



ALSO BY SCOTT BLUM

Summer's Path

Waiting for Autumn



The above are available at your local bookstore,
or may be ordered by visiting:

Hay House USA: www.hayhouse.com[®]

Hay House Australia: www.hayhouse.com.au

Hay House UK: www.hayhouse.co.uk

Hay House South Africa: www.hayhouse.co.za

Hay House India: www.hayhouse.co.in



scott blum



HAY HOUSE, INC.

Carlsbad, California • New York City
London • Sydney • Johannesburg
Vancouver • Hong Kong • New Delhi

Copyright © 2011 by Scott Blum

Published and distributed in the United States by: Hay House, Inc.: www.hayhouse.com • **Published and distributed in Australia by:** Hay House Australia Pty. Ltd.: www.hayhouse.com.au • **Published and distributed in the United Kingdom by:** Hay House UK, Ltd.: www.hayhouse.co.uk • **Published and distributed in the Republic of South Africa by:** Hay House SA (Pty), Ltd.: www.hayhouse.co.za • **Distributed in Canada by:** Raincoast: www.raincoast.com • **Published in India by:** Hay House Publishers India: www.hayhouse.co.in

Editorial supervision: Jill Kramer • *Project editor:* Alex Freemon
Cover design: Amy Rose Grigoriou • *Interior design:* Pam Homan

The Rumi poem on page 189 was translated by Andrew Harvey.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced by any mechanical, photographic, or electronic process, or in the form of a phonographic recording; nor may it be stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, or otherwise be copied for public or private use—other than for “fair use” as brief quotations embodied in articles and reviews—without prior written permission of the publisher.

The author of this book does not dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of any technique as a form of treatment for physical, emotional, or medical problems without the advice of a physician, either directly or indirectly. The intent of the author is only to offer information of a general nature to help you in your quest for emotional and spiritual well-being. In the event you use any of the information in this book for yourself, which is your constitutional right, the author and the publisher assume no responsibility for your actions.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Blum, Scott.

Winter moon rises / Scott Blum.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-4019-2717-2 (hardcover : alk. paper) 1. First-born children--Fiction. 2. Mind and body--Fiction. 3. Spirituality--Fiction. I. Title.

PS3602.1864W56 2011

813'.6--dc23

2011024060

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4019-2717-2

Digital ISBN: 978-1-4019-3093-6

14 13 12 11 4 3 2 1
1st edition, November 2011

Printed in the United States of America



FOREWORD



am very honored to write a Foreword for this brave, strange, and magical book by my friend Scott Blum. I am also especially honored to appear in it and give what little wisdom I have found on the Sacred Feminine.

I am not aware of such a book ever having been written before. This work has a unique and modern theme—that of a man who longs to be a father but is overwhelmed with despair and dread when he discovers that everything isn't as he imagined. This despair and dread take him into a depth of genuine inquiry and openness to revelation that leads him to all his own self-doubts and to a wholly new vision of what

scott blum

Sacred Masculinity can be in a time like ours. So this book is at once a memoir; a thriller; a mystical confession; and a new kind of conversation about the nature of the Masculine and its responsibilities to the worship, adoration, and protection of the Divine Feminine in the great work of our time—the restoration of the full splendor and power of the Sacred Marriage in all of us.

If this sounds grandiose, it is my fault. Why the book works so movingly is that the story is such a human, gritty, and down-home story that opens quite naturally to its own supernatural dimensions. Scott Blum's great courage is to open us very simply and without artifice to his own growth and healing visionary journey; and to do so from the center of life as a man who owns a business, celebrates his marriage, works deeply on his inner life, and is trying to devote all he is to his heart's vision. It is Scott's sincerity that carries us throughout this ordinary and extraordinary story; and this sincerity is one of the heart and soul . . . and so is a very treasured gift between writer and reader.

May you enjoy this book as much as I have, and find its discoveries as I did.

— **Andrew Harvey**
the best-selling author of *The Hope*



*Morning dew,
the clover glistens no more.*

In afternoon.

CHAPTER ONE



artika was the first person we told.

In her kitchen. The very same kitchen where Madisyn and I had first met.

