

*the*  
***ANAERRIS CODE***

a Gemma Sinclaris Series

Part 1

the

***Gemma***

**By LK Kelley**

DragonEye Publishing

The Anaerris Code, a Gemma Sinclaris Series – Part 1 The Gemma  
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Published by  
Space-Time, an Imprint of DragonEye Publishing

First Printing: February 14, 2017

ISBN 13: 978-1-61500-137-8 (Paperback)  
ISBN 13: 978-1-61500-138-5 (EBook Mobi)  
ISBN 13: 978-1-61500-141-5 (Ebook EPub)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016963820

Publisher info. Contact  
DragonEye Publishing  
511 W. Water St., Unit E  
Elmira, New York, 14905

Website: [DragonEyePublishers.com](http://DragonEyePublishers.com)  
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## *...PROLOGUE...*

Above me, two, ancient moons shine – one of brilliant lavender, purple, and white, and one of blood red, yellow, and black. Both obscure one-fourth of the night sky, casting an eerie light on the world of my birth, which is charred and blackened by hell-fire and blood. I stand upon an enormous bluff, and stare down into the great, blackened valley, while the final war rages. A massive river of red races toward the brilliant lavender moon...the blood of my people and his. Tears of blood stain my cheeks and clothing while I watch the end of two races of beings. My race will be gone – including me, if I refuse to agree to be turned. A sound behind me. I know it is he. I can feel him as I have always done, since we met. Our kind should never be together, but it is as inevitable as time itself. I turn to see my attacker's body, which no longer has its head attached. Blood gushes forth from it. I meet his frightened eyes, and follow his horrified gaze down to the fatal wound in my chest where blood runs freely. I will bleed out in seconds.

“NO!” he yells, as I begin to collapse.

He catches me long before I hit the blackened earth below me. I stare at the man I love, knowing I should not love him. We are enemies. He has no tears to shed, but he gently cradles me in his arms, his tortured red eyes begging me with the same question he has asked many times. I can barely move my head, but I nod once, knowing the precious cargo I carry for my race and his. I want to be with him forever. And, if I'm still alive, my own race will also continue. I must change, no matter what, into whatever form. His mouth lowers to my neck kissing the pulse that is rapidly quieting as my heart silences. I feel a momentary sting as his fangs bite into my neck. To be with him forever is all I ever want, and I must complete the task that I was given by the ancients. Warmth trickles down the back of my neck as I feel the liquid of life slipping from me, echoing the death of my planet. I hope we have not waited too long. He lifts his head, his mouth dripping with my blood. I see in his sad

eyes that he is hoping the same. I slide gratefully into the unknowing.

Time and space stand still. For how long, I know not. I awake, naked, on a soft bed covered in crimson silk. He sits with his back to the headboard, still cradling my lifeless body in his arms, patiently awaiting my awakening, and then, I will always be with him. I lift my eyes to stare at the man I will be with forever. I am ready as his lips lower to mine while my new, strong arms pull his nude body over mine. He is not gentle with his kiss, and I would never want him to be. I kiss him back frantically, feeling wetness between my legs as he spreads mine with his. He plunges into my heat, sheathing himself as deep as possible, and thrusts hard and fast into my body. My hips meet him with the same desperation and desire. I need him like I do not need air to breathe. As our orgasms reach their climax, I feel his hot seed jet into me. I can feel it enter my womb! He has so much! He stills, and I open my eyes that I know are still ripe with inhuman desire. I stare at the couple that is reflected in the mirror above our bed. My bright red eyes look back at me. I am whole again, and in the arms of my great lover for all time to come.

It is time. He shows me the crystal that I had entrusted to him, and I breathe a sigh of relief. It is safe, and ready for the one who must receive it. One who knows not of his part in the great scheme of the Creator. I must make sure that the Codex is written, and both it and the crystal must be kept apart. Both are dangerous alone, but together would cause unimaginable chaos. Our race has always been banned from writing about our history. I have been charged with finding a way to write what I was given in an indestructible method. But, I will use not only my own powers, but those given to me by my mate. I will make sure that we do not lose our heritage. If we must sacrifice our own lives, then so be it. At all costs, the one safeguard I carry must be kept safe until a time when the “gem” is needed.

Time ceases to exist in the realm we chose for its magic, where an ancient friend of mine offered to help. An ally who believes, as do we, that nothing can be left to chance. It is time

to travel to the one place the Council would never expect us to hide the book. As for the crystal? My love has given it to one we know we can trust to protect it, sending him to a primitive planet known as Earth. And, we will hide the flesh-blackened codex – sealed with the most terrifying of magic that cannot be opened by any living soul, or they will die. My magical friend sees the future, and tells us that a time will come when both crystal and book will join together. Because of this, she sends an envoy with the “gem”. And, now, we are leaving behind the only one who has the power to open and to read... the codex. And, then, it passes into legend and myth.

