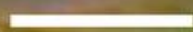


CONVERGENCE

A NOVEL



SHIRLEY J. NAAS

This is a work of fiction. Similarities to real people, places, or events are entirely coincidental.

CONVERGENCE

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Written by Shirley J. Naas.

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First Edition

Chapter 1

Cassamie James

The wind whipped violently against my lightweight jacket. Immediately I realized my folly in not preparing more carefully. Though it was the end of April, at this elevation, my baby blue North Face windbreaker was warmer than most but no match for these Arctic winds that arrived about thirty minutes ago. Typical that Malitar would have to choose the highest point in the region for our rendezvous. There was something about a high altitude and bracing winds that appealed a great deal to him. Perhaps he would sense my discomfort and bring something more suitable for these winds. After all, he knew my tendency to get distracted and forget the bare necessities.

Why were these meetings at the most inconvenient time? Literally, why meet in the dead of night or during the first promise of daylight? Angels. They had no need for sleep or rest in general because angels are not human and have no basic survival needs. I've been dealing with one angel in particular since childhood. Born with a unique trait that allows me to see them and I've had an association with Malitar, my angel, since birth. My uniqueness is based on bonus attributes that most people don't have. Who would have thought that I, introverted Cassamie James, would be dealing with such celestial beings?

I've lived in Scobey, Montana, for almost four years. After graduating from Harvard's journalism department, I accepted a job with the Scobey Sentinel, a small, family-owned newspaper that provides daily news for the surrounding area in a sixty-mile radius. The newspaper maintains a wide readership partially because some rural families do not have Internet and many are stubbornly loyal to the editor of the paper. Anyway, my family was shocked when I chose such a remote and isolated community. Always attracted to beautiful scenery and miles of open, unpopulated land; I accepted the job. After being raised in large metropolitan areas, the smaller communities held a strong appeal for me. I liked walking down the street and recognizing people. Not only that but I knew all the local gossip and could tell what tidbits of information were worthy of notice. Most of my investigative skills had to do with what specials were on the weekly menu at the local restaurant, The Shady Spot.

Mount Antelope is the highest elevation near the small town of Scobey. When the glaciers moved through thousands of years ago, this small mountain range formed. For some reason, the glacier stopped at this point and with its final thrust of energy, forged this mount that I now stand upon and raised 3,464 feet into the air.

Of course, Malitar would say nothing just happens randomly and this spot, this mount under my feet, was created years ago to prepare for this meeting. Meeting? I wouldn't really call it a meeting. Nope, this definitely would not be a meeting. In meetings, people tend to have some say in what is happening. Opinions are given and gathered but not in this "meeting." I would have no influence, power or effect whatsoever on what would be determined today. I would be given some role to play then I would be on my way back to little 'Po-dunk' USA, or my next location and whatever nondescript job was assigned to me. Come to think of it, I had been here for an extended period of time.

The wind moved and shifted differently. It wasn't getting colder but a bit warmer. A small tingle touched me, so I knew Malitar was close by. Angels are surrounded by an aura of energy. He called it a "cycloplasmic" energy source that surrounds angels and prevents them from being detected unless desired so by that angel. You see, angels tend to travel in a sort of mist interacting or counter-acting against any environment and they can alter or control all the elements of that environment.

Most humans are unable to visually see angels. That ability is based on an individual's brain functions and, of course, the willingness of the angel to be seen. The occipital parts of the human brain are so layered and complex that ninety-seven percent of humans have no ability to fully process what the eye is actually seeing. It's as a limited computer with all the attachments necessary but not having the right connection to get online; however, many people can actually sense the presence of an angel or celestial and, yes, there can be a difference. For instance, when a feeling of inner peace or intense happiness settles upon a person for no obvious reason, it's because a celestial has touched that person or been nearby.

I have that brain capacity and connection and I was born with it twenty-six years ago in a back room off a deserted train depot. Shortly after my birth, my mother died from complications. Malitar was present and took charge of what happened later. Of course, I don't remember any of this but Malitar had everything recorded so that one day I would be able

to access it. That is, if I ever want to access it. Some things are better left alone or to put it more colorfully, some stones are better left unturned. I believe another expression is, "Ignorance is bliss". That's good because I live in a blissful state most of the time. I hold a great deal of ignorance when it comes to supernatural beings.

