

Requiscant In Pace

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Forward

When I'm writing, I simply let go and let my hands do the work. It's a straight line from my 'story brain' to my fingers completely bypassing my normal thinking brain. This means that sometimes I find that I've written about a character I had no idea about before I began writing. Bulitia was one of those. He just appeared in *Between Death and Heaven* like... "Hi. How you doing?"

Well...that's exactly how Phil and Lillian appeared in the as yet unpublished *Child of Destiny* – Marcus Devereux and made me go back and write a book about them. Its all very convoluted this universe. I go back and forth, being flung this way and that depending on the story. Its direction is not a collaboration with me, it's a dictatorship. It says go here; and I go.

This story wouldn't have been written though if it wasn't for the East African Friday Feature which are Friday stories written to a prompt by five Kenyan authors. Yes, the Bulitia story was written as a prompt and then people really loved it. One person on Google plus even compared the writing to Anne Rice...one thing led to another and here we are. So enjoy the story.

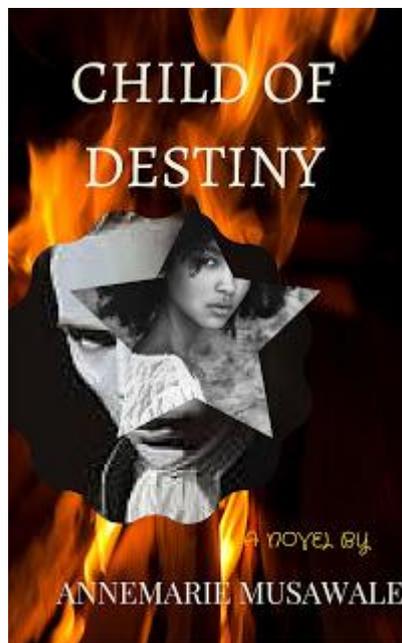
Prologue

A millennium ago, a prophecy was made about a child. This child would be something special; his entire being made up of pure magic. It was a prophecy that set many hearts aflutter, either they wanted to control the coming of this child, or they wanted to prevent it. Fair means and foul were employed; dirty tricks and any means necessary were used. Nobody knew from whence the child would come, but one name; Devereaux permeated every rumor. Rumor fuelled by the persistence of Armand Devereaux, a four thousand year old being held hostage by Fate for unknown reasons. Unknown to any but him; and he wasn't talking.

Across the globe, Bulitia was going about his daily business, tending his cows, nurturing his maize crop, impregnating his wife...when the slave raiders came. They desecrated the village, killed the weak, and captured the strong. Bulitia was half a day away, trading with the next village. They picked him up on the trail, he heading home laden with goods, they heading out from the devastation they'd wrought. Bulitia's wife was dead; though he didn't know it. His unborn child would never see the light of day.

Chapter One: Amistad Ain't Got Nothin On Me

Bulitia looked up at the black hole that narrowed until there was just a small circle of blue at the top. This place was aptly named; Shimoni. Bulitia had never been anywhere so dank and dark and miserable. The woman lying next to him was dead. He knew she was because he'd been listening to her laboured breathing for the past three days. It was the chest illness she had; and no way to treat it down here. He didn't know if he would treat it if he could. The slavers looked out for such things. He didn't want to make himself more attractive to them. Perhaps when they were loading them into the ship, and they saw that the woman was dead, and threw her overboard...he could pretend to be dead too. His father, Mulungu bless his soul, had taught him to swim long ago. He could hold his breath under water for as long as it took. Then he could make his way back...back to his people and his new wife; his little baby that must have been birthed by now. Yes, Bulitia was motivated. If he had any leverage, he would have climbed up the hole to the sky. Perhaps enough people would die down here so he could pile up their bodies, climb over them and escape.



No such luck though; the slavers came for them before enough people were dead. They were led out, through a tunnel to the very edge of the sea. Bulitia had smelled it; but that was the first time he was seeing it. It was vast, endless and intimidating. A person could get lost just trying to find the horizon. How was he to get back if they took him away now? Bulitia rattled his chains, looking left and

right frantically, trying to find a way; but he was securely tied between a woman whose baby was dead on her breast – yet she clung stubbornly to it – and a man with a potbelly so large it covered his nakedness quite effectively. Bulitia shivered; there was a cool breeze blowing in spite of the heat. The slavers were whipping their backs so they could get moving; get on the huge ship waiting on the docks. One last time Bulitia looked around, looked for a way out. But there was none.



