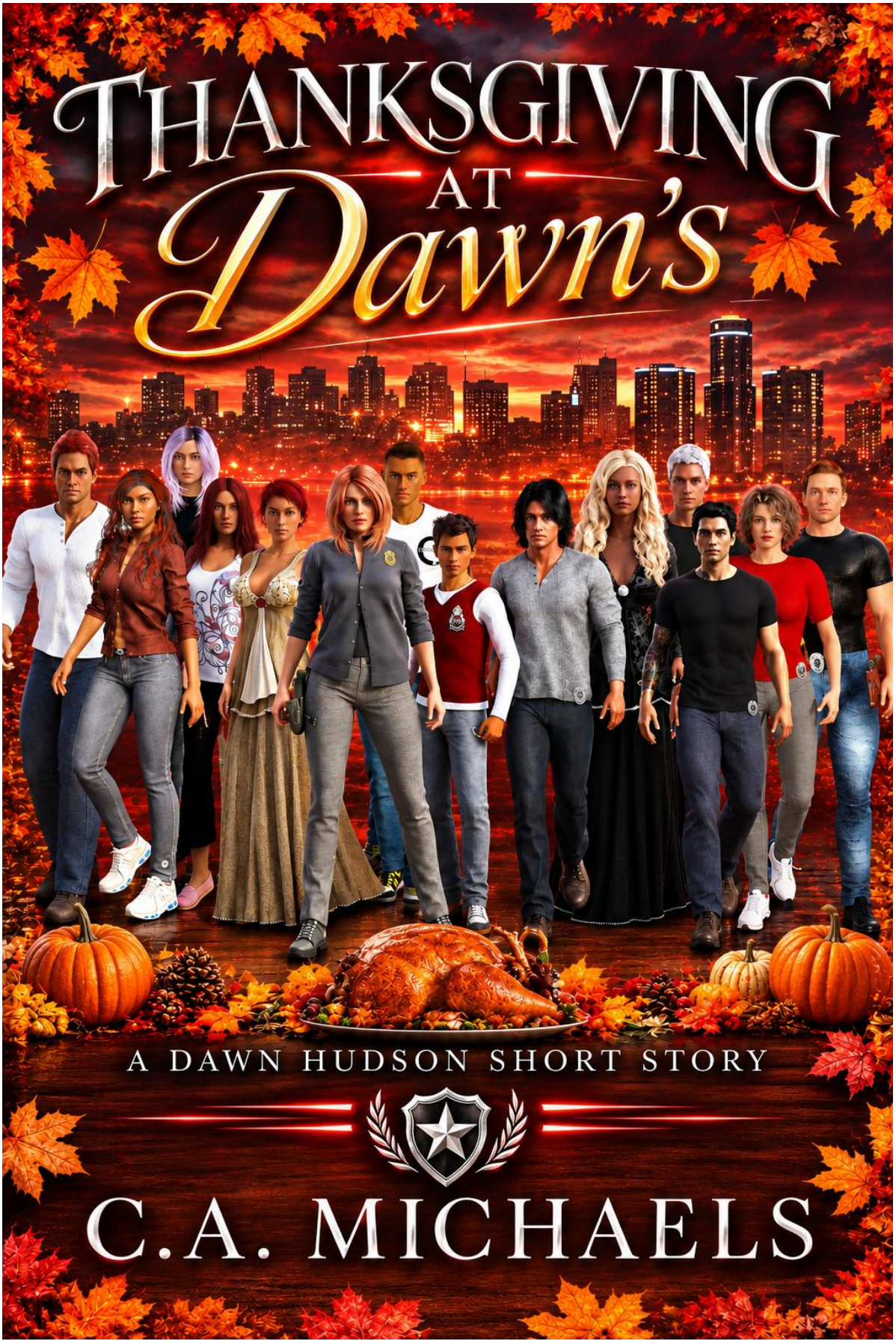
THANKSGIVING
AT
Dawn's
A DAWN HUDSON SHORT STORY
C.A. MICHAELS

Thanksgiving at Dawn Hudson's

Short story featuring Dawn Hudson

C.A. Michaels

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Warning

Contains alcohol, drug use, graphic violence. This story featuring Dawn Hudson, is not for the faint of heart. The story depicts adult situations, realistic violence with consequences, and delves deep into the darkness of our world.