*And, this book will forever be known as...*

*the*  
***ANAERRIS CODE***

## *The Beginning*

“DADDY!” screamed eleven year-old Gemma Elwood, as she ran toward the house, and down the driveway with a tiny little dog at her feet. “DADDY! DADDY! HELP! HELP! MOMMY!”

William Tyler Elwood flung open the door the moment that he heard his daughter scream over the thunder and lightening that scraped the sky. Gem flung herself into his arms. Gemma and his love had just left the house minutes before he heard Gem's voice.

“DADDY! MOMMY! HELP MOMMY!” she screamed, finally getting her words right.

Tyler felt his stomach draw up in knots as he heard the terror in her voice. Without a word, he threw Gem into the new, red truck that he had just purchased, and drove like a maniac to where Gem pointed. Tears ran down her cheeks as she sobbed. Tyler stepped out of the truck.

“Gem. Stay here,” he told her, then turned to see smoke and flames coming from below him on the mountain.

Terror gripped him as he flung himself over the edge, and started slipping and sliding his way down the embankment to get to the black Honda SUV that lay at the bottom of the mountain side. As he got closer, he saw his wife, Corina, laying on the ground in an unnatural position. He slid his way down, using his hands to keep him upright, rocks and grit scraping them to almost bloody pulps until he reached her. She had been flung almost thirty feet from the vehicle, and she hung from a low branch, where she had been impaled. He gulped as sobs racked his body. He had no option but to pull her down. She was dead. There was no life left in her beautiful green eyes. Crying uncontrollably, he slid her off the eight inch limb, and gently laid her down on the ground pushing her blonde hair back from her face. Looking into the face that had held his love for so long, he found himself in an almost catatonic state as he held the love of his life.

“Oh, Corina! My beautiful love! How did this happen?” he asked as reality set into his mind.

His clothing was blood soaked with her precious life, and he buried his face into her neck. The storm crackled around them, and rain poured from the sky mixing with his own tears and her blood from the massive hole in the middle of her body. And, then, he heard crying above him. Who was crying? Then, he remembered. Gem. Gem was crying. He turned his head upward, and saw her peering over the cliff. Corina would want him to watch after her, now. All he wanted was to join her in death! But, he couldn't. Not with his precious little girl needing him. He took one last look at his wife, laid her body down, then began the long climb back to the top. Once he was there, he fell on his knees, and pulled his crying daughter into his arms.

“It's OK, Gem. It'll be OK.”

“No! It will never be OK again, Daddy!” she cried.

“I know, Gem. I know.”

~I~

***“Alone is never where I wanted to be, but then, I do have Lola!”***

Lola, the pug, dodged a pillow that her pet just threw. Lola had been very worried about her over the last few weeks. She hadn't been able to write one, damn word on her laptop. She must have writer's block. The next words confirmed it.

“I'm so sorry, Lola!” Gem apologized, whipping her up into her arms, and giving her a kiss on her tiny head. “I didn't mean it! Really, sweetie, I didn't. Oh, Lola! What am I going to do? I don't have an idea for my next novel series!”

Lola loved her little pet, so she did the only thing that was really in her power. She turned her head, and licked her pet in the mouth. She and her pet had much in common, since both of them were adopted. Gemma Marie Elwood adopted Lola from a Pug Rescue organization in Denver, Colorado, and she had been with Gem for a very unusually long time. In fact, Gem really didn't know when Lola came to live with them, and truthfully, Lola was a bit anxious that Gem might discover that very soon. Strangely enough, though, all Lola knew was that she had never been happier. She had only complaint with her pet, and that was that Gem should be feeding Lola much more food than was placed into her bowl twice a day! Gem claimed it was to keep her trim and healthy. Lola didn't believe that for one minute! Nevertheless, no matter how many times Lola pulled the “I'm really starving” face, Gem never bought it, and would never give her any more, or less. However, sometimes, Gem would give in and cook her an egg, or maybe put some peanut butter in a Kong Ball, which kept Lola busy for hours trying to eat it all, with a bone treat, sometimes. In consequence, Lola grudgingly admitted to herself that she was healthy, trim, and had tons of energy! She could run rings around other pugs her age, since most were kind of fat! In addition, her Vet was very pleased with her health, and it always made Lola a smug pug! Pugs had a problem with weight, causing them to become

sedentary with little energy. Another condition specific to pugs was with impaired breathing due to their flat little noses. And, being overweight just made it worse. At least Lola just didn't have that problem, so she forgave Gem for not feeding her as much as Lola really wanted. OK. So. If she could, she'd eat all the time! Lola loved everything – well, except for lettuce. She hated it! Ick!

Gem carried Lola over to the sofa flopping down, and leaned her head on the back of it.

"Lola, I'm stumped! I don't have an idea in my head!" Gem told her. "My publisher is about to have a cow! I have to come up with something really soon!"