I waited for the rumble and loud clap of thunder. This time Malitar chose to arrive in a bolt of lightning. I could feel the hair on the back of my neck rise. To my left, approximately forty yards away, the lightning struck a huge boulder. I saw the reverberations of energy reflect then bounce off the limestone rock where I stood. When the noise died away, before me stood Malitar. No matter how many times I witness this event, it never ceases to impress me. Where nothing but a boulder stood moments ago, there now appeared the tall, angelic body of Malitar. He was over ten and a half feet tall. Although when necessary, he could adjust that height and assured me many angels were much taller. In fact, he had many more years to grow before reaching his full potential of fifteen feet. Malitar was young by angel standards. He had only existed for around 2300 hundred years. To me, he didn't look a day over forty.

Then came the smooth, lyrical voice, "Good morning, Cassamie. How are you?" I was continually amazed with how well he dressed for any setting. Today he was in knee high leather boots over form fitting riding breeches. The brown, leather bomber jacket and wool scarf gave him a rather rakish appearance although most definitely there was no rogue here. He was the most caring and compassionate being I had ever met, hence, the rank of angel.

Looking directly into my eyes, his usual custom, used to unnerve me. I've become accustomed to it now. He has the deepest, lavender-shaded eyes with the outer edges circled with crystalline shavings of ice blue. These eyes mesmerize and tend to pull one in and make concentration difficult. Perhaps it was intentional, although I doubt angels are cunning, at least not this kind of angel. So it must be characteristic. Surprisingly, angels were a lot like humans in many ways but with highly enhanced attributes. For instance, when Malitar moved; it was as a folding of energy. Immensely graceful with a musical symmetry, his speed could go entirely undetected. One moment he was a few feet away and by the next breath he was within inches. Normally he tried to approach more slowly. It took

years for me to accept these behaviors. Fortunately, I had my entire childhood to help with this acceptance.

“Good morning, Malitar. I see you’ve chosen your typical meeting place. Is it easier for you to meet at high elevations, or do you just prefer challenging me?”

“Now, you know I’m not that type of angel, Cassamie. Surely by now you’ve learned to trust me and know I will protect you at all costs.”

I felt a little guilty when recalling how many times Malitar had saved me from imminent danger. Tasting a little salty chagrin, I replied, “Sorry. I’m just not an early morning person. If I had my second cup of coffee, I would be much more amicable. Can we get down from this mountain and go get some?”

“Of course. Do you want to walk down, or shall I carry you?” He flashed a lop-sided grin.

I almost let him take me down but, remembering back a long time ago, I decided to walk down. Though I would get the coffee sooner if I left it up to Malitar, I was not quite prepared for such a dramatic trip. I told him I would meet him down at my car and we would drive into town.

While descending the mountain, I thought of the first time Malitar had carried me. It was an experience I immediately feared, though some would have found exhilarating. Because of being a reserved and cautious child, I possessed too many uncertainties and worries. Grams said I was born that way, too wary and cautious of new experiences; always sitting back, observing and letting others take the risks. She said it was as if I had an internal thermostat that kept me from being reckless or foolhardy. I thought of it as having levels of restraint. Maybe I was a bit too careful but it had come in handy for most of my life.

My mother, on the other hand, Shelby Annette Kensington, never had any restraints. She lived her life and enjoyed all the amenities it offered. A direct result of her lack of caution took her life. I had a great deal of blame in that along with the one who sired me but I wouldn’t think of that right now.

The first time Malitar carried me was when I was six years old. I attended a family reunion at a park in a small, rural area. Grandpa and Grams always felt strong family connections and we would travel a great deal to meet with our relatives. Grandpa’s huge family, the Kensington clan, came from Scotland in the late 1800s and had primarily dealt in

textiles and manufacturing. Some were even merchant marines and sailors adding to the shipping company that later followed. My grandfather's expertise was managing the legal aspects of the companies and he was quite good at his job.