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Edited by C.A. Michaels

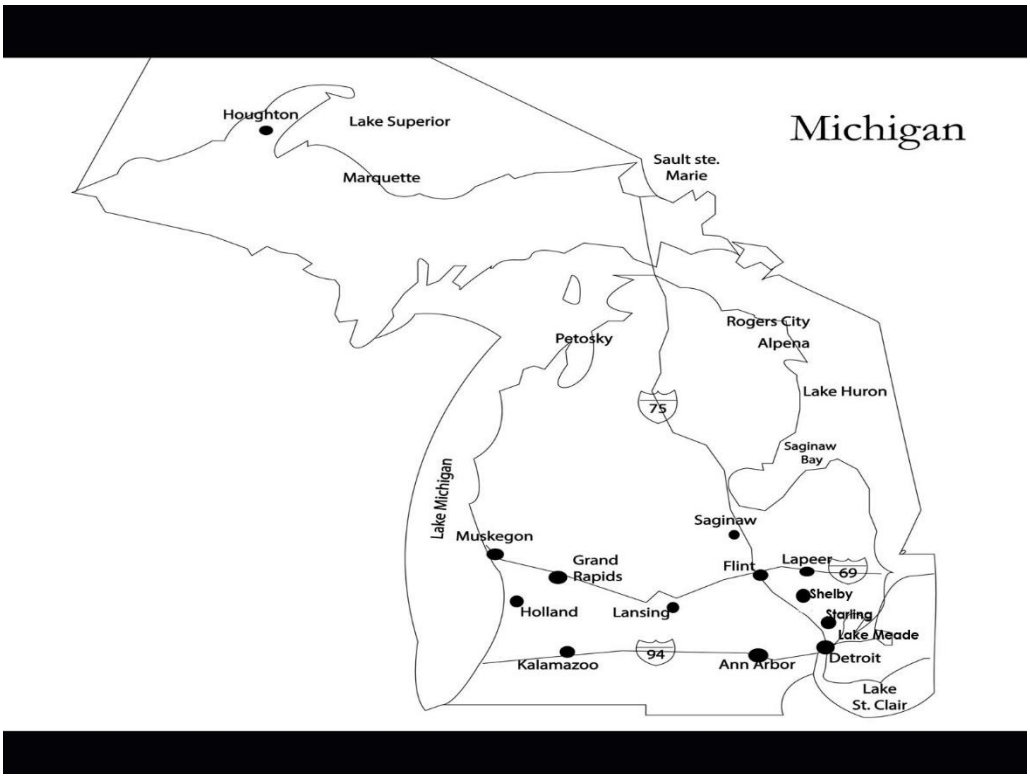
First edition

Printed in the United States

Dedication

Dedicated to my superman, wonderful husband, Brian and to all my friends. I'd like to also dedicate this story to all the men and woman who wear the badge. And to all our first responders.

Map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Ann Arbor
Detroit
Lake
St. Clair

Chapter One
The Warning

Thanksgiving had ended, but the warmth of the holiday had not yet left the Hudson home.

Dawn had spent the day cooking, laughing with family, and allowing herself a rare evening in which she did not think about work. Charlotte and Steven had come with Neo and Bosco. Rohan had been there. So had the rest of the police family.

Charlotte and Rohan had respectfully explained why Thanksgiving was not a holiday they celebrated in the traditional sense. Their histories were different, their traditions different, and for them the day carried the weight of a National Day of Mourning. Dawn's family listened. No one argued. No one tried to turn their history into someone else's celebration.

Instead, they ate together.

They laughed together.

And Jackie, as always, found a way to bring up Dawn's infamous crunchy mashed potatoes from 2022.

Dawn groaned every time.

"You are never going to let that go, are you?"

"Absolutely not," Jackie said.

Music filled the house later. Chris brought his acoustic guitar. Rohan played guitar and bass. Someone found another instrument. The younger generation drifted in and out while the adults talked.

