in his hands and felt the smooth skin and muscles beneath. *My body feels solid and real, yet everything around me feels as soft as clouds. Why?*

His steps made no sound as he walked toward the walls. Shelves upon shelves were filled with papyrus rolls but they looked old and faded. He saw strange symbols painted on small paper squares, but he couldn't read them. None of the figures made any sense. He felt anxious and lost.

Then, he saw colorful hieroglyphics. They were so clear and real and beautiful. *Whoever painted them must have been schooled by a really great teacher.* He tried to unroll one of the papyri open, but his hands kept sinking into it. He gave up and turned away.

Suddenly, a bright light beam swept across the floor and then the walls. He froze as his eyes followed the light. Was it a sign? What caused this strange bright light? It looked to be as pure as the sun, but how could it be seen at night? Was he in the realm of the gods? Heavy footsteps approached, and he moved toward the sound. A large man in strange

clothes held a torch that didn't burn with flames. *That's no torch with fire!* Akhmose decided. *How could they trap the sunlight in that small cylindrical object the man is holding?* The strange man looked old and worn, paying no attention to him. Akhmose crossed his arms and commanded, "Tell me what this place is!"

His face burned when the man refused to reply, or even glance in his direction. How dare he? He was Akhmose, brother of the Pharaoh of Egypt! He took a step closer to the man trying to avoid the bright light. Standing in front of the man, he shouted, "Can you hear me?"

The stocky looking man didn't even blink. *What's wrong with this man? Those who own this place, why are they employing the blind and deaf?* Akhmose sighed and leaned against the wall. He had given up on trying to get the man's attention. All his life, few dared to ignore him, and even fewer who were not punished for said transgressions.

His gaze was drawn to the moon and smiled. He was in a place where nothing was familiar except the moon staring down at him. He tried to relax and ease the building tension. *A troubled mind attracts confusion, but a level head draws the solution.* His father had told him many times and it had always worked for him. He tried to make it work for him, again.

The bright light from the stranger's torch landed on him briefly, and he wondered if the light was meant to harm him. He jerked backward by instinct, but when the light swept his body, he felt nothing. No heat on his skin, no burns from the light. It was nothing like the sun. Lost in his thoughts, Akhmose didn't notice the man walking in his direction. When the stranger was a foot away from him, he didn't stop. Before he could move, Akhmose felt the man go through his body—it felt like a gust of cold air.

The stranger drew a sharp breath. "A window must be open somewhere. It's drafty in here," he mumbled and shivered. Akhmose watched in horror and couldn't understand a word he was saying. The

man shined his flashlight on the shelves and continued his monologue, “This place is giving me the heebie-jeebies. I wish I could get a normal day job.” He quickly turned and started walking toward the door.

Surprised, Akhmose reached out and touched the man’s arm. “What did you do? How did you do that? How did you walk through me?” He pulled back in horror as his hand and fingers sunk into the man’s arm.

The guard yelled in fright, “Who’s there? Is there anybody there?” His eyes widened as he looked around the empty room. He turned and ran as fast as he could, his footsteps echoing down the long hall.

Akhmose followed the man who spoke in a strange tongue. He saw another man walking toward them in the long corridor. Sharp light wavered from his torch as he moved his hand.

“Earl! There’s a ghost in here! I’m getting the hell out of here.” The stocky man pointed at Layla’s workshop with shaky fingers.

“Don’t be stupid, man!” The taller man shook his head and groaned. “What are you going on about, there’s no such thing as ghosts.”

The shorter man stuttered, “No? Then you never had one touch you.”

The taller man groaned and shivered. “Okay, let’s get out of here.”

*I’m in a strange world and I don’t understand what these people are saying. Why am I here? Am I a ghost?* Akhmose watched the men flashing their lights everywhere. He wondered who they were. They wore the same black outfit and looked more like watchers than thieves.

