

# TOMB of the QUEEN

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JOSS WALKER



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TEAR ME APART  
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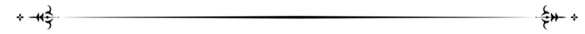
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# DEDICATION



For all the girls who are coming into their powers,  
and the extraordinary women they will become.

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TOMB OF THE QUEEN

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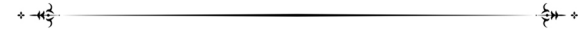
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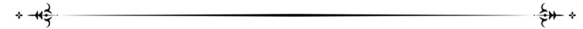
## PART ONE



“I cannot go on playing like that woman  
That had but the cold blood of the sea in her veins.”

—Deirdre, William Butler Yeats

## CHAPTER ONE



Nashville, Tennessee

Now

This meeting was never going to end.

Jayne focused hard on her boss, willing the head librarian to just stop talking. She imagined the woman's lips becoming a zipper and pulling the tab closed from across the room. Nothing. Willed the lights to go off, to no avail. Muttered some words in Latin that roughly translated to *may you be spirited away by gentle dogs*, and yet the woman kept prattling on.

Sadly, unlike the worlds in Jayne's beloved fantasy novels, this one had no such thing as magic. That fact wouldn't stop Jayne from longing for it.

She checked the time on her beat-up phone, the Vandy Research Department's logo superimposed over a shot of Hogwarts blinking across the screen. Nearly six. If they didn't wrap this meeting soon, she was definitely going to be late for dinner

with her sister.

“Tomorrow,” Eleanor droned on, “Jayne will collate the Latin American poetry and keep tabs on the research room as needed. The rest of you...”

Jayne’s phone lit up with a text.

*Running late, will see you at 6:30, kk?*

A smile pulled at Jayne’s lips. Sofia always ran a little behind schedule. Normally it drove her crazy, but tonight, it was a relief. Jayne hated being late almost as much as she hated nights without dessert.

*Sounds good,* she replied.

“Miss Thorne?”

Jayne’s head snapped up. Eleanor was staring at her. “Yes?”

“Do you have somewhere you need to be?”

“Um...yes? No. No, I’m fine.”

Eleanor cleared her throat and dropped her glasses, which swung across her chest on a gold chain. “If Miss Thorne can’t keep her attention on her work any longer, it seems I’ve kept you all too long. See you tomorrow.”

Finally.

Avoiding a one-on-one with her boss, Jayne followed the rest of the staff into the corridor. If she slipped down to the vault right now and checked the location of the Latin American poems, she’d have a head start on tomorrow’s work. She had thirty minutes. She could do this. The bar where she was meeting Sofia was right down the sidewalk.

While everyone else said their good nights, Jayne went to her small office beside the registration desk and stripped out of her cardigan.

“I’ll lock up,” she called to the vault manager, who waved, relieved to be able to sneak out herself.

Jayne retrieved a book cart, then walked through the reading

room to the elevator. When the doors opened, she inserted her key to access the vault level.

The silence afforded by the vault’s thick, partially underground walls brought a smile to Jayne’s lips. If all the world could enjoy such quiet. At least once in a while. She loved a good night out with live music, but silence was her preference, especially when books were involved.

In the vault, rare books were shelved to the right, and manuscripts, mostly contained in gray boxes, lived on the left. The hush of paper was her only companion today. Slipping down the stacks, Jayne found the three editions of the poetry manuscript and carefully brought them to the table in the center of the room.

This workstation was always a mess. Today someone had left behind a huge, brass microscope and five stacks of papers other staff members were in the middle of cataloguing. Would it kill them to put their work away at night? It was almost as if they enjoyed torturing her, she who put stock in neatness. She had her mother to blame for that trait, she supposed. “Neatness begets order,” she would say, staring into Jayne and Sofia’s bedroom and shaking her head at the chaos. Always Sofia’s. Never Jayne’s.

Sighing loudly, though no one was around to hear her, Jayne shook her head and gently cleared a space. The edition at the top of her own stack was nothing more than simple text on parchment. Jayne’s studies in Greek and Latin weren’t very helpful with this language, nor was her experience studying Irish mythology, but, happily, she spoke decent Spanish and could therefore muddle out most of what was written. Most. Some of the lines were in a dialect spoken by African slaves and she had no idea what was being said.

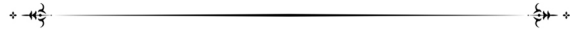
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next book in the Jayne Thorne,  
CIA Librarian adventure series

### *THE MASTER OF SHADOWS*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**JOSS WALKER** is the pen name for two friends who share a love of fantasy and extraordinary women discovering their power in the world. *New York Times* bestselling thriller author J.T. Ellison and *USA Today* bestselling fantasy author Alisha Klapheke have joined forces to create a brilliant new lighthearted urban fantasy series perfect for lovers of books, libraries, romance, and of course, magic.



## ABOUT J.T. ELLISON



**J.T. ELLISON** is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author of more than 25 novels, and the EMMY® award winning co-host of the literary TV show *A Word on Words*.

With millions of books in print, her work has won critical acclaim, prestigious awards, been optioned for television, and has been published in 28 countries. Ellison lives in Nashville with her husband and twin kittens, where she's been dreaming about writing a fantasy novel for over a decade.



## ABOUT ALISHA KLAPHEKE



**ALISHA KLAPHEKE**, *USA Today* bestselling author, wants to infuse readers' lives with unique magic, far-flung fantasy settings, and romance. Her inspiration springs from an obsession with history, years of world travel, and the fantasy she grew up reading when she was supposed to be doing her math homework. When she's not writing, Alisha teaches Muay Thai kickboxing, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and Krav Maga to kids, adults, and the occasional country music star at her school just south of Nashville. That may be why writing fight scenes is her favorite.