For a few hours, Starling's darkness seemed very far away.

Then Jacob disappeared.

No one noticed him leave.

He had planned it with Chris.

At the first place where he and Dawn had ever gone on a date, Jacob had prepared a room filled with her books. Her Luke Remington novels were stacked across shelves and arranged carefully around the room.

When Chris brought Dawn there, she stopped in the doorway.

Jacob was lying across the bed, reading one of her books with a rose between his teeth.

Dawn stared.

Her breath caught.

Nothing about work.

Nothing about Crimson Reign.

That chapter of her life was dead.

Only Jacob.

Only the life they had somehow found again.

She climbed onto the bed beside him.

“You want me to retire?” she asked.

Jacob nodded.

“But. It’s truly up to you.”

The words stayed with her.

So did the ring.

Later, outside, Dawn stood beneath the cold sky with the ring she had once believed she had lost. She looked upward.

“Luke,” she whispered. “Is this real?”

She talked to him as if he could hear her.

She talked about Jacob.

About the job.

About the people she had put behind bars.

About the people she had killed.

“Would retiring keep them safe?”

She had no answer.

Only time.

Or so she thought.

Chapter Two

The Questions

The next morning, Dawn drove through fresh snow to Megan Delco's mansion on Utica Road, a Starling landmark.

Megan already knew why she had come.

The question was simple.

If Dawn retired, would the criminals she had put away be released?

Megan knew the law. She knew the rules. More importantly, she knew Dawn.

"No," Megan told her. "Retirement does not erase your cases. Convictions do not vanish because the officer who made the arrest leaves the department."

Dawn exhaled.

It was not the answer she had feared.

But Megan saw something else in her face.

"You're still thinking about the call."

Dawn told her about the mysterious caller.

Megan did not pry, but Dawn knew she would want to know.

"I want to protect you," Megan said. "And your family."

Dawn refused protection.

Megan finally told her to go home and talk to everyone. Her sisters. Her father. Her family.

Dawn did.

The caller came again.

"Lieutenant Hudson, this is something to take seriously."

"Is this a threat?"

"No. A warning. One case looms. It was a robbery involving a reporter."

Dawn knew immediately.

Jennifer Long.

She had been a reporter for the Starling Times before joining the Supernatural Paranormal Agency.

Dawn went straight to her case files.

Every case was stored there. Hard copy. Cloud copy. A backup at Choo's. Another at the station.

Then Dawn remembered Jennifer.

She called her.

They agreed to meet.

Dawn never made it.

Before she left the house, a masked man had tampered with her Blazer.

He left almost nothing behind.

He even interfered with the home security system, creating a two-minute gap.

Jacob kissed Dawn goodbye.

Two minutes later, she was driving toward 15 Mile.

She pressed the brake.

Nothing happened.

The SUV accelerated.

Dawn hit the horn.

She activated the hazards.

She rolled down the window and waved at traffic.

15 Mile was busy between Van Dyke and Stone Drive.

She weaved through traffic, trying desperately to keep the SUV from striking another vehicle.

She pressed 911 on the touchscreen mounted to the dashboard.

"I'm on 15 Mile," she told the dispatcher. "Between Van Dyke and Stone Drive. My brakes are gone."

The SUV finally struck the snowbank.

The sudden stop threw her forward.

Even with the seatbelt locked across her body, her head struck the steering wheel.

The last thing she remembered was pain above her left eye.

Then darkness.

Chapter Three

Three Days

St. Mercy Hospital became the center of Dawn Hudson's world.

Rita Jackson and Martin Malone worked on her in the ambulance while Jamie McNeil arrived with Engine 25. Jamie had known Dawn since junior high. He was family.

Dawn had a deep gash above her left eyebrow.

Fifteen stitches closed it.

The swelling in her brain was serious.

There was no brain bleed.

But there was something else.

Dawn slipped into a coma.

Three days passed.

Dr. Kerry Ellsworth monitored her constantly.

Jacob was the first to see her when she finally began to wake.

"Dawn, if you can hear me, I love you. Austin loves you. Everyone is here."

Her fingers moved.