Everything seemed oddly similar to the way it had been on that initial evening. Madisyn was dressed in a flowing pastel skirt that matched her silk-wrapped sandals; and I was once again wearing faded blue jeans, a T-shirt, and canvas tennis shoes. But it was our friend's kitchen itself that brought back the most vivid memories from several years before. The sweet smell of herbal teas danced with the nutty aroma of freshly roasted cashews, and stacks of self-help books crowded the

fine china in oak cabinets. It was always comforting to visit the heart of Martika's home, and it felt like a perfect place to share our news for the first time.

"I'm preg—" Madisyn barely uttered the first syllable before the entire house filled with Martika's excitement.

"I knew it!" shrieked Martika as she plucked a rhododendron flower from a vase and placed it behind my wife's ear. Madisyn's wavy blonde hair gracefully framed the fuchsia petals, and I was once again taken by how much she resembled our close friend. If I didn't know better, I would have assumed that Martika was Madisyn's older sister because of their matching locks and petite stature.

"I could tell the first moment you walked in the door!" continued Martika, after wrapping my wife in a firm embrace. "How far are you along?"

"Five weeks."

Martika's smile remained as she waved her finger in a mock accusatory gesture.

"I know, I know," said Madisyn. "But you're basically family, and if you can't tell family . . ."

"I'm sure it'll be just fine," reassured Martika, her giddiness returning. "Do you want some tea?" she asked rhetorically while removing three china

WINTER MOON RISES

cups and matching saucers from the top shelf of a glass-faced cabinet. After putting a kettle of water on the stove, she unrolled a narrow bamboo mat on the table between us, carefully wiped the cups and saucers with a soft red cloth, and gently rested them on the mat. She then retrieved an ornate china pot, added two generous scoops of loose black tea from a golden cylinder, and slowly transferred the boiling water from the kettle to the pot.

I had seen Martika prepare tea in this manner twice before on special occasions, and Madisyn and I both watched in silence, appreciating the simple beauty of the ritual.

While the tea was steeping, Martika deliberately rotated each gold-rimmed cup handle to the three o'clock position. The dark liquid swirled as she poured the water into the cups, and the loose tea leaves floated counterclockwise at the surface.

Once the tea had all been poured, she looked at me and smiled knowingly before breaking the silence.

"Scott, I'm dying to know," Martika began. "Is it *her*?"

We all knew who she was talking about, and it was the only thing I had been able to think about since I had seen the matching plus signs on the

pair of white plastic sticks. I'd had a strong connection with my unborn daughter since before I met Madisyn, and found myself regularly communicating with her in my dreams. And although my wife and I had both been anticipating her arrival during the past several years, we had decided to focus on our careers before having children, which made the news even more exciting when the day finally arrived.

"Of course it's Autumn," I asserted confidently. "She's been waiting patiently for years, and when she saw that the window was finally open, she flew right in."

"How does that make *you* feel?" Martika asked Madisyn.

"A bit left out, but I think I'll get used to it. I'd better, huh?" Madisyn laughed. "Every daughter goes through a *Daddy's little girl* phase, right? This one just seems to be starting a bit earlier, that's all."

It was true that I'd developed a stronger relationship with Autumn than Madisyn had, although I was pretty sure that the pregnancy would even the score by the time it was over. However, I was sensitive to the fact that having a relationship with our unborn child for many years before she

WINTER MOON RISES

was incarnate didn't exactly start the journey on an equal footing with my wife.

"So are you ready to become a daddy?" Martika asked me, her eyes twinkling.

"I'm not sure—I don't know. I guess so."

"It's natural to be nervous," Martika replied. "Conception, birth, and death are the three most important events in each of our lifetimes. And the former is probably the most special because it is so intimate. It involves only the souls of the mother, father, and baby—it's the ultimate expression of family."

"Yeah, I guess so. However, I would have expected a much stronger connection with Autumn now that she's closer, but she's been unusually silent since the beginning of the pregnancy."

"You haven't communicated with her?" Martika seemed surprised.

"Not recently." I sighed. "Sometimes I wonder if I've imagined this whole thing—if we simply made a baby like everyone else."

"The first thing to remember is that conceiving a baby is not the same as creating a baby from nothingness," Martika explained with a familiar sparkle in her eye that emerged whenever she shared her vast metaphysical knowledge. "Every

baby's soul has *always* existed, and as new parents, you are just inviting it into your life. But it's the initial process of a child choosing its parents that I find most fascinating."

"Are you sure a child chooses its parents and not the other way around?"