Akhmose shook off the uncertain feeling and began wandering. *I must find someone who speaks my language and explain to me what I’m doing here.* He walked from room to room and passage to passage until he came upon a large door. When he tried to grab the doorknob, his hand and arm floated through it. It was a strange experience. *Am I really a ghost? I can feel my body, but everything around me feels as if made of clouds.* Feeling more curious than scared, he pushed his foot through the

thick door and when he didn't feel pain or pressure, he rushed his entire body to find himself on wide, stone steps.

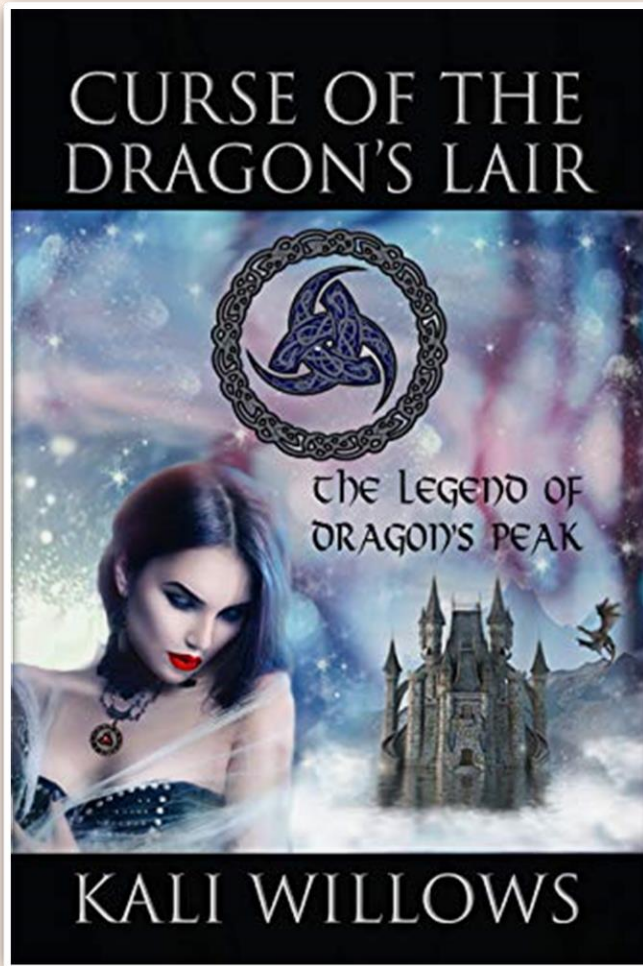
*It must be a temple*, Akhmose looked back at the building with tall pillars. He walked down the stairs and looked around in awe. Everything looked strange. He had never seen anything like it. The buildings were almost as tall as the pyramids and clustered together. He had never seen so many large buildings together. Marveling at the lights, shining from the top of long poles, he wondered. *There are so many people walking about. Why aren't they sleeping? Only watchers and evil people move around after sunset. At least in the world, I knew.* Suddenly, he felt a rush of great power dragging him. Everything turned into a blur.

Suddenly, the rushing sensation stopped. Akhmose stood still, listening to sounds, but everything was quiet. He opened his eyes when he felt solid ground under his feet. The floor was different, it felt as soft as the woven carpets of his rooms in the palace, but smoother. He was thankful that his feet were on solid ground, it made the experience that much less awkward. He already felt like he was losing his mind, so he refused to think about how he was suddenly in a strange room. He waited for the panic to set in, but he felt strangely calm. He looked around and tried to make sense of what was happening to him.

The small, crowded room was half-lit by the moon. He shivered, wherever he was, it wasn't his home in his beloved Egypt. He heard a soft moan and when he turned his head, his eyes fell upon a beautiful woman in a lilac-colored bed. Her long, black hair spread on the pillow, and in her peaceful sleep, a small smile played at the corner of her shapely lips.

Akhmose stood frozen, mesmerized by the sight of the curve of her dark eyebrows, smooth, sun kissed skin, and the soft rising of her chest with every breath. "Anakhmun, my beloved," he whispered. *Could that be?* He thought and leaned forward to take a closer look. *No, there is only a resemblance.* He realized. *I wonder who she is?*





## Paranormal fantasy

Dragons, witches, castles, and curses, along with an army of gargoyles. After Vala's bid to save her family backfires, she awakens from a frozen tomb to a dark curse that runs far deeper than a botched spell.