Then Austin came in.

Seventeen now, he tried to be strong.

It did not work.

Seeing his mother like that hurt worse than what he had endured with her at the cabin years before.

"I scored a couple goals against my cousin," he told her through tears. "You promised you'd be careful."

Dawn could not answer.

Later, Frank came to see his Little Cheeks.

The family waited.

Bonnie.

Jackie.

Alana.

Trudy.

Joseph.

Paul.

The children.

Bonnie's Sam, Marie, and Ann.

Jackie's Chris, Brian, and Allan.

Alana's Aiden and Adrian.

Everyone was afraid.

Rohan was furious.

He gathered Dawn's team in the back corner of the waiting room. Stephanie Taylor. Chris Reinhardt. Sen Choo. Sergeant Rohan. Commander Peter Brown. Chief Marie Paterson. Megan Delco.

"We need to investigate," Rohan said.

Marie shook her head.

"Conflict of interest."

Rohan protested.

Marie held firm.

But Rohan sent Chris and Stephanie to the impound yard anyway.

He lied when Marie asked where they had gone.

They found the evidence.

They also found danger.

Chapter Four

The Feather

The impound yard was privately owned.

Chris heard the growls first.

Three German shepherds stood in the shadows, huge and ready.

He turned to Stephanie.

His left hand moved toward the far-left gate.

She nodded.

“I’ll draw their chase,” Chris whispered. “You run.”

Three massive men entered with guns drawn.

Damion Laruse raised his weapon.

“Trespassers will be shot on sight!”

Stephanie pressed a new device on her belt.

The invention silently alerted Starling PD.

She smiled.

Damion saw it.

He reached for his gun.

Chris fired.

All three men went down.

The dogs did not attack Chris.

Instead, they were drawn to him.

Stephanie recovered Damion’s phone.

One contact stopped them cold.

Amanda Brown.

Bonnie’s estranged mother-in-law.

Paul’s mother.

Amanda had married Paul’s father for power. His father was a lawyer and the head of Martin and Martin, the most powerful law firm in Starling.

Paul had no idea what his mother had been doing.

She had left the family.

She had built something of her own.

Something called L.A.R.K.

The Feather was not a symbol.

It was a neurological implant.

A microscopic device designed to influence brain function.

L.A.R.K. wanted control.

First responders were the first priority.

They were the people who arrived first at fires, shootings, disasters, medical emergencies.

Control them, and control the response.

Amanda had worked with remnants of Madelyn Rutkowski's defunct Biobluetech operation and the failed Utah experiments of Kennith, always spelled with an "i."

She had used the Supernatural Paranormal Agency to identify unusual subjects on which the Feather could be tested.

Jennifer Long had discovered enough to become a target.

Dawn was different.

Dawn was resisting.

Kerry could see it in her brain activity.

He simply did not know what she was fighting.

Chapter Five
The Waking

Dawn woke after three days.

Darkness gave way to light.

Her mother stood before her.

Luke.

Rachel.

Their words came softly.

“Come home.”

“You've done enough.”

“Rest.”

Dawn knew something was wrong.

They were not really there.

They were visions created within a mind under assault.

She fought.

The meadow shattered.

Her eyes opened.

The ceiling of St. Mercy appeared above her.

Pain exploded behind the fifteen stitches above her left eyebrow.

Kerry leaned over her.

“Well, look who’s decided to rejoin the waking world,” he said. “My favorite source of early retirement.”

Dawn stared at him.

“How long?”

“Three days.”

He checked her pupils.

“There’s swelling, but no bleed. And you're fighting something.”

“What?”

“I don't know.”

Kerry studied the monitor.

“But you're fighting it.”

Dawn whispered, “The Feather.”

Kerry looked at her.

He did not understand yet.

But he knew she was not imagining it.

Jacob came first.

Then Austin.

Then the family.

Dawn fought for hours.

She survived.

But the Feather remained.

Chapter Six

Jennifer

Jennifer Long had been missing for five days.

Then the video arrived.

Brian Long watched it first.

He was not a police officer. He was a real estate agent. But he owned a firearm for protection and knew how to use it.