The lady they sold him to scared Bulitia more than the slavers. There was something about her that wasn't right. He could not say what it was but he knew in his bones she wasn't all the way human. There were five others with him; all from his own tribe. They spoke Bukusu among themselves, speculating on what she might be, and what she would do with them. Bulitia hoped that it was something that would end in death. He was not about this slave life. It was not his destiny.



The woman took them to a plantation in the bayou where sugarcane grew high in the damp humid air. The air smelt sweet and cloying yet familiar to Bulitia. He'd been somewhere like this before, in the time of Nabongo Mumia he had travelled to his kingdom to trade. It smelled sort of like this. Only without the underlying smell of blood, excrement and death. Bulitia wondered why he wasn't

dead yet; he was starving, he had wounds from the whippings some of which were infected and he *wanted* to be dead. So why wasn't he? Perhaps it was fate. Perhaps he would find a way to go home again. Bulitia didn't share this thought with his companions; they would just laugh at him for his naiveté after all; there was no getting out of this life.



Bulitia was assigned to cattle pen; there were six cows on the plantation and one bull. He was to feed, water, and milk the cows and make sure that the bull remained virile and ready to serve. This was familiar work to him. On his own land, he had thirty cows and three bulls. He wondered who was looking after them now.

One day as he was cleaning out the cow pen in preparation for milking a shadow fell over him that made him cold to the marrow of his bones. He did not have to turn around to know who was there. He went down on one knee and tried to still his trembling.

“Mama”, he said submissively, hoping she would get whatever she wanted and go.

“I have been watching you, Bulitia”, she said in a low voice and he trembled. The slaves had been stripped of their names; they were nothing but numbers. How had she known what his was?

“Don't be afraid”, she whispered coming closer her cold breath fanning on his naked shoulders. Bulitia wanted to shy away, to turn and run. But he could do nothing but stand there and wait to see what the creature would do to him.

“I think you were meant for greater things than this Bulitia, am I right?” she asked putting one hand on his shoulder in a light caress. Bulitia wanted to scream but he knew better. She didn't know that they knew that she was some creature from hell. She thought her human disguise held. He could not show more fear than a slave would at being singled out by his master. But what was he to say to her? He

had no words to answer. If he told the truth, then Mulungu knew what she would do. If he told a lie...she would know. He was doomed. So he kept silent.



She ran her hand slowly, speculatively down his back until she got to the crack of his ass. He tensed as her finger dug inward, sharp nails causing injury as she pressed into him. He bit his lip so as to not to make a sound but he couldn't still the trembling.

Suddenly her hand was gone from him and she stepped away. He dare not turn to see why.

"You'll do", she said.

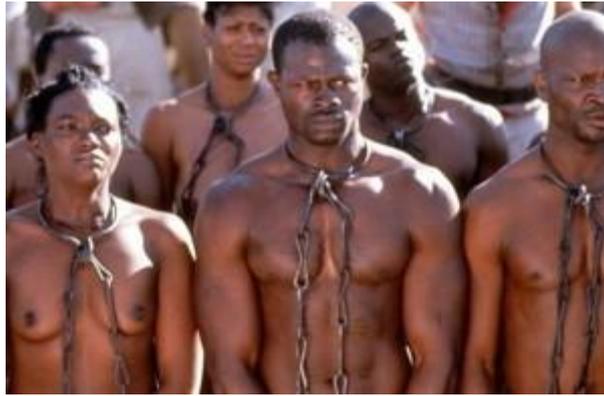
Chapter Two: Porn With Plot

“What did the *jitu* want with you Bulitia?” the woman whispered to him as they lay facing each other on the bed. He shrugged, not wanting to even think of the mama and her cold hands penetrating his anus like...he cut that thought off fast. Turning to the woman next to him he turned her so her back was on the bed and vaulted his body over her, looking down at her luscious body as his heart beat fast in his chest. He needed to forget.



my vision of Leo/Armand when I started to write

He leaned down and placed his teeth on her left nipple, biting down, hard. The woman hissed with pain and hit him over the head but he ignored her, using one of his strong thighs to make a space between her legs. She got with the program pretty fast after that, widening her legs on her own and allowing himself to lower himself onto her. he grunted, transferring his mouth's attention to her lips; and bit her lower one before sucking it into his mouth. She moaned softly, arching upward gently, urging him. He took it for the invitation it was and reached between them, fisting his penis in his hands and guiding it none too gently to her waiting, dripping hole.



