

# **Satan's Scat**



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The Destiny's Damned Trilogy

Book 2

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Published in United States of America  
Printed in the United States of America  
ISBN: 0-9785216-1-7

First Pilchuck Publishing, Inc., trade paperback edition, 2007  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data  
Available upon request

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## Dedication

*Dedicated to Deborah*

My thanks to Deborah Martin, Rhonda Winchell, Jeanne Bennetts, Beth Hannley, Brenda Rogers, Lisa Norton, Sheri Meckler, Ann Martin, my brother, Shawn, and my mother, for all their help and support.

# Chapter 1

*3:00 a.m.*

**San Francisco, California**

Blinding fog, through which only God could see, consumed the street and all the objects around her as she stumbled to the right and into an alley. Half naked, her tight, old-fashioned, ice-blue kirtle torn nearly off at the bust and sleeves, its hem damp and shredding as she stepped on it, she staggered face first into a dumpster and fell. Face swollen, her bright crimson cheek torn, she crawled to her feet and wept.

They were somewhere behind her, but where? Terror a spark that shocked her to her feet, she pushed away from the dumpster and ran on. Her feet vehicles with no driver, they flailed against the pavement as she careened her way along, crying, crashing into walls and trash cans, fire escapes and stairs. Bruised

Echoing her footsteps, magnifying her sobs, the fog was a radar for her enemies. She knew they were coming by their own footsteps. Coming quickly. Steadily. Gaining on her by inches, and then by feet.

Hysterical, she ran faster, overwhelming the sound of their footsteps with her screams. Light. Where's the light, she worried, as she searched for the other end of the alley. If I can just get out of here.

Through the haze, in the brume, a nebulous, borderless glow appeared, and she ran for it. Oblivious of all that was to the right and left of her and that which was about her, barely missing the curb at her feet, she ran half blind toward the light. Comforted by its presence, only vaguely aware that the footsteps behind her approached, she felt nothing as tons of steel, led by a bumper, hit her, sending her sailing.

## Chapter 2

A coat of mail defending her from hunger, the bone aching cold kept her mind occupied on the misery at hand as she tried to ignore her need for food. On stone worn hollow through time by hundreds of penitents, she kneeled, her bare knees a conduit through the stone and to the frozen earth below.

Breathing slowly and deeply, forcing her mind to take control of her shivering, she calmed and stilled her quaking. Wearing but a rag, a coarse, burlap bag cut sleeveless and short so as not to warm her, her head shaved and exposed, she drew within herself, detached herself from the cold and hunger, and left her surroundings behind her.

She was one of fifteen women, isolated from each other, yet each within the length of another's arm. Neighbors, they were oblivious to the struggles of those around them as they prayed. Cloistered from the world outside and from those within, confined to

Forbidden to touch anyone or anything but the cold, stone floor on which they prayed and prostrated themselves, sleeping without cover on thin, beds of straw, they lived isolated and alone. In a dark, dank, six-hundred-square-foot room with a fourteen-foot high ceiling, in a structure made entirely of stone, with only two, scant candles on the granite altar providing light, the brilliant orange dawn was lost somewhere outside.

In control of her shaking, the cold forgotten, she allowed her senses to wake and heard from a distance, a thick, bronze bell, the sound muffled by pungent smoke which draped the air and hindered her breathing. Her awareness aroused, the rich, lingering sound of the bell came closer and, with it, a voice, a grim, deliberate voice in methodical rhythm.

In response, the bell rang once, resonating from every stone in the ceiling.

*“Domine, non sum dignus, ut entres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea.”*

And, the bell rang once again.

*“Domine, non sum dignus, ut entres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea,”* the voice repeated, and the bell rung once again.

*“Domine, non sum dignus, ut entres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea,”* the voice chanted for the third time, and once more the bell rang.

Without thought other than to go toward the bell, her legs stiff and cold yet yielding, she rose. Converging in a line with the fifteen, a full yard between them, she walked in single file with them toward t

Head down, eyes lowered, she stepped forward. When she got to the priest, she kneeled, raised her eyes, and closed them, never allowing them to see those of the man who was bringing her God.

*“Corpus Domini nostri Jesus Christi custodiat animam tuam in vitam aeternam.”* The body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life. “Amen,” the priest said as he placed a piece of the stale bread on her tongue.