His wife was missing.

He wanted her back.

The video showed Jennifer stripped and suspended from a ceiling in chains.

Brian's face went white.

Goldie, Jennifer's service dog, pressed against his leg.

Dawn watched the video from her hospital bed.

She looked at Kerry.

“Release me.”

Kerry refused.

Everyone pressured him.

The family.

The team.

Chief Marie.

Finally, Marie gave in.

Dawn was cleared under strict conditions.

Chris and Stephanie brought her the information they had gathered.

Amanda was breaking into an armory nearby.

Dawn began building the timeline.

The sabotage.

The warning.

The robbery involving Jennifer.

The Feather.

The SPA.

Amanda.

Everything connected.

“We find Jennifer first,” Dawn said.

Brian nodded.

Goldie stood beside him.

They went together.

Chapter Seven
The Final Stand

The rescue came in a storm of gunfire.

Jennifer was found alive.

Brian reached her first.

Goldie found her next.

Dawn and her team fought their way through the facility.

Jennifer survived.

So did everyone else.

Then came the attacks on Megan Delco and Chief Marie Paterson.

Two massive shootouts.

Two locations.

Two fights that could have ended differently.

But they survived too.

Megan.

Marie.

Dawn.

Rohan.

Chris.

Stephanie.

Choo.

Everyone.

The enemy had wanted control.

Instead, they had exposed themselves.

Amanda Brown was arrested.

Bonnie was no longer the ADA, but she still carried enough influence and legal knowledge to help bring the case together.

Paul was devastated.

He had never known what his estranged mother had been doing.

“How could she do this?” he asked.

Bonnie had no easy answer.

Amanda had left them.

She had chosen power.

Now she would answer for it.

Epilogue

The Crossroads

Dawn's battle was not completely over.

Dr. Kerry Ellsworth stood beside her again.

This time, he was preparing to remove the Feather.

The surgery was successful.

The implant was removed.

Dawn was finally free of the thing that had been fighting her from inside her own mind.

Later, Dawn sat with Jacob.

They talked about retirement.

She was tired.

Not simply physically tired.

The weight of the job had become enormous.

She had been carrying cases, losses, criminals, memories, and responsibilities for years.

She wondered if she could keep doing both.

The job.

The writing.

She had not written in approximately three and a half years.

Her fans had told her they would wait.

Her publisher had not.

Margaret Williams called.

The publishing house wanted the next Luke Remington installment.

December 23rd.

Her birthday.

It was December 4th.

Three weeks.

Margaret gave her a choice.

Produce a draft by December 23rd or be dropped.

Dawn understood.

She just couldn't decide.

That night, at approximately one in the morning, she bundled herself against twenty-four-degree weather and light freezing drizzle.

The sky was black.

Mega-overcast.

She sat on the covered porch.

She talked to Luke.

She talked to her mother.

She talked to Rachel.

“I miss you.”

Luke hurt the most.

And that made her feel guilty.

She felt guilty for wanting to keep the job.

Guilty for wanting to write again.

Guilty because the people she loved had already given so much.

The next day, she went to the cemetery.

She spent the longest time with Luke.

She stood there quietly.

“I don't know what I'm supposed to do.”

There was no answer.

Later, she spoke with her team.

Marie.

Peter.

Megan.

Rohan.

Stephanie.

Chris.

Choo.

Could she really do both?

Three weeks was possible.

But it would require a tremendous amount of time.

She found Choo at his desk.

He was always a different kind of calm for her.

“What do you think?”

Choo looked at her.

“It's only up to you.”

Dawn smiled faintly.

That was the answer she needed.

Not an answer telling her what to choose.

Permission to choose for herself.

She returned home.

Her laptop waited on the desk.

The cursor blinked.

The job waited too.

So did Luke Remington.

Dawn sat between them.

The question remained.

Could she do both?

Three weeks.

Three and a half years since she had written.

A life demanding one direction.

A career demanding another.

She placed her hands on the keyboard.

Then stopped.

For the first time in years, Dawn Hudson had no case to solve.

No suspect to arrest.

No enemy to fight.

Only a choice.

And the choice was hers.

