



**THE
GLITTERING
WEB**

A NOVEL



RICHARD & LINDA NATHAN

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REDEMPTION
P R E S S 

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Maple Falls, WA 98266
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Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 13: 978-1-68314-030-6
ePub ISBN: 978-1-68314-056-6
Kindle ISBN: 978-1-68314-057-3

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2019930563

Editing by Linda Nathan, Logos Word Designs, LLC
Cover design by Little Tree Creative
Book design and production by Redemption Press, Enumclaw, WA

Scripture references marked NIV are taken from The Holy Bible, *New International Version*®, NIV®.
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“Wow! An amazing book! Out of their own fiery experiences, the authors have emerged with a deep understanding of the battlefield that is fast growing fiercer in our postmodern times. A riveting story of two souls caught in a web of deception they can never hope to escape on their own.”

—Berit Kjos, author, *How to Protect Your Child from the New Age & Spiritual Deception* and other works
(Lighthouse Trails Publishing)

“Richard and Linda, this is dynamite stuff! You have done an excellent job! Your story is a real page-turner... I can't commend you enough—your writing was excellent; your powers of description were amazing; the characters were believable; the action was fast and creative; the plot was unpredictable; and you made your point concerning Christianity very well without preaching. I think you have an excellent chance for this book to be a winner!”

—Dean Halverson, author, *Crystal Clear: Understanding and Reaching New Agers* (NavPress);
Editor, *The Compact Guide to World Religions* (Bethany House)
City Team Leader, International Students, Inc., Colorado Springs, CO

It is he who remembered us
In our low estate, for
His steadfast love endures forever.

Psalm 136:23

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CHAPTER 1



THE MASTERS' CALL

Seattle, Washington
December 24, 2050

Loren sucked in his breath, savoring the sharp sting of the icy night air in his lungs, and readied himself for what lay ahead. The years of failure were behind at last, years of being nobody in a world that worshipped power and status, rewarding the few and relegating the rest to history's grave of forgotten dreams. But *this* dream was real, visible. He smiled, watching it shimmer before him, no futile fantasy. He needed no persuasion to surrender to its purpose, to make its goal his goal. It was a miracle, he knew—his ascent to power. Only a handful ever reached this pinnacle reserved for the few and denied the many.

He was chosen.

Behind him, the hiss of the car door closing emphasized the night's stillness, and he sensed rather than heard Eve's approach then felt her press against his arm. He turned toward her, drinking in her lovely face glowing with the cold and with the radiance of this special moment. *What a difference these past few weeks have made . . .* Loren pushed the memory of their last fight out of his

mind, brushed some fluffs of snow away from her face, and kissed her.

They lingered for a few moments, oblivious to the cold.

“Ready?” He lifted her gloved hand and brushed it with his lips, a wisp of breath floating around their faces from the soft word. Then he looked up, beyond her, marveling. *It’s still there.* He began moving forward through the deep drifts, Eve on his arm.

The wall didn’t block the estate’s view from the street, it only enhanced its smooth lines, but Loren’s trained ear discerned the subtle hum of a laser defense line. Countless times they had passed these walls, yet they had been as thoroughly cut off from the life hidden within as aliens from another universe.

Tonight changed everything.

* * *

The Arcane Institute rhythmically blended the best elements of ancient splendor and modern sophistication. Built with the regal simplicity of pure white marble, its complex of buildings rested amid a formal garden transformed by the night’s heavy snowfall into an enchanted grove.

The heart of the whole marvelous business was a white-domed building in the center situated upon three huge steps of polished marble. No visible windows revealed any light from within, yet a mysterious glowing luminosity drew their eyes irrevocably upward to the crowning glory of the entire edifice—a shining golden spire whose soft pulsating light created shadows that ebbed and flowed in mysterious veils through the dark grounds around them.

Those few who entered its portals were said to draw from sublime sources of power—a power that had enticed the couple, like most of their generation, to dabble in the esoteric arts. Still, despite both a hunger to understand and an ambition to achieve, the deeper mysteries had eluded them, and they had never crossed that invisible line that separated neophytes from initiates. But Greater

Beings who controlled the advancement of mere mortals in such things had been observing their progress.

And the call had finally gone forth.

* * *

At the top of the third marble slab, the ramp halted before a sleek computer screen. The gate into the grounds had opened easily enough through voice recognition, but this second entry required DNA scans based on DNA they had provided weeks earlier. The Institute's security system, Identity by Design, acknowledged them, and a silent panel slid open, revealing enigmatic stained-glass symbols surrounding a honey-colored oak door. But what riveted Loren's attention was the carved wording on its frame:

~ You Shall Be as Gods ~

Ancient wisdom. This is where it's at, he thought with a thrill. *No more hallucinogens to experience godhood.* He reached out and ran his fingertips along the raised letters as though to reassure himself that what the words represented was truly real. The oiled wood felt smooth and slick to the touch, and he sighed and closed his eyes, letting their message sink deep into his hungry soul.