On the other hand, Grams' family was much smaller. I really never knew much about her family. She rarely mentioned them; however, on this particular occasion, we were visiting with Grams' side of the family. The day had started out cloudy with some periodic sunshine filtering through but I recall the thickness of the air, an almost oppressive humidity.

I went with a group of cousins to explore rock formations near a cave. We were only a few hundred feet from the group of adults cleaning up after the noon meal. Grams had made her famous blackberry dumplings and I'd probably eaten too many. The sugar high had worn off. Anyway, I was beginning to tire of the group. Reynolds, a slightly older cousin, had dared me to climb up to the highest formation extending over the face of the cave. A dangerous outcropping of jagged rock protruded over the face dropping steeply to the river below. From that moment, I learned to dislike him. His hair shone with an eerie blackness, so black it was almost purplish-blue. He had disturbing eyes, unfriendly eyes that never warmed when he smiled. It was as if he had a cruel smirk on his face trying to tempt me. Even his name irritated me. Interestingly enough, none of my other cousins were paying any attention to us. They ignored Reynolds completely as if he weren't there. Later I would learn the reason why they "overlooked" him. Anyway, I remember him walking over to me and whispering in my ear.

"You're a chicken, Cassamie Anne, you can't do anything."

"I am not a chicken. I could go up there if I wanted to." I defiantly hissed back.

"Then show me. You won't because you're a momma's baby."

"I'm not a momma's baby. You'll see."

I never liked to talk about my momma because Grams always got sad when her name was mentioned. Even at that young age, I sensed I had something to do with her death. Yet, no one had ever told me that. Any time her name came up, adults would always give me a sympathetic look. I wanted to scream, "Don't look at me that way." Then they would transition to another topic and completely ignore me for a few minutes. On this particular day, as usual, I was the only child in the family without

parents present. So, already fueled by misgivings and resentment, those feelings quickly turned to anger.

The anger filled me with enough daring to head toward the rocks jutting out over the face of the cave. Climbing higher, I could hear Reynolds taunting me saying I wouldn't go all the way, that I would turn around any second. With the wind building, I continued to climb until I no longer heard him. When I got farther away from the group, the wind strengthened and I noticed the clouds darkening. One great gust pummeled me mercilessly and I began to lose my bravado. Instantaneously, my anger left me and my natural sense of caution rushed in. I was terrified. Unable to move another inch and rooted to the spot, I began to cry. Stubbornly not calling for help because I didn't want Reynolds to hear the fear in my voice and taunt me even more, so I clung to the rocks while the rain pelted me. Unbeknownst to me, the other children had returned to the picnic area. They'd been called back when the weather began to look threatening. A summer thunderstorm was coming.

The thunder boomed and the wind grew in intensity and I hunkered down on the rock face. What seemed to be hours but actually only a matter of minutes passed before I looked up and saw Malitar. Though this was the first time I remembered seeing him, I wasn't afraid. He gently knelt down, picked me up and wrapped me in his arms. Before I could open my mouth to speak, he folded into himself and carried me away. Complete terror seized me. My body seemed to turn inward with a great penetration of pounding pressure. My lungs clamped shut and I began gasping for air. I couldn't expand them. There was no air and I felt similar to the time when I had the breath socked out of me by a large black dog knocking me to the ground. I wanted to scream but there wasn't enough oxygen in my lungs to fuel it. Within seconds I was placed safely inside the cave to wait out the storm. Malitar whispered to me everything would be OK. He stayed with me until Grandpa came to rescue me. Of course, Grandpa couldn't see the angel and, for some reason, I never said anything about him to either of my grandparents.

Today I made another descent; only this time I was a grown woman, an experienced climber. I proceeded slowly down the mountain. I saw Malitar sitting in the front passenger seat of my classic 1989 Volkswagen Beetle. A comical sight to see him scrunched into the compact car. Many times, he'd tried to persuade me to buy something more "conducive" to his great

height but I got my small amusements wherever I could. It amazed me even with the passenger seat pushed all the way back; he could barely stay contained within the space. He would need to shrink before we could head back to town. The moment the thought left my mind, I saw him make the size adjustment.

