

# SPLASH



**FEATURED  
AUTHOR**

Roger E. Pedersen

**GRAMMAR  
HELP**

**MARKETING**

**EXCLUSIVE SHORT STORY:**

THE LADY AND THE LAMB BY MARIE BELROSE

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Worldwide promotion.

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OUR E-MAGAZINE IS HERE!

## Editorial

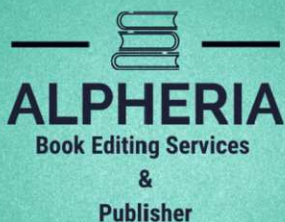
AUGUST 2021, ISSUE 001

Feeling the need to communicate feelings, aspirations, and dreams is something that we all have felt sometimes in our life. It is a voice coming from within us. Our soul screams to make itself heard. If you take your time to listen to it carefully, you will learn about yourself, your deepest desires, and your hidden inner fears.

Alpheria does not believe in unfinished businesses, especially when it comes to reaching a life dream. If there is something that you know will make you happy, don't let it go.

Once, I heard a saying that came to be my motto,

*"Don't let your dream go. If it makes you happy, take it into yourself and do not let go of it, no matter what."*



My dream is to help, giving people the possibility of being heard by the world. Publishing a book of any kind can be difficult, scary, and very hard. Sadly, big publisher's companies take only a few books to be published every year. It is usual to see authors and writers getting their hopes destroyed by reading, "Your novel is not what we are looking for, sorry, try somewhere else. Good luck!"

*Good luck? Does it take good luck? Or maybe what you need is someone who cares about you, your voice, your writing, and your soul. You need someone who can help you without letting your hand go. That is what is almost impossible to find in a place where companies care much more about money than about helping you to reach your dreams.*

There is where Alpheria comes into place. We will edit your manuscript, together with you, respecting your voice, emotions, and way of writing.

***You are not alone.  
We are here for you!***

Today, Alpheria reaches a new milestone. We are launching the first issue of our "Splash" e-magazine. We hope you enjoy it, and if you need help, you know, you can always count me in. You can reach me at [info@alpheria.com](mailto:info@alpheria.com).

Sincerely,

*Paulina Hellstrand*

Editor-in-chief



# FEATURED AUTHOR

## ROGER PEDERSEN



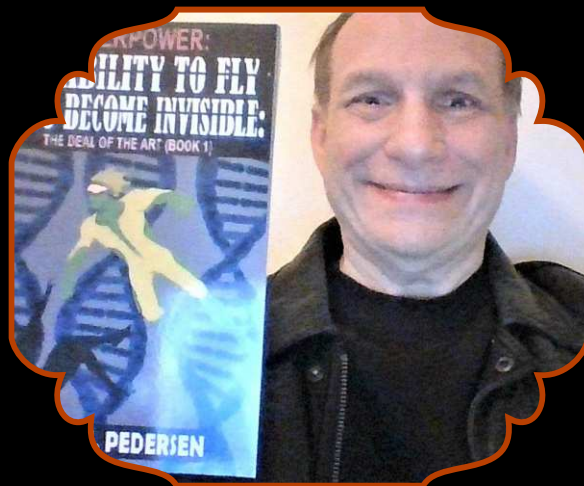
I still remember when I read Roger's first book "SuperPower. The Ability to Fly or becoming invisible," all I could think was, "What the heck?" The truth is that I couldn't really grasp what he was trying to say with it. However, as the editing progressed, I felt as if I was going into his mind, understanding more and more about what he wanted to scream to the world. His story wasn't only about people with SuperPowers, it was much more than that. Something deeper, by writing his book, Roger wants to teach about art, human development, nature, and so many other very interesting topics, which you would have never thought you could find in a SuperHeroes book.

Let's read a bit more about this amazing author, **Roger Pedersen**.



Roger E. Pedersen is a computer manager and consultant by day. In his free time, when he isn't writing, he enjoys playing chess. He is a U.S. Candidate Life Chess Master, an amateur photographer, videographer, dancer, and an avid film enthusiast. He also likes traveling, exploring the world on cruise ships.

# INTERVIEW



## **Can you tell me about "Superpower: The Ability To Fly Or To Become Invisible"?**

A little over a year ago I was watching movies on TV. Within three weeks, three of the movies I watched asked the same question, "if you had only one superpower would it be to fly or to become invisible?" Since I don't believe in coincidences I began researching, looking for some book on the subject. There have been hundreds of articles asking the same from Forbes, Time Magazine, and Psychology Today. I began researching what are the traits of those that would have either power, what are the parameters such as height speed, and other abilities that could come together to flight or invisibility. The movies I watched were "Shazam," and all the Harry Potter films.

## **What gave you the idea for the books?**

Once I had a notebook filled with information, I began to write down the plot of the first story.

Many stories have been told about stealing gold, silver, money and a few movies have been filmed about stealing an art masterpiece or two. According to numerous investor groups, masterpiece artwork is as negotiable and more valuable than silver, gold, and diamonds. Being a United States candidate chess master and computer consultant, my goal was to understand how I could incorporate this new phenomenon of SuperPower abilities.

Part of my fun in writing is that I can have family and friends cooperate as characters' names. Plus, being a game designer of over 100 video games, several gamers take part in my books, by using their names.

### **Can you tell me a bit about your books?**

In the first book, the SuperPower people can either fly at a thousand miles an hour or become invisible. Professor Steele along with the FA (Fine Arts) King plans a five billion dollar Masterpiece Heist. They first have many high school and college students attending one of two summer camps where they recreate famous artwork. The best of these masterpieces will replace the originals. As the members of the Department of Defense Genetically Engineered (DODGE) Initiative try to thwart the night's activities in New York at the Metropolitan Museum, Guggenheim Museum, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and the Neue Gallerie, in France at the Louvre, D'Orsay Museum, and the National Museum of Modern Art (MNAM), and London at England's National Gallery, the Tate Modern Art Gallery, and the Courtauld Institute.

SuperPower reveals the future of those attending the summer camp as well as the superpower teams that acquired the \$3.5 billion in the artwork heist.