Since she was little, Gemma Marie Elwood kept spiral notebooks that she called her "Dreams Diary". Spiral notebooks weren't the most elegant diary, but then, they never had much money. In them was written every dream she ever had that she remembered. It was those dreams, which gave her great ideas for her books. After her Mom had died, she became plagued by new and horrible dreams that were terribly disturbing. She would awake, screaming, and every time, her Dad would come to her rescue, holding her until her shaking and terror calmed.

Questions followed those dreams about her Mom's death – and, one particular question she repeatedly asked, yet was never supposed to ask, she did anyway.

"Why? Why? Why?" she would ask, but that question was never answered, of course.

There were things that never added up in her Mom's death, and her Dad had not been forthcoming with any information. Whatever the mystery surrounding her Mom's death was, her Dad took it to his grave. He had always told her that her Mom had hydroplaned during a horrendous storm, sending her SUV flying over the cliff. Gem could remember running and running back to her house after she found the wreck, but, she could remember nothing more, and her Father would never answer her questions. Most importantly, though, she always had the queasy feeling that she was in the SUV with her Mom. If so, though, she had no memory of it. But, another

question plagued her. If she was, why wasn't she hurt or killed? She had not had a scratch on her!

Her therapy doctors had told her Dad that she had deliberately blocked out what she had seen that night. However, despite all her therapy sessions, the dreams continued to escalate. The night her Mom died was also the first night she dreamed of a frightening place of blood, death, and war. Pick something! During the nights, Gem would awake in a cold sweat that drenched her sheets. Of course that meant that she had to change them in the middle of the night, before she could go back to sleep. And, then, the dreams repeated. During the days, though, she tried to reason it all out, but when she thought of it too much, her head would feel as if it were about to explode. That one particular dream, though, had always remained the same. But lately, it had begun to change. Now, *she* had become *a participant* in it! Because of this, she could see from both the objective and subjective points of view. However, trying to figure out which was which, was becoming increasingly harder, especially since she kept hopping back and forth between someone else's eyes and her own. Confusing was not the word for it! She needed to do something about them!

Putting that aside for the time being, she walked to her desk where she kept a drawer under lock and key. Gem inserted her key, unlocked, and opened it, pulling out one of her older diaries. Because she actually believed that sometimes it was beneficial to hand-write, Gem grabbed a pencil, and curled up on her sofa, while Lola plopped her tiny body on the arm of it, falling asleep almost instantly. Gem began to write out her dream, trying to remember the omniscient point of view, and the first person point of view. And, in this case, it was really hard since the scenes kept switching constantly.

"Let's see," she said aloud, and while biting the top of her pencil, she began to write. Gem's mind escalated, and her hand began to write as if possessed!

“OK. I’m standing on a bluff. Everything around me is blackened as if burned to a crisp. Nothing is alive here. There are no trees, no grass, no water, no signs of habitation any longer. And, it is certainly not Earth, but another planet somewhere. Two moons – or were they planets – take up half of the sky above me – one in lavender and white, and the other black and red! Below me is an unbelievably deep valley – so deep, that those fighting below resembled ants scurrying to and fro. And, even though everything seems so dark, I can still see everything.”

“How weird is that?” she asked herself, still nibbling on the eraser. Then, Gem continued to write and mutter to herself. She smirked, and said, “And, that is the fate of an author!”

“Massive armies fighting beside a red river spanning the ground below her, as if it were a vein within a giant being in the cosmos.”

“Suddenly, I feel a gut-wrenching pain in the middle of my stomach and look down. A large spear is piercing my body. *Scene switch.* I see what happened from my own point of view, now. A bastard of a coward stabbed me – uh her – from behind, and a look of glee flits across his face. *Scene switch, again.* Where before, I saw the man who had stabbed me, now, I am the woman, and I see a man leaning toward me with red eyes that have no hatred, but are filled love and concern. I am weak, but I don’t know why. Pain! The cause of my pain is sticking out from my chest. And, I’m sticky with blood! A lot of blood! My eyes jerk back to his in shock, and they seemed to ask me a question. Without my own volition, I nod my head slightly, and turn my neck. I see him lean down with fangs, and feel a sharp prick on my neck – no, wait. *Scene switch.* Not my neck...hers! *Scene switch..*

*"I'm getting damned tired of this!"* she growled to herself.

She continued. "I can feel the pricks in his bite, followed by incredible desire despite the weakness due to loss of blood. *Switch back.* I see her body through her eyes lying on a massive bed covered in red silk. I am completely naked, and my legs are on top of the man's shoulders who bit me – uh – her...and he is fucking me hard! I can feel every single stroke of his cock as he pounds deep into her body! And, I could not stop it! I didn't want it to stop! A mirror hangs from the ceiling over us, allowing me to see the back of his body that was toned with the tightest ass I've ever seen! I am beginning to lose track of where I start, and the woman begins! My hands, no the woman's hands, were digging into his ass, trying to push him – uh, her – deeper into my body. His hair is coal black, but I can see nothing else, since his mouth is suckling my neck as he was biting me. And, more? I stare into the mirror that is above the bed. My eyes were bright red just like his! Although what I could see was so erotic, it was embarrassing – especially since it wasn't even me!"