THE END

Never fear!

More Lieutenant Dawn Hudson will be coming soon. There are other stories coming soon. The series planned so far, Black Dawn, Red Dawn, Fatal, Rising, and coming soon Fractured Dawn. These stories are so much fun to write. I'm truly falling in love with Dawn, her family, and the cast of characters. I hope you fall in love with her as well!

Acknowledgments

This acknowledgment is simple. I'd like to thank all the fans who liked the posts of the snippets I posted on my social media! I especially like to thank Kris Sweet and Jessie Leigh as my beta readers! Dawn has become quite a unique character. She is my new favorite to write. She has been such a fun, challenging character. I hope you enjoyed this story as much as I had fun writing it.

Meet the Author



C.A. Michaels is a lifelong resident of Michigan and currently lives in Southeastern Michigan with her husband whom she calls Superman. She began writing and drawing stories in the sixth grade. She's since then tried many different things, music, having a Rock N Roll band in the early nineties, and learning graphic design since 1999. She typed her first manuscript back in 2010. However, that will never see the light of day.

It was when she got great feedback from a helpful agent, she became passionate about writing once again. She took that former manuscript and turned into the first of the Pathfinders series. She is always on her laptop listening to Rock n Roll, Heavy Metal and yes even some Country while she creates new exciting worlds. She does love to take breaks every now and then to visit her friends, hang out, play cards, games, enjoying hot summer nights by a bonfire with a beer, and even do a little Karaoke.

Other stories from Author Cynthia Michaels/Author C.A. Michaels

The Elysian Gods
Book I: Rise of the Serns; out now
Origins: Karri the Warrior Goddess; read the script at https://www.digitalreverence.net/elysian-gods

Jennifer Long Series
Reckoning Day; out now
The Demon's Pact; out now

Remwalkers
The Fallout; out now

Renegade Love series
Renegade Fury a Prequel; out now
Renegade Justice: the Wedding; out now
Renegade Love Book 1; out now
Renegade Storm; out now
Renegade Vengeance; coming soon

The Deep Series featuring Samantha Peterson
Deep Ties: Book 1; out now
Deep Venture; Book 2; out now
Risen; Book 3
Through the Flames; Featuring Firefighter Jamie McNeil; out now

What Lies Ahead; Featuring Detective Chris Reinhardt an Awakening Series Spin off; out now

The Awakening Series

Vanished prequel: out now

Black Dawn: Book 1; out now

Red Dawn: Book 2; out now

Fatal Dawn: Book 3; out now

New Dawn Novella 3.5: out now

Rising Dawn: Book 4; out now

Fractured Dawn: Book 5; out now

Blo Blood Dawn: Book 6; out October 23, 2025; out now

Shattered Dawn: Book 7; out now

Chaotic Dawn: Book 8; out now

Golden Dawn: Book 9; coming soon

od Dawn: Book 6; out October 23, 2025 ; out now
Shattered Dawn

You can buy all of these books at www.digitalreverence.net/books

A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This book almost never happened. On December 23, 2023, I was diagnosed with stage 4 Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. It has been a long road to recovery. I spent a year prior to that date dealing with a swollen right thigh, swollen feet, and swollen groin right where the thigh meets my groin on my right side. I also had a huge lymph in my left armpit. I took forever going to the docs because I was scared and quite frankly, didn't want to. When I finally went, it was stage 4!

I was devastated. Everything was put on hold. All my plans for this series and others. I almost gave up writing completely because getting out of bed sucked. Going through treatments sucked. being in the hospital twice, sucked. I almost died last February around my husband's birthday, which February 12.

But I have since beaten the cancer. I got the all clear January 15, 2025. My final petscan was December 31, 2024. I have to thank my hubby, my son, the Tuxedo cat, Skunky Luke, my adopted mum from PA, and Marcie Smith. Her along with Dawne and Ethan Leaf, Danielle Swartz, Brooke Rennier, and others who have helped us along the way during this battle.

Also, thanks to my new ARC Readers, Jessie Leigh and my first ARC reader, Kris Sweet!

With all my heartfelt thanks,
C.A. Michaels