The second book "The Next Generation" occurs 20 years after the first heist. It starts with Martin's children. They work with Elijah Moses' son, recruiting SuperPower individuals to join DODGE.

All of the books starting with the second, the SuperPower ability individuals have at least two different SuperPowers, where one of them has to be the ability to fly or to become invisible.

The Professor's nephews, Apollo and Rocky Steele counteract their efforts by recruiting their SuperPower individuals and assigning them well-paid missions.

In the end, it is a SuperPower vs SuperPower air battle from Stockholm to Colorado, having many twists and turns.

A preview of the third book entitled "The Golden Eagle has Yielded" has the SuperPower SuperModel Myrena Gorgona creating her own SuperPower organization "Lemnian Deeds Federation." An Amazon-like, female-run SuperPower organization focused on destroying the "Golden Eagle" Organization.





**You published both of your books with Alpheria. What were your experiences, what do you think about our services?**

When I first finished the initial book "Deal of the Art" which is a total play of Donald Trump's best-selling book "The Art of the Deal," no one but myself had read one word of my book. For \$30 I submitted it to a well-known book website and received two out of four ratings.

The reviewer said, "The book is a power move of a story. The overall story was fascinating and came close to being the thing I like the most... how easy was to read as a children's book but with adult content. I like the main plot of the story, how it was about normal people after they earned power ability."

In the last comment, a reviewer stated: "I wouldn't say it was professionally edited but I still suggest that readers give a chance."

My quest for an editor began. My search ended right before Christmas as I found Paulina Hellstrand. Paulina took a completed story and had me add more emotion to scenes, more character descriptions such as physical description, motivation, and more background. She fixed grammar, spelling, added her own sentences. You do not start a fire without friction, and like any author-editor relationship, we had many discussions some cultural differences, and some factual. Every fix done by Paulina, I fact-checked and most of the time right on points such as not indenting the first line of a chapter. In the end, Paulina resolved the only complaint that the previous reviewer had.

I am planning to ask Paulina to work on the third book as soon as it's finished. I would recommend to any author of a book or article to work with Paulina Hellstrand. She is not only very knowledgeable in proofreading in English as well as suggesting how to fill plot holes and add more readable flesh to the skeleton we authors bring to her.





### **To whom would you recommend your books?**

My book writing is heavily influenced by films, especially the young adult successful film series based on books such as Harry Potter, Twilight, Hunger Games, and Divergent. Generally for ages 13 to 18, and adults like myself, who enjoy learning while having exciting adventures all around the world.

As mentioned, I appear in the first book several times as Peter Rogers, Roger E. Pedersen, Paul Spence, Roger Edwards, the dog learning chess player as well as all for my daughters Michelle Lock, Brooke Laurel DeMille, Megan Leigh Pedersen, and Meredith Marlowe Pedersen, my brother Glen Eric Pedersen as well as my friends Bessalel Yarjovski (President Bob Yarjo), Michael Robert Hausman, Cynthia Campbell (Soupe).

### **If you would be a character in your story, who would you be? Good, or bad? What would be your superpower?**

I would prefer to have the SuperPower ability of invisibility as I can do lots of mischievous activities such as one's done by Loki in the first book.

### **Could you give us a little taste of what is coming in your book series?**

The Third Book of the SuperPower Series, "SuperPower The Ability to Fly or to Become Invisible: The Golden Eagle has Yielded" begins at the Steele brothers' memorial service. The Martin twins and their paramours pay their respects to their adversaries, who died on their way to lifetime incarceration.

Encountering the treachery and blatant lies from the Steele family, Myrena Gorgana a SuperPower SuperModel, forms a new feminine SuperPower organization, the "Lemnian Deeds Federation." She opposes the two male-dominated, operated SuperPower groups: the DODGE (Department of Defense Genetically Engineered) Initiative and the "Golden Eagle" Organization. The Lemnian Deeds welcomes all SuperPowered individuals and non-SuperPower females as the non-SuperPower males survive as domesticated servants.



How do the DODGE Initiative and their adversary the "Golden Eagle" Organization deal with Myrena Gorgana and her new "Lemnian Deeds" Federation?

Follow the recruits of the 'Lemnian Deeds' Federation having new SuperPower abilities and experiences. The third book will be launched soon!

The Fourth Book of the SuperPower Series, "SuperPower The Ability to Fly or to Become Invisible: Can Phoenix Eagles Rise From the Ashes?" Starts after Myrena Gorgona launched the Israeli David's Sling missiles hitting the jet plane flown by Apollo and Rocky Steele with its passenger Professor Steele. After that, she assumes leadership of the "Golden Eagle" organization.

The combined efforts of DODGE and the "Lemnian Deeds" Federation recruit new SuperPower ability females while revisiting some of the SuperPower legends.

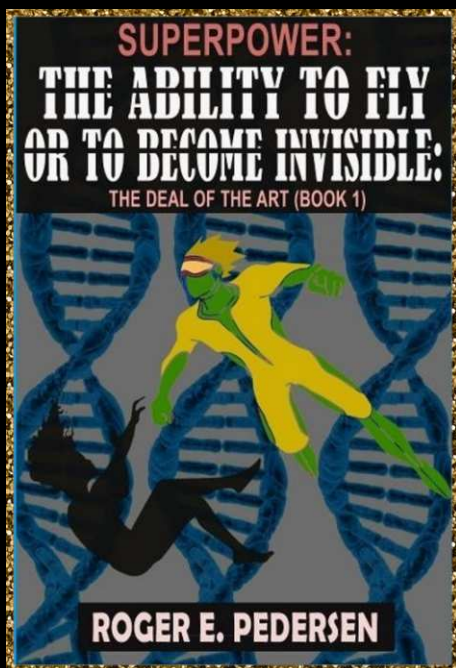
Her "Lemnian Deeds" Federation breaks ties with its ally, DODGE (Department of Defense Genetically Engineered) Initiative.

In the battle of the sexes, it's the female organization led by Myrena against Elijah Wood Jr. and the Martin twins who control the DODGE Initiative.

