

# Olivia Gaines

## Prologue

Raphael Hoyt started the drive home from Kentucky, heading to South Carolina. In more ways than one, it would have felt good to pull the trigger and take Tempest out of play, but she was really efficient at her job. She had a God given talent for stroking the right vein in a man to remind him of a small moment they shared together which made him feel important. His one moment with Tempest Fateman was shared five years ago on a dance floor.

He recalled the moment with pain and clarity. He hated pedophiles. Honestly, he hated any man who preyed upon defenseless women. Phillip, or Phil Weston, was the worst type of predator. A slimy man who took a job as a janitor at an all girl's school and spent his nights drugging the young girls so he could have his way with them. Unfortunately, Raphael caught him in the act when he arrived to fulfill the contract.

Then people saw Mr. Exit's face.

He'd almost gotten caught on camera had it not been for Tempest. She should have been long gone, but she stayed behind for a hair to ensure that all surfaces were cleaned leaving no trace evidence. Mr. Exit made that task difficult to complete. Phil angered Mr. Exit to the point he'd been sloppy in the execution of the task leaving evidence not only on the floors, but the ceilings, the walls and pieces of gray matter stuck in the air vents. Raphael also found himself high in his emotions, thinking about what his sister and niece had endured at the hands of her husband.

"Mr. Exit, I'm going to break the rules this one time," Tempest said, wrapping her arms around him, pulling him onto the makeshift dance floor she'd created. "Look at me, look into my eyes, can you feel my body against yours?"

"Yes, I can," Raphael replied.

"Good, my name is Tempest," she said. "I know you should only know me as Wrong Way, but my name is Tempest. Can I ask yours?"

"Raphael," he answered, forgetting his anger momentarily, loving the feel of her in his arms. "I am Raphael."

"A pleasure to make your acquaintance. Let's finish the song, exit through the side door, and go our merry ways. The body has been staged, the cops will tie him to the other crimes, and the rest is for the history books. Our work here is done, Raphael," she said softly, rubbing the center of his back like a mother would during a child's nightmare, only the way that Tempest moved against him felt more like a long-lost lover reminding him of a better time.

Wrong Way was no longer a member of the Crew. She returned home and became a housewife. Her husband would get that comforting touch from her. She was his problem now.

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## Blind Copy- The Technicians, Book 5

Raphael remained in Louisville two additional nights, double checking the Muldrake home for signs of the Glitter Man as well as ensuring Wrong Way's vision hadn't come back. Moreover, he wanted to make sure she wasn't pulling a fast one on him pretending to be sightless. Taking to high ground, he watched Tempest feed the chickens, completely unaware a black Eastern Hog Nose snake was near her dainty feet. The well-built and overly handsome husband of hers pushed the slithery serpent out of his wife's path, and she didn't seem to be aware at all that she was so close to a nonvenomous snake. If there was one thing Raphael knew about Tempest Fateman, the lady didn't care for reptiles of any sort.

Convinced of her inability to see and his inability to glean any traces of glitter near the family, he made his way down I-64, headed towards Lexington. The 10-hour drive back to Hilton Head seemed long and boring, and for a moment, he hoped for a phone call. Not that he was anxious to take a life, but it would be preferable to listening to his own thoughts about Tempest having a family, which for the oddest reason didn't set well with him.

Lately, it seemed to be the going trend with his fellow Technicians. A couple of years back, Mr. Mann had gotten himself a wife and kid and had recently added another one. Then Mr. Stop went to check out the wife of a skip trace and ended up in Missouri with a wife and kid himself living in a sod house with a living roof. Or at least, so he'd heard. What really chuffed his chaw was that Mr. Yield, that monosyllabic caveman, went and got himself hitched to a little lady out of Missouri as well, which is where Tempest picked up her piece of trouble that left her blinded.

"I know one damned thing," Mr. Exit mumbled to himself, "I'm staying the hell out of Missouri."

He drove nearly three hours before needing a cup of coffee and a bathroom break. Just outside of Red Ash, Kentucky, Raphael pulled into a Welcome Center. He usually chose the Welcome Centers that were brightly lit, on a state property, and normally devoid of too many weirdos in the early parts of the evening. The latter parts of the night he could not attest to, but at a little after four in the afternoon, making the stop was a safe bet.

