

Judy DuCharme has given us a story woven together with the historical blood moons past. *Blood Moon Redemption* takes the reader into a captivating drama, drawing from her rich knowledge of the ancient land of Israel.

—TRINA HANKINS
Mark Hankins Ministries

While the Bible makes it clear that no one knows the hour of Jesus' return, it also gives us signs of His coming and tells us to be prepared. In *Blood Moon Redemption*, Judy DuCharme weaves together the biblical signs of the coming of Jesus with today's news headlines to craft a page-turning tale of mystery and suspense. At the same time she delicately tells the story of a modern-day Jewish family grappling with the question of the Messiah, while interacting with Christians, Muslims, and Jews along the journey. With unexpected turns along the way, this story will surprise and delight, while inviting you to view today's news headlines in a whole new light.

—DR. CRAIG VON BUSECK
Editor of Inspiration.org and author of *I Am Cyrus: Harry S. Truman and the Rebirth of Israel*

It is a very pleasant surprise to find a fictional story that is based in reality. Judy DuCharme's novel *Blood Moon Redemption* explains a difficult spiritual truth in an extremely entertaining way.

The convergence of the modern blood moon quartet on Jewish Holy Days is of profound significance, and it is imperative to have a handle on it. This story will help you to do just that.

—J.R. BRESTIN
Master Control, WHMB TV-40, Indianapolis, IN

BLOOD MOON REDEMPTION

JUDY DUCHARME



AMBASSADOR INTERNATIONAL
GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA & BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

www.ambassador-international.com

Blood Moon Redemption

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate *Blood Moon Redemption* to all those who were such great influencers in the writing of my book. My husband Lee sowed the original idea and some key concepts, and he gave a few gentle nudges to get it done. Our son Chris plays a big part in the actual story and what you read is who Chris is. These two guys are the loves of my life. Thank you.

Then there are so many from my church and extended family who encouraged and exhorted me as well as prayed for me . . . so essential. Thank you to each of you. Christians United for Israel and Billye Brim Ministries were two places that provided understanding of and background information for the subject matter of the book. They also fostered my great love of Israel. The persistence of my agent, Joyce Hart, the readiness to publish of Ambassador International, the patience and oversight of my editor Daphne Self, and the beautiful cover creativity of Hannah Nichols have so blessed me. Of course, without the steadfastness of the Lord in my life, this work would never have been completed.

Our first grandchild was born this summer and though my excitement for the release of *Blood Moon Redemption* is so high, that little boy stole my heart. And as he grows and continues to bless my heart and be the focus of my love and prayers, I pray this book will bless and grow you.

PROLOGUE

1492, SPAIN

Terror. Fingers of fear constricted her throat. “Papa.” The word barely escaped Lydia’s lips.

Papa scooped her up, eyes wide, and held her close. The smell of anger filled the air. She did not understand it.

The warm summer evening now held a chill that penetrated her. Never had she known her little home to be full of people shouting.

Her father’s ever-present prayer shawl slipped off his shoulder. Lydia grabbed the tassel as he pulled her closer. Men—angry men—shoved Papa and Mama out the door. Lydia took one final look at the home she loved, the place she felt safe and free, the place where now people broke windows and smashed furniture.

The men yelled and yanked the prayer shawl. They ripped and tore it and laughed. Lydia buried her head in her father’s chest. His heart beat so loudly, but he said nothing. She gripped the tassel still wedged between them as the awful men shoved her Papa again, and her family stumbled away.

When she finally felt Papa’s hold on her lessen, the darkness of late evening settled around them. They were in the woods with a gentle rain falling as if the sky didn’t feel the fear.

Lydia screwed up her nose. The smoldering smell made her feel a little sick. She tried to understand the events of this day. In recent weeks fewer people walked the streets and visited their home. Usually guests came often

to counsel with her father, the rabbi. She asked her father why one day. He told her times were hard and many moved away.

Papa always spoke with calmness and strength, and his answers satisfied Lydia's curiosity. But nothing made sense now. Just a few weeks before she and her best friend Gabe whispered that everyone appeared fearful. Where they played they saw broken windows and scattered furniture. Soon she was confined to playing at home, seeing Gabe only at Shabbat. Plus, Shabbat wasn't even in the synagogue any more since a fire had destroyed their lovely building.

"Papa, where is your prayer shawl?"

"Oh, sweetheart, they took it, but God's Word is in our hearts and we are alive." His deep brown eyes looked sad, but Lydia, even in the dark, could see the ever-present peace she loved.

"Papa, look!" Lydia opened her hand. She held the tassel from the prayer shawl.

"Oh, Lydia, we are blessed. God has given us a piece of Himself to take with us wherever we go."

Lydia wasn't sure if she saw tears or rain on his face. "Where can we go? Is our house still there? Mama, why are you crying?"

Mama put her face in her hands. Water droplets dripped from her hair as it fell forward. "Reuben, what can I say?"

Papa set Lydia down and wiped his wife's tears. "We must always tell the truth, my dear Esther. Lydi must know, hard as it is. In the long run, it is always better. No matter how hard, we have God's promise that He will bring us through."

