

## chapter twenty six

Gabryl looked up at the white clouds that hung heavy in the ash gray sky.

He kissed his balled up fists and stole a look at his stoic grandmother seated at the head of the hole the casket had been lowered into before he and his little brother silently tossed two handfuls each of dirt onto it.

“See you soon,” he whispered. His face was wet but he didn’t care. His Grandpere’s words danced inside his head even though he was gone.

*“Only the strong have the courage to cry.”*

The boy knew without anyone having to tell him that Grand-pere was a good man. But the turn-out at his funeral had shocked them all, even his now frail wife.

The sadness glistened on her like rain even though not a drop had fallen yet. Danise stood right beside her. Gabryl’s mother had not only gotten better, she’d stayed better. As clear as she could, considering where she had been.

If you’d told anyone who had witnessed Danise in the gutter that it was *her* who became their rock as the family prepared for his passing no one would have believed it.

They didn’t understand how much weight a person who crumbled on that squalid, drug littered path had been up against inside and out and had collapsed under, and never had to, really. A return from the dead was that rare in the war zone. But word of her Lazarus walk had spread.

Her strength had bloomed after her devil run out of hell with Gabryl in her arms. Gabryl had watched in awe as she’d grown even stronger dotting on Grandpere as he faded away. He saw the sharp light sing out his mom where her shadow should have been and encircle his grandmother as ribbons of her mother’s waning red and pink light danced down into the open grave.





Danise steadied her as people from the neighborhood, Grandpere's work and two churches streamed pass and offered their condolences. He was no longer afraid of the Angels he saw sandwiched in the crush between them because Grandpere had explained they were part of the songs the two of them were somehow able to see, and their greatest gift. So overwhelmed were all in attendance by the strength and gratitude that beamed out of Danise's eyes that everyone overlooked her inability to bear offered hugs.

Gabryl peered into the press of faces shyly, like he expected Grandpere's face to be found glowing among them even though he knew he was really gone. His eyes kept being drawn to the dark, dejected countenance of the slight man who lived down the hall who had showed up on the edge of the crowd a little while ago and seemed to inch closer every step he could. Remembering the elevator incident, Gabryl watched in shock as the slight paper-pusher made his way to his mother and reached out as if to touch her from behind, his face darker with every breath. Instinctively, he protectively cried out. "Momma!"

Danise looked up in alarm at the sound of her son and whirled around right before Pierce made contact.

"Get AWAY FROM ME!" Danise screamed as she stumbled backwards against her mother.

"Baby- what's wrong?" Gabryl's grandmother cried out over the stunned din that spread through the crowd. "What's going on?" she snapped out of her mourning and grabbed her shaking daughter.

"Why are you here?!" Danise roared, "Haven't you done enough to this family?!"

"Danise-" Pierce whispered, the wind knocked out of him by her ferociousness. He crumbled at her feet "I'm- so- so- sorry!" he choked.

"Get away from my Family!!!!" Danise screeched and kicked at him as members of the churches pressed towards them. An alarmed yet dignified church lady openly rebuked her.

"Danise!!-That is no way to treat this most respected man who came to pay respects at your father's funeral! How Shameful! And in front of your boys?! He is a tithing member of our church family and you will pay respect where it's due-"

"HE RAPED ME! AS A CHILD! He RAPED ME!" Danise exploded. "And I wasn't the only one, either! And You want to tell me how to treat his ass showing up at MY Father's funeral, Mother Rogers?! He molested every damn kid on the block you church ladies turned your nose up at! Yeah-everyone who ended up drugged out like Me!" she hissed, her face twisted up in rage as the crowd yelled in horror.



"How dare you!" Mother Rogers clucked her tongue as she wedged between an enraged Danise and a cowering Pierce, more indignant over the tone of what was said than the content.

"You never said any such thing to me about anyone-"

"You know what your old pastor husband did whenever any of us told on him, you spiteful old witch?!" Danise hissed, "He said they had to forgive him!"

"That's what the LORD says to do, you stupid child!" Mother Rogers huffed arrogantly. "If you'd spent more time in church You would Know the Faith-"

"Oh! But that wasn't it!! If only that had fucking been it!" Danise yelled at Mother Rogers and lunged at Pierce, her mother refusing to let her go.

Danise shook her mother off of her. "I'm sorry, momma-" she whispered. "I should've told you...somebody- but-" The guilt and shame of not saying anything after seeing how adults had responded to others crept up on her but she knocked it away defiantly. "I have to do this-"

"I'm saying it now- for everyone who can't-" she said valiantly and steadied herself against the judgmental barrage of insults pelting her from the church elders of the congregation Pierce belonged to.

"You're Lying!" Mother Rogers snapped authoritatively. "You better go into your prayer closet and pray God doesn't strike your lying-"


"They are why you and daddy Left that damned church... after what happened to Gabloom when I was already gone-" Danise whispered and found her frozen son's eyes in the crush. Released, he and his little brother ran over to her and his grandmother in shock.

"You're a liar!" Mrs. Rogers hissed again. Danise turned around.

"Want your congregation to know what he did next, Earla? Huh? ...I'm sure they'd Love to hear this-" she snarled and continued without letting Mother Rogers interrupt.

"A little while after each kid told Their fucking Pastor... a lil while After he told each CHILD who told on Mr. Pierce to forgive this DISGUSTING Fuck you're so ready to defend AT MY FATHER'S FUNERAL THAT HE HAD THE AUDACITY TO SHOW UP To After having RAPED me as a Seven Year Old Child ... because he gave your fucking church 10% of what he made... Your husband-





Your FUCKING Man of God-You know...the one who was fucking every piece of barely legal ass that got entrusted to him for counseling as you looked the other way and dusted your fucking hats?! Your supposed Man of God -HE tried to molest them too!"