"I'm absolutely sure. By the time a child is invited in, the parents are already well on their way down their own karmic paths of this lifetime. But at the beginning, a child soul only possesses a single unopened envelope of karmic debt, which is used to comparison-shop for parents. The soul essentially is looking for parents who have the most compatible karmic currency to help pay down this karmic debt."

"Karmic currency and karmic debt?" Madisyn interjected. "We sound more like a bank than prospective parents. Maybe I don't fully understand what karma is and how it works."

"Similar to the scientific law of gravity, karma is an *absolute* spiritual law that governs the nature of cause and effect," Martika replied. "Simply put, if we do something bad to someone else, our karmic debt increases. If we do something nice, it gets paid down."

WINTER MOON RISES

“Isn’t that the same with everyone you meet?” I asked. “What makes the relationship of a parent and a child any different?”

“Our karmic debt works hand in hand with our soul contract—the agreement we make with the universe before we’re born about what we need to accomplish during this lifetime. These are usually core lessons we need to learn about relating to ourselves and other beings on this planet. For example: compassion, greed, family, anger . . . that sort of thing. So let’s say a key lesson we need to learn in this lifetime is compassion. If our parents have a nice, easy life, providing us with anything we need or could want, we might not be in a position to learn *why* we must be compassionate to people less fortunate than ourselves.”

“We wouldn’t be able to relate,” I noted.

“Exactly. But if our parents’ karma provides for a lifetime of financial struggle and they’re unable to provide us with the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, we would have a much deeper understanding of why compassion is an absolute necessity in this world.”

“So having a difficult childhood isn’t necessarily a bad thing.”

“Not from a karmic perspective. It might be exactly the foundation that allows us to pay down our karmic debt and learn our core life lessons.”

“Well, I hope that Autumn has already learned compassion,” said Madisyn. “I don’t want to have to lose everything we’ve earned just to teach her a lesson. But I guess since she’s been hanging around so long, she’s probably the only one who wants us.”

“Unlikely. If you consider that every living being has a soul, there are literally millions dying each day. For every conception, it’s likely that there are thousands of souls waiting in line to be reborn. It’s just that Autumn’s karma is perfectly matched with your own.”

“Who would’ve thought that making a baby could be this complicated?” I said with a wry grin. “I think I learned the abridged version in elementary school.”

“I know what we should do!” Martika exclaimed suddenly. “Meet me here tomorrow afternoon and bring some comfortable walking shoes. I know the perfect way to honor the beginning of the most amazing journey you’ll ever have . . .”

As Martika walked us to her front door, I had the distinct feeling that everything was oddly

WINTER MOON RISES

different than it had been when we first arrived. The pungent food smells were deeper and more complicated. The precarious stacks of books were suddenly flirting with gravity as we walked by. And the paintings appeared to have taken on additional brushstrokes while we were having tea.

Yes, everything did seem oddly different—precisely because it *was* different.

Nothing would ever be the same again.



CHAPTER TWO



“Everything is going to be just fine,” I said softly while driving along the country road toward Martika’s house. The stately ranchlike estates were a welcome contrast to the more densely clustered dwellings of downtown Ashland, Oregon; and although it was only a few minutes’ drive between our houses, it often felt like we were going on vacation whenever we went there.

“What are you worried about?” I asked.

“There are so many things that can go wrong. I just don’t know if it was a good idea to wait so long,” replied my wife.

“We needed to wait until the business was stable enough to support everyone.”

Madisyn and I had started a company together, and it had taken a few years before it was able to sustain itself. We weren't the first to discover that nurturing a start-up takes a lot of time, money, and energy, although we were lucky that it was eventually able to support all the people who were relying on it.

"I know, I know, but I'm just feeling we might have waited too long."

"We're still young," I said confidently. "We might be older than some of the other parents, but we'll make up for it in experience."

"It's different for boys," my wife noted sadly. "Girls are taught from a young age that they only have a limited time to have children."

"Oh, that's not true anymore. It's very common for women to have healthy children well into their fifties now." I didn't want to discount her feelings, but I honestly believed she was overreacting based on an obsolete societal pressure.

"It's a feeling I've had since before we got pregnant," she said, gazing out the passenger window as we pulled into Martika's driveway. "I just hope everything will be okay."