Tyr and Jera are on the run from enemies who hunt the last of their kind, until a run-in with a mysterious woman. Can these destined mates uncover the secrets buried deep for centuries in time to save their dragon-witch clans from extinction?

[EBOOK](#)

## Chapter from Curse of Dagon's Lair

The stench of sulfur from the burnt match still lingered in Vala's nose. The warmth of dozens of candles filled the chamber as she set the final white pillar in its place outside of the circle. Despite the stone walls and little natural light from the open window just above, the vast room was aglow with the flickering flames. The light danced across the nine archways embedded in the walls of the circular room. Ornate carvings of ancient oak framed each pocket with magical Druid symbols: the tree of life, the triple horn of Odin, and other symbols of meaning to their coven. It was breathtaking and had taken her mother years of hand carving to create. Mother had planned to build statues to each of her daughters to fill the spaces. To pay tribute to the last of her precious bloodline. Sadly, she never had the chance to finish.



After an hour of preparing, she made sure every detail was flawless. From the purple silk spread smoothly across the altar's surface, to every item on her list, hand-picked and lined up in order. Focused on the measurements she pinched between her fingers, Vala meticulously added each ingredient to the cauldron.

“A sprinkle of sea salt, a pinch of—”

“Vala.” Vesta's voice echoed up the stone stairwell. “Vala, please. I am not joking this time.”

“I am in the sacred chambers, Vesta,” she hollered “Where was I?”

She busied herself plucking chunks of obsidian, quartz crystal, and hematite from her collection of magical tools and continued her urgent work. The witch's powerful arsenal included a circle of gemstones, a variety of potent herbs, sea salt, candles, and her trusty dragon athame. The blade she'd claimed from her mother's belongings just days ago, a tool she was told carried great power in magical work. Grendel called it the Dragon's Tear. Mother had hidden it since Grendel passed away. When Vala found it, she knew she needed every ounce of power she could summon to complete the task at hand.

From the inventory she completed, it would seem she had all the tools in place to implement her plan. Now, all she had left to do was to convince her sisters to go along with her new spell. It would require no less than three to do the incantation, but nine would be the most potent. The light of the full moon would soon be upon them.

“There you are. I have searched the entire castle and the grounds for you. What in the name of Odin are you doing?”

Vesta was only a year older than her, but she behaved like an overbearing mother. The fact that Vala was the youngest of the nine sisters meant everyone felt the need to mother her.

“I was soon to summon you all. I have been devising a protection spell,” she muttered as she concentrated on her agenda.

“Protection for who, and from what?” Vesta propped her hands on her hips.

“To protect the rest of us, from the mortals,” she growled. How could Vesta even ask such a question after all that had unfolded in such a short time?

“The mortals are of no consequence to us, dear sister.”

“Oh really? A swirl of frustration spun through her soul, and the heat of tears filled her eyes. “If that is true, then why have we hidden our mother’s remains in this secret place?” She pointed to the stone altar with ornate trim in the center of the room. The waist-high pedestal housed a secret door to a space built by the sisters just days ago to honor her ashes. Locked with a golden key they’d then buried in the orchard. It was their plan to ensure no other should disturb her resting place again.

“Her trial is over. None of us were found to be a threat to the village. As long as we keep to ourselves, no one will bother us anymore.”

The embers of rage in Vala’s stomach combusted. “No threat? Our mother was tried as a witch. After they hanged her in front of us, they removed her head and tore off her jaw for fear the dragon-witch could still utter curses.”

“The mortals live in fear of what they do not understand.” Vesta always tried to be the voice of reason. Perhaps more so, since she’d fallen in love with a mortal the previous summer. A mortal Vala had never been truly fond of.

“The mortals have been provoked into fear and panic by a darker force than you know,” a voice called through the window of the tower. “It is mass hysteria.”

Vala spotted her mentor, Ninna, in gargoyle form on the window ledge.

“Darker force?”