"You are Not going to-" Mother Rogers hissed but Danise kept going.

"And the ones who didn't believe his lie that it was okay? He told them that no one would believe them over him if they said a word! That God let it happen because they were damaged goods! Imagine hearing THAT as a kid...from your fucking pastor...as he's fucking molesting you! THAT is why I never told. That's why NO one said any such thing to You about shit-"

"You are nothing but a drugged up, used up lying whore!" Mrs. Rogers bellowed. "How dare you! How dare you?!"

"You will NOT besmirch the glorious name of my dearly departed husband with some twisted crack-head fantasy -a ridiculous, smacked out fever-dream- whatever the fuck your drug of choice is-"

The church members gasped at Mother Rogers use of profanity. "Where are your other victims, huh?! Since you're spreading this nonsense- at your own father's funeral no less, in your poor mother's face- in front of all these sanctified people! You Dare insult my dearly departed husband's name now that he's not here to defend himself?! He's seated at the right hand of the Lord in Heaven, Witnessing you lie on him-"

"The only Lord your fucked up husband is sitting beside is the Lord of the Flies!" Danise hissed. "And he's on his fucking knees- Like he used to force the kids to be-"

The crowd gasped.

"Every kid his fucked up actions sent to hell ahead of him due to overdoses is bashing his fucking face in every single day as their closest semblance to heaven possible!" Danise snarled.

The members of the sanctified congregation of "*Many blessings, Giveth and Taketh away*" howled in outrage at the blasphemous accusations spewing from Danise.

The Others from the church her parents had found refuge in after being failed by Giveth and Taketh Away streamed through the crush to encircle the grieving family as actual Angels in the crowd wedged between the camps.

"Eddie Monroe. Jacinta Thompson. Precious Smith. Roberta Marks. Ricardo Jones-" she screamed in a raw, staccato voice over the melee. Danise stood rigidly yelling the names of the children she'd known Pierce and the Pastor to have attacked, most whom had gone on to die of overdoses.

"Stop her! She's lying!" Mother Rogers yelled. Everything in the graveyard got quiet as a hot, empty Tuesday in July even though it was packed to the gills, except Danise. She continued to roar.

"Takeisha Reynolds. Karina Clarkson. Maddy Williams. Ebony Willis. Ronald Mayweather, Anton Crusher- Half your church's fucking praise and worship department! He Made pedophiles out of as many spirits as he fucking broke- He even pointed And fucking provided some of them with their first tastes of heroin to ease their pain, shit that eventually they saw as their only fucking way out-"

"You better dive back into your crack den with this shit, you fucking addict-" Mother Rogers heaved. "This is slander! This is Blasphemy! I need to call the cops! I need to call on God to strike your filthy ass down right now! Lying on my chaste and dignified Husband! How dare-"

"Robert Murphy, Kenneth Downton, Ricky Jenkins- Dead! Dead! Dead!-" Danise stopped in the middle of her roll-call and tilted her head as if God himself was whispering in her ear. The softness that spread across her face made the venomous words loading in Earla Rogers mouth from the truth of her heart skid to a stop.

"OMG-You...Knew! Oh my God- and all this ...all this time, I-" Danise whispered aloud then started to laugh. "You were complicit! You Knew what he was doing to kids too, and just didn't care- Just like In the name of whatever demonic Lord he actually served you never cared about the ladies in your congregation he was fucking-"

The entire crowd gasped over how cavalier Danise said the one thing they all already knew.

Mother Rogers could care less about what the one who made all the females in his flock call him daddy did as long as he was referred to as Pastor and she was positioned as Pastor's wife. Her tawny skin went white with rage, her speechless mouth flapping in the wind as her own congregation awkwardly turned towards the truth.

"So you know what, Mrs. Pastor's Wife, Earla Rogers?" Danise hissed. "The blood your husband ordained to keep being spilled amongst the most vulnerable in yall's flock? Blood that eventually spilled into the gutters of these streets due to the monsters he was in League with? In the name of Jesus... that all can now see you in no way or shape serve no matter how you preen on a plush throne behind an altar you all paid for from the money you got from your still impoverished, never bettered by your leadership ...flock~?" Danise growled, "That blood burden is now officially transferred to You."



Mother Rogers started to protest.

“And it’s witnessed not by just two or more, but all of these people present that Are in the body of christ-” Danise snapped. “And it’d be better for you to have a fucking rock chained around your fucking neck before you got tossed into the fucking ocean than to face what God has in store for you after all the innocence YOUR husband and YOU are guilty of destroying-”

The congregation of Giveth and Taketh Away roared, ready to riot. As Pierce stood up nervously their eyes flashed with sanctimonious rage.

“She’s telling the truth.” he yelled over the din.

Danise’s mother grabbed back onto her child and held on with all her might as the elders from the Giveth and Taketh congregation flew back in shock, as if a bomb had gone off with his admission of guilt. The clouds broke and the rains finally came.

“About ...what I did...and what her,” he motioned absently towards Mother Rogers, “ What her husband...knew and did too. And I am so sorry-I- But it- it happened to me as a kid-” he said hoarsely, “and I just blocked it out-” he stopped himself. “No! Because that’s no- It’s no excuse!” he cried out and ran out of the graveyard hounded by outside knowledge of his dirty deeds in

Excerpt from chapter twenty six of **ESTHESIS**, book **SIX** of **grievechronic** by AngelBrynnner.

**ESTHESIS/Perdition**, collage by AngelBrynnner 2020.  
Additional image credits: Luis Molinero & kues1.