Martika was waiting for us next to her car and hugged us both tightly after we parked. "Come on,

WINTER MOON RISES

you guys,” she said excitedly. “We don’t want to be late. You can ride with me . . . Onyx is already in the car.”

The front passenger seat and floorboard of Martika’s white Subaru station wagon were filled with dozens of used astrology books, so we both climbed into the backseat next to the full-grown black Lab.

“Hi, Onyx!” Madisyn said when she got inside. “Are you ready for a walk?”

Onyx panted excitedly and attempted to climb up on our laps. The backseat was roomy, although it felt cramped with the overzealous dog.

“Settle down, Onyx!” Martika yelled from the front seat. “Sorry about the passenger seat. I forgot to go to the bookstore to drop these off earlier—they also have another boxful for me to pick up. I’m completely obsessed with astrology at the moment. It’s absolutely fascinating how accurate it all is . . . I resonate with it completely.”

“It’s okay,” replied Madisyn as she scratched the side of Onyx’s muzzle. “It gives us a chance to catch up with this handsome guy.”

“Do you ever miss him?” Martika asked me as she headed toward the mountains, in the opposite direction of town.

“Yeah, I do miss him,” I said sadly. Onyx looked at me wistfully. “But Madisyn’s cat, Zoe, would never have allowed him to stay. She barely tolerated me when I first moved in.”

Onyx had originally been the companion of a dear friend of mine named Robert whom I had met when I first moved to Ashland. Robert taught me many things about life and was essentially responsible for my own personal spiritual awakening. When he was preparing to move on, Robert had requested that either Martika or I take care of Onyx after he was gone. The dog stayed with me for almost a year until I moved in with Madisyn, and then he began living with Martika, where he’d been ever since.

“He’s one of the best things that ever happened to me,” said Martika. “I’m the luckiest girl in the world to be able to spend my life with this incredible soul. I’m so happy I was able to get my allergies under control, because I can’t imagine living a day without him.”

Looking out the car window, I realized I had never continued up the road past Martika’s house. The curvy lane narrowed as it meandered up into the mountains, deep within the forest above the Rogue Valley.

WINTER MOON RISES

“Where are we going?” asked Madisyn.

“It’s a secret,” Martika replied with a childlike giggle, “but I think you’re going to like it!”

We continued up the gravel mountain road until we came to a small turnout that was already occupied by a white Subaru station wagon. Martika parked behind her car’s twin and quickly got out and opened the doors for us. Instantly, Onyx leaped out of the backseat and ran up the path and waited for us on the ledge.

“I guess *he* knows where he’s going,” said Madisyn.

“Onyx and I walk up here at least a couple of times a week,” agreed Martika as she collected a canvas Co-op bag from the floorboard, next to the pile of books. “I think it’s his favorite place on Earth.”

Madisyn followed Martika, and I trailed behind on the narrow pathway. We hiked up the steep incline for several minutes, with Onyx running in front and waiting at a bend for us to catch up, then happily darting ahead. When we finally reached the top of the hill, Martika paused to allow us to enjoy the vista, which was unlike anything I had seen before in Ashland.

The terrain was distinctly junglelike, as the path ahead appeared to be suspended above the dense forest floor by slender conifers that stretched high into the clouds. Massive shafts of golden light shone through the branches and landed on the well-worn trail like giant yellow spotlights, while millions of golden particles sparkled within the sunbeams themselves. But most unusual was the density of the air—even our breath felt heavier and palpably softer than it did in town.

“Absolutely magical,” Madisyn gasped. “How could I not know about this place?”

“There are many hidden gems around Ashland,” said Martika. “The town is deceptively small, but the magic within is endless.”

The three of us hurriedly traversed the forest path to keep up with Onyx, and once we eventually made it to the crest of the third plateau, the Lab was patiently waiting for us with his front paws crossed.

On our left was an imposing void carved deep into the face of the granite mountain, which resembled a gaping mouth with an insatiable appetite for anything that would dare to walk near it. There was also something disarmingly alive about the depths of the cavern itself, as if the inky

WINTER MOON RISES

shadows inside were undulating and dancing with one another.

“Here we are,” said Martika as she gestured toward the cave.

“I’m not going in *there!*” exclaimed Madisyn. “I didn’t bring a flashlight!”