They continued through the woods as the shadows lengthened and disappeared. Mama took her hand. "My sweet Lydia, we will be strong even though our house is no longer there." Mama's voice shook. "They burned all the houses in our neighborhood. See, look there." They paused and peered through the darkening woods. Glimpses of flames darted before their eyes. "We are too far to see well, but those are the houses of our friends."

Lydia strained to see the houses, but the smoke and darkness made her view hazy. "I smell smoke, Papa. Perhaps there is a camp fire and neighbors nearby to keep us warm." Lydia looked first to her mother and then her father.

"That smoke is from the burning houses, sweetheart." Papa stooped down and picked Lydia up again. "Lydi, they would find us and hurt us if we started a fire. We must trust God to keep us warm tonight."

Lydia looked her father in the eye. "Gabe told me they cut people open because they thought they had jewels in them."

Mama gasped. Papa held Lydia close. "Yes, yes, they did that. It was evil, Lydi." He gulped. "It was evil, but we must take comfort that those friends are now in Abraham's bosom and free from all pain." He stopped and peered through the woods. Then he spoke in his stern voice. "We need to find a place to hide and then get ourselves out of Spain. There is no mercy here for Jews."

Mama put her hand on Papa's arm. "No. We must travel as far as possible now and then hide in the daylight. They will find us easily if we hide nearby and travel in the morning. Look there is a partial moon to give us enough light to travel."

"But, Mama, there are so many clouds. They block the light of the moon."

Mama touched Lydia's head. "Yes, but that is good. The evil men will perhaps not follow us, because of the clouds and rain. We can go on the little light we get. We know these woods better than they do."

"Papa, I can walk. I will pretend we are playing a game and Gabe is trying to catch us. Papa, is Gabe okay?"

Papa sighed. "Truthfully, Lydi, I do not know. I pray he and his family are alive."

There was a shuffle of leaves and the breaking of a branch behind them. A voice nearby, pierced the air around Lydia's family. "We are well, but if you insist on being so noisy, we will all be dead, dear Rabbi."

A muffled scream left Mama's mouth. In the attempt to quiet herself, she tripped and fell. Papa threw his body over Mama. Lydia dropped next to them before she realized they heard friendly voices.

"Esther, Reuben, I am so sorry. I did not mean to frighten you. I thought you heard us as well as we heard you. Are you hurt?" Mr. Goldman, Gabe's father, hurried to assist Papa and Mama from their crumpled positions on the ground.

"I landed on this branch full force on my ribs." Mama groaned as she accepted the hand extended and struggled to rise. "I must look a sight, covered with dirt." She attempted to laugh but sucked in her breath. "I perhaps bruised my rib."

Papa put his arm around her to help her stand upright. "You look wonderful, Esther. You are alive. You will heal." He turned to the Goldmans. "Dear friends, we are so encouraged to see you alive."

Papa always had good words to say. That was why he was such a good rabbi.

Gabe's father kissed Papa on each cheek. "Oh, Rabbi, we have lost all, but now that we see you and your family, we have proof that God is still with us."

Lydia pushed herself between the two men. "And look, we still have Papa's tassel. The bad people took everything else."

"Let me see that, Lydi." Gabe held it in his hand. He was a little taller than Lydia and almost a whole year older. The nine-year-old looked up. "What is the prayer, Father? 'The Lord our God is one . . .'" As Gabe said the words, everyone echoed the refrain, visibly relaxing as peace settled on the small bedraggled group. Gabe smiled as he looked at Lydia's father. "I want to be a rabbi someday."

Papa ruffled the boy's hair. "You'll make a fine one."

The boy handed him the tassel. "Come on, Lydi, we know where we can go. Mama's cousin is sailing to find new land, and he is taking all of us with him."

Gabe's mother hushed him. "Do not speak loudly, son. The trees have ears."

Lydia and Gabe laughed. "I don't think that's true, Mrs. Goldman." Lydia paused. "Is it, Papa? You said it's better to know the truth."

Papa chuckled. "She means there could be bad people hiding and listening to us. But, Anna, what does Gabe mean?"

In the ever-darkening haze, Gabe's mother held her finger to her lips and looked around. Everyone stood still and followed her gaze. She moved close and indicated with her arms for them to draw close in a huddle. "My cousin is Cristobal Colombo. The queen knows only he is Spanish and Italian. She does not know he is Jewish as well."

"He denies his faith?" Mama rubbed her ribs.

"He only appears to do so, so he isn't evicted as are we. He has won the favor of the queen and king and been given permission to set sail with three ships. He is smuggling many Jews out of the country and we are able to go. You will come with us, Reuben. We need a rabbi."

Lydia jumped up and down. She was about to squeal but was quickly shushed by all the adults.

"This is truly amazing." Papa placed his hands together in front of his face and sighed deeply. "How soon does he sail? You're sure there will be room for us?"

"There is room for every displaced Jew, every Jew that has been forced to convert to Catholicism, and every Gentile who is willing to let the Jews live." Gabe's father, Joseph Goldman, placed his hand on Papa's shoulder. "Rabbi Reuben Liebermann, we need you. We sail in three days. We must be on the ship in two. Praise be to God that we have found you."

Gabe grabbed Lydia's hand. "Let's go, Lydi. We will sail to a new land and grow up together. I will be a rabbi and you will be my wife."