*"Ah, hell!"* she almost screamed aloud. *"I always wake up at this point in the dream, feeling wet, horny, eager, and ready for my new life to begin."* But, aloud, she said, "And, that is the...End of dream, Lola," Gem finished with a flourish of her pencil! Her face was flushed, and very red.

Gem put her pencil down, and remembered that the dream *always* ended with her screaming when she awoke. Worse, and even more embarrassing and frustrating, was the fact that she was so horny, she had to touch herself to get some kind of release! Thank goodness her Dad wasn't alive to see the change in her features that had manifested over the last five

years. Her arousal after the dream caused her eyes to glow red just like the woman's in her dream. And, it happened every single time she was aroused. It was so scary, she had refused to write it in her diary in the past. Gem had made the decision to put her diary away, and never write in it again – until now. All her other dreams were more dreamlike. But, some of them were so erotic, she had to bring herself to an orgasm, and the last couple of weeks, it was almost every single night! Gem had no idea why this was happening to her, but she sure *wanted* to know. No. It wasn't a want, but a *need* to know!

Lola watched her little pet, while cocking her head to the right. Lola meant the word “little” as it pertained to her pet, because Gem was barely five-feet tall, and sported long, bright red hair, and cool, emerald green eyes. She had milky white skin that was pale, but had a luminosity that caused her skin to have a faint, but soft glow. Her nose was smaller, while her lips were full and naturally pink, so lipstick wasn't necessary. And, let's face it! She never went anywhere, and never had dates, so why should she wear makeup? But, when her eyes twinkled, it gave her a mischievous glow, bringing a smile to whoever was the recipient of it. She wore only a minimum amount of other makeup. Her figure was all woman! Her breasts had always been larger than most girls, her waist was not skinny, but perfect, and her hips gave her that hourglass figure most girls would die to have!

All these features, when seen as one, simply gave Gem an almost ethereal look. But, still, Gem was the epitome of what some might call a “pixie”, and it fit the description of her personality perfectly. Always smiling, she bounced around with plenty of energy, and she cheered up everyone she met – even when she was miserable.

Barely five years before, when Lola had seen her red eyes for the first time, she knew the time had arrived for Gem's destiny...and, Lola was so not looking forward to it! However, she was Gem's guide, so she sucked it up, and waited for the event that she had waited for over the eons that would change everything.

Watching Gem put her notebook away, Lola could tell she was very despondent. No ideas meant no writing. And, writing was absolutely her entire life. And, where was the best place to get new ideas? Why, Gem needed to go to that odd building she called the “library”. It had lots of books, and might provide Gem with the ideas she might need. Hmm. Periodically, Gem would take Lola with her, dropping her off with her other pet human, Taylor Tamson, who was Gem’s best friend. The two were the exact opposite in personality. And, they really got along great!

Gemma and Lola lived at the base of the Rocky Mountain Foothills, about forty minutes from downtown Denver, Colorado – in the middle of nowhere. There were also no internet connections, so Gem couldn’t do research for her books online with her computer, iPad, or even her iPhone. She barely got cell service, and it was “iffy”. So, she nudged Gem until she lifted her head, and frowned at Lola.

“What’s the deal, Lola? You can’t be hungry! I just fed you breakfast!”

Gemma got up, stretched, and paced as she fought for some kind of an idea. She stopped, and turned back to Lola.

“Well, I could do the usual, you know. Werewolves, Demons, Vampires, or Fae are the popular things these days,” she said to Lola, who yawned.

And, that was really what the LaMonte Publishing House wanted her to write about. The few times her cell did connect, which was last night, she received a call from Norman LaMonte, her publisher.

“Come on, Gem! The public is clamoring for those types of books, and you are my best writer.”

“You can’t be serious, Norman! Do you know how many of those types of books are out on the market? How could I compete?”

“Look. It would sell, because you are one of my finest writers!” Norman had told her. “Besides, it’s what the public wants! We are in the business of selling entertainment for the eyes. So, get over it, and start writing! I need that book in a

couple of months!” Then, he had disconnected the call, leaving her angry, and even more frustrated than ever!

Gem had fought against writing those kinds of novels with every single breath. All of them were pretty much alike. And, they were not what Gem wanted to read. She wanted something unique like her last Trilogy. Despite the fact that she was one of the more popular writers, and her books were making a small amount of money on Kindle, it was just not enough. She wanted to be able to live as a writer. Since Gem couldn't do that, yet, she was forced to supplement it by working as a cashier at the only grocery store in town owned by Macklin Simmons of Simmons Grocery. In addition, she also held a part-time job at the library. Since she was majoring in writing, it was the best possible world for her! After all, not only did she have to live and eat, she also was paying off her Father's hospital bills that had incurred after he spent two months there just before he died. She figured she would be paying those off even after she was dead at this rate!

Pacing more, she muttered, “I just need a new angle on the supernatural, Lola. But what?”