As if on cue, the shadows within the cave began to coalesce, and a mysterious woman gradually emerged from the darkness. She had long snowy-white hair and was wearing a reddish-maroon velvet dress that was adorned with several strands of exotic gemstones draping from her neck. The blood-hued velvet cloth dragged on the ground and completely covered her feet so that she appeared to float into the space in front of us.

Martika and the mysterious woman embraced, kissing each other lightly on the lips before Martika introduced us: “Madisyn and Scott, this is one of my dearest friends, Caroline. She has prepared a very special ceremony for Madisyn today.”

Caroline walked up to Madisyn and tenderly held both of her hands and looked deep into her eyes for what seemed like hours. Madisyn’s incredulous expression immediately melted into a blissful smile, and I could sense that my wife became more relaxed than she had been since finding out

she was pregnant. Caroline then squeezed Madisyn's hands and said in a soft voice, "So nice to see you again, my child."

My wife continued to smile at the unfamiliar woman, and I instinctively held my breath while waiting for her to acknowledge me. Caroline then silently floated in front of me and placed her right hand on my shoulder. I was startled by a current of electricity that flowed from her jewel-encrusted fingers down the length of my arm. She then looked directly into my soul with her piercing emerald eyes. I felt like I was sinking into a bottomless pit, deep within the center of the earth.

"Mr. Scott," she finally said aloud as her lips pressed into a gentle smile, highlighting the deepest wrinkles around the corners of her mouth and eyes. The lines revealed lifetimes of wisdom that were intimidating at first glance. "Today we will be performing a sacred ceremony that is traditionally for women only."

My heart sank when I heard these words.

I would have graciously encouraged Madisyn to attend any women-only ritual if I had known about it ahead of time, but after feeling the energy of the moment, I was disappointed that I wasn't going to be able to share it with her.

WINTER MOON RISES

After a long silence, Caroline slid her hand down my arm and squeezed my hand firmly. “But we have much work to do, don’t we, Mr. Scott? I have made the appropriate preparations to welcome you into the sacred feminine space for today only. However, you must remain in silence and be mindful of your place as a guest. Do you understand?”

I nodded as Caroline turned to Madisyn and asked, “Are you ready?”

Madisyn smiled as she followed Caroline to the opening of the cave with slow, deliberate steps.

Caroline gestured for her to wait as she removed a long braided bundle of sweetgrass from a wicker basket that was waiting at the entrance. She then proceeded to ignite one end of the braid with a match. The air quickly filled with a sweet pungent cloud, and she began to *smudge* Madisyn by systematically waving the bundle around the perimeter of her body until every inch had been covered with the blue-green smoke.

“Wait just inside the entrance,” Caroline whispered, and Madisyn disappeared into the dark cave.

Caroline then extinguished the smoldering bundle on the ground and produced a large, well-used

bundle of white sage. After lighting the new bundle, she smudged Martika and me in the same way.

The cave was much larger than I expected, and while we were waiting patiently for Caroline to smudge herself, my eyes began to adjust to the flickering candlelight that illuminated the cavern. Nearly a dozen glass votives were nestled into the crevices of the smooth stone walls, and in the center of the cave was a small round table that was covered with an embroidered red velvet cloth. Perched atop were six unlit candles—three large pillars and three medium-sized tapers held erect by a trinity of antique pewter bird-claw candlesticks. Resting at the feet of the shimmering talons was an *athame*, an intimidating silver dagger with an ornately carved ebony handle.

When the mysterious woman finally entered the cave, all of the candles appeared to dim, and a pronounced chill filled the air. It was as if she commanded all of the oxygen in the cavern and the flames were struggling to stay lit in her presence. I absentmindedly rubbed my arms for warmth through my thin sweater as I watched her mouth move in a silent prayer.

Caroline removed a candle from the wall and walked into the center of the room, gesturing for

WINTER MOON RISES

us all to remain where we were. She placed the votive on the altar and then ceremoniously cradled the dagger with both hands and lifted it high above her head. She brought the *athame* to her lips and kissed the shining blade. I felt a rush of energy fill the room as I watched her deliberately use the knife to carve a large circle into the dirt around the perimeter of the cave.

She purposely left a narrow opening in front of Madisyn and beckoned her and Martika to enter, making it clear that I was not welcome to join them. I did my best not to take it personally, although there was still a part of me that felt I should be allowed to stand next to my wife and be an active participant in the ceremony.