Lydia pulled her hand away. "Will not. Gabe, I will hit you if you try to marry me."

“Shh, children.” Gabe’s father took them each by the hand. “Let’s get to the boat. There will be plenty of time to talk of marriage. Now we must concentrate on staying alive.”

They proceeded carefully through the woods, occasionally tripping on roots and rocks, but staying close enough to catch each other before anyone else could fall. Lydia and Gabe yawned and rubbed their eyes but did not complain. She could hear Gabe’s mother and Mama as they whispered about the homes and friends now lost, the children, and their wonderings of what sailing would be like.

Gabe’s father and Papa diligently watched for any other people who might be in the woods. Mr. Goldman was in the front of the group with her and Gabe. Mama and Mrs. Goldman walked behind him with arms locked while Papa followed directly behind them, praying and quoting Scripture.

They neared the edge of the woods, and Lydia could see roofs of houses in the distance. Mr. Goldman turned. “Praise God we’ve made it safely this far. We know the way to another cousin’s house not far from here.”

Papa came close to Mr. Goldman. “Joseph, how is it they have not been evicted or killed. Are they not Jews?”

Mrs. Goldman laid her hand on Reuben’s arm. “Rabbi, they are, but they have pretended to become Catholic.”

Papa pulled his arm away and placed his hand over his mouth. He looked away. “We are forbidden.”

Mrs. Goldman stepped around to see Papa’s face. “No, Rabbi, it was for life. It was for our lives. They remain Jews to the core. This is simply to protect the many who must escape. Please understand. It was not easy.” She implored him with her eyes.

Mama took Papa’s hand. “Reuben, she is right. God has made a way of escape for us. Anna, is that why you remained when you could have left earlier when the decree was given?”

Anna nodded, and Mr. Goldman placed his arm around her. “Anna has worked closely with her cousin and kept in touch with many who pretended to convert. She was able to make lists for Cristobal. He used them to hire crew and create a list of passengers for the queen. Anna was not able to talk directly with him, but another cousin ‘converted’ as soon as all this began to be discussed so that he could be the go-between. It is to his home we must go now.”

Papa shook his head. “Yes, yes, mysterious are His ways. Sometimes past finding out. Anna, thank you for your faithfulness. I never knew and often wondered why you stayed so long.”

Mrs. Goldman smiled. “We wondered the same about you, Rabbi.”

“I could not leave my flock. I knew I must stay as long as possible. Esther and I knew the danger but felt we must do it.” Papa rubbed his hand on his face, then nodded. “We will go.”

“But won’t soldiers be around?” Mama wrapped her arms around herself and rocked.

Mr. Goldman touched Mama’s shoulder. “Because this is a Catholic area, there are fewer soldiers. They will be checking, but since all the Catholics are either Jews, or Catholics who wish us no harm, I think we’ll be safe. I have been here many times with Anna. We must hurry, though, so we don’t draw unnecessary attention to ourselves.”

The small group held hands and prayed for protection. As they were about to exit the woods, a man stepped out from the shadows nearby. His hair was long and white, sprinkled with gray. His nose was large and his deep-set eyes kind. A few missing teeth were revealed when he smiled, but the most notable aspect of this man was the uncanny glow. Did it emanate from within or without?

“May I be of assistance, my friends?” His voice was strong, but kind.

Mr. Goldman whirled around. “Put out your flame, man.” His voice was a hiss. “You’ll get us all killed.”

The strange man held out his arms. "I'm here to protect you."

Papa hesitated and grabbed Lydia's hand. Mama's hands were over her eyes as tears streamed down her face. Peeking out through her fingers, she stepped behind her husband.

"Who . . . who are you?" Papa took a step toward the man then stopped. Lydia wondered if Papa felt what she felt, an overwhelming impulse to kneel.

Lydia studied the man. "Papa, it's okay. He is here to help us. I think that's God shining out of him." She felt her father relax.

"Lydia is right. Rabbi Liebermann, Mr. Goldman, have no fear. My name is Hernando Wental." His eyes emanated peace. "Follow me. I will escort you all safely to your friend's house."

Papa hesitated. "But the light. It will expose us."

"Stay close. It will keep us hidden." The man's voice resonated inside Lydia. Mr. Goldman shook his head as he took his wife's hand.

"Come along, children." The man's voice commanded authority along with a great gentleness. Gabe and Lydia giggled and ran over, each taking one of Hernando's hands.

Papa slipped his hand around Mama, and they began following the strange man. Wonderment filled Lydia's soul. The soft light around Hernando was like a lantern exposing roots and rocks in the path.

Upon reaching the cluster of homes and roads, they paused. Papa whispered. "It is certain death if we're seen."

Hernando turned. "No fear, my friends, we'll be there shortly."

The streets were deserted. Mama still shook. Mr. Goldman kept looking in every direction. Papa did not take his eyes off Hernando. Lydia and Gabe giggled and skipped, and Hernando did not shush them. Lydia wondered why the adults were so nervous. After all the fear and anger of the early evening, she felt safe again.

As they turned a corner, Papa gasped and stopped short. Mama's hands went to her face. There were Queen's guards, clubs ready, canvassing the

street. Hernando simply turned to the others and smiled. The slightest shake of his head indicated they should not worry or speak.