Suddenly the door swept open, revealing a tasteful room whose soft music and lighting heralded a shift from earthly to ethereal realms.

Loren's stupefied appraisal ceased as he noticed a man observing them. Tall and stocky, in his late fifties, the man had a ruddy English face topped by a mane of thick, shocking white hair. His silk shirt and tailored jacket gave both an aura of clean casualness and a hint of great wealth and power. With a benevolent smile, he stepped forward and extended his hand, speaking in a soft English accent.

"Come in, do come in, Eve and Loren. I'm Reginald Crenford, the dean of our little enterprise. You are so welcome here—as are all who answer the masters' call."

“Absolutely delighted to meet you, sir. Thank you.” Loren gripped the dean’s hand with fervor, hoping he appeared calmer than he felt.

“Welcome, my dear, welcome.” Dean Crenford enveloped Eve with a warm, if unexpected, paternal hug then waved at several red velvet chairs before a crackling fire.

“Do make yourselves at home, friends, you’re among family now.” He seated himself before the nervous couple with an affable expression. “I’ve been anticipating meeting you.”

I’m going to like it here, Loren thought as he settled into the opulent chair and glanced around. Fine bone china cups of aromatic coffee sat next to plates of fruit and cheese on the low table before the fireplace. *Everything’s so tasteful . . . so right . . . not uptight. Even better than I’d hoped.*

“Please, don’t be reticent.” The dean handed each of them a steaming cup and gestured at the spread. “Fruit? We eat lots of it, as it raises our vibrations.”

Loren and Eve each took a small portion then turned to the dean.

“Now then.” Crenford settled back and took a sip of his coffee. “It’s good to welcome you personally. So sorry I couldn’t have met you sooner. I’ve just returned from reviewing some sensitive international work, you see. We’re very pleased at the speed and efficiency with which The Plan is progressing, in both the spiritual and political spheres.” He leaned forward, his eyes focused on their faces.

“As you are no doubt aware, many rigorous years lay ahead for you both if your part in The Plan is to succeed.”

Loren edged toward the dean, his pulse quickening. Life had begun to seem very empty until the call.

“However, it’s quite worth it,” the dean continued. “Now that you’ve reached this level, you must become aware of some of its ramifications. Because our true work is secret, few realize what great power and influence our initiates wield. You will be expected

to keep our little secrets, of course. And of course—” He flashed small, perfect white teeth.

“There is no turning back.”

* * *

Reginald Crenford leaned back, pressing his fingertips together as he appraised the two. Loren’s lively, open intelligence, Eve’s charm and sensitivity . . . her vibrant green eyes . . . *Like us when we first started the path . . . so eager . . . so receptive . . .* He felt a catch in his throat.

Although an urbane and self-confident man who thoroughly enjoyed the tremendous power he wielded, the planetary head of the world’s most influential spiritual leadership institute had always secretly regretted the lack of children in his marriage. A regret unfortunately not shared by his wife. He had realized there was something different, unique, about this couple from secretly observing their lives and studying their psychic profiles over the past year, but he hadn’t expected to feel *so drawn* to them . . . *to . . . to feel so . . . fatherly . . .*

He cleared his throat.

“As you know, our human potential is . . . infinite.” He caressed the last word with his rich, melodious accent. “Many, many levels of self-realization exist, and of course they’re all guided by the great consciousness that is leading this world into Harmony. However, the truth is that some of us are further along than others, no?” He smiled a patient, paternal smile as they nodded in agreement.

“Unfortunately, the masses are mostly locked in their narrow little visions of transcendence—money, comfort, power. But those who truly have seen the great vision”—his voice dropped, and Loren and Eve edged closer—“recognize that our highest purpose is to provide enlightened spiritual leadership for the union of human and divine consciousness.”

“The Omega Point,” Loren whispered.

“Yesss . . .” The dean exhaled in a soft hiss and leaned forward, his hazel eyes bright. “And your part in this marvelous drama will become clear as you go on. But enough of these great mysteries for

now.” He set the cup and saucer down. “Let’s discuss your immediate future.

“Tomorrow you will begin intensive spiritual formation through deep work in the transformational arts and sciences. You must learn to awaken and control the inner energy, as well as to use your astral bodies, because as you know, Spirit guides our real work. Therefore, it’s imperative that you learn to depend upon your intuition and imagination instead of your intellect, so you can be completely open to that guidance. I know all of this is familiar in some measure to you already, but, believe me, our methods are far deeper and more effective than anything you may have learned.”

Crenford smiled, discerning their discomfort and, behind it, their fear of failure. “Don’t worry. You will master it. We shall make sure of that.” Then he rose. “Come. It’s time to see some of our inner life.”