“Focus on your spell. We are here if you need us.” Ninna flew away. The gargoyles perched on the turrets of the castle every day for as long as she could remember. Friends of her mother’s, they offered protection against evil if the need should ever arise.

At her mother’s command, the gargoyles refrained from interfering during the witch trial. Kara’s final wish was to end the war on Dragon’s Peak with her execution. She wanted her family and her allies safe from harm, despite her daughters’ protests against the injustice.

Their life in Salem Harbor had crumbled in recent weeks. The mortals’ witch hunt and trial was fast, relentless, and unfair. The magistrate found their mother guilty of witchcraft and conjuring destructive beasts to attack the village below. Their castle sat on top of the bluffs, at the edge of Dragon’s Peak. Before this wretched violence, they’d lived in peace, and Vala had found comfort in the sounds of the water below. Now, they feared the mortals would still come for them, at least everyone but Vesta did.

“Before Christianity was established, we were revered as the most wonderful, benevolent creatures. Then the fanatics who preached to the masses spread poisonous lies across the lands about us. In the eyes of humans, we became monsters. They hunt us down to the point of extinction. They sacrifice maidens to satisfy the ‘beasts.’ Yet, the very people mother protected with her life fled and never told the villagers that we didn’t kill them we set them free.”

“I know you are angry. Not all mortals feel the same about us.” Vesta’s voice was soft and pleading.

“Like your lover?” Vala snarled. “And where was he during the trial? Was he there to shield us from the long arm of the law? From the judgment of his father?”

“It is more complicated than that, Vala. Please...” She dipped her head to her chest.

“No,” she barked. “Your beloved abandoned you, and us, in our time of need. He knows we protect the villagers, yet said nothing to his father in our defense.”

Vesta stood silent as tears spilled down her porcelain cheeks. There was no way she could deny the truth.

“Even now, as his child grows in your belly, where is he to protect you both?”

“To conjure spells when your heart is full of hate and anger will yield negative consequences,” their eldest sister Phoebe called from the doorway. “Your words to our sister are chilling. Her heart is already broken.”

Unwilling to admit Phoebe was right, she swallowed her guilt. Outside the window, the daylight had faded, the pinks and oranges of the sunset dissipated. In their wake, rays of dark purple and streams of the moonlit sky took their place.

“What will you have me do?” she growled.

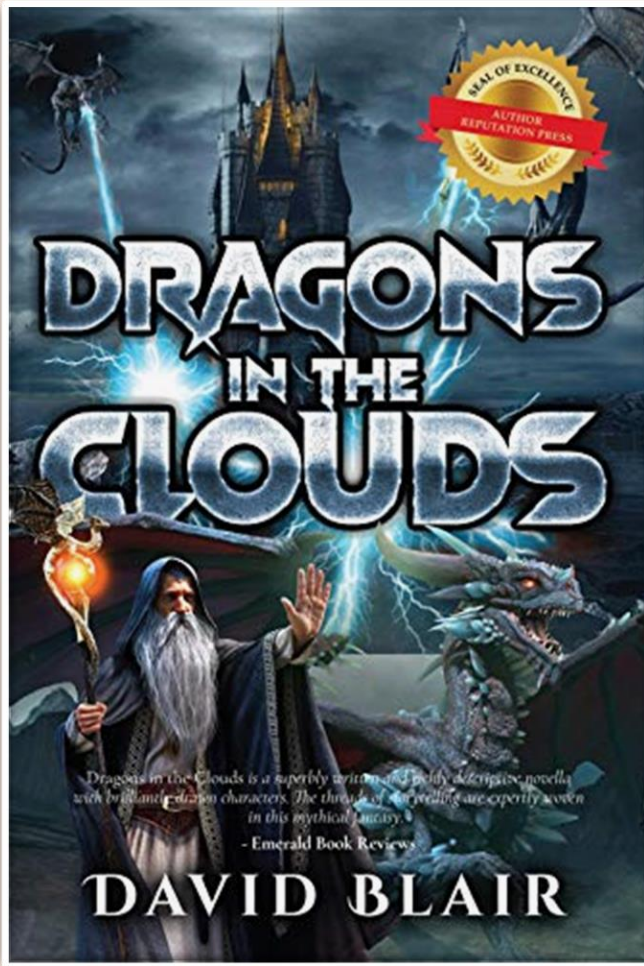
“We will have you tell us your plan,” Adara entered the room. Second in age to Phoebe, she usually sided with youngest sister.