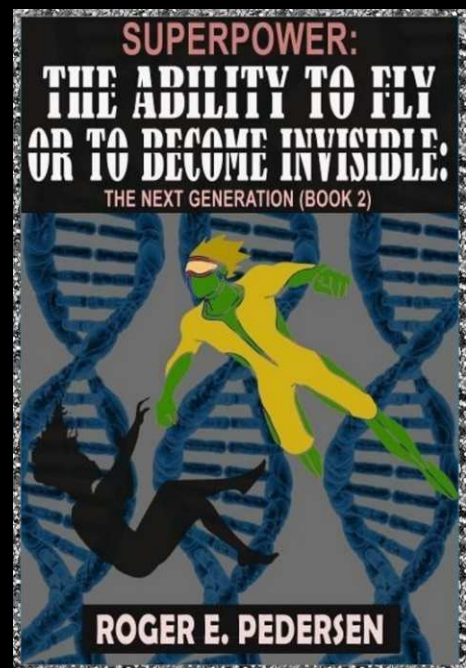
### What about the Professor and his two nephews?

Their ashes inside three large steel urns are beginning to make a fire crackling (crepitation) sound. Can't wait? Well, the book will be released soon! Stay tuned!

# AVAILABLE NOW!



AMAZON!  
AMAZON!  
AMAZON!



To order:  
Amazon.com => Roger E. Pedersen.

# Marketing

It can be difficult to know what to do to market your book. If you have funds, you can always spend on Google and Facebook paid advertisements. Even then, no one can assure you that you would get to sell your book as much as you wish to.

Being an author can be very difficult. To be a writer is easy. I mean, anyone can write. But being an author is much more than just writing. It means you can connect with readers, giving them what they are looking for, hopefully, turning them into avid fans, always waiting for a new book to read.

What matters is to connect with your readers. How to do that? Thankfully, we are in the Internet era, so it can be easier than decades ago.

## **Create a blog:**

Write weekly articles based on your writings, personal experiences, upcoming books, etc. In this way, readers will get to know you on a more personal level.

### **How can Alpheria Help you?**

Alpheria will create a blog for you. The design of your blog is free of charge when you order the Full Editing Package. However, if you want it to have its domain, you will have to pay for that. I recommend using Wix.com. For only 20 USD Alpheria will edit and publish your blog entry, plus we will share it all over Facebook and Instagram.



## **Create a website:**

A website with your domain (xxxxx.com) is a great tool to have. In this way, readers can easily find you online.

### **How can Alpheria Help you?**

Alpheria will create a website for you. Like the blog, it is free of charge when you order the Full Editing Package, but getting a domain will cost you. I use Wix for website creation. I recommend having a blog and a website together. In this way, when you update the blog, people will get the chance to see your website too. If you need information about how to get your domain, write me.





### Manage your SEO:

Seo marketing is very important, it helps Google and other web search tools to find you online.

### How can Alpheria Help you?

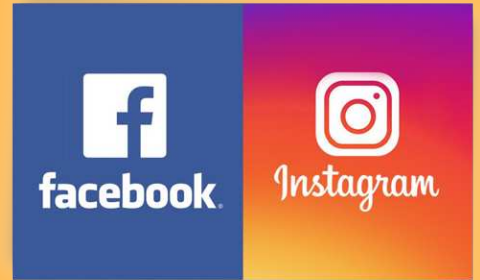
Alpheria will handle all the SEO marketing for you, free of charge. All you have to do is to order the Full Editing Package and we will take care of the rest.

### Use Facebook and Instagram:

Social media is a great way to connect with your readers. Keep them update with your news, blog entries, website updates, etc.

### How can Alpheria Help you?

If you order the Full Editing Package, we will promote your book free of charge. We will create banners, advertisements, and video trailers to be shared online.



### Mailing-list:

Create a way to make your readers sign up for your newsletter. In this way, when you have something important to share, you can easily contact them.

### How can Alpheria Help you?

We always add a mailing list to any website we create. Order the Full Editing Package to enjoy all our free services!

### What else can you do?:

Create video trailers, share the first chapter of your novel, invite people to online live readings, etc.

### How can Alpheria Help you?

If you need help creating live meetings, online readings, promotions, etc. Don't hesitate to contact me. I will guide you through the whole process.



How to order the Full Editing Package? Visit: [Alpheria.com](http://Alpheria.com)

Websites created by Alpheria:  
[JamesRockridge.com](http://JamesRockridge.com) / [TonyArtym.com](http://TonyArtym.com)

# ASK THE EDITOR

As I say, "Pink, pink, pink... it always has to be pink." So, this is my section, here I will be answering all of your questions, related to writing, please. I don't solve marriage dilemmas, heartbroken issues, and I don't give diet recipes, well, if you know the one that works, let me know... I need that.

I only got two questions to answer, Both of them were about marketing, so I have written a full article about that, pages 10 and 11 in this e-magazine. If you still have inquiries about marketing, advertisement, and how to sell your book, write me.

## **Where can you write me?**

You have three ways to contact me:

- Alpheria.com
- e-mail: [info@alpheria.com](mailto:info@alpheria.com)
- Alpheria's Facebook group: Making your dreams come true
- Or if you are in extreme urgency, you can call me: +46 76 216 66 98 (Sweden)

So, since I don't have any questions to answer in this first issue of our "Splash" e-magazine, I think that I should properly present myself, so you know whom you are talking to.

My name is Paulina Hellstrand, 42 years old, married to a Swede since 2004. Together we have four kids, three girls, and a boy. Their names are Caroline (13), Samantha (11), Linda (9), and Jonathan (7). Yes, we were looking for the boy, but my oven only cooked girls, it is good that we good the boy or I would be still trying, having like 14 girls... hahaha.



My husband Richard and I.  
We got married on August 9th, 2004.  
17 years of marriage.  
We met online. I was in Chile and he was in Sweden.  
Serendipity at its best! We chatted for 1,5 years, and then I came to Sweden to meet him and his family. Three months later we got married.

# My Babies



I was born on July 22nd, in Chile. I love listening to music, especially Pop music. My favorite are romantic songs. My favorite singer is Ricky Martin, my favorite group is Backstreet Boys, and my favorite actor is Ian Somerhalder.