Once the women were inside, Caroline closed the circle with her dagger and returned it to the altar. She used the candle from the glass votive to light each of the three large pillars, which corresponded in color to the smaller tapers in front of them—red, white, and black. Caroline then moved Madisyn to the center in front of the red candles. Martika was positioned to the left in front of the white ones, and she herself returned to the right side in front of the black ones.

“I call forth the Triple Goddess to join us on this auspicious day,” Caroline announced in a booming voice that filled every inch of the cavernous space. “Maiden, Mother, Crone, you are within all of us sisters on this earth; and you give us each strength from the power of the moon. As spring into summer, and summer into winter, and winter into spring again, you fill us all with the exquisite beauty of your grace.

“Today we are here to celebrate *Maiden* Madisyn as she transforms into *Mother* Madisyn and follows her own divine path of the Triple Goddess. The mother is represented by the full moon, which will provide Madisyn with the essence and energy she needs while embracing motherhood. Her new role is that of the nurturer, and she will be responsible for tending to the seeds and dreams that have been planted within her family. Home and hearth will be the foundation that will bring her strength, security, and resolve during this sacred journey.”

Caroline then removed a single sheet of square yellow paper and a red pen from the opposite side of the altar, and handed them to my wife.

WINTER MOON RISES

“Madisyn, I encourage you to write down any fears you may have about your new role of motherhood.”

Madisyn laughed nervously. “I don’t think that’s enough paper.”

“Just write down what you can.” Caroline smiled.

Madisyn began writing intensely, and in less than a minute had filled the front side of the paper. She flipped over the page to fill the back with little effort. She then turned the yellow sheet sideways and continued writing in the margins until there wasn’t any room left.

“I guess that’s enough.” Madisyn sighed, returning the page to Caroline. “I hope I remembered everything.”

With the deftness of an origami master, Caroline carefully folded the yellow sheet into a small cone and gently placed it upright on the altar in front of the center candles. She then removed the black unlit taper from the holder and gestured for Madisyn and Martika to remove the tapers immediately in front of them. Once all three women were holding their candles, Caroline lit her own from the flame of the black pillar candle and slowly walked to Martika’s side before speaking in a clear, deliberate voice.

“Of the divine circle of the Triple Goddess, the Maiden receives the flame from the Crone.” Once the candle was lit, Caroline kissed Martika on both cheeks and returned to her place to the right of Madisyn.

Martika then turned to Madisyn and said, “Of the divine circle of the Triple Goddess, the Mother receives the flame from the Maiden.” She then lit Madisyn’s candle with hers and kissed her on both cheeks, smiling lovingly.

Caroline then turned to Madisyn and said, “Madisyn, the flame of motherhood that you now hold in your hands burns brightly with the collective fire of the Maiden, Mother, and Crone. You will never be alone on your new journey, and you can always draw from the strength of your sisters.”

In the flickering candlelight, I could see the shimmering path of tears as they made their way down my wife’s cheeks. At that moment a blanket of energy swaddled me, and I hastily removed my sweater, as the temperature in the cave seemed to warm in a matter of seconds.

“It is now time for you to release your fears of motherhood,” Caroline continued in a gentle voice, gesturing for Madisyn to light the paper cone with her candle. Once she did so, it burst

WINTER MOON RISES

into flames and quickly burned to its base. After it had nearly burned completely, the charred remains of the cone magically rose up from the altar and floated toward the ceiling. The beauty of the floating ash was incredible, and when it had disappeared from view, I joined the others in a chorus of gasps that filled the space. Caroline then brought the taper to her lips and blew gently to extinguish the candle. After replacing it in the holder, she gestured for the other two women to follow her lead.

Once the three tapers were no longer burning, Caroline walked directly in front of Madisyn; looked deep into her eyes; and said in a soft, loving voice: "Welcome to motherhood."

The commanding tone returned to her voice as she turned to the altar. "Dearest Triple Goddess, thank you for blessing us on this auspicious day. When you are ready, please depart in peace with our everlasting gratitude. Return whenever you desire, for you are always welcome."

She then extinguished the three pillar candles, and when the last one was snuffed, the cave fell to darkness and the electricity present in the air since we had entered instantly evaporated. When my eyes finally adjusted to the darkened cave, I saw that Caroline was quickly shuffling around

the perimeter of the circle, erasing the line clean with her feet.

“That was wonderful,” Madisyn said, embracing both Caroline and Martika at the same time. “I feel very supported right now.”