After her, Ember, Amaris, Blodwyn, Catrin, and Braith came in.

All nine sisters were now in the sacred chambers. All wearing the matching coven charms their mother fashioned for them in silver; the triple horn of Odin with a ruby in the center. Each took her place in the sacred circle around the altar where Vala worked.

“Phoebe is right,” Adara offered. “To cast any spell with anger or hatred in the heart of the witch can cause that spell to backfire.”

“Our hearts must all be true, and beat as one. We are a coven,” Blodwyn affirmed. “The last of our northern tribe and the dragon-witch bloodline. Mother would have wanted us to support one another.”



## Fantasy

A wizard is compelled to help a family of Dragons escape the annihilation of their species. He grants them the spell of weightlessness and tells them to hide within the cover of the clouds. An apprentice to the wizard grants the same spell to a vicious specie of Dragon. Causing a war to begin between the two species, forcing an event that may bring an end to their world and perhaps the very world we live in today.

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## Chapter from Dragons in the Clouds

Inside the laboratory, the two wizards were still battling. David was startled by a loud crashing sound made by a large cabinet that Merlinius magically sent flying toward Odious. Odious ducked and scrambled behind some knocked over tables, causing Merlinius to momentarily lose track of him.

“Where are you? You coward!!” shouted Merlinius.

Odious jumped up and threw a crystal rock at Merlinius, hitting him in the head. Merlinius screamed in pain as he fell hard to the floor. David, seeing that Merlinius had taken a severe hit, immediately went to him to help him get back on his feet. Odious ran to retrieve the mallet he had lost earlier. Seeing David helping Merlinius, Odious went after him to try



to scare him off. But brave David didn't run. Instead, he started throwing bottles at Odious. While many of the bottles hit the wall behind Odious, some hit their mark, slowing Odious down considerably.

Outside, in the sky, Zindetha was in hot pursuit of Rago and was gaining ground, getting closer and closer. Zindetha thrust his large wings harder and harder as he zeroed in on Rago. His eyes grew bigger with excitement as he was almost upon his target. 74 David Blair Rago, seemingly running out of gas, began to slow down. Zindetha could almost taste his breakfast, his mouth watering with anticipation. Suddenly, Rago veered downward toward Merlinius' castle, tucking his wings for maximum speed. Zindetha was angered by this unexpected burst of Rago's pure will to survive, helping him to streak downward at incredible speed.

"You can't get away!!" Zindetha roared, as he also tucked his wings for maximum speed downward.

Once again, he started to close in on Rago, this time at a much faster rate. Rago swiftly changed direction in hopes of eluding his capture. Rago is now heading straight for the castle, while Zindetha, oblivious to his direction of flight, is focused entirely on Rago. Zindetha failed to realize that he was headed straight for the castle wall. Rago spied a small porthole, difficult to see, but possibly big enough for Rago to fit through. The smaller dragon soared in the direction of the small porthole. Zindetha, still oblivious that he was headed for the wall, followed in full pursuit of Rago. At the last minute, Rago tucked his wings as tight as he could and shot right through the castle porthole. But foolish Zindetha, like a runaway train, collided horribly into the castle wall. The crash brought boulder-sized bricks down on top of Zindetha, practically covering the large dragon. Zindetha lay immobile on the ground. Seeing Zindetha hit the wall and collapsing, the other meat-eating dragons took flight and started circling above Merlinius' castle.



## High fantasy – fairy tales

A golden chest, a stained-glass window that never ages, and a dream. What do these things have in common? MAGIC. Magic sends twins, Katie and Billy, into Fey to recover a stolen talisman, The Dagger of Truth. Mixed with dark magic, this mighty talisman can be transformed into The Dagger of Malice and possess the power to destroy both Fey and mortal Earth. Come along as “The Chosen Ones” step into an exotic land full of danger, magic and mystery.