Lola flew under her feet, and nudged Gem, again. She only did that when...wait. Gem's eyes grew wide. She just realized that Lola only did that when Gem went to her hole-in-the-wall town's library. Her eyes narrowed with suspicion looking into Lola's eyes with shock. Was Lola communicating with her? How the hell could that be? She was a dog. No. That would be the most ridiculous thing she had ever heard!

“Are you talking to me, Lola?” Gem just had to ask, anyway. Lola cocked her head to the other side, and nudged her nose against Gem again. Frowning, she squinted her eyes at her. “No, you can't be, right? I mean, animals can't talk,” she said, and laughed as she deliberately slapped her forehead with her hand, causing a loud cracking sound. “Gem, you're losing it! You really are! You've been living alone for far too long, and writing way too many fantasy novels! Now, you're starting to believe what you write?”

Looking at Lola, she said, “Well, I guess going to the library will get me out of the house!”

To which Lola just nodded, receiving another surprised look from her pet. Well, she did love to look at the ancient books that were in the climate-controlled room. She was so good with books that she had been put in charge of the ancient books and documents. She stood up, and slapped her legs.

“You’re right, Lola! I do need to go to the library. I’ll be back before dinner. You want to go out, or stay in today?” she asked her not expecting an answer.

Nevertheless, Lola cocked her head at her well-trained pet. It sure did take her long enough to get through to Gem. While Lola usually loved inside, today she just wanted to run and play. After her brief potty break earlier, she had seen that it was already a perfectly beautiful fall day. And, she figured the shit was going to hit the fan soon enough, so she had better take her breaks, now, before she couldn’t any longer. Lola darted to the back door, and looked back at Gem wagging her tiny, little curled tail. With the fenced yard, Gem didn’t have to worry about Lola getting in too much trouble, and she had a huge place to run. She had meant to put a doggy door in, but kept forgetting to do it. On the patio, Lola had a little doghouse just in case Gem didn’t get back in time if it rained, or was later than usual. In the winter, Lola would always stay inside! She hated the cold, especially when it snowed outside, and her butt was always so cold! But, it was still nice even though Thanksgiving was just a few weeks way. Right now, all Gem needed to do was to leave a few snacks, and Lola would be all set for the day.

“You know, Lola? If I didn’t know any better, I would swear you could understand every word I say!” she muttered.

Lola heard her, stopped, and barked, bringing another shocked look from Gem!

“Nope! Not going there, Lola! I already have enough of an active imagination!” she laughed.

Gem set a large bowl of water for Lola on the deck, a small snack, then closed and locked the door. As if she had anything valuable in the house. She grabbed her purse, phone,

and laptop, then jumped into her rattletrap of an old, rusted-out Ford truck. People laughed at it, but she loved it. It was all she had left of her Father, except for the house. While she drove, she reflected, yet again, on how her Mother had been killed in a car accident eleven years ago. Gem had been running on the road, but she still had no memory of why! Her Mom had been driving to Simmon's Grocery, simply because she was out of sugar, eggs, and milk. No matter how hard she tried, she had never been able to remember. Since her Dad had died, his truck was more important to her than ever.

Anyway, she had to drive, and she certainly couldn't afford to buy one, used or new. She was barely making ends meet as it was. Jobs were scarce since the 2008 mortgage debacle, and the only real job she could find was at Simmon's Grocery Store. At least, both the house and truck were paid for, and just recently, her book trilogy had begun to sell in spurts all over the world. Even so, it would be quite some time before she saw any money from it. She had several rejections at large publishing houses, so she had found an Independent Publisher who accepted it immediately. She really didn't know why the sudden sales were happening, and neither did her publisher, but hell! She wasn't complaining. Maybe, just maybe, she could finally become a best-selling author. But, still, it was hard work to get her name and books into the outside world. If only she had the money to go to book signings, and other appearances. But, where she lived, there was only the Sinclair Library owned by the tiny college, where she worked from four to ten every other day, and a couple of very tiny bookstores which never had booksignings. Even sadder? They wouldn't even carry her books! So, her only alternative was to rely on social media – especially Twitter. At least this way, Gem could get her name out faster all over the world!

When Curt and Jerry Elwood adopted her as a baby, they legally changed her middle and last name to Gemma Allen Elwood, her middle name taken from her Mom's maiden name, and her Dad's last name, of course. Her publisher wanted to change her name, and she balked at it. Together, they decided

that she should write under the alias of her real name, G.A. Elwood. At least they never changed her first name, because, as her Dad always said, she was the brightest “gem” in their lives. Her Dad had toyed with the idea of calling her “Rusty”, because Gem's hair was the exact color of rust. Gem was one of the few girls whose red hair did not run riotously around her face. She kept it a long length down to the middle of her back, and it was loaded with soft waves that only emphasized her pale skin, and of course, the freckles on her face. OK. The freckles she didn't like, but that just wasn't something that could be changed, and she had accepted that fact long ago.