When I opened the door and climbed in, Malitar gave me that indulgent smile that parents must give their children when they mean, “Why didn’t you do what I suggested?” Although I really wouldn’t know about parents since my mother died at my birth and my father, well, that was another story I wasn’t prepared to deal with yet. My maternal grandparents had raised me. Sadly, my grandfather died last April but my grandmother, “Grams” as I called her, was still as active and alert as ever.

There was nothing she couldn’t do when she decided on a course of action. Usually her energy was concentrated on helping others and caring for their needs. Financially comfortable because of my grandfather’s businesses and investments, one could not tell of her wealth by her lifestyle. She lived modestly and spent much of her wealth on charities and church needs. Her special gift of “second sight” kept her busy trying to avert danger or misgivings for others. She sensed things. Throughout my childhood, I’d been a witness to her many premonitions that had indeed come true; however, she cautiously guarded her “gift” and only a privileged few knew of it. My mother had also had the “sight,” yet it had not saved her. The gene hadn’t transferred to me in the same venue. My special gift dealt with sight as well but mine was that my brain could rearrange energy and penetrate the barriers that kept most people from seeing what was actually behind that energy, thus, my ability to see angels.

Malitar leaned over and asked, “Where exactly are we going for your desired coffee, your nectar, your life-sustaining drink?”

I knew he was teasing me or trying to anyway. He had no earthly or heavenly knowledge of the effects coffee can have on a person. What a waste to never need any caffeine or have a hunger for any particular food. As my mind wandered to all of my favorite foods, a plethora of food items crossed my mind.

“Chocolate. Have you ever tasted it?”

“Yes, I have tasted chocolate and many other foods. I find some to be pleasing but have no need for that type of sustenance. Our hunger is caused and quenched in ways other than food.”

The road became more winding, so I concentrated on my driving and we rode silently for the remaining two miles to the local café. Luckily, there was a parking space in front of the building and I whipped easily into the spot. There most definitely were advantages to driving a compact car. I hopped out and bounded around the front of my car as Malitar came crawling out of his seat. Amusing.

The café wasn't crowded, so we took a booth toward the back wall to give us some privacy and to present a clear view of the street and anyone entering the café. I learned a long time ago to always be strategic about these details. Also, I positioned close to the back exit in case we needed to make a quick departure. Malitar had taught me well.

Today I didn't recognize any of the customers. That was good. Brooke, our waitress, came to take our order. I ordered my coffee black with sugar only, added a plate of fresh fruit to go with it then leaned forward and waited for Malitar's response.

"I would like one of those deliciously smelling rolls I see on the counter. Please, may I also have a tall glass of iced water?" He gave his most engaging smile to Brooke. I felt a little sorry for her as she tried to stammer a response. No one was immune from his charms. I knew he had no desire for the pastry, wanted to appear as human as possible, so he improvised with duplicating a comment he thought normal. Of course, "normal" could never describe Malitar.

Malitar hadn't told me much about Heaven. Oh, he hinted at things, always making comments about the plan and how everything happened for a purpose. He never really told me anything about why he was here with me instead of being 'there'. I always wondered about the angels up 'there'. From the little I remember from my childhood Sunday school classes, angels were supposed to have wings. I had never seen Malitar with wings. I needed to check the scriptures and brush up on the information concerning them but I don't remember much written about them. Secrecy evidently shrouded the heavens. Looking at Malitar, I knew there was a higher order, a supreme God who had a hand in making this beautiful creature, this spirit and heavenly angel. I needed to try and find some answers to so many questions. Yet, the questions and answers would have to wait because Brooke brought out our order and I could definitely smell freshly brewed coffee. This was my heaven right here on earth.

After thanking Brooke, I drank most of my coffee and ate some fruit before leaning back against the booth and asking Malitar the reason for this visit. He smiled and asked, “Do I need a reason to visit my favorite human?” When I continued staring at him and gave no response, he smiled and began filling me in on the “situation” that would require my involvement.

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