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## Chapter from Katie McCorry and the Dagger of Truth

Yes, they were all doomed to whatever fate the fairies had in store for them, and Katie hadn't even thought to prepare them with any defense. She had put all of their lives in danger, and now she didn't know what to do.

The old chest levitated then shook causing the crusted edges to sail through the air. Soon it glistened like a precious jewel. The knight slowly lowered it back to the floor. Then lifting his lance upright, he turned his horse back to its original position. As the light faded from the window, the room was lit only by the glowing amber of the chest.

Everyone's eyes returned to the chest. It stood amongst the dust and cobwebs of the attic sparkling solid gold with emerald jewels forming a

circle on the center of the lid. Inside the circle was the same elaborate golden T as worn by the knight. Intricate patterns that looked like some kind of symbols were carved into the gold surrounding the circle. A giant empress cut emerald served as the latch. On each of the four sides were more emeralds outlining other symbols. The front symbol was a seven-pointed star carved out of a sparkling clear crystal. On the back was an obsidian tree, with the emerald jewels forming its leaves. On the left side was a sun of golden citrine, and on the right, a moon carved out of iridescent moonstone.

As everyone stared, transfixed on the chest, the latch turned. The lid slowly creaked upward until the chest stood fully opened.

Katie looked frantically around the attic. There had to be something made out of iron up here. There was just about anything you could imagine in this attic, and right now things you never would have. Keeping one eye warily on the chest, she scanned the room and spotted something silver under a pile of clothes. She slowly worked her way towards it. As she grabbed the object, a large hairy brown hand grabbed the side of the beautiful chest.

Katie held her breath. What on earth was that? Maybe something bad had killed their guide and replaced him. The object in her hand was heavy. Surely, it was made out of iron. Maybe they had a chance after all.

Another gross hand followed the first. Gnarled brown fingers with long curved claws now held onto the trunk. Slowly, a moldy-looking brown cap emerged, followed by a long skinny, pointed nose. The cap was rounded on top and long, pointed ears stuck out on each side. The cap hid the creature's eyes, falling forward against its huge nose. Its mouth was enormous, encompassing the entire face. Long stringy brown hair sprouted out from beneath the cap. Grossly matted brown hair covered the arms and face. The creature slowly emerged from the trunk stepping out onto the dusty attic floor. Its short body was covered with

the same matted brown hair as the arms and face. It wore a red jacket, tied around its round belly with a leather belt. Feet stretched out in front of its body, longer than its legs. They were covered in a pair of shoes made out of the same moldy, brown material as the cap.

Katie held the heavy object out in front of her. “Who are you and what have you done with our guide?” she asked, a little shakily. Everyone now looked at Katie, astonished.

“What do you mean our guide?” asked Billy. “Guide to where? If you know what’s going on here Katie, you’d better tell the rest of us right now!”

“In a minute, Billy! Right now we have more important problems,” Katie yelled, pointing at the creature, “in case you haven’t noticed!”

“Problem, now I’m a problem!” growled the creature. He pushed back his cap to reveal large slanted yellow eyes. “Well, that’s just great! First, it’s the queen. ‘Send the brownie,’ he mocked, ‘he’s used to being in a mortal’s house. Yes, yes, the others agreed, he would be the best one to go. He knows all about mortals.’ No matter that I might get killed. No one cares about us brownies. We’re expendable. I ought to just go right back and tell them they can come and get their own mortals. I think that’s just what I’ll do. I definitely don’t need these kinds of problems at my age, and I won’t stand by and take insults from imps!” The creature looked angrily around the room. “I ought to put a hex on this house before I leave. Such nerve! Calling ME a problem!”

He got back into the trunk and closed the lid, muttering something as the lid slammed shut. The kids all waited in anticipation. They looked at the window, but nothing happened. The voice from the trunk said the words again, only louder this time. Everyone held their breath, but again, nothing happened.

The brownie threw the trunk lid open and glared at the window. “Knight, you gone deaf?” he yelled. “By the Tuatha De Danann, By the



star, moon, sun and land, with the power of the night, to Fairyland I go in flight! Evah Htiaf Ni Yef!”