In my free time, I love reading books, watching Netflix, and crocheting.

I am a very simple person, with normal needs and with a golden heart. I am always ready to help anyone who needs... while they don't ask for money.

Since I created Alpheria, I have met extraordinary writers, people, and friends. I keep them all in my heart, and they know, whatever happens, they can always count on me.

This is me, would you like people to know about you?

Write me: [info@alpheria.com](mailto:info@alpheria.com)



# Grammar Help



It is important to remember that every author and writer has a personal way to express feelings, passion, fear, etc. There are grammar rules to remember; because you want readers to understand what you are trying to evoke.

If you have problems following grammar rules, ask for help. You can find books on the Facebook group, "Making your dreams come true." Download them and keep them by your side. If you need immediate help, you can write me through Facebook or to my e-mail. If I am online, I will help you right away.

Most of the manuscripts I get have some grammar mistakes. Don't worry! I will help you correct those mistakes. It is just that sometimes, writers get so centered in what they want to express that they forget to place a comma or any other punctuation mark. I want you to be able to express yourself, let the correcting grammar part to me.

Anyway, here are some grammar rules to remember:

- **Use active voice:**

Subject + Verb + Object (the one receiving the action).

**Example:** Paulina read the manuscript.

Instead of: The manuscript was read by Paulina.

Avoid using passive voice when writing your story.

- **Use conjunctions to link ideas:**

Subject + Verb + Object + Coordinating Conjunction + Subject + Verb + Object.

The coordinating conjunctions are: **for**, **and**, **nor**, **but**, **or**, **yet**, and **so**. Don't forget the comma before using a coordinating conjunction.

**Example:** Paulina read the manuscript, yet she couldn't understand it.

- **Use a Serial comma when listing something:**

Commas separate items in a list and don't forget to place a comma before the word and when you are listing the last object.

**Example:** Paulina likes to read horror, erotica, dramas, and love stories.

Something to remember, sometimes the items we want to list need to be together; look at the example to understand. The comma only goes before the last listed object.

Example: Paulina likes to read horror, erotica, dramas, mystery and crime, and love stories.

- **You can use a semicolon (;) to join two ideas:**

If you don't want to use Coordinating conjunction, you can use a semicolon; it has the same purpose.

**Example:** Paulina won't stop laughing; the manuscript she is reading is amusing.

- **Use Simple Present Tense for habitual actions:**

You use it to describe things that you do every day. It is the basic form of a verb.

**Example:** Paulina works every day of the week.

- **Use Present Progressive Tense for current actions:**

If you want to describe an action happening at this moment, you need to use the -ing ending in the verb form.

**Subject + Helping Verb (To be) + Present Progressive Verb + Object**

**Example:** Paulina is reading a manuscript.

- **Use Perfect Present Tense for something that is still happening:**

Something that had happened, but they are unfinished.

**Subject + Helping Verb (To have) + Perfect Present Verb + Object**

**Example:** Paulina has read the manuscript.

Use the Helping Verb (To have) + the Perfect Present Verb to help readers understand.

In this case, it means Paulina hasn't finished reading the manuscript yet.

- **Use Present Perfect Progressive Tense for any unfinished actions and Past:**

When action and time are considered unfinished, you need to use the helping verbs To be and To have plus a progressive verb form.

**Subject + Helping verb (To have) + Helping verb (To be) + Present Progressive verb + object**

**Example:** Paulina has been working all day.

**More help is upcoming in the following "Splash" editions, don't miss them!**

*Never Stop Writing!*



# *The Dove and the Lamb*

*Missive from the Motherhouse of the Order of the Madonna Nera, in the Third Quadrant of the Queen's Palace Settlement, Ishbillya, Capitol of the Five Fae Realms.*

On the second day of the tenth moon,  
in the Year of Our Lady, 1401.

Dear sister Alisia,

There's trouble, and I can't puzzle it out.

I've been sitting in the Convent's library since daybreak. It is too early to read the dusty tomes of chronicles in this room's dark stone walls and walnut bookshelves. I lit a beeswax taper borrowed from Sister Maud to write you this letter.

The hours of dawn are my favorite. The grays begin to lift as fingers of pink and gold tickle their way across the fields. Then, the birds begin to flutter and call to the coming daylight, and the whole world slowly starts to stir. I often pray that it could stay like that forever. Anything is possible when the whole world is listening and waiting.

Yesterday was different.

A girl died in the orchard.

First, I woke up from a dream in the middle of the night, before the morning bells of the Abbey would rouse the sisters from our slumber for prayers. In my dream, I saw Sister Columba. Her face loomed in front of me. I jumped and reached for my dagger.

"Mother, it's spilling. She's floating away," that is what she said to me. Sister Columba isn't easy to understand at times. She speaks in riddles and married a cat. Sister Eugenie says her ways of thinking are not like ours. She sees things that we can't. But that doesn't help me understand her any better.

"What do you mean?" I asked, sitting up in my dream bed. My heart pounded.

My dream self saw Columba kneeling on the floor in a puddle of dark, viscous liquid, stooped beside a body. She held her hands over the torso, reaching up, trying to grab bits of air, like feathers on a breeze, she said, "Like mother, like daughter. No more words."

"Whose daughter?" I asked. Rubbing my eyes, trying to decipher what I was looking at.

She looked right through me, "I can't keep her here," whispering a prayer, she looked down at the small, lifeless figure, and folded the stiff hands in an X across its chest.

I shot awake, but it was silent. Nobody was in my room.

I went to the door and listened. Nothing.

You know that bad dreams are nothing new to me. But premonitions are.

I managed to fall back asleep until the bells rang. When we went to morning prayers everything began as it always did. The sisters entered single file —black, brown, and beige faces atop grey robes— into the cold, dark church. We shuffled into our seats in the Lady Chapel. Sleepy voices sang and half-closed eyes looked at prayerbooks. We asked for mercy and redemption for our patrons. But not for ourselves.

Then I saw something out of the corner of my eye. Some of the nuns had stopped singing. Something —someone— fell to the ground on the other side of the tall wooden benches in the choir stalls. The sisters' voices faded away and they crowded around the scene. They pulled something —someone— along the cold, stone floor and out into the aisle.