At his words, a door slid open, revealing a blue corridor pulsing with otherworldly music—music that elicited an exotic sense of jungles, hidden temples, and mysterious visitors from other realms.

He stepped into the corridor with Loren and Eve close behind, and the door whished shut.

* * *

“This is our holy place, the Meditation Room.” The dean’s voice floated out of a circular doorway ringed with glowing violet light just ahead of them.

Eve stepped through the ring and stared with awe.

A spacious light-filled room in the shape of an octagon met her eyes, painted pale blue to accentuate the spiritualized life led within its confines. Large groupings of greenery heightened the sense of seclusion. Low couches, embroidered floor pillows, and carved mahogany chairs lay scattered about an enormous Persian carpet with an intricate mandala in its center. Eve spied a number of people in various yogic and meditative positions.

Gesturing at the rug, Dean Crenford murmured, "A gift from a benefactor who was healed. Isn't it splendid? You will begin your work here. Our Director of Sacred Studies, Dr. Apu Singh, will see that, for a start, you're assigned to Sacred Psychology and Science, Personal Mythology, and Mega-learning." A sweep of his hand indicated a small, dark man approaching them with cat-like movements. Although the white turban bound with a single red jewel upon his head almost obscured the narrow, brown face, his intense brown eyes compelled one to look into them.

Eve stared as the vital little man made a deep bow; then, with careful dignity, he straightened up and locked gazes with her. A jolt struck her, and she swayed for a second.

"You will be very interested in these depictions, I am sure," Singh said, lightly touching Eve's arm and drawing her aside to where life-sized paintings of various religious figures hung: Buddha, Ramakrishna, Jesus, Zoroaster, and others. "All great teachers, each one leading us a step further in our divine evolution."

"I . . . know these others, but who's that?" Eve's eyes locked onto a startling portrait of an Asian man seated in the lotus position. Peering out of cavernous hollows set in an ancient, lined brown face, his luminous eyes dwarfed all else in the room, compelling her to approach him. Transfixed, she neared the painting and in a sudden electrifying inner encounter united with the unknown being. For a moment that seemed like an eternity, she hung suspended and trembling in his presence. Then, just as abruptly as it had occurred, she was released and the encounter was over.

Dean Crenford and Dr. Singh exchanged a glance, and the dean came up behind Eve and whispered in her ear. "That, my dear, is a portrait of the last bodily incarnation of the great Master Lobsang Nan, the Tibetan Lama who guides this Institute from the Spirit. You have been highly honored by this meeting with him so soon. Undoubtedly, he has special plans for you." He squeezed her arm. "My wife, Jasmine, painted the portrait in deep meditation. You'll meet her soon, and I know you will love each other."

At that moment, several students who had been meditating appeared to awaken. They rose and strolled over to the foursome by the door.

“Ah, Dorian. Good to see you again.” Crenford smiled at a thin young man with a black goatee who was half-bowing to them. “Dorian Lanske—meet Loren and Eve Montcrest. Dorian is our post-graduate.” He chuckled at his private joke as Dorian shook hands with the couple, examining them through small, penetrating blue eyes.

“Dorian is most helpful to us. He completed his work last year but is continuing here in other capacities until we finish some very sensitive political shifts in his area.

“Ah—and this is Sonia Bollinger, one of our newer members. She arrived here last spring. She heads her own coven, don’t you, dear?” With an affectionate smile, Crenford gestured to the beautiful young woman standing on his right.

As the newcomer dipped her head in acknowledgment, Eve took in the dyed red hair, the heavy-lidded eyes studded with purple eye shadow, the provocative purple caftan, and the golden armlet in the form of a cobra coiled around Sonia’s tanned upper left arm. Fear slithered up her spine. The insignia on the armlet was that of the Oak Tree Sisterhood, a powerful local coven known for their deadly rituals.

Eve watched as the sorceress’s black-painted lips barely opened in a silent seductive greeting to Loren while she grasped his hand a moment longer than necessary. Then the dark eyes locked upon Eve in a cool appraisal that seemed to confirm the existence of an impenetrable wall between them. A glint of irritation flashed in Sonia’s eyes as she took in Eve’s natural red hair, the opposite of her own.

“I’m sure you’ll all be the best of friends in this great venture,” the dean said with a smile. He gave a warm hug to each woman.

Dorian nodded in silent assent while Sonia continued to assess Loren through slitted eyes. Then the two melted away behind the plants and took up their previous positions on the rug.

“The Meditation Room is one of the students’ favorite haunts,” Crenford explained as he started down the blue hallway again.

Reeling from the intensity of her encounters with both the Tibetan lama and Sonia, Eve sucked in her breath and hurried to keep pace. Within a few minutes, she had experienced an unbelievable new consciousness and the unexpected venom of a cobra. She heard the dean’s voice coming from down the hall and saw Loren poking his head into a doorway.