Sighing, Gem had to finish her research, before she would head to work as a cashier at Simmons from 9 to 11 pm. It was really lucky, because the grocery store was right next door to the library. She wanted, and needed, a full-time job, but the economy was very bad in their neck of the woods, and at least her part-time job gave her money for food.

The Sinclair Library had assigned Gem her very own parking place, because she was the well-known celebrity in town thanks to her books. And, that meant that she didn't have to waste gas! So, Gem turned into the library's parking lot, putting the truck into park – just as a huge bolt of lightning flared, making her jump.

“That's just great!” she whined to no one as she stepped out of her truck, and into the random hard drops that always comes with a bad storm. What the hell?

She totally ignored the black lettering above the door that declared the name “Sinclair Library of Fate” in her desperation to get inside. The name had too much of a connotation to it, so it had been shortened by the public to just the Sinclair Library, and finally, just the library. Hoping she could get into the building before the next lightning strike shot from the sky, Gem quickly ran up the three short steps into said building. The second she stepped inside, high winds began to whip about in almost hurricane force. The trees bent halfway, and then, a deluge broke loose. Gem paused in the foyer to look out the door's windows. Watching the wind blow, she was truly

thankful to the fates that she was allowed to get her toe inside, before she was caught in it!

“Whoa!” she whispered, drawing back in surprise when she saw a metal something fly by the door. Not good to stand here with that happening!

Turning she ran up the ten stairs leading into the main room of the library. As usual, no one was present at two o’clock in the afternoon. Ordinarily, the only other person inside it was Taylor Tamson, who was Gem's best friend. Taylor was about nine years older than Gem, but their friendship was immediate the day that they had met six years prior. She was about five-foot seven inches tall, and had an absolutely gorgeous figure! She was extremely well-proportioned, despite giving birth to her two children – Shirley who was six and seven year-old Marcus. Taylor had two very unusual features. First, her snow white hair flowed down her back to her waist, which she deliberately kept in either a tight bun or a long ponytail. Her second feature were eyes of lavender, so pale, they were almost white. And, her eyes drew men to her like flies, even though she had been married to Richard, or Rick, Tamson for the last ten years. None of them even had a prayer of getting anywhere with her, and she generally ignored them. Not that it deterred them in anyway, but her skin was fair, her lips pink and plump, and it looked as if her legs never ended they were so long. And, that kept the men – and boys – trying to gain her favor!

Both little Shirley and Marcus loved Lola to distraction, and Lola returned that love when Gem let them pug-sit for her. There was no doubt whatsoever that Lola would protect them with her life if need be. Recently, Taylor and Rick had been thinking about adopting a pug from Colorado’s Pug Rescue just as Gem’s family had done. And, Gem was encouraging them to do so. She wasn’t thinking of herself, but if they did, then, Lola would have a friend to play with when she would stay with the children.

Gem headed for the librarian's desk that was situated within the middle of the library to put her things into the file cabinet, and then looked up into Taylor's face.

"Hey, tall and lanky!" Gem laughed. Between the two of them, Gem was short, and maybe had a few extra pounds, which didn't show even though she thought they did, while Taylor was just tall and skinny.

"Hey, yourself, Ms. vertically challenged!" Taylor laughed back at her. "So, back for more torture? And, why are you here so early today, anyway?"

Gem plopped herself on the stool that sat behind the desk, ignoring Taylor's question for the moment.

"Man! Did you notice the storm outside? I mean, I've never heard or seen the wind blow this hard!" As if on cue, a huge gust of wind hit the side of the building, and shook the narrow windows above that circled the building. Both girls jumped.

"Wow!" Taylor gasped. The girls had dropped to the floor when they heard all the rattling.

"Yeah! What you said," Gem agreed. "Oh. To answer your question? I needed to do some research to find something new and different for my next book."

Both stood back up, and Taylor signed onto the computer.

"OH! Well, I get that. Besides, I really don't think we're going to have that many customers today!"

While Gem agreed by nodding her head, Taylor grabbed two dusters, and tossed one at Gem. Following Taylor, the two women started dusting the shelves. For the next two hours, they circled the room talking as they dusted. No one entered during the entire time, but then, the storm had not abated at all.

"Anyway, to answer your question of earlier, before I was so *rudely interrupted by that big blowhard*," she grinned, "when am I not here for torture! I so miss not having an internet connection, Tay! But, I'm stumped. Writer's block," she poked herself in the temple. "I need a demon idea, before my publisher is put into the hospital with a coronary!"

“So, that publisher of yours is giving you a hard time?” Taylor asked as she ran the feather duster across the shelves and the top of the books as if there was dust when they both knew there was none.

“Yeah. He wants me to write...wait for it.... A Demon series!”

Taylor stopped dusting, and turned around with wide eyes.

“Seriously? Why would he want that? Most all of them are alike! Why would he want you to write one of those?”

Gem stopped dusting. She tilted her head as something came to her.