Mrs. Goldman stood frozen. Her husband wrapped his arm around her and pulled her close. She buried her face in his shoulder as they stayed close to Hernando.

The guards, not twenty feet away, looked directly at them, almost through them. Lydia heard her father whisper, "How can this be?"

"See anything?" one of them called to the other.

"Thought I heard something down this way." He walked toward the group.

The first guard called, "Let's go. There's nothing here." Their footsteps faded in the distance.

Papa doubled over and placed his hands on his knees. "Did they not see us? How is that possible?" His voice was hoarse.

Mr. Goldman scrutinized Hernando. "How did that happen?"

"I am sent to protect you." Hernando smiled.

Gabe looked at Lydia. "I wasn't afraid a moment."

Lydia pushed him. "Were too. I was."

Papa gazed around. "So was I. I think we all were. Esther, are you okay?"

Mama held her hands over her face. "I'm still petrified."

Mrs. Goldman put her arms around Mama. "But God, blessed be His Name, has again kept us safe."

Hernando's voice was a blanket of calm. "Come. We must continue."

Moments later, they arrived at the small stucco house, surrounded by gracious gardens. Hernando laid his hand on Papa's arm. "Rabbi Liebermann, your descendants are set to influence the blessing and rise of Israel in the end days."

Papa stared at the little man. "Israel?"

"The land of your fathers, the land of your people to come."

The door opened. With big eyes, the man looked at Mr. and Mrs. Goldman. "How did you get here? Come in, come in, quickly."

“Hernando brought us safely, praise to the Almighty.” Mr. Goldman turned to introduce him to Hernando, but no one was there.

Papa scanned the area. “Where did he go? We were just speaking to each other. Lydi, did you see him?”

“Yes, Papa. He smiled, patted my head, and disappeared. I think he went back to heaven.”

“Rabbi, all of you, we must shut the door. It is not safe.”

CHAPTER 1

PRESENT DAY, CHICAGO

Tassie Stevens ran her hand over the leather arm of the chair and inhaled the professional fragrance of wood, leather, and power in her new office. First day on the job. Get the paperwork over and dive in. She was so ready.

“So, Tassie, is that your real name? I mean, full name?” The young file clerk looked up and waved his hand. “I mean, is Tassie a nickname?” He looked back at the form ready to write.

Tassie smiled, wishing she could grimace. She straightened her black suit jacket and crossed her legs in order to keep from tapping her sling-backed heel on the polished floor. She’d been answering this question all her life. “No, it’s Tassel.”

His head came up, eyebrows arched. Just like a dog with his ears up. He just needs to tilt his head now. The rueful thought amused Tassie, but she was so tired of the joke of her name.

“Yes, Tassel.” She half-smiled and looked down. “It’s from a story in my family’s history. Now, what else do you need?” The curt explanation effectively stopped any further questioning. The young man continued through the basic paperwork process.

How dare her parents saddle her with the legend! Fine if they wanted to believe it, but to name her Tassel Lydia after the magical remnant of a prayer shawl and the name of the little girl who saved it was ludicrous. A children’s story! That’s all it was. Who cared about a tassel from 1492? Her brother was stuck being named Reuben Liebermann, the name of Lydia’s father, the rabbi.

At least he didn't have to explain his name every time he turned around. He just went by Rube and no one questioned it.

From childhood all she wanted was to be a lawyer. A high powered, high-stakes lawyer that people respected and feared. She had gotten the second highest score on the bar exam and landed this position with the best law firm in Chicago.

She wished she could lie about her name—that Tassie was her legal name, but she couldn't. She had vowed to be honest as well. That was her upbringing and that was okay. It was just the tassel story. She could still hear him snickering silently.

Full of stories to share with her parents about her entry into the legal profession, Tassie made her weekly visit to the home where she'd grown up. As soon as she walked through the door, her mother began the conversation.

"Darling, I have been working on our family history, and I think you—"

Tassie groaned. "Mother, I really don't have time."

Her mother spread out several sheets of paper, not looking at Tassie. "It will take only a few minutes. I think the most interesting—"

Tassie stood straight. It served her well as an attorney. It accomplished nothing with her mother. "Mother, look at me. I don't want to look at your papers. I don't care about our history."

Her mother sat in the chair. She brushed her slightly graying hair off her face and looked up at Tassie with a gentle smile. "Sweetheart, you were a history major."

"World history, not family history." Tassie shook her head. "Besides, it was a good base for law."

"I'm quite sure Christopher Columbus, well Cristobal Colombo, is in our family tree."

Tassie gazed at the ceiling. “Oh, please. Perhaps we came over with him, but if the story is true, Lydia Liebermann was only eight years old. I highly doubt she married Columbus.”

“Oh, no, of course not. But his cousin traveled with the Liebermanns and her son married Lydia. Isn’t that amazing!”

“Mother, how many generations ago is that? Wait. No. Don’t answer that. It was over five hundred years ago. It’s not really history. It’s speculation. Why should I be interested?”

“Tassie, you are named for—”

“I know, I know, and I love you, Mother, but if this name sinks my career, I just . . . I just . . . I don’t . . .” Tassie faltered and didn’t finish.