## Chapter 3

Will conquering temptation, despite the painful, gnawing hunger that almost drove her mad, she did not chew the lump of stale bread still dissolving in her mouth as she solemnly left what was her three-hundredth-and-sixty-fifth communion in the stone chapel. Still holding a space in line a yard behind the woman in front of her, only feeling the distance between them, her head was bowed. She walked watching her bare feet, her hands reverently at her breast, her fingers entwined, struggling to think not of the needs of her body, but those of her soul and the mystery of His body.

Outside the mammoth bronze door, tempered by hand hundreds of years ago on open fires, in a dark corridor where only slits of light from the dawn were allowed, was a single table and fifteen, oak buckets wrapped with bronze straps. In each bucket was a gallon of thing.

On the table without plate, napkin, or utensil were fifteen stacks of three, four-by-six inch wide, three-quarter inch thick disks made of cooked and pressed dried beans, dried fish powder, and a kind of gluten. One disk was to be eaten in an hour, after morning prayers of thanks; one at noon, before afternoon meditation; and, one at eight o'clock in the evening, exactly one hour before mandatory bed time.

Picking up her stack, careful not to waste one bit, she slipped the disks into her hands, clasped them with her fingertips, and pra

Walking very smoothly and quietly so as not to spill the water or make a sound, she followed in line down the dusky corridor.

Crowding the wall on her left, skimming the stone with her bare shoulder so as not to stray from it, she was deep in prayer. Her days here endless and forever, she did not see a form in the corridor, and barely heard her name.

“Alicia?”

## Chapter 4

Out of the waste of ages, threads of thick, oily liquid leaching like sap from the stone, oozed down granite walls, rose up from hell, and streamed into open pits piled high with fresh, and not so fresh, bodies. Carved from rock, hundreds of years ago, the room was a mausoleum for the dead and for those about to die. The corpses in the pits, in various stages of decay, those whose violent death came centuries back merely powder, were, when there were scraps left, food for the rats that brazenly swarmed over them. The pits were a depository not only for the bodies, but for the ooze that flowed over and seeped out of them.

The room was dank and cavernous with small stalactites of sludge, too thick to drip, acting as conveyances for that which was not. From the granite ceiling, the sluggish, viscous fluid clung to one, then fell. Drop. By slowly forming drop. Onto

Iron, centuries old, its rust burned to black cinder, were bracelets of terror around her wrists and feet. Coming out from her shackles, chain links three fingers wide, with thick, hemp ropes threaded through them, attached her to the ceiling. Prickly, orange hair peaking out of the sores and scabs on her shaved scalp, head drooping, eyelids closed, she whimpered. She was hanging from meat hooks.

Time a dead weight, crushing and tormenting her, refusing to move on to her death, she hung resigned. Naked, her body was massed with flies crawling in and out of the bloody hollows left

when her nipples were notched out. Her right eye was burned from its socket. Wounds inflicted hours ago. She felt only her fingertips, under whose nails, hot needles were being driven.

"My God," she silently prayed, unwilling to say it.

A hand reached toward her, and fingers charged with her destruct

Sealed shut by the salt from sweat pouring into it, her left eye struggled to open, finally peering through a narrow, murky slit. Skinny, tinsel lips, gleaming with sweat, pursed, then informed her, "This is your last chance. Where is it?"

As if she had not heard, or cared, she said nothing, closed her eye, and let her head drop uncontrolled as her torturer released it.

"Raise her," the torturer ordered.

Someone took the ropes that wove through her chains, through an iron ring in the ceiling, and to rings attached to the wall nearby. Untied them. And, pulled. First at the ankles, so she hung almost upside down, the meat hooks digging ever deeper into her s horizontal and level.

The raised pit of fire to her left that heated the iron of her shackles until her skin was scorched, that heated the knife that cut into her breasts and the rod that took her eye, now heated to red hot the same rod, the diameter of a finger, the length of an arm.

She saw through her eyelid the fiery, red glow of the rod coming toward her, felt the skin of a cheek touch hers, and smelled the foul, evil breath of her torturer.

"Where is it?"

## Chapter 5

Weak and fragile, five-foot-five and under a hundred pounds, Alicia Cook looked up and smiled.

Behind a three-inch thick, deep-purple cord, a man with curly, blond-red hair, his thick, dark eyebrows raised in concern, was waiving at her. Gently restrained by a Roman Catholic nun in full habit who was holding the back of her hand to his chest, he grinned. "Times up."