“Taylor, will you explain to me why we are always dusting dust-free shelves and books?” Watching Taylor shake her head, Gem continued. “Oh...he thinks it’s going to be good for his publishing company, and wants to get in on the bandwagon, I guess. At least that’s what he told me. I think it’s really silly. I wrote my fantasy books without the normal paranormals on purpose! I didn’t want to be like everyone else,” Gem giggled. “Seriously, though? I almost wanted to tell him to vamp-off!”

Taylor, who was standing on the third rung of the ladder, dropped her duster, fell off the ladder, and onto the floor erupting in boisterous laughter.

“V-vamp-off?” she roared. “Did you really just say that? That’s just s-so h-hilarious!” she gulped between breaths. “W-whoa, girly! You are sure full of *something*! Gem, you should be writing comedy!” Taylor laughed even harder.

“Hey! You mean bullshit? Taurus, remember?” Gem pointed to herself. “And, let’s face it! I have always had that talent!” Gem joined Taylor on the floor laughing so hard, they had their arms holding their stomachs.

Their laughter almost drowned out the hurricane force winds and rain outside. It was really lucky that no one was in the library at the moment, because the girls were laughing just far too loud. After about ten minutes, their giggle boxes landed right side up, but stopped immediately, when a man came

through the door with a disapproving frown. They picked themselves up off the floor, and strolled back to the desk with huge smiles on their faces. Both women knew he came every other day at exactly four thirty pm every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday...and he was never late. The last two hours had flown by, Gem grinned at the pun, and she had gotten nothing at all done with her research!

The two women quickly went about doing their job. While Gem perched herself onto the stool that was behind the desk, Taylor opened the locked, desk drawer, automatically pulling out the key to the climate controlled room. Turning, she frowned in dismay as she walked toward him, noticing that he had already removed his coat, and was shaking it out, drops of water being flung everywhere!

*“What a jackass hypocrite!”* Taylor told herself. *“I bet you’d never do that in your own really fancy home!”*

Professor Hawkins sat in an overstuffed chair with a table and reading lamp that sat to the right of the chair. Gem had deemed this chair “Professor Hawkin's chair”, and they kept it vacant at all times. Gem had told Taylor over and over that she thought he was a dick, and Taylor agreed with her every time.

Taylor asked which books he wanted to see today, and after he “ordered” them, she turned to go back to her desk when to her surprise, he actually addressed her! That was a new one!

“My dear Mrs. Tamson,” he began, condescendingly, “Must I remind you both, that it is highly inappropriate to find our Librarian and her assistant, laughing loudly – and on the floor – inside the Sinclair Library?” he admonished her, then glared at Gem who pretended she hadn't seen it.

Professor Jaxxon Philip Hawkins was his name...and...he was the bane of her existence! Always complaining about something, he was a true enigma. He always sat in the same chair, always had the same, black leather, duster on with a hoodie underneath, and the hood flung over his head! No one could see his face that well, since it hid most of it, but, when one did get a glimpse of his eyes, they were indescribably

gorgeous, deep brown eyes with flecks of blue glitter. And, from what she could see of it, his face was tan, as if he spent a lot of time in the sun. He would come and go from the Sinclair Library like clockwork, always asking for ancient manuscripts and books, but never the same ones, which was a bit peculiar to her. But, he also did one other thing that made Gem grit her teeth over and over to keep from smarting off in a retort. He always butted into other people's conversations without remorse, interjecting complaints into those conversations. He thought he was right and smarter than everyone else! And, even though he rarely addressed either Gem or Taylor directly, when he did, it was to criticize them for some stupid infraction. She narrowed her eyes at him when her "inner imp" invaded her body, which gave her the courage to do what she did on the spur of the moment, to finally say something to him. Of course, that led her to slap her hand over her mouth after the words spewed forth! Without thinking, Gem stood and walked over to him. Taylor saw her, and recognized that look! She quickly started shaking her head at Gem, who paid no attention to her.

"Oh, shit!" Taylor murmured under her breath, seeing Gem's eyes turning bright green as she approached Professor Hawkins. There would be no stopping her, now. As for Hawkins? Anyone on the receiving end of Gem's sharp tongue when she got started, well, Taylor cringed when Gem spoke.

"Oh? And, just why the hell do you object to laughter, Professor?" she demanded with hands on her hips.

His piercing, brown eyes glared with disapproval at her, raising his eyebrows in surprise that anyone would actually talk back to him! He smirked at her audacity.

"I do not object to laughter, young woman. Only where it happens and when. And, it is most obvious that a library is not that place!" he answered with sarcasm in his voice.

Gem started toward him, when a hand touched her shoulder. It was the only thing that made it through her angry haze. She turned to look at Taylor.

“Don’t, Gem. It’s OK. He was correct to point our inappropriate behavior out to us. I apologize, Professor Hawkins,” she told him.

He darted the same piercing eyes at Taylor, and sharply nodded once in approval. Gem glared at the Professor, then turned to glare at Taylor. She took a deep breath. Professor Hawkins was clearly waiting for her apology.