I pushed my way in. It was Sister Columba convulsing on the ground. My stomach started to churn as I remembered my dream. The Mother Abbess dropped down on her knees beside her. Another sister cupped Columba's head to prevent her from injuring herself even more.

When Columba stilled I crouched beside her. The woman's lips were moving. I reached my hand to her face and she looked at me. The room turned into a tableau for a moment, everyone standing in place as if they were frozen.

She spoke one word to me in the stillness, "Daughter." It was so loud I could have sworn it reverberated through the whole church. Still, no one moved.

After another heartbeat, the world turned again. I hauled the poor woman up, a shiver of dread snaking down my back. Holding her up we made our way across the church, out the heavy side doors, and into the back garden. She was staring at the orchard, so I led her through the garden and into the orchard gate. I looked out over the fruit trees, dry withered leaves shuddering in the cool morning breeze.

Already fading, she paused, leaning on the gate. She pointed a shaky finger and I left her there as I strode to the middle of the grove. The other sisters lined in behind me as I made out something at the foot of the largest tree. My heart jumped into my throat.

The Abbess came forward and stifled a small cry. She whispered, "No, no, no."

I kept going, my feet moving of their own accord.

There was a small white heap under the tree. It was glowing in the dawn light, with dark branches and dried leaves around it. When I got close I made out the figure of a young woman in a white shirt. Red pooled beneath her lifeless body. Her throat had been slashed and her tongue cut out. It was a horrible sight. Worse than any battle I had been in.

It was Agnes, the kitchen maid, a bright young lady who loved to work in the gardens. She was happy with dirt on her cheek and a basket of herbs and roots at her side. My heart broke to think she would never brighten my day again.

The light in her eyes had been replaced with a glassy stare, looking upwards. Her beautiful, black hair was matted with blood. I couldn't help myself. I reached toward her and brushed the dirt off her light brown face.

Sobbing, the Reverend Mother Abbess sank to the ground, her dark robes, which were a stark contrast to her pale and small figure. She tried to gather her up in her arms. I thought of the carving of The Lady in the woods, holding her baby. Then I remembered the statue in the High Mage's Temple, depicting when The Lady lost her son. The sculpture had captured her sorrow as she held his adult body in her lap, shedding tears for her loss. My eyes stung and the Reverend Mother and The Lady became one in my blurry vision.

Dearest sister, you know I came to the Abbey six months ago for peace. I had loved teaching history at the Order's school and practicing my weapon-craft with the other warrior-sisters. I didn't want to manage and supervise those who had chosen a solitary life. I had planned to keep busy in the world, going where they needed my skills as a courtier and warrior to protect the kingdom. But perhaps The Lady had planned this all along. Perhaps my skills were most necessary here, in the heart of the Order of The Lady of Mercy and Deliverance, here at the motherhouse.

It is almost time for morning prayers again. I will pray that today won't bring more surprises.

I miss you and the family, my dear. Give them my love.

Yours faithfully,

Johanna

\*\*\*

*Excerpted from The Life of the Blessed Sister Columba: Holy Woman of the Abbey of The Lady of Mercy and Deliverance, published by the Order of the Madonna Nera, and distributed throughout the Five Fae Realms, in the Year of Our Lady, 1487.*

**Chapter Two:** “The account of this poor creature’s childhood, when she first trod down the path of holiness.”

The Blessed Columba was chosen by The Lady when she was a child. She received the call when she was walking to her grandmama’s house with her little brother. That was the first time The Lady appeared to her.

Sister Columba heard the village bells ringing and then the vision appeared. She described the apparition as a beautiful, strong lady with gleaming ebony skin and radiant hair. The Lady reached down to take the little girl’s hand, but her brother held her other hand tight. She wished for him to let go. The Lady shook her head sternly.

The vision told her she was young and needed to stay with her family. However, when she came up to age, she would travel many miles to live in her House —the Abbey of The Lady of Mercy and Deliverance.

Columba protested. She was ready, she said.

But The Lady said, “Never fear. I shall visit you often in your home before you come to mine. You shall not be alone,” then, she disappeared.

Columba was so happy she skipped all the way home, pulling her brother behind her. When she opened the door and told her family they didn’t believe her. Her little brother didn’t remember seeing anything. Her mother scolded her for being late and set her more chores.

Thus began Columba’s tribulations in her family home. Her mother punished her for talking with The Lady instead of doing her chores. When her father brought home suitors for her she hid in her room. She shouted and fell in trances when she was cooking or serving guests.

Her mother told her it was inconvenient to see The Lady so frequently. Columba simply smiled and said, “The Lady insists I speak with her when She chooses.”

The Mother Abbess from the Motherhouse of the Order of the Madonna Nera, Simona Wessela, heard about Columba and came to see her. She spoke with her for a whole day. When she told the girl’s mother she had a place for her in the motherhouse, the mother refused. Columba tried to follow Mother Abbess, but her family stopped her. Sister Columba already had an affinity with little birds, so she sent sparrows after Mother Abbess. But Simona didn’t turn back.

Sister Columba thought she was all alone then. She knew The Lady was testing her to see if she was strong. The Lady wanted to know if she would be prepared for a path filled with misunderstandings and miseries. She knew it was lonely to walk in the steps of the holy, with little more than birds and dreams to share her path.

\*\*\*

The fourth day of the tenth moon, in the Year of Our Lady, 1401.

To The Most High Mage Corran Bromley,

I am writing Your Grace with the account of my investigation into the death of the poor kitchen girl at the Abbé de la Pitié et de la Déliverande. I have met with all of the sisters who were residents the night of the murder. The Mother Abbess was visiting with her sister, Duchess Duchesne, that night and the next, so I was unable to speak with her until the visit was concluded.

I’m afraid I still don’t have all the answers. The older sisters corroborated the story of the arrival of Agnes, the kitchen girl, with Sister Columba. You may have heard the astonishing story of Sister Columba, who claims to have visions.