She'd snuck into his cabin one night as they slept; five to a cabin – surprisingly luxurious accommodations for slaves. She had stepped over the other men and came to lie next to him, pressing her naked body into his. His heart was still in the hills of Mt. Elgon, with his new wife and their offspring; but his body had needs in the here and now. He had turned to her, pushed her under him, and pounded her into the floor. She'd been back every night since.



It made him angry that they were reduced to this; late night trysts that would never mean anything more than physical relief. At least not to him; he was not getting involved with anyone who would be taken from him on the whim of some not quite human master who had somehow managed to reduce a bunch of people into commodities. It was hard for Bulitia to wrap his head around and he was angry all the time.



He slid into her warm, soft, wet hole and it expanded around him, welcoming him with open arms as he thrust into her. and again. And again. The woman

reached up and folded her strong thighs around his waist, pulling him as close as she could. Bulitia let out a breath, hips stuttering with desire as he tried not to come so soon. Her moans were getting louder as she came closer to her own climax. The other men around them lay still; pretending to be asleep. Bulitia caught movement at the corner of his eyes. A hand moving rhythmically up and down as Abednego, his roommate brought himself to his own completion on his right. Bulitia cast his eyes to the left where he could see the shine of eyes in the dark. Someone else was watching them; most likely Jefta. He was a short man, teeth stained brown from tobacco and a freaky little bastard.



Bulitia redoubled his efforts, pounding harder into the woman, giving them a show. He found to his surprise that it turned him on to know that the men were watching him fuck this woman. He withdrew himself from her to the head of his penis and then thrust back in with renewed force. She cried out in shock and arousal, pulling her own legs further toward her shoulders to give him better access. He did it again, grunting with effort and heard someone in the room groan. His mouth was set in a rictus of effort and he let go of the fear and anger; drove them into the woman with every thrust and then released it all in a flood of seemingly endless come. She took it all, begging all the while for more, her muscles clutching and releasing him as her own orgasm took her. he dropped down beside her, turned away and closed his eyes. She could stay if she wanted; just as long as she was gone by morning. There was no guarantee though, that one of the other men would not try to rape her if she did. Bulitia heard the woman gather her clothes and creep out. He closed his eyes and slept.



“Did you enjoy yourself last night Bulitia?”, the monster disguised as a woman asked him the next day as he raked out the stable. He was in nothing but his small clothes. Louisiana was sweltering with summer humidity; Bulitia could barely abide the weather. He was used to the mountain coolness of his home; still. He ruthlessly cut off that thought. To think of home was to stab himself in the soul.

“Beg pardon ma’am?” he asked submissively hoping she would think him slow and leave him to his raking.

She took a step toward him and ran a hand down his sweaty back.

“Your session with Asha last night; was it good?” she asked. Bulitia froze, but only for a moment. He would not show his fear for any reason. But she was watching them? Of course a creature like her probably had many ways of finding things out. But how had she found *this*? Did she perhaps watch them in her fire or perhaps she was right there in the cabin with them, invisible to human eyes.

But no...Bulitia would have known if she was there. He was sensitive like that to the supernatural. Just as he had felt her coming long before she appeared around the cow pen.

“*Are you a man or a mouse?*”

His father’s voice reprimanding him in his head shocked him so much he almost stopped working. And then he decided that he would stop; he would stop being so afraid; such a craven that he could not turn and face his fears. He stuck the shovel back in the cow patty and turned to face the monster.

“What do you *want* with me?” he asked.

Chapter Three: The Plot, It Thickens

“You are a medicine man are you not?” the woman said to him, “You know how to heal and how to...kill?”

Bulitia stared at her, wondering how she could possibly have come by that information. Nobody knew; not his fellow slaves, nor the slavers who caught him. He had been very careful not to give himself away. For his own sake and that of his wife and child at home: if he had any hope of seeing them again he could not become essential or important to these people. He had to fade into the background, be forgettable. Looked like that plan was out of the window though. This monster knew, and whatever she wanted from him, Bulitia knew it was not good.

