

# ~ Battle Within ~

## A Short Story by Mari Wells

I stood in line hugging the books close to my chest. My eyes darted across the line. The automated checkout would be free after I was called, I sighed. Please don't let Maryann check me out, Please.

I shifted my weight from one side to the other as I waited. Fran called the woman in front of me. Please hurry. My stomach twisted. I felt my heart twist into the knot. I heard someone laughing at me. I glanced behind me. I was the last one in line. Please, hurry. Don't let Maryann call me.

Maryann looked up and smiled at me. Of course, it'd be her. I sat the books on the counter and handed her my card.

"How's school?" she asked.

"Good, I'm enjoying my classes."

"That's good," she started scanning my books. Her smile began to droop at the corners of her mouth. "Does your mother know you read these?"

The knot in my stomach grew tighter. "I'm a grown woman. I can read anything I want. Besides, they're for a school report."

She piled the books up into a pile as she shook her head. "What are they teaching you in that fancy school of yours." It wasn't a question it was a statement; one that was meant to make me feel guilty. I felt my shoulders shrug. "You better tell your mother. She might not want you there anymore."

My head nodded obediently. I always wondered what this woman had that could make me feel like a small child who had been caught with my hand in the cookie jar before dinner?

I felt calm as soon as the books were in my arms and I was out of the building. I slowly drove home. Getting the books past mom was going to be harder. If Maryann called her, it would be so much harder. I stopped at the coffee shop; after a few sips of my favorite coffee. I looked at the pile of books and my laptop bag, pulling out the laptop, and pushing the books back inside.