The sound of a barking dog caught his attention. A tall man with a scraggly beard and suspicious eyes checked the bushes where the dog had located an object. Raphael stood next to the black SUV for a moment observing the man, who became uneasy, collecting his animal and moving back to the pickup that had mud caked over its license plate.

"Hmmp," Mr. Exit mumbled, checking his inner coat pocket for his favorite weapon. Raphael climbed into his truck, which had the engine still running, and backed up, parking with the butt end towards the bushes where the dog had been sniffing, leaving the door unlocked. Due to his profession, the interior lights of his vehicle were disabled, lessening the opportunity to be spotted by the interior lights of

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the vehicle. The dog had ceased to bark, but the truck hadn't moved, and the driver's eyes were focused on the rear-view mirror, watching the bushes.

Raphael walked past the old truck, nodding a greeting.

"Hey, I can keep an eye on the dog if you need to run inside and handle some business. My dog can get mighty antsy if I'm gone too long," Raphael said to the man.

"Yeah, I'll put him on a leash. You can keep an eye on him that way. If the windows are down, he's just gonna jump out," the guy said, dragging his eyes away from the rear-view mirror.

"Go on, I've got him. What's his name?"

"Butchy. I'm Theodore," the man offered.

"Nice to meet you, Theodore. I'm Ian," Mr. Exit said, giving his middle name. "Come on, Butchy. Let's take a little walk so you can water the hedges."

"You sure you don't mind?"

"Not at all. I mainly stopped to stretch my legs, get a bad cup of coffee, and grab a bag of chips from the machine. I'm trying to get Knoxville before nine to get 40 winks," Mr. Exit offered.

"Great, be back in a jiff," Theodore said, heading to the bathroom.

Mr. Exit held Butchy's leash and walked toward the vending machines. The few bills he had in his pocket were used to score a bag of nuts, chips and a cold, sugary sweet drink. His back was to the truck while Butchy whined.

"Okay. Okay," Mr. Exit said, walking the dog to a nearby patch of shrubs. Butchy raised his leg, providing yellow water to the plant that hadn't asked for any precipitation. The dog, satisfied that he too had relieved himself, barked happily at his owner's return.

"Thanks," Theodore said, taking the dog back to the old pick up.

"No worries. Safe travels," Mr. Exit said, taking the snacks to his own vehicle. He sat behind the wheel, placing the snack and drink on the backseat. His bladder would have to wait for the next exit, which was at the Tennessee state line on the other side of Jellico.

The turn signal clicked on as Raphael pulled from the parking space, driving down the egress, entering traffic, and merging onto the interstate. The rattle of the plastic wrapper didn't faze him as he heard the pop of the soda can and a small mouth guzzling down the sugary sweet liquid.

"You're safe for now," Raphael said. "I took a chance that you would get in the vehicle once I moved it closer to you. The man was not your father?"

"No," a small child said. "I like your voice. You have a voice like a nice Daddy that reads great bedtime stories."

Mr. Exit cleared his throat, trying to get the child to come back on track, "Was the man planning to hurt you?"

"No, but he was going to take me to other men who would," she said, shoving a handful of nuts into her mouth.

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“Have those men or Theodore hurt you before?” he asked looking into the rear-view mirror trying to see who he was speaking with.

“Theodore is not allowed to touch me or the Mothers,” she said. “He has his own wives. I don’t have anyone but Willow Rayne and Dusty Rose. They are my nest and take care of me. You know like baby birds, with a Mommy who brings them food and keeps them warm.”

“Do you know how to get to where Willow Rayne and Dusty rose live?”

The child sounded small, hungry, and very thirsty. She gulped down the soda, making a loud burp, then opened the bag of chips. Her manners weren’t lacking as she asked to be excused for the loud gassy expulsion of air.

“Sorry, but I am so hungry. I don’t get to eat until after date night,” she said, frowning. “It would have been my first date night, but I didn’t wanna go. Some of the girls come back from date night very sick. Hurt. Bleeding down there.”