"Patrick," Alicia sighed, not moving, letting the line of cloistered women behind her flow around her like water. "

Time, the ticking of a clock, was a luxury she had not been allowed to track and was a lost memory. Having left the worldliness of time and space, her yesterdays and tomorrows were meaningless.

"I've come for you," he whispered.

As if he was an apparition she stared at him. Bucket in her left hand, things dark and round, reminiscent of cow pies, in her right, she was as still and impassive as the stone wall behind her.

"Can I go get her?" he asked the nun.

The nun pointed to a stone bench behind them, half way down another long corridor. "Best if you wait for her over there," she said. "If she wishes it, we'll bring her to you."

Though he yearned to rush to Alicia's side, pick her up in his arms, and run with her from this place, Patrick knew b

"These things take time. You'll have to be patient."

"But, she can go home, right?"

"She has lived cloistered and in a state of grace for a year. She may not want to leave." The nun smiled. "But, I will ask her."

Fixed on his watch as the hours passed, Patrick Bodowski grew more and more restless, without word from either Alicia or the nun. Rehearsing over and over what he would say to Alicia when he saw her, repeatedly getting up and down from the bench, he twiddled and fumed. Endlessly pacing, he pounded up and down the corridor.

If she did not want to come, he would make her. He would convince her she did not belong here. He would remind her Jarvis, her dog, and her mother were waiting for her and show her the pictures he brought.

She was in a v

acuum here, her senses totally deprived of purpose. In a space with nothing to ground her, whatever she learned, whatever she experienced, could not be real. If she did not abandon it soon, her mind would be lost forever.

Having seen the shell of a woman that once was her, he sighed. He had to help her.

There was no church bell to toll the hours, no angle iron to ring for prayers, but when the light in the hallway faded, as if answering them, streams of nuns in silent, unhurried cadence, in the hallways crisscross

Disappointed, he slumped on the bench and watched. There would be no news for hours.

Suspecting they forgot him, he cupped his face in his hands

and stewed.

"How are you, Patrick?" a voice above him whispered, moments later.

He allowed his gaze to move slowly up her body and smiled as his eyes met hers. "I've been waiting for you," he said.

The guileless softness that first drew him to her was gone, and in its place was taut, pallid skin over exaggerated cheek bones and jowl. Her brow had been consumed by an internal darkness, and there was no sparkle in the blue eyes that used to smile at him. As he stared at them, he saw them flinch. She was as nervous about their meeting as he was.

Taking a deep breath, he stood, and tenderly asked, "Can I hug you?"

Apprehensive, almost frightened of the moment when finally "Maybe later," he ventured. "You want to sit down?"

As if the bench were something foreign to her, she hesitated. Concentrated on positioning her body just right, she eased herself onto the stone. At least that unyielding cold was familiar. "I have so much to get used to," she said, a little embarrassed. "I didn't think getting readjusted to the outside would be so strange."

"Maybe a year was too long," Patrick said.

"Maybe," she acknowledged, "but it was what I thought I had to do."

"Did you get from it what you thought you would?"

"I thought my husband was a man of god, but he was a cruel and vicious murderer who would even have murdered Jarvis and I if it hadn't been for you. I thought the Christ I knew was the true Christ until you forced me to confront the awful reality that Consttold him, "I was really shaken, Patrick.

What if there was no crucifixion? What if Jesus didn't die on the cross for our salvation? If none of that's true, what's Christianity all about? What, and who, is God?

I had to have time to sort things out, to think without any distractions. Before I could move on, I had to find out what happened to Jesus.

I knew I couldn't find Him by turning away. So I came here to be near Him. Living here, isolating my mind so that my thoughts were only of Him, I tore away all doubt and exposed myself to Him. Through meditation, I learned to speak with Him.

I seemed to be just beginning

So yes, I guess I did get what I thought I would. Partly, anyway.

At least now, I'm certain He exists. What does it matter whether He was crucified or not? That only means the responsibility for our salvation is where it belongs, with us.

We can't continue to believe what Constantine wanted us to believe, or we'll never get to heaven. We've got to seriously question the testaments and scriptures written to advance that tyrant's ambitions and do whatever we can to discover what those testaments really were. I know it's suppose to be a sin to 'question' the bible, that we'll be heretics if we do, but I think I'm ready."