“What is it?” She caught up with him and stared into the room. A tantalizing array of sophisticated computer equipment, enormous wall screens, and a holographic light station filled a room the size of a small auditorium.

“It’s the library,” he whispered.

“Wow.”

“We have a world-famous collection of knowledge—undoubtedly the finest on earth,” Crenford continued. “Many scientists and scholars use it to delve into the mysteries of the cosmos. It’s not available on the internet to the masses, of course, or on personal devices. One must have special dispensation. For now though we must bypass it, as we have a special ceremony planned. Come.” He turned upward into a shimmering spiral corridor that followed the dome’s contours.

“Oh! How exquisite!” Eve breathed a sigh of pleasure, her inner conflict relieved by the rush of beauty. Washed by rose and golden-colored light, the corridor glowed like the inside of a pearly nautilus shell. She noticed that light streaming through a glass pyramid in the ceiling was causing the ethereal effect. “Why, it makes me feel like I’m ascending to heaven.”

“That, of course, is the very purpose of this Institute,” Crenford said with a smile, placing a hand over his chest. “Except that ‘heav-

en' is within of course. You are experiencing some of the masters' power concentrated here."

"It's like walking along a rainbow," Eve murmured as the three-some moved past other doorways along the golden corridor, each bordered with a force-field of some vibrant color.

"Indeed." The dean nodded, pleased. "We think of our Institute as part of the rainbow bridge of the imagination that humanity must use to cross to heaven."

"What was that?" Eve clutched Loren's hand as a strange hollow moan, like an animal in pain, echoed through the corridor. Intruding upon her experience of ascending into light, the unexpected sound sent a shiver up her spine.

"Oh, that," Crenford replied with a shrug. "That's our Healing Room." He gestured at a closed door and continued walking. "We deal with the whole person here—hurts from this and previous lives, not to mention the lower vibrations that keep us earthbound. It's esoteric psychotherapy, Eve, something you should be interested in. The master informed me you have special abilities in this area."

"Uh, I suppose so . . ." Eve swallowed hard, her hands clammy from the impression made by the uncanny sound.

"In here." The dean swung into a small white chamber, and Eve forgot the weird incident as she gazed at the most beautiful room she'd ever seen. The air was thick and sweet, filled with an overpowering perfume of jasmine flowers, although Eve sensed a fetid, swampy smell lingering just beneath their aroma that made her feel slightly nauseous. Their copious blooms tumbled down the sides of a white marble altar and into a tiled reflection pool teeming with lotuses.

Tall scented white tapers burning on golden stands in each of the four corners further enhanced the chamber's mystical atmosphere. But all energy in the room radiated from the portrait of the Master Lobsang Nan nestling amongst the jasmine—an exact duplicate of the one in the Meditation Room.

* * *

Loren stepped into the room next to Eve and halted, his heart thudding. Then, to his surprise, Apu Singh appeared, grasped his and Eve's hands, and led them to the edge of the pool. The dean was behind them now, and he and Singh were chanting something under their breath. Loren couldn't hear what it was, but it sounded . . . *exotic*. He exhaled deeply, his palms damp and sticky. Shimmering light from the water made it hard to see, and the thick perfumed air was making him dizzy. Suddenly the soft silken hands of Apu Singh were thrusting his arms into the capacious sleeves of a white robe. Next to him, Eve was being similarly attired.

Come.

The word hung in Loren's mind, full and pregnant, an invitation to mysteries. He watched, entranced, as Eve glided down a set of marble steps into the pool and sank beneath the surface, her hair spreading out like an otherworldly, blood-red water lily rooted in a realm of mystery. Dreamlike, she re-emerged, dripping, her green eyes filled with ancient secrets, and floated up the stairs. But in the midst of the otherworldly scene, Loren unwillingly became aware that a brackish root was clinging to the bottom of her white gown and dragging a fetid ooze across the floor behind her.

Determined to ignore this revolting intrusion, Loren turned away from the scene and followed her down beneath the waters—eager to wash away the old world, the old Loren, the old life. Above his head he sensed shapes of exultant radiant beings, ready to lift him back up the stairs . . . *and far beyond* . . .

He re-emerged and stood dripping at the edge of the pool, eyes closed, head back, and a little whimper of ecstasy escaped his lips. *There was no going back. Nor would he ever want to.*

Loren heard Eve sigh then felt something warm on his forehead. Thick jasmine perfume and intense white light enveloped him until he felt like he was melting. Next to him Eve moaned. Apu Singh was anointing them with fragrant oil.

"This little initiation is but the first taste, my children." The dean's melodious voice floated into their minds from far away.

“Now that the Serpent Power is beginning to awaken, the first phase of your initiation is complete. This is the baptism of your imaginations, the beginning of the road to godhood.”

The journey had begun.