The knight turned and looked at the creature, but did not point its lance at the chest. Instead, he stood there as if challenging the irate brownie.

“Oh,” said the brownie, “so that’s the way you’re going to be. Not going to let me go back without the imps. Well, that’s just fine with me!” he said, crossing his arms in front of his chest. “What if I decide just to stay right here and not go back myself? Then what are you going to do?” The brownie paused as if listening to something; then, he stomped his foot inside the chest “Send another brownie! You really think another brownie will come here if I don’t return? They would think I died. Brownies might not be as powerful as the Tuatha, but they ain’t stupid.”

The brownie paused again, still looking at the window as if it were talking to him. Katie strained her ears trying to hear what the knight was saying. She heard nothing, nothing at all. Oh, why wouldn’t the knight just let this furry grumpy hobgoblin go back home where he belonged? He didn’t want to be here any more than she wanted him here.

“Freeze my powers, would she? Miserable old witch,” muttered the brownie.

Instantly, the knight drew his bejeweled dagger from his waist and pointed it directly in line with the brownie’s heart.

“Okay, okay, don’t do anything rash! I take it back!” said the brownie, holding both hands up in front of him. “Queen Utopia is not a witch. Now just turn back around,” he waved his hand in the direction the knight had been standing, “and let me finish my job, so I can go home.”

The knight nodded his head and replacing his dagger, turned back to his original position.



“Knights always take things so literally! Humph,” said the brownie, climbing out of the chest. “Now if you’re ready, I’d really like to get home. Come on the lot of you, into the chest!”

“No,” said Katie, holding her precious metal piece out in front of her. “We won’t go, and you can’t make us! Everyone, get behind me!” she yelled. Donnie, Billy, and Ariel wasted no time crossing the room to hide behind Katie who seemed to be the only one who knew what was going on.

“What are you going to do with that?” asked the brownie, scowling. “Straighten my hair?”

Katie looked at the object in her hand for the first time. She was holding out an old iron. “Well it’s no cross, but it’s still made out of iron, so stay away,” she said, feeling really silly now.

“They call me Jackel,” said the brownie, “and as you have already figured out, I am a brownie, hobgoblin, bwca, or pixie, whichever one of your mortal names you prefer to call me. My power is great, but my patience isn’t, so put that silly thing away. Your jinx won’t work on me. We brownies have spent more time in your mortal houses than you have, and we learned centuries ago how to ward off your defenses against us. You might want to grab that iron cross in your great grandma’s wardrobe, though. It might come in handy later. There are still a few stupid fairies in Fey.”

Katie put the iron down. “Wait,” she said, thinking maybe she should try to reason with this hairy creature now, since her iron wasn’t going to do her any good. “We can’t just leave. Think about it. Grams and our parents would miss us. They wouldn’t know where we went. They’d send people searching all through the woods for us, disturbing your work there. You really don’t want that now do you?”

“It’s not up to me as you can see,” said Jackel, nodding his head toward the knight, “but I will see what the queen says about your concerns.



### **Pre-apocalyptic urban fantasy**

A secret society of Druids. An ancient Reptilian foe. Earth teeters in the balance.

When Reptilians engineer a plan to breach Earth's unsuspecting borders, Emily Hester is chosen as the new Grand Druid of the Awen Order. But Emily was kidnapped at a young age and doesn't know magic. Now she desperately seeks to unleash the powers the Druids swear she possesses. Can a sexy druid priest, his teenage nephew, and their animal Elders tilt the odds in Emily's favor?

[\*\*EBOOK PRINT\*\*](#)

### **Chapter from Awen Rising**

The scroll was delivered to the White House in the wee hours of the morning by an old woman demanding secrecy. High-ranking officials were summoned from their beds, and after a flurry of activity, had declared the scroll authentic and threat-free. Only then was the message copied and deciphered, and the age-delicate original stored in an acid-free environment for preservation.

The president's polished shoes sank into the rug as he crossed the Oval Office. He had engineered a rare moment alone and used it to remove the file from the hidden alcove in the Resolute desk. Withdrawing its contents, he read through the report and studied the map at the bottom of the reproduction.