*“Tough shit! He’ll be waiting for an apology until hell freezes over!”* she thought, looking into his eyes. He was clearly not going to back down. *“Nope. Never gonna happen!”*

Aloud, Gem told Taylor, “I’m going to the CCR, now.”

Gem turned on her heels, and stalked off in a huff toward the CCR room. Taylor turned, and walked back to the desk, when several things happened simultaneously. A huge bolt of lightning crashed, causing a fireball to appear inside the library, and just missing Gem. She was stunned into silence as she watched the ball of fire travel leisurely across the library, before it dissipated, knocking out all electricity to the building. Anyone who has ever seen one knows that it is a scary sight to behold. Then, immediately, a massive gust of straight-line winds blew out the windows on one side of building, hitting books and bookshelves as waves of various sized glass flew toward Gem.

Watching as if in slow motion, Gem knew she would never make it, even if she ran! She knew, without a doubt, that she was going to be struck by millions of shards of glass, and would be cut to pieces! There was no way that she would be able to move out of the way in time. Dropping to her knees, she tried to cover as much of her body and head as possible, and slumped forward waiting for the shards to slice her. That’s when she heard Taylor scream, as if from a distance, followed by another scream, “NO”! Then, suddenly, Gem was slammed by something that felt like a tank, knocking her out of the way of the oncoming glass.

“Umpf!” was the sound Gem made as she felt her body fly sideways, and out of the path of the glass. One of the tables

stopped her from going any further, as she smashed into it. Her head hit the corner of the table, and she uttered an oath.

“*Fuck!*” she said yelled.

More lightning and thunder followed, and rain began to blow into the library onto the shelves showering down water onto the precious books.

“Taylor! Do you have something to cover these books?” Professor Hawkins yelled, as he knelt next to Gem to make sure she was alright.

“Yes!” Taylor told him loudly, then turned and ran to the storage closet grabbing a couple of tarps that were only there, because of the manager’s convertible, antique T-Bird.

“Are you alright?” Professor Hawkins asked her in a tender voice.

“Y-yes, I-I guess,” Gem answered, rubbing the bump that she had on her head. Her hand came down, and she saw that it was bloody. She stared at the blood dripping from her hand, but tried to stand, anyway. That was a futile move, since she fell back down on her ass, as a wave of dizziness hit her.

Hawkins obviously tried to help her, but she waved him away.

“I’m fine! Go! Help Taylor get those books covered!”

“But, you’re bleeding,” he stated the obvious.

“Yeah, yeah! I know! Don’t care! Please, Professor! Help her cover those books! It’s just a little bump on my noggin’!” she whined, closing her eyes.

Nodding, the Professor darted to help Taylor. Gem opened her eyes. Wait! Noggin? Who the hell says that type of word? One word came to her...concussed! Yep. That’s what was wrong, because the minutes that followed had her questioning her sanity.

“Jaxx!” yelled Taylor. “Take your time, but hurry the hell up!”

Hawkins left her, while Gem shook her head, trying to clear her vision, and decided to lean against one of the table legs closing her eyes. That’s when her blurry vision saw Professor Hawkins and Taylor fly up to the top of the shelves to cover the

books. She frowned. Flying? Gem closed her eyes, and when she opened them seconds later, she saw Taylor on the ladder with Professor Hawkins, helping her cover the lower books with one of the tarps. Gem groaned, and rubbed her head, again. Where the hell was the tank that had pushed her out of the way? It had saved her body from being scarred for life, if not saved her very life. But, what was it that hit her in the first place? Gem tried to stand to her feet, but they collapsed from under her, and she fell back onto her ass.

“Damn! That’s twice!” she murmured in anger.

She tried, again. This time, she managed to pull herself up by holding onto the table edge. Her legs were really wobbly – probably from a bit of shock. Her body was bruised, but at least the bruises would be temporary. No such luck if she’d been hit by the flying glass! She’d just be in a lot of pain until the bruises healed. That was alright for her! Bruises were good!

Professor Hawkins dashed to her side when he saw Gem trying to walk unsteadily toward them.

“Are you alright?” he asked her, grabbing her arm as she stumbled, almost falling, again.

Nodding, “Yeah. I think so. I’m sore as hell from that tanke that hit me, and knocked me against the table,” she said, “But, at least I’m still alive.”

“Good. Stay here,” he ordered, earning a “no one tells me what to do” look, which he ignored, of course.

After he finished helping to cover the windows, Taylor asked him a question.

“Professor Hawkins?” Taylor said. “I wish we had some wine, or other booze in here, but we’ll just have to make do without it. Could you get some coffee for Gem while I finish hanging the tarps?”

Without question, Professor Hawkins, first, helped Gem to the chair where he usually sat, pushing her gently down into it. His heart, if he had one, would have still been pounding in fear! He could have lost her! Instead, he turned to Gem.

“Ms. Elwood? How do you take your coffee?”

“Oh...uh...two sugars, please?” I think.