“You are, my dear,” replied Martika as they made their way out of the cave.

I followed behind the women until we had reentered the forest, and then I walked up to my wife. Her face looked different in the golden twilight—stronger and more confident. “I’m proud of you,” I said, hugging her tightly. “You were very beautiful in there.”

“Is there anything we can do to help clean up?” Martika asked Caroline.

“No, I can manage. You all go home, and Madisyn, you would be best served to rest for the next few days—you’ll want to integrate all the new energies that you have received.”

The three of us had started up the path toward the car when I remembered that I had left my sweater inside the cave. Caroline was waiting for me in front of the entrance with my cardigan in one hand and a piece of paper in the other.

WINTER MOON RISES

“You should call me,” she uttered in a solemn voice as she handed me the handwritten note. “I see something in your field that concerns me—you may need some help.”



CHAPTER THREE



hat night I had the latest in a series of anxiety dreams that had begun as soon as Madisyn got pregnant. They always focused on my childhood, although in this one I was much younger than in most.

I stood in front of a local circuit judge flanked by my mother and her new husband inside a linoleum-floored courtroom. The fluorescent lights reflected off the imposing paneled bench separating the judge from the three of us, and our voices echoed as if we were inside a stone cavern.

“It says here that the child’s father has been remiss in paying support for quite some

time,” the judge said in a booming and authoritative voice.

“That is correct,” replied my mother solemnly.

“And that you and your new husband wish to adopt this child and be legally responsible for all of his needs, financial and otherwise.”

“We do.”

“What is the child’s name? Ah yes, I see it right here. Mr. Scott—”

This was the first time in my life anyone had called me “Mr.,” and it made me feel quite important. I instantly warmed up to the judge.

“—do you understand what it means to be adopted?”

At seven years old, there was no way I could truly understand all the implications of adoption, although I did my best to parrot the speech my mother had prepared me with.

“It means that my last name will change so when my new daddy picks me up from school, they will let him take me home because we will have the same name.”

“That’s true.” The judge laughed. “He’s a precocious little boy, isn’t he? Is that what you want, Mr. Scott?”

WINTER MOON RISES

“Yes,” I responded as confidently as I could. “I want to be ‘dopted.”

“Who can argue with that?” The judge laughed again. “You will receive a new birth certificate within the next four to six weeks that will have the new father’s name on it. I will also order the existing birth certificate with the previous father’s name to be legally sealed for the life of the child. From this date forward, nobody will be able to obtain any official document with reference to the preceding paternity.”

The next morning I stayed in bed while I mulled over the emotions the dream had stirred up. Being adopted hadn’t changed anything from my perspective at first—other than that I had a new last name to play with and was able to discard my old one with all the ceremony of an empty candy-bar wrapper. In one fell swoop, adoption made the inconvenience of mismatched surnames a thing of the past. One day I was a Saxton, and the next I was a Blum. Simple as that.

As the years progressed, I gradually lost touch with my birth father, although the adoption couldn’t explicitly be blamed for that. He was busy

with his new family, and we ended up living well over a thousand miles away from each other. Every few years we would reconnect, and we even managed a few visits during my adolescent years, but his consuming guilt and my growing indifference always seemed to make our visits more awkward than I intended.

However, the adoption itself had a much more insidious effect on me. I never genuinely felt connected to the paternal side of my bloodline because of the confusion of where my loyalties should remain. I felt loved and cared for by my entire family, but I never felt like I *belonged*. And after my sister was born, the connection to my mother's side diminished as well. On the surface my family was a cohesive unit that was as traditional as apple pie, but underneath I felt like I was the only one who remembered that I didn't fit in.

But now I was in the midst of trying to bring another soul into this world, into *my own* family, and I didn't even know what family *I* belonged to. For the first time in my life I felt completely cut off from my own bloodline—the very one I was attempting to pass on to my child.

For the first time in my life I felt truly orphaned.

WINTER MOON RISES

“Have you given any thought to Autumn’s last name?” I asked my wife, noticing she was also now awake.

“A bit,” she responded coyly.

“I don’t know—I just feel weird about giving her the name Blum. It’s not really *my* name, you know?”

“That’s a relief,” Madisyn replied. “Because there’s no way I was going to agree to that.”

“Why not?” My feelings were hurt, although I had already conceded the point without her asking.