Outside Caen, in the north of France, was a town named Falaise. It was here the message had been discovered, under the ancient ruins of a castle that once belonged to William the Conqueror. The cave itself was a significant find, containing pictographs and vault-like chambers that held an entire library of scrolls and tablets, and a treasury of precious gems and metals.

But in an inner chamber, sealed away from all else, was a priceless sculpture of a woman with long, curling hair, flanked by an inordinately large hound and wildcat. In the photograph, the woman's arms were lifted to the heavens in supplication with the rolled parchment resting in one hand.

The president considered the lacy writing and the meticulously drawn symbols. Carbon dating and writing-style analysis had traced the parchment to the early eleventh century, corresponding to William's reign.

Translated, the missive warned of a world-ending event. As the Mayans had predicted today to be that day, the timing made the find more significant. The White House stood prepared for the worst.

But if truly a prophecy, it also declared the existence of a champion and, therefore, hope. He polished his glasses with a soft cloth and donned them to reread the cryptic message.

*When Armageddon threatens,  
The sleeping one will wake.  
Along the same meridian  
The fallen steps in place.  
One coast will gather light and kind  
The other dark, despair,  
But each will yield its suffering  
To a world laid waste with fear.*

*The call will soon be answered  
Old wounds doth fester e'er,  
The battle begun before Earth was wrought  
Must be won in the helm of the sufferer's heart  
And from thence She leaps forth  
Once again.*

The president slumped deeper into his regal chair and tapped the sheet of paper against his chin. The words meant nothing to him. He was a politician and understood legalese, not prophesese. But the nation's top minds were working on the cipher. With the clues supplied by the mysterious crone, he was certain they would be able to come up with something.

The intercom squawked, jarring him back to his hectic day. He folded the prophecy and stuck it in an inside pocket, then replaced the file in the hidden drawer.



### Cozy supernatural thriller

Lauren has everything she'd ever wished for. Great career, financial security, loving husband, and devoted friends.

When her Raven spirit guide warns her of impending danger, she takes the omen seriously, but she doesn't have enough time to perform the protection spell her grandmother taught her. Someone breaks into her office and after the brutal attack and the Raven's repeated warnings, she knows her life is still in danger.

Who wants her dead and why?

[\*\*EBOOK AUDIOBOOK\*\*](#)

## Chapter from Messenger

Lauren had a happy childhood, but the tragedy of losing her parents and brother caused her to grow up too fast. She was eight years old on that stormy morning when the Raven appeared on her windowsill the first time. She was curious and stood up to take a closer look at the bird, but it quickly disappeared.

That night the Raven came back and pecked on her window. This time the black bird seemed menacing, ruffled its feathers and let out a loud *kraa* sound. Its coal-black eyes reflected the light of the room, and it let out another eerie "*kraa*". Lauren was frightened and ran to her grandmother who was watching TV in the living room. "Grandma, there's a huge black bird pecking on my window, and it squawked at me.



I'm scared!" Lauren grabbed her grandma's hand. "Come, I'll show you!" she cried.

Her grandmother stood up and followed her.

"There! See?" Lauren pointed at the window.

"I don't see it, but you can. Don't be scared, munchkin," her grandmother cooed gently and hugged her tight.

"Why can't you see it, Grandma?"

"Because it's your spirit guide, only you can see it."

"Do you have a spirit guide too that only you can see?"

"Yes. In our family, everyone has a Raven messenger."

"But why? What does it want?"

"It warns you that something bad is about to happen that will change your life." The old woman sighed and hugged Lauren even tighter.

"But this morning it didn't scare me. Why is it so mean to me now?"

"You saw your Raven this morning?" her grandmother questioned, feeling alarmed.

"Yes, but it didn't scare me then."

"Goddess help us! I hope I'm not too late." She whispered reaching for Lauren's hand. "Let's go munchkin, we'll light some pretty candles."

"Why, grandma?" Lauren asked wide-eyed.

"Because... it will keep everyone we love, safe."



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