Raphael’s hands gripped the steering wheel. He’d heard so much of this before. Cults of pedophiles masquerading as holiness and wellness centers of the new age of people living off the grid. They were dens of iniquities preying on the less fortunate. He knew them all too well since he’d lost his sister to one in Ohio.

If it hadn’t been for the Archangel, a man very few of the technicians actually knew personally, going inside one of those cults on a late night to rescue his sister, the niece who ran track at Idaho state would have been just like the child in the back seat; a victim with no future outside of more abusive men.

“Sweetie, do you know where I can locate your mothers?” Raphael asked. He didn’t know what to expect from the kid. She sounded very small. Maybe six or seven at the oldest.

“Right outside of Pine Knot in Daniel Boone National Park. Well, not in the park, since that’s the gub’ments land, but right on the edge of it. Willow Rayne and Dusty Rose are there. He’s going to sell them soon,” the small voice said. “Willow Rayne won’t allow *Him* to touch Dusty Rose, although he says she’s ripe for the plucking. Willow Rayne fights hard to keep *Him* away from Dusty Rose. She don’t know they took me.”

“What’s your name?”

“Karli Jebson,” she said.

“Do you have parents, Karli?”

“No,” she said softly. “My father fought against them, and they killed him a few years ago. I think it was years, I’m not that great at telling time on a calendar yet. My real mother tried to get away, and *Him* sold her to the men with mustaches who talk funny, but *Him* kept me.”

“Karli, are there a lot of men at this place where you live or just Him and Theodore?” Raphael wanted to know.

“*Him*. Theodore. George and Kindred, who really wants Dusty Rose. No one trusts that guy,” she said. “In the morning, Willow Rayne and Dusty Rose will walk to the

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Wolf Pen Creek to get water and wash clothes. I think we should meet them there and escape with you.”

“With me?”

“Yes, I prayed for help like Willow Rayne taught me to do when I was terrified, and that’s what I did,” she said. “I prayed. You pulled up and scared Theodore and I ran and hid. Butchy started barking, letting you know something was wrong, then you moved your car so I could get in it, and you brought me food. I need more because I’m still very hungry, and I need to pee.”

“Karli, I should call the police and let them handle this,” Raphael said, trying to see the child in the back seat.

“Why? The police come out every Friday and go into the mating hut with a different girl each week. The policeman also wants Dusty Rose, but only *Him* can have the girls first,” she said. “*Him* wanted me, but Willow Rayne wouldn’t let *Him* touch me either, which is why *Him* was sending me out for date night. I hate it there. Please help me. Help us.”

“If I am caught with you, I could get in a lot of trouble,” he said. “We may need to find someone to help me, help you.”

“I want you to help us,” Karli pleaded.

“Karli, how do you know I’m not a bad man too?” Raphael asked, looking into the rearview mirror to see her face. “I can’t see you Karli.”

She slid over in the seat. She wore a purple slip dress with daisies and other flowers covering the fabric in sporadic spots. She had caramel skin with thin braids in her hair and an adorable upturned nose.

“How old are you, Sweetie?”

“I’m 10, but Willow Rayne said on my next birthday she would make me a cake. I really like cake, but we don’t get to eat sugar,” Karli told Raphael. “That soda was really sweet and I’m probably going to start pinging as Willow Rayne calls it.”

“Karli, we need help. I need to make some calls to get a few people to provide me with more information before I get myself into a mess I can’t get out of, or these bad men will end up hurting me too,” Raphael explained.

“No, the less people the better,” Karli said. “If anybody asks, I’ll just say I’m your daughter. When you get Willow Rayne and Dusty Rose, you can say Dusty Rose is your daughter from your first marriage and I’m the one from you and Willow Rayne. We can be a family. I can go to a regular school with real friends. Please. Please help us. I hate it there.”

“So, you’ve told me.”

“We just have to wait until morning, just after sunrise. I can show you,” Karli said. “I can ease in and tell them we’re being rescued, they follow me back to the truck, and we’re outta there!”

“Karli, it’s not that simple,” Raphael tried to warn the child, who popped up on the back seat.

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One look at her sweet cherubic face did him in. The idea of a 10-year-old child being taken to grown men for date night made the acid in his stomach bubble and his trigger finger itch. A thing he didn't care for was people with vices who hurt others. *Him*, whoever 'him' was, had earned an assessment from Mr. Exit. It wasn't his place to pass judgement, but he didn't mind expelling a few bullets when needed.