“I...have some herb-craft”, he said, “But...*semanya ta*.”

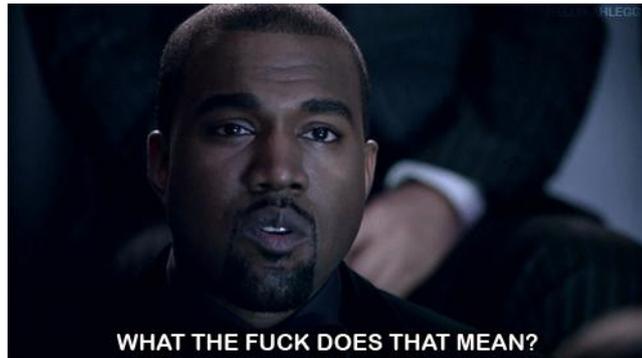
“Oh but you do my reluctant witchdoctor. You ‘*manya*’ a lot”, she said. Bulitia felt his heart go cold and shrivel in his breast. Was she some kind of spirit? How had she come to know Bukusu? He knew it wasn’t commonly spoken here; most of his fellow slaves were from Hispaniola, St. Domingue, and from West Africa. They had strong juju there; and this...creature liked that. So why him when she was so spoiled for choice?

“It has to be you my young prince. And you will know why soon. For now, I need to transfer you to another part of my ranch. I need you to keep watch for me.”

“Keep watch on what mistress?” Bulitia asked wanting to say no with every fibre of his being. Wanting to stand up and fight and scream and rage. Wanting to escape this place and go home.

“My erstwhile neighbour...Sylvester B. Devereaux, he has a young boy; this boy isn’t very well behaved. Sometimes he wanders over the line to my side of the fence. I need you to keep watch for him. Make sure he doesn’t do that. Kill him if you have to.”

Bulitia kept his eyes on the ground, not sure he’d heard correctly. His master...wanted him to kill a young boy? A young *white* boy? Bulitia might be new to the continent but he already knew that shedding white blood was a death sentence. And though he was willing to die... not like this. Not with the blood of an innocent on his hands. The ancestors would never accept him. He would be thrown into the empty. No; there had to be another way. Bulitia resolved that very day to run. His first thought, to kill his mistress, was foiled by the fact that he did not know what she was; or if she could be killed.



Asha was cleaning the mistress' bedroom when she came in and leaned on the doorway watching her. It always made Asha really nervous when her mistress watched her and she would literally do *anything* to make it stop. She turned around and curtsied prettily.

"Mama I did as you asked", she said eyes cast down.

"Oh I know you did. And you did it well. I just might sell you to a brothel. You're a natural", she said proudly, "But that is not what I am here to discuss. I need to know; what is he holding on to? Why does he still resist?"

Asha bowed her head lower, heart speeding up with anxiety, "Mistress I do not know. I have tried to speak to him, draw him out...but he just turns away from me and goes to sleep. He won't talk."

"Perhaps you're not trying hard enough Asha. Do you need to be motivated? Because I can motivate you. I am a wonderful mistress like that. Let's see, I could cut that baby out of your belly and sell it to the shamans in New Orleans. They have so many uses for innocent blood you have no idea." The mistress sauntered forward, running one long nailed finger down Asha's abdomen. Her nails were sharp enough that Asha thought they could cut her open if they were so inclined. They seemed to grow longer and sharper the closer they got to her womb, where the baby she hadn't known she was carrying lay vulnerable. Perhaps it *would* be better for the baby to be cut out while it was still growing. Allah knew this was no life for a child. Or for anyone really. But what of the child's soul? Would it be trapped here if this creature got its hands on it; perhaps she would eat it. She looked like she fed on the souls of babies.

Not mine.

Something in her rejected completely the thought of giving up her baby to this monster. No, she would protect it to her last breath.

"I will try again mistress", she said, "And this time, I will succeed."

"Good girl, Asha. Now go; babies are hungry things and you have not eaten today."