“Because of exactly what you said—it’s not your name.”

“Okay.” It made much more sense when I was thinking about it myself, but it somehow felt uncomfortable when she said it.

“I was thinking she could take *my* name.” She smiled. “Autumn Taylor.”

For some reason, this felt even worse to me. There was a part of me that felt excluded, as if I wasn’t part of the family at all.

“What about me?” I asked. “Then I’d be excluded from her life completely.”

“Don’t be ridiculous—you’d still be her father. And if it means that much to you, why don’t you

take my name as well? Scott Taylor." She smiled again. "That has a nice ring to it."

"No," I said firmly, without even considering her offer. "I gave my last name up when I was adopted, and I *won't* do that again."

"Well, if that's the real issue," she replied perceptively, "then why don't you change your name back to Saxton?"

She was right—that was the real issue. "I don't know about that. I think it would really hurt my parents' feelings."

"Don't you think it hurt your birth father's feelings when you changed it the first time?"

"Of course it did. But that was years ago, and I was only seven years old. Why should I dig all of that up again? Shouldn't I just let well enough alone?"

She shrugged.

"But what about Autumn?"

"What did you think of Caroline yesterday?" Madisyn always knew when it was time to change the subject.

"I thought the whole experience was a bit intimidating." I surprised myself by saying it out loud.

WINTER MOON RISES

“Powerful women are always intimidating—especially for men.”

“Maybe that was part of it, but I just didn’t feel like I belonged there.”

“I think she made a very real effort to make you feel welcome. Besides it was a *women-only* ceremony, and you weren’t even supposed to be there.”

“That’s exactly my point. I just don’t feel like I have an inherent bond with *any* group of people.”

“What do you mean?”

“In today’s world, nearly every group of people seems to have a shared bond within itself. Women, African Americans, disabled, gays, and so on. The only group that doesn’t seem to have an intrinsic bond with one another is *straight white males*. Can you imagine what would happen if someone created a support group for straight white males?”

Madisyn laughed. “That’s because straight white males have historically been responsible for oppressing everyone else.”

“I know, and evidently that’s my burden to bear.”

“I don’t think anyone is going to feel sorry for you.”

“And they shouldn’t—it’s just that I feel lonely in my *straight white maleness* sometimes.”

“Perhaps it’s time for you to finally embrace your Native American heritage. If I had Indian blood, I’d be at every powwow within a hundred miles.”

Madisyn was right. My great-grandfather was responsible for the majority of the Cherokee blood flowing through my veins, and there was something about bringing a new baby into the world that made me want to reconnect with my ancestral line on an even deeper level.

“Maybe that’s it. I should probably keep my eye out for an event that resonates with me.”

“I’m sure that will help,” she said compassionately. “So, what did Caroline give you when you went back to get your sweater?”

“Her phone number. She said that I needed help, and I should call her.”

“Well, you better do it,” Madisyn replied in a serious voice. “Martika said that Caroline isn’t taking any new clients . . . so if she’s offering, it’s probably pretty important.”

“What does she do?”

“Martika speaks highly of her work—some kind of soul healing, I think. I’m not sure exactly what she does, but you should find out.”

WINTER MOON RISES

We spent the next few hours leisurely getting ready for the day. The weekends gave us the chance to be together as a couple, since much of the time during the week we needed to play the role of business partners. After bathing, I dug through the pockets of my jeans and handed Madisyn the crumpled note that Caroline had given me. She studied the handwriting for a few seconds and started dialing the number without saying a word. She then handed me the receiver before it began ringing. Caroline answered after the first ring.

“Um, hello. It’s Scott from yesterday. Martika’s friend.”

“Hello, Mr. Scott,” Caroline said matter-of-factly. “I just had a cancellation a few minutes ago. I’d like to see you at one o’clock today.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Scott Blum is the best-selling author of *Waiting for Autumn* and *Summer's Path* and the co-founder of the popular inspirational website DailyOM (www.dailyom.com). He is also a filmmaker and multimedia artist who has collaborated with several popular authors, musicians, and visual artists and has produced many critically acclaimed works, including writing and directing the feature film *Walk-In*, based on his book *Summer's Path*. Scott lives in the mountains of Ashland, Oregon, with his wife and business partner, Madisyn Taylor, and their son, Oliver Moon.

Website: www.scottblum.net



