

*Do not move. They can't see you if you don't move.*

The wind roared like a freight train barreling down the tracks, straight for them. Alicia stared in horror as the massive ebony coach pulled by its two mammoth black bears burst through the clouds. *They can't see you if you do not move.* She prayed for divine intervention, even as she watched death coming for her.

The bears stopped, and snuffled the air. They couldn't find her. She was safe.

There was movement to her left. Terror gripped her throat, as little Megan ran straight for her. The bears turned as one, and sped straight toward the little girl.

*Do not move. Do not move. Do not move.* Even as the words ran through her mind, Alicia leapt toward the child.

She snatched the startled child into her arms, and stumbled, rolling as she fell to protect the child with her own body.

Coming to a sudden stop, she sat up with the whimpering child tucked safely against her chest.

Thunder roared in her ears, as the bears' hot breath brushed her cheek. Megan whimpered. Alicia knew if they stayed were they were Megan would die. She couldn't live with the death of another innocent on her conscience.

There was a flicker of movement in her peripheral vision.

He stood there; Tall, Egyptian, and wearing only a loincloth that did nothing to hide his manhood. His tanned body rippled with muscles, and flames flickered in the golden sun tattooed on his broad chest. His eyes locked with hers, and she stopped breathing. Heat pooled at her center, and her blood ran hot. Alicia melted beneath the radiating heat of those golden orbs. He silently offered his hand.

Alicia's eyes flickered to the fluttering nostrils of the giant bear, and back to the nearly naked god.

*Lynn Marie Simpson*

*Blood  
Connection*

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## DEDICATION

To the keeper of my heart

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on this journey.

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Thanks

# Prelude

She awoke with a jerk. Fear thrummed through her veins, as her eyes furtively searched the room for the reason she was awake.

Nothing.

She relaxed slightly, and listened to the sound of a train barreling down the tracks. *Wait a minute.* Was that a tornado? Yesterday she watched a news program where a tornado swept through a small town leaving behind a trail of destruction. Everyone the reporters talked to said it sounded like a train screaming through the sky over their heads. Besides, there were no trains anywhere near the ranch. There wasn't a whole lot of anything near the ranch.

The ranch lay in a densely wooded area in the foothills of the Catskill Mountains, about five miles from the nearest public road. South of the ranch lay the Ashokan Reservoir, and west of them was the town of Phoenicia. There was a train station in Phoenicia, but the tracks didn't come anywhere near the ranch. Not many strangers came visiting,

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partially due to the fact that the exact position of the ranch was a well guarded secret and accessible only by all terrain vehicles, horseback, or air. She supposed that one could hike out to the ranch, but for some reason the hikers avoided this area. She remembered the first time she came to the ranch with Aunt Althea. The closer they drew to her new home, the more intense the desire to turn and run; to go anywhere as long as it was far away from where they were going. Then Althea had wrapped her warm, soft fingers around Alicia's smaller ones, and squeezed.

"You belong here child," she whispered, and the oppressive feeling vanished, allowing Alicia to see the beauty of what was to be her home for the time being.

There were several Jeeps, a Hummer, and a couple of smaller ATV's in the large barn, but they seldom used the vehicles. Alicia's favorite mode of transportation was by horse because riding on a horse reminded her of her other life. Before her parents were murdered, and before Jade adopted her, Alicia lived on a small farm in Mexico where their only modes of transportation were by foot, and by mule.

Alicia lifted a corner of the Disney princess curtains, and peeked out the window beside her bed, careful not to wake her German-shepherd pup that slept peacefully on the foot of her bed. What she saw made her gasp, and she started to whimper.

*Do Not Move.* It was a command, one that she followed instinctively. *If you don't move they won't see you.* The harsh voice soothed and quieted her, even as she watched the two giant black bears, their heads turning first to the right, and then to the left. She could hear them snuffling as they tasted the air, searching for her scent. She knew that the voice was right, and that if she moved they would discover her. She stopped breathing. She became a statute, not moving, even

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her heartbeat slowed as she watched in mixed fear, and wonder.

The two black bears pawed the air before them like two great steeds dancing anxiously, blowing smoke out their nostrils with each exhale. The bears pulled a giant, black coach, its only color the grotesque gold inlay around the doors and windows depicting thousands of souls screaming in agony.

*Where are you girl? Show yourself to me.* The spirit voice crawled through her mind, like ants crawling through a picnic, even as it thundered around her making the house shake. She wanted to look, to see if anyone else heard it, but fear held her immobilized.

She would not betray her presence this time. This time she would stay quiet, and protect her new family.

Suddenly both bears turned as one, and stared straight at her. They could see her through the wall. She knew they could. She could feel their eyes burning into her soul.

*I see you.* The voice dripped with smug satisfaction.  
Alicia screamed.