Sixteen years ago she left her home and traveled on foot to the Abbey. Along the way, she acquired a baby. Many people believe she was pregnant before she left home and gave birth on the way. The simple child tells a wild tale of meeting a lamb at the Lady's shrine who gave her the baby. But you must know that Sister Columba is impossible to understand. The stories she tells are jumbled and incoherent. I do not trust her version of events.

The Reverend Mother Abbess Simona was in charge at that time, sixteen years ago. I have read her account of these events, written in her journals in Abbey's library. Although the Abbess did not question Sister Columba's story, she did report that some sisters attributed a non-miraculous explanation to Sister Columba's story. These contrarians thought that Columba found the mother and baby on her journey to the Abbey. But Mother Abbess disagreed with their assessment. She concluded her entry by stating that when she asked Columba where the baby had come from, the girl simply said, "The Lady gave her to me."

Before Reverend Mother Abbess Simona died she asked her successor, the current Mother Abbess Christina, to take over her charges. Since I have joined the Abbey I have looked out for the girl to allow the Reverend Mother more time for her other responsibilities. Sister Columba is a harmless, simple child. Maybe, she covered up the trauma of her pregnancy and birth with this story of the miraculous appearance of the baby at the shrine. But it doesn't give us an answer to why the kitchen servant Agnes was murdered. I don't think Sister Columba could be capable of such a crime. Still, I will look into the possibility that the father or another family member may have been involved.

My interview with Mother Abbess did not uncover anything further. She's shaken by the event, frankly more than I expected. I realize that because it happened on Abbey's grounds she thinks she is to blame. She also feels responsible for Sister Columba's welfare and, as a result, for the death of the girl who entered the nunnery with her. She thinks she failed both of them. I have not been able to get much from her, but further inquiries should lead to more clarity about these relationships.

I will write again as soon as I have more information. Thank you for taking an interest in this matter. It is a small concern within Your Grace's purview. I acknowledge your graciousness in asking after the fate of a lowly member of your flock.

Yours in service,  
Lady Prioress Johanna

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*Excerpted from Sister Columba: In Her Own Words, Edited by the Reverend Mother Johanna Boswellia, and Published throughout the Five Fae Realms, in the Year of Our Lady 1433.*

**Chapter Three:** "When the poor creature saw the shrine of The Lady of Deliverance for the first time."

It took almost a year until my mother forgot to latch the gate at bedtime. I made no move until everyone was asleep. Then, I quietly crept to the door. I held my breath as it creaked open, and I slinked out like our cat Perkyn. They wouldn't know I was gone until they woke up to find the kitchen fire had gone out.

The Lady guided me out to the lane and down the path in the cool night air. It took three suns to reach The Lady's Mantle-what the others call the Abbey of The Lady of Mercy and Deliverance. One night I spent wandering in circles in the woods. I swore I could hear The Lady laughing as she led me to and fro. I was still vain and thought I was special. I didn't know yet that my sight was a curse and a burden. When I learned that I served her and not myself then The Lady relented and led me to the Mother. Now I do as she wills. I have been delivered.

As I walked I scanned for The Lady's shrine in the trees. She had been found there by a shepherd many years ago.

The shepherd's lamb was digging in the ground where the statue lay. Fashioned of wood, she was holding her baby, half-buried in the earth. This is where they built her shrine. But even though I followed The Lady's voice to the shrine it was the little lamb I found instead.

It was nighttime. I heard little whimpering noises. When the clouds parted and the moon shone down I saw a small figure in the middle of the meadow. I crept closer. I thought she was sleeping. But when I reached her I saw the blood trickling from her neck and shoulder, dark against her pale dress. I cried out but The Lady didn't hear. It was a miracle the creature was still alive. When she tried to say something I knelt and put my ear near her mouth. Her light breath made me shiver.

"My baby," she whispered.

When I looked around she put a hand on her distended belly, saying, "She's in here."

I pulled back, my heart racing. I had seen babies delivered in my village.

"She's coming," the little lamb said. "Please help her!"

The lamb wasn't much older than I was. She put a scrap of linen and a small token—a circle of steel with a jewel—in my hand. I took a deep breath and slid them into my pocket.

I sat with her through the night. I held her hand as she pushed and cried and bled. It broke my heart to see her suffer. And then, after she had labored and the baby was born, the mother faded away. There was nothing to be done. I said a prayer, took her babe, cleaned her off, wrapped her up in her mother's cloak, and went to see The Lady.

Cradling the infant, I walked over to the shrine. The carving in the tree didn't look like The Lady to me. When I got close I could see her better, in the light of the rising sun. Then, she spoke to me. She was sending me and the baby to L'Abbé de la Pitié et la Déliverande. She called the place Her Mantle, saying I would sew the sleeves of her garment and make them beautiful for all to see.

I knew the sisters were famous not only for their sword skills but also for their fine needlework. I told her I didn't know how to sew. She said I would weave the strands of my prayers around the Abbey to keep us safe and happy.

The Lady walked from the shrine to the Abbey with us. The baby was fussy so I held her close and sang to distract her from her fear. My eyes kept drooping. The Lady had to prop me up when we got near.

Before we arrived The Lady told me to keep the linen and token from the baby's mother a secret. I should hide the treasures until I needed them.

I asked her when that might be. She said she would tell me what to do when it was time.

When we arrived I looked up at the place that would be my new home. It was bigger than my whole village! The stone walls and wood doors were practical, but there were also colorful flourishes—banners, flowers, painted gargoyles—within the walls of the convent.

I pulled the big rope at the gate and the bell rang. The baby started wailing at the sound and I tried to shush her as the sisters came to the gate. Over the noise, I announced my name. I didn't tell anyone what had happened with the baby. When they asked I said I had found her at The Lady's shrine and brought her with me to join the sisters.

The sisters took us to Mother Abbess Simona, who welcomed us in. Mother Simona anchored me, spreading the love of The Lady, and casting the strength of our foremothers into the Lady's mantle. She heard our voices and intertwined them into a gorgeous tapestry for The Lady. We were each one of us a part of it. We helped her weave it together with our devotion—prayers and songs, fasting and feasting, handiwork, and reading.

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The eighth day of the tenth moon, in the Year of Our Lady, 1401.