"Helping people is easy. Help me. Help my Mothers," Karli pleaded.

The sign came up for Pine Knot. Before he knew it, he had hit the turn signal to exit the interstate. Once he secured Willow Rayne and Dusty Rose, a call would be made to the Archangel for assistance with the women. Tonight, he needed a place to rest. Karli needed more food and a hot bath once he collected her mothers, and the rest he'd have to figure out.

"I'll grab a couple of burgers and fries for right now," Raphael told the small face in the back seat.

"Oh, for you maybe. But we don't eat animals," she said, arching her tiny little eyebrows as if she were passing judgement. "I'm not too keen on fried food either."

On second thought, he reached for his cell phone. The number programmed into each Technician's phone, but seldom used unless it was an emergency, Raphael stared at with a bit of hesitation. He didn't want to call but he had to, he needed to, and he reluctantly hit the icon of the angel. The line rang three times when the voice came across the line.

"State your need," the voice said.

"Archangel, it's Mr. Exit. I have three serious issues outside of Pine Knot near Daniel Boone National Park. I've been told by a credible source that the best time to go in is right after sunrise," Mr. Exit said. "I don't know what I'm walking into and could use some guidance."

The voice replied, "We are aware. Our eyes are on it."

"Should I make a move?"

"Sending support at sunrise; anything else I need to know?"

"Yeah," Mr. Exit said, "she's about 10 and in my backseat. I saved her from a date night; I think that's the word she used. There are two mothers. I don't know what that means. The little lady wants me to go in at sunrise to get the Moms."

The line was quiet except the clicking of computer keys. Mr. Exit held his breath, awaiting a response. The normal calm which kept him company began to quickly evaporate and the thought of having to spend the night with a 10-year-old made him extremely uncomfortable.

"Archangel?"

"This may be sticky," the Archangel replied. "Wait for the diversion. Go in. Get the women."

"Then what? Do I bring them to you?" Mr. Exit asked.

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“No, take them home and lay low, and I’ll be in touch in a week,” Gabriel Neary said into the line. He looked at his schedule. It would be more like three weeks, but in seven days, he would call the man.

“Take them home? Are you out of your mutherf...hello? Archangel? Hello?” He looked in his rear-view mirror at the adorable face. Truly, the Archangel didn’t expect him to take a 10-year-old and two hippie commune living women to his home. What if they smelled weird and wanted to bathe him in rose water and cook vegetable stew? “Hello?”

From the backseat, the small voice piped up, “I heard what he said. We are going home with you. We can be a family,” Karli said.

Mr. Exit didn’t know about all of that. He wasn’t the family type. Raphael Ian Hoyt was a loner who appreciated the life he led with no ties outside of his sister and niece. They were self-sufficient. He touched base and checked in with them on a regular basis and sent money when needed. Now, the Archangel expected him to take two women and a feisty 10-year-old home with him for a week?

“The Devil you know...,” he mumbled, looking for a restaurant that sold a variety of meals which were not fried and had vegetarian options. Raphael Hoyt was already making adjustments for a little lady in his backseat that he barely knew. The idea of taking her home along with her ‘mothers’ made his nut sack itch.

“Damn you, Archangel,” he growled between pursed lips. This was always the way it started. As much as he hated the idea of having three people in his home, he hated the idea of letting down Karli Jebson, who smiled at him with hope and wonderment in her eyes. To think of a grown man touching that little girl hurt the spot in his chest where he believed his heart rested. The other issue that he had to reconcile more than his nut sack itching was his trigger finger.

That bitch was itching, too. His eyes went to the rear-view mirror. She was the key to more than just rescuing the ‘mothers’. Karli was also the key to unlocking the heart Raphael Hoyt hid away in the back of the closet away from prying eyes. If there was one thing which chapped his ass, it was nasty people with nasty vices. The man who ran the ‘nests’ as she called them was about to get a pink slip terminating his employment as the leader of the cult of sexual sadists.

“Karli, can you tell me what *Him* looks like?”

- Fin -

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