Her mother stood and came around the table. She embraced Tassie. “Nothing will sink you, Tassie Stevens. Don’t you worry. When you want to talk about this, just let me know.” Scooping up the papers, she walked out of the living room into the small study that served as her office.

Tassie followed. “Mother, I . . . I’m sorry.” She glanced at her mother’s favorite books lining the walls interspersed with sculptures and vases she collected from trips all over the world. The mahogany desk was immaculate except for upholstery fabric samples that covered one end.

“Oh, no need to fuss.” Mother carefully placed her papers in a file and set it on the side cabinet. She slid an arm around Tassie and guided her back into the living room. “You have a lot on your plate. I understand.” Her mother stepped back and looked at Tassie. “I love your hair down like that. My beautiful brown-eyed girl. And that dress is very flattering. Stylish and professional. I think you need a little more lipstick to bring out the highlights in that gorgeous auburn hair, though. Jack, what do you think?”

Tassie’s father glanced up from his easy chair and from the football game. He held out his arms to Tassie. “You always look wonderful. If I were the other lawyer, I’d just rest my case and give you the win.”

Tassie hurried over and sat on his lap. She fell into her father's hug just like she'd done since she was a little girl.

Her father pressed his lips to her forehead. "How's it going, girl? Got any questions for me?"

"I do have a couple situations, Daddy." Tassie loved to discuss case studies and sticky law questions with her dad, a retired judge. And she had never stopped calling him 'Daddy'. She always thought he was the epitome of a teddy bear and an encyclopedia. As a judge he had been both approachable and exacting in his judgements resulting in high regard throughout his profession.

Father and daughter climbed out of the chair with a few chuckles and headed into Jack's den. "We won't be too long, Mother."

Tassie heard her mom chuckle as she closed the door. She could easily spend hours with her dad, yet Mother never complained.

"Daddy, Mother kind of drives me nuts with all this Columbus stuff. I'd much rather discuss law."

Her dad patted her hand. "When we married, she was as exacting as you. Except it was in her study and love for archaeology. She gave up her career dreams to raise you and Rube."

"Did that upset her? That would be so hard for me."

"Well, she just transferred that gifting to decorating our home with artifacts and furnishings from around the world." He grinned. "And . . . she included you in the search for pieces of art from almost every time period. She fed you an appreciation for art and history, which prepared you for the study of law."

"Oh, Daddy, I think your love and understanding of the law did it."

Her father tapped her nose. "Tassie, I worked long hours when you were little. I spent every moment I could with you and your mom and Rube, but those moments were too few for many years. Give your mom some credit.

And let her tell you her discoveries. They're significant. Some day you should ask her about the dream she had when she was pregnant with you."

Tassie squinted her eyes at her dad but said nothing.

Her dad sat up straighter. "Now, let's hear about your cases. I'm all ears."

The next morning in court, Tassie noticed him immediately. As the attorney turned from the opposing lawyer's bench, his eyes caressed her from her head to the floor. Tassie was glad she did not blush easily, but she felt a warm electricity flow through her. *I must be slipping or he's really good at this.*

The opposing counsel's face was angular and incredibly handsome. Dark skin with deep set eyes. Close cropped hair with just the slightest curl. Probably had adorable curls as a little boy.

Tassie smiled before realizing he still gazed at her. She slowly swiveled her head to her fellow attorneys and began talking as if her smile was solely intended for them.

Two hours later when the judge recessed proceedings until the next day, Tassie glanced one more time in the handsome man's direction. He nodded at her with the slightest of smiles.

Smooth. He was very smooth, and because of it, she was not quite sure if she trusted him. Not that she needed to. Rarely did she trust the defense lawyers. His tone was firm when speaking to the witness and the jury, giving him a professional respect in the court, and an underlying kindness that made witnesses open up to him.

It was the slightest bit of disdain she detected beneath the handsomeness, the professionalism, the kindness that unsettled her. During court proceedings it seemed no one else picked up on it. She watched for skepticism, a slight tilting down of the chin, narrowing of the eyes, but saw not one bit of any of those reactions. Her father always told her she read people well and to trust those instincts implicitly.

Lost in thought, analyzing every step of procedure in the day's case, Tassie almost ran into the man as she passed through the courtroom doors.

"I am so sorry." Tassie looked directly into his eyes. Deep green, beautiful. Quickly she turned to go past him, fighting a school girl tendency to sigh at his beauty.

"No need to apologize. I was waiting for you." He bowed slightly and flashed a beautiful smile. "I'm Omar . . . Omar Tugani. You are very impressive in the courtroom."

Tassie paused. "Thank you. You were succinct and put the witness at ease. Now, if you'll excuse me."

The man touched her arm and shivers ran through her. "Miss Stevens, would you do the honor of allowing me to take you to dinner?"

Tassie stood straight. "I can't discuss the case with defense. You know that."

The deep green eyes sparkled, and little crinkles formed at the corners of his eyes. "I'm quite sure we can find many things to converse about other than our jobs."

Tassie cleared her throat and repositioned her purse on her shoulder.

"I'll take that as a yes." He took her by the elbow and guided her to the elevator. "Chicago Pizza sound good? There's one just down the street."