To Her Majesty, Queen Isabella of Ishbilliya, Defender of Peace and Protector of the Unshielded,

My dear friend, how I long for our school days. Do you remember when our biggest problems were whether we would pass the next test? You always had greater concerns, of course. You were a daughter to the Queen and niece to the fiercest warrior in the kingdom. Still, you managed to sail through your studies with grace and aplomb. I tagged along in your wake, hoping a little of your burnish would rub off and make me greater than I was.

The only subjects where I had any chance to shine were history and defense. I loved the review sessions where we questioned each other on the details of chroniclers and their words, trying to understand how and why they told the stories the way they did. Always the scholar, you argued that we still had to buttress the shift of power that your great-great-great-grandmother had accomplished when our kingdom moved to matriarchal rule. You talked about how you wanted to provide space for more voices in government. I planned to write new accounts of the kingdom and its citizens that showed this same plurality —after I became a famous warrior-poet.

And here I am, sitting in the motherhouse, surrounded by whispers and deceit. I don't have time to rewrite the Abbey Chronicles while there are more pressing matters on our doorstep. I am embroiled in a case where I fear the most vulnerable are being silenced. A girl's throat has been cut and the key witness's communications are difficult to decode.

Our Reverend Mother Abbess has hanged herself. Or rather I think someone killed her and made it look as though she hanged herself. The trouble started when a young girl was murdered here a week ago. The Abbess led us to believe the murder had to do with the girl's parentage —she was the daughter of the resident holy woman. But I had Sister Matilda, our leech and midwife, inspect the putative mother. Matilda confirmed that the holy woman had never given birth.

When the Abbess heard the news she called for her sister, Duchess Duchesne, to attend her, and they retired to her chambers. I went to inquire after them the next day. When the Duchess went to wake the Abbess she found her dead in her room.

The whole community is in chaos. I have no answers to the first murder. And now there is a second one. What shall I do? Do you think someone is rattled? That could mean I am getting closer to the truth.

Do not fear, my dearest and oldest friend. I don't expect you to have the answers for me. But you are the only one I trust to share my secrets and fears.

Today I will speak with the holy woman, Sister Columba, again. She frustrates me with her impenetrable answers. But I think there is something in her if only I can find the key to unlock her secrets. Are there magic words? Or something else I need to know?

Your friend and servant,  
Johanna

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*From the Archive: Blessed Sister Columba's Unpublished Writings, held in the Library of the Motherhouse, Order of the Madonna Nera. Copied by Sister Alexandra, in the Year of Our Lady, 1451.*

Entry from the tenth day of the tenth moon, in the Year of Our Lady, 1401.

The Lady came in the morning. Sparrows perched on my pillow.

"Too tired," I said, but they insisted, their chirping gentle yet urgent.

I turned over in my bed, "Not now!" I felt dry like the desert had taken hold of my soul.

"Now, now!" They sang.

"Go away!" I threw my quill at them. Then, it happened

—ding dong—

—time stopped and I moved into that other space.

I see The Lady who is my mercy and my deliverance. She is here. She is blue like the sky and black as the night and the light. In her smile casts beams so wide it touches her corona and she smells like the wind and feels like water bubbling over pebbles in a brook

I look into her eyes and her spirit washes over me, filling me with her strength, peace, and her affirmation.

She reaches out her hands and I grasp them in mine feeling awe and wonder as I stare at her. She says it's time.

She puts the linen kerchief and the token in my hands.

"The Mother will need it. Keep it close," she says.

Reverend Mother is dead, I cry.

Oh my dear, she says, she was never your Mother. The new Mother is yours.

I look at her and then —ding dong—

Waking up I stand, rolling the little treasures around in my fist. I put them in my pocket, throw them on my robes. I scurry to the Mother, scratching on her door, chirping, "Lady Prioress?"

She lets me in and I splutter.

She says, "Calm down, child. Sit." She hands me an apple. I crunch, thinking, listening. When I finish I reach into my pocket, bring out my tokens. Lift them high for her to see.

But she doesn't see them.

I try again. I pull out the linen, shake it in front of her nose. Place it on her desk, smooth out the crinkles. Trace my fingers on the stitches —curly-cues and roses.

She looks at my hand, the linen, my eyes, "C. and B.," she says.

I nod, just once, curt and short. Chirrup —her mind's eye flutters open. I hold out the token. Sparkly and shiny. I saved it all this time. Sixteen years.

"A ring," she says. "With the seal from the Bromley family crest."

"The little lamb," I say.

"In the orchard?"

I shake my head, no, once.

Her bodily eyes squint and her nose scrunches up. She is thinking, thinking, thinking.

"Like mother, like daughter." I picture the two little lambs. Both slaughtered, both connected, though separated by years and years. I wait.

The Lady Prioress's inner eye blinks open wide —I take her hand. Our two souls stare at each other. I show her what I know, what I saw, what I say.

We stand transfixed for a moment. Or a lifetime. I don't know.

The door opens and a sister says, "Come. Come."

When the Mother stands and follows, I flutter behind. We reach the gates, where the Father is standing, his warriors rustling in their cardinal plumage. There is murder in his eyes.

"Reverend Master High Mage Corran Bromley," she says.

I almost scream but hold it in, fluttering my arms and singing to distract myself.

Then it is like one of the Lady's visions, where everything changes and time skips and stutters. His warriors break the gate and swarm around us, while the sisters call out and fly to our aid, chirping and biting with their steel talons. The warrior-sisters are strong and fierce. But there are so many foes. Everything is happening so fast. It overwhelms my senses and I can't stop it.

The Mother tries to protect me. When the Father's arrow finds her she falls to the ground. Pierced to her soul, her body tries to release her to The Lady. The Mother's spirit seeps. Thin threads of pink and purple swirl around her chest. I reach out to the eddies, catching them and bringing the strands of light together, coaxing them back into their vessel. The sparrows circle and swirl above us, adding their patterns to mine.

I weave the filaments in figures of healing and strength. I breathe a short prayer. And then —ding dong— we fly from the scene of battle into the dark embrace of The Lady's.

She holds us as she did her infant and I know it is time in the place of no-time and place in the time of no-place.