Asha hurried off, before the mistress could change her mind. The only advantage to being a house slave was the access to food. The mistress didn't care what they ate; so long as she had food when she asked for it, and drink when she wanted it. So the house slaves were fairly well fed; her field slaves too. Still once in a while, one or two would disappear without explanation. They were not sold...Asha suspected that they were eaten. So did the others. They didn't discuss

it though, not even among themselves in their own languages. The mistress was all knowing – they all knew that. And they did not want to know what would happen to them if her red eye fell on one of them. So they kept their heads down and did as they were told.

“Asha”, Laila’s deep voice cut into her musings. She was a fat old woman who spent her days ordering the kitchen slaves about and grinding corn in her huge mortar and pestle.

“Yes mama?” she said.

Laila sighed, “This time, you have bit off more than you can chew”, she said sadly.

Asha looked at her, wanting to ask what she meant but fearing that Laila already knew what she had been sent to do. The thought filled her with shame. Her mother had taught her better. Still she was a slave; mother’s lessons meant less than nothing compared to what the mistress wanted.

Chapter Four: It's a Rat Race

Asha stood outside the cabin door, debating with herself. Should she come clean to Bulitia? Tell him she was pregnant and that the *jitu* had threatened the baby? But he was just as much a slave as she was; there wasn't much he could do...if anything. But if he wasn't some kind of special then why was the *jitu* interested in him? He must have some special powers or something. Which meant he could help her if he knew...Knew what though? What could she tell him really? The *jitu* had come to her, and asked her to seduce Bulitia; didn't tell her why or how long or anything. Didn't tell her anything really about Bulitia. She knew he was from East Africa and he and his shipmates were still hopeful; still green. They continued to think there was a way for them to get home when there really wasn't. They were fucked the moment they got on the boat. No, probably before. The minute they were captured. Not like their families would be willing to take them back if they returned. They'd probably think the runaway slaves were ghosts and kill them on sight. These Africans were very superstitious. Asha had been born a slave; it was the only life she knew. She watched the new recruits come in, still thinking they were people; still thinking their opinion counted for something – that they had rights...it made her sad for them. At the same time she was contemptuous. Why couldn't they *see*? It made things very tiresome for the rest of them; having to train them, teach them; whip them, break them...Asha had watched it happen so many times; she was tired of it. Tired of it all. Sometimes she wanted to walk into the creek and let the alligators take her. But she was scared; scared that it would hurt worse than the whips and chains. What if the afterlife was no escape, but just more of the same? She had to know for sure before she tried anything.



She pushed open the door and entered. Bulitia was lying on his side, nearest the door. His head was pillowed in his hands and she could see the glow of his eyes as he looked at her. He wasn't asleep then. Good. She crept to him and lay

down next to him matching him shoulder to hip to ankles. She was a tall girl too; almost as tall as him; she looked up into his eyes and smiled.

“Bulitia”, she whispered, “Will you save me?”

“Save you from what?” he asked not bothering to keep his voice down.

“From her. From the woman who holds our souls in her hand.”

“No one but Mulungu holds our souls woman. You are mistaken.”

Asha sighed, “You do not get it; the woman who owns us; she is no ordinary human”, she tried again.

“Oh, I know that. But she doesn’t own our souls”, he said.

There was silence in the cabin broken only by the loud snoring of Jefta on the other side and Abednego’s restless rustling. There was a rhythmic slap of flesh on flesh. He was stimulating himself as he was wont to do every night Asha came. She wondered why he didn’t just get himself a woman.

“What is she?”, Bulitia suddenly asked, startling her.

“She is a monster who eats souls”, Asha told him.

“You know that for a fact?” Bulitia persisted.

“Yes”, Asha cried softly, desperate to convince him.

“How do we kill it?” he asked.



Mama Ruth sat before her fire, scrying for the gatekeeper she knew was nearby. She had settled here because it was a beacon for magic; it drew things to it; including the future Child and the forces trying to thwart its existence. She had followed the trail of soulless bodies; and they had led her here. Met Kafu was up to something; something bad. With the help of Asmodeus the demon he was creating chaos where order should be. Using the lust of man against him. His plans must not be allowed to succeed. Not if there was to be any hope for the future of mankind. Mama Ruth sat back, pondering her own stake in that future. She didn’t know how it would be; would the child destroy her? But she could not let that deter her. There was too much at stake to worry about herself.

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