Tassie laughed. "Excellent choice. Only good things happen over pizza." Mr. Green Eyes was a little too smooth, but she could handle him.



Even though her mother sometimes drove her crazy, Tassie enjoyed her Sunday evening visits to her parents.

"I made ravioli. Would you get the wine, Tassie?"

Dinner conversation covered court issues, the weather, the neighbor's sick cat, and plans to remodel the guest room. When dinner was over, her mother brought out her folder.

Expecting to see remodeling fabric and wallpaper samples, Tassie's eyes fell on a thick stack of papers, entitled, 'Four Blood Red Moons: Columbus to Now'.

“What in the world!” Tassie pursed her lips and turned toward her mother.

“My latest research about lunar eclipses falling on the Jewish feast days.”

Tassie shook her head and began clearing the table. “Can I get you coffee, Daddy?”

“Please.”

Tassie went to the kitchen, returning with a steaming cup of coffee which she set before her dad. She then poured another glass of wine for her mother and herself. “You . . . this . . . it’s superstitious, Mother. Are you getting into astrology?”

“Do you remember Uncle Rupert?”

“Vaguely. He always played with me, but I remember everyone thinking he was crazy.”

Her dad laughed. “That’s true. A kind old man, but a little off.”

“Maybe not.” Her mother took a sip of wine. “Do you remember, Jack, what he always talked about?”

“Yes, yes.” Her father nodded his head. “Lunar eclipses. They started calling him Professor Luney.”

Tassie laughed. “Oh, my goodness. I remember that. I thought his name was Rupert Luney.”

Marge groaned and then began to giggle. Soon they were all guffawing.

“Okay, I’ll bite.” Tassie wiped the tears from her eyes. “What was the reason he was called Professor Luney?”

“He was obsessed with lunar eclipses.” Her father shrugged his shoulders.

“Astrology?”

“No, actually he’d been a science teacher and loved studying and teaching about space. He was really interested in eclipses and began charting them. He was also quite a devout Jew and served as an officer in World War Two. He was able to visit Israel and met David Ben Gurion right when they were struggling as a new nation. He was quite an impressive man.” He sipped his coffee before

continuing. "So, anyway, in his study of eclipses, he saw that around 1948 and 1967 there were four lunar eclipses in a row that fell on Jewish feast days."

"Well, I suppose that's not so unusual. Aren't there about seven lunar eclipses every year?" Tassie sat down at the table and lifted her wine glass to her lips.

"Yes, there are." Her mother shuffled the papers. "However, to land on feast days was considered highly significant and seemed to tell of upheaval and harm to the Jews."

"Sounds like old wives' tales."

"That's why he was called Professor Luney. But, look what happened. Israel became a nation in 1948 and regained Jerusalem in 1967." Marge pointed at one of her papers.

"Well, that's interesting, Mother, but it wouldn't hold up in court. It's anecdotal, not direct cause and effect."

"Perhaps, darling. But this is very interesting because there were also four lunar eclipses on four Jewish feast days near 1492."

Tassie rolled her eyes. "And I suppose they're on Christian holidays in 1776 and 1863. There are probably a dozen of these incidents. It's all conjecture, Mother."

Her dad set down his coffee cup. "It actually is interesting, Tassie, although I must remind everyone that Uncle Rupert Luney was on your mother's side of the family." He winked at his wife. "These alignments occurred on Jewish feast days in 1493-94, and then not again until 1949 and 1967. That's it. Uncle Rupert also studied rabbinical teachings and the rabbis always predicted great upheaval followed by great provision when the lunar eclipses were on feast days." He spread his hands. "So now Mama Marge has taken up the baton."

Tassie groaned. "Okay, it's history, a little luney, but history. And, we love history in this family, but this stays here . . . in the family. You're not going to share this with the synagogue and the neighborhood." Tassie tipped her head at her mother.

"It's not just history, Tass, it's future too, almost present."

"Whatever do you mean?"

“It’s happening this year and next. Four lunar eclipses on four Jewish feast days.”

Tassie poured another glass of wine and walked over to the window. “Mother, you’re smarter than this. Life is full of interesting coincidences, but you can’t make connections with, with, well, whatever it is. Actually, I don’t want to know what you are trying to say. I have to go.”

Tassie set down her glass without taking a sip and kissed her mother on the cheek. Her father stood and gave her a big hug. “Goodnight, Daddy. Love you.” She picked up her jacket and purse and walked out.

CHAPTER 2

1492, ATLANTIC OCEAN OFF THE COAST OF SPAIN

The ship gently rocked as Lydia drifted off to sleep. Most of her fears had subsided and she enjoyed the excitement of traveling on the ocean. She missed her home and neighborhood terribly. She chose her happiest memory to be the last thing she thought about each night as sleep came, and fear tried knocking on the door of her mind.

It had been her eighth birthday just a month before their eviction from their home at the edict of the Queen of Spain.

“Lydi Liebermann, what an impact on the world you will make! The most beautiful daughter ever!” Papa had beamed as he handed Lydia her present.

“Ha, ha, Papa, so funny. I am the *only* daughter of the Liebermanns. That would make me most beautiful and the smartest.”

Papa’s eyes had twinkled. “Ah, Lydi, there has never been a more beautiful Liebermann daughter ever. Just as the Psalmist said, ‘Many daughters have done beautifully, but you outshine them all.’ Is it not true, my dear wife?” Papa bowed and swept his hand in the direction from Lydia to his wife.

“True, it is,” laughed Mama. She picked up the towel draped over the chair and swatted her husband. “But, it is also true, dear husband, that you have only one daughter, your brothers have only sons, and your papa had only sons.”

Papa extended his hands, raising his arms. “As I said, never a wiser, smarter daughter than mine. She will be remembered as were Rachel and Sarah. I know it!”

Lydia ran her fingers over the luxurious texture of the brocade bag before peeking inside. Reaching in, she pulled out a small cloth doll with a beautiful porcelain face. She loved the lacy dress her mother had sewn. It was the best present ever.

The three held hands and danced in a circle, a traditional Jewish dance. Papa gave his wife a kiss on the cheek and his daughter a kiss on her head.

Lydia lay quietly and smiled as the memory faded. *I don't have that doll anymore, but I have my Mama and Papa, so I am okay.*

A few days later Papa reached down and felt Mama's brow. Lydia knew it was too warm. She had also touched her forehead.

"Is she okay, Papa?" Lydia sat at the foot of her mother's bunk.

"I think it is just the sea and the rocking. It makes one dizzy sometimes." He dipped a cloth into a bucket of water, wrung it out, and laid it on her forehead. Mama moaned.

She opened her eyes and looked at her husband. Lydia could see the fear screaming out of her mother's eyes. Papa swallowed and patted her hands. "Esther, all will be well. God is with us." He closed his eyes and Lydia wondered if he, too, was afraid.

Lydia heard what sounded like mumbling from her father. She knew he was praying. *Good, Papa doesn't fear anything. He knows how to pray. Mama will get well.*

Mama moaned again and placed her hand on Papa's arm. "My ribs. Such pain. Can't get my breath."

Papa's voice was full of compassion. "You bruised them, dear wife, when you fell in the woods. Remember when I bruised myself after falling while building the house?" Mama nodded, and a slight smile crossed her lips. Papa laughed. "Yes, I was not a good builder, now was I? Why did I bring that up?"

He looked at Lydia. "I am a better Rabbi than I am a carpenter. I will tell you that story someday."

Lydia nodded. She took a deep breath. Her parents were smiling and laughing. Surely all would be well now.

Papa touched Mama's ribs gently. She winced. "It will take time to heal, dear one. We will be patient. It took me quite a while to heal." Mama smiled again. Papa chuckled. "I know you think I nursed that too long, so our friends would do the building for us. But a bruised rib takes a long time. You just need to rest." He leaned over and kissed her lightly on the lips.

"Come, Lydi, let's let your mother sleep a while."

"Love you, Mama." Lydia paused and gazed at her mother. She kissed her mama's cheek, took her papa's hand, and walked to the upper deck where Gabe and the other children played.

Gabe called to her to join them. Papa smiled and nodded, and she ran over to see what her friends were doing to pass the time.

A FEW WEEKS LATER

"I am so sorry about your mama, Lydi. I will say the Prayer of Mercy for her."

A tear ran down Lydia's cheek. She didn't speak but nodded.

Gabe put an arm around her. "I will take care of you, Lydi. I promise."

Lydi stiffened and pushed Gabe with both hands. "No, Gabe, my papa will take care of me. And I want my mama." Her little chest convulsed, and she ran from the lower deck sobbing. She found Papa on the upper deck just staring at the ocean. Blinded by her tears she slid into the railing.

"Lydi, Lydi, you must be careful. I cannot lose you as well." He scooped her up and the two wrapped their arms around each other and sobbed.

"Papa, why did they drop her in the ocean? How will we find her for a proper burial?"

"We won't, little one, but even in the ocean, she is in Abraham's bosom. And, we will see her again."

Lydia stopped sobbing. Putting both hands on her papa's chest she pushed back so she could see his eyes. "What do you mean? She lives? How will we see her? When?"

Papa set her down, took her hand and walked along the deck. "Lydi, the Torah tells us we will all be in heaven with Father God one day. That is where we will see her."

Lydia stopped and pulled her hand from Papa's. "No, Papa, not when we die. I want her now."

Papa stooped to eye level with Lydia. "So, do I, my sweet Lydi, but we must know and accept the truth. Mama will always be in your heart, but you will see her no more in this life. We must take care of each other, my sweet Lydi."

Everything was blurry. Wiping her eyes did not help. "I will always take care of you, Papa. But not Gabe." Lydia stamped her foot. "He thinks he can marry me."

Papa laughed a big laugh. It was so good to hear that Lydia stopped crying and smiled at Papa.

"Maybe someday, Lydi, he will marry you, but not for a long, long time."

EARLY 1493, NEW WORLD

Rabbi Liebermann stood with Lydia on the sandy shore and waved as Christopher Columbus sailed away on his return trip to Spain. Lydia missed him already. Not long into the voyage, she started to call him Uncle Colombo. She and Gabe had loved to stand with him as he steered the ship.

Gabe's mother, Anna Goldman, wiped a tear from her eye, as she turned to her husband and the rabbi. "May God give my cousin safe travels. I wonder if we shall ever see him again. I did not know him that well growing up, but watching him as the admiral of our ship, stirred great respect. Now, he goes back with reports of ways through the sea, the lay of the land, the peoples, the riches." She scowled. "I think all Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand want

to know about are the riches . . . whether there are gold and spices. Wouldn't she be surprised to know this journey opened a whole new world for the Jews of Spain? Perhaps the Jews from all over the world will come here, too."

Mr. Goldman placed his arm around his wife. "Yes, a whole new world and we must explore it as well."

"Look what he gave me before he sailed." She pulled a small cloth package from her pocket. Unwrapping it revealed a small coin. On one side was the image of Queen Isabella.

Her husband raised his eyebrows. "Truth be told, I don't care for that image, dear wife."

"Ahhh." Anna smiled. "Study the other side."

Mr. Goldman turned the coin over and there was the image and name of Cristobal Colombo, 1492. Lydia stood close to Mr. Goldman. "Ooh, look. Papa, look. It looks like Uncle Colombo. What a nice gift."

The Rabbi leaned in. "Right you are young lady. It is a wonderful gift. Joseph, this is a wonderful memorial of how God Almighty, blessed be He, has taken care of us."

They gazed out at the water and watched the ship get smaller and smaller as the sails billowed and the ship flowed with the wind. The sky was blue and feathery clouds lazed about the sky. Small birds graced the air above them and they all just stood and soaked in the beauty.

"Papa, Papa." Lydia tugged on her father's sleeve.

He reached down and patted her head. "What is it, Lydi?"

Lydia pointed at the sky. "Papa, how far is the sky blue?"

"Oh my, Lydi, I guess forever." Each person crooked their neck and peered into the heavens. "What do you think . . . as far as heaven?"

Lydia placed her hands on her hips, tilted her head, and scrunched up her lips and nose. "I think it's as far as God will take care of us." She turned to her father. "Because He will."

Rabbi Liebermann reached down and picked up his daughter and held her close. His words were choked. "Yes, Lydi, He will."

PASSOVER, SPRING 1493

"Papa, Papa!! Look!" Lydia's face was aglow with excitement even in the dark. "The moon's face is moving!"

Rabbi Liebermann and his daughter stepped outside and stood next to the little home they now shared with the Goldmans. His dear wife was gone, but Lydia filled his life with delight. The Goldmans daily provided love and strength as the rabbi worked to set up a simple synagogue for all the Jews displaced by the edict of Spain.

As Rabbi Liebermann looked up, his stomach churned. He stepped back and gulped. "Oh my. Oh my."

The night was cool and clear. But the sight before him sent shivers up and down his spine.

"What is it, Papa?" Lydia stiffened as she watched her father. "Is it bad?" Tears formed in her eyes.

"Oh, not to fear, sweet one, not to fear. It's one of God's majestic events in His creation. I learned about this as a young man in my studies of the Talmud and about the heavens. The earth gets between the sun and the moon and makes a shadow on the moon." He took her hand. "Isn't it amazing?"

Lydi looked at the moon, then gazed up at her father's face. "But it looks red, Papa. Our shadows aren't red, are they?"

"No, they are not. You are so smart. They call it a Blood Moon because it's red."

"Why did you look so surprised, Papa? You almost looked scared. Were you scared?"

"I was surprised, sweet one, because this is Passover. And a blood moon on a holy day is very important to the Jewish people."

"What does it mean?"

“I am not quite sure. I must pray and seek His face. Times and seasons are in His hand, bless His holy name. Our people in Spain just came out of horrendous pain and suffering, and now we are in a new land. Perhaps this is His sovereign plan.” The rabbi took his daughter’s hand and bent over to kiss the top of her head. “He does know the end from the beginning. So, it is our duty to seek the wisdom revealed in His Word and hidden from those who do not seek His face.”

“Maybe it’s like the blood sacrifices in the temple so long ago, Papa.” Lydia’s face lit up. “Remember those?”

“Oh yes, Lydi. God commanded the blood sacrifice for the removal of sin.”

“Oh, Papa!” Lydia squeezed her papa’s hand and signaled with her finger for him to come closer. He kneeled on one knee and Lydi put her mouth to his ear. “Maybe He’s showing all the people who left Spain, wherever they are, that He has forgiven the sin of the whole world. Cause that was a big sin, Papa, what they did in Spain.”

Rabbi Liebermann coughed and cleared his throat. A single tear ran down his face. In barely a whisper, he said, “Out of the mouth of babes.” He stood slowly and picked up Lydia. “Oh Lord, what wisdom You place in little ones. My heart is overrun with Your presence. You have forgiven the world. You have forgiven Spain. I, too, will forgive.”

He grasped the tassel that he wore on a loosely woven rope about his neck like a pendant. It had been lovingly kept and held in high honor as they crossed the ocean and settled in a new land. “Blessed are You, God of the universe. I will walk in forgiveness, and every time I see a blood red moon, I will perceive that You have done sacrifice and forgiven the world.”

The rabbi shared the story with his small but always growing congregation. “We have lost much and yet we have gained a whole world in which to live and grow. Let us always be mindful of the lovingkindness of our God, not just toward us, but to all those, good and bad, who live in this world.”

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