I take my hands and hold them at the center of The Mother's soul. The Lady lays her hands upon mine.

The Mother's heart vibrates, turning pink and purple, glowing like the angels who joined in The Lady's song. The sparrow-angels draw feathers of light from above us and drop them down. I scoop them into The Mother humming as I work. The sounds fade as the soul's glow ebbs and her spirit contracts back into the vessel of her body —ding dong— I stop and look around. The Lady has left us. The Mother is on the floor. Her face is pale but her chest is moving with the slow in and out of shallow breaths.

The sisters look at me, expectant. I put the linen kerchief and the jewel into the Mother's hand. When I nod, they put The Mother on the pallet and take her to the Healing Room. I slump to the cold ground and everything goes dark.

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On the twelfth day of the tenth moon,  
in the Year of Our Lady, 1401.

Dear Alisia,

I write with the news that I will be traveling to see you and the family shortly. The scandal at the Abbey has been concluded and I need some time to rest. Both physically and spiritually.

I am bringing Sister Columba with me. I don't want to leave her behind in her fragile state. She saved me. Us. I'm the only one who connects with her —I can't abandon her at the convent on her own.

I will tell you the whole story in detail when we arrive. For now, I will give you the short version.

You may have heard the High Mage Corran Bromley has resigned his post and will be brought up in front of the Chief Counsel for murder and various other crimes. It turned out he was the mastermind behind the two deaths, enlisting one of our acolytes to kill on his behalf.

After the High Mage arrived with his warriors at the Convent and tried to kill me, the Abbess's sister confessed all she knew about the affair. Corran Bramley had an affair when he was newly promoted to the Mage Council. When she became pregnant he turned her out. She sought help at the Motherhouse from her family friend, Sister Christina (who was to become our Abbess). When Corran caught wind of this scheme he threatened Christina, forcing her to try and murder the girl.

Christina stabbed her and left her at the shrine for dead, but the girl was discovered by Sister Columba. The holy woman helped her birth the child and then brought the infant with her to the Abbey. Sister Christina thought she was delivered from her crime and vowed to protect the child. She kept this promise until this month when she discovered the girl, Agnes, had a boyfriend —a cleric, like her father. Christina, now the Abbess, approached the High Mage to ask for his intervention. Upon learning he had a daughter, Corran dispatched someone to kill her. When the Abbess started unraveling, he had to act again to prevent his secret from coming out.

At this point, things were collapsing for the High Mage but his arrogance led him to believe he was untouchable. However, it was another defenseless woman —Sister Columba— who gave us the proof we needed. When he arrived to kill me and silenced the whole nunnery. We fought back, and we won.

He has been stopped. But this kind of corruption will squirm its way out of any constraints we might set. Whether it's tomorrow or in a decade, something like this will happen again.

I have decided I am not going to rewrite the Chronicles. That is a job for someone else. Instead, I will tell the stories of my sisters. I will make sure their voices are not silenced and forgotten.



The motherhouse is purchasing one of those new-fangled printing press machines we have been hearing about. I've asked the sisters to go through the library and archives, looking for documents they'd like to share with the Five Fae Realms. We will make our voices ring through the land.

I'm excited to tell you more about this project when I see you. In the meantime, know I am safe and as well as can be expected.

All my love,  
Johanna

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*From the desk of Juliana Alba, Apprentice Archivist, the Queen's Palace, Ishbillya, in the Year of Our Lady, 1701.*

To my darling daughter Petronilla,

I will have to stay longer at Duchess Sophia's estate. I've made an important discovery in the Duchesne family records. A scandalous story of a holy woman from before the Necromancer Wars. You know—from having to listen to me rattle on about it—these kinds of documents are hard to come by since the wizards attempted to destroy most of the evidence of the Fae religions. Who suffered most of all? The women leaders, nuns, and female mystics were persecuted by the Necromancers and their followers.

I found a trunk under one of the desks in the large library here. As I wrote to you in my last letter, the collection of records and books kept by the Duchesne family is remarkable. During the Necromancer Wars, they transported the library of the Madonna Nera Motherhouse to their estate. This must have been a huge undertaking, particularly when they were trying to evade the authorities and their book-burning hunts during that dark period. Duchess Sophia's housekeeper has shown me the tunnels and trunks they used at the time. It is still incredible to think of them moving hundreds of volumes before they had steam power and our mechanical inventions.

The little book I found was easy to overlook. Perhaps it was designed to be so. It contains pamphlet clippings, letters, book excerpts, and other papers concerning an event that took place 300 years ago. From what I've read so far, one of the holy women of the Order of the Madonna Nera was accused of murder, but it turned out to be a more complex situation. Only after more violence and deception, it was resolved by Lady Prioress, a woman by the name of Johanna. She reminds me a lot of you, my dear. Strong, analytical, and eager to solve a good puzzle.

I know you enjoy spending time with Grand-mama, so I hope you won't miss me too much. The opportunity to uncover the lost voices of these women and read their stories is too great to miss. I hope to gain a publication from this research and share their voices with the Five Fae Realms.

All my best,  
Your mother

PS: I include a little sample of the holy woman's writings. They are cryptic but since you enjoy reading poetry I trust you will get some pleasure from her musings.

On the 13th day of the 10th month, The Year of the Lady 1401

The sparrows

I thought they had left me but now they're back it's as if they never left and they're chirping hello we missed you. They flutter back and forth up and down happy to see me and each other again.

"The Lady," they say.

The Lady sends her greetings, she says you have done well you have served her as she asked.

The lights are green and yellow and they dance around me.

The sparrows gleefully like the summer rain, they hang in space for a moment.

— ding dong—

The particles rearrange themselves as everything else moves out of focus.

I am thrown into the other space, the motes coalesce into The Lady's face.

The lady of beauty, the lady of peace, the lady of stars, moon, sky, earth, sea, flora, and fauna. She is

The Mother, The Lamb, The Dove, The Sparrow. She is All..

She smiles and says, "All Manner of Thing Shall Be Well."

And I know it's true. There is love, there is light, there is joy, and there is peace.

There is everything for all of us... for everyone.

THE END



Thank you so much, Marie Belrose for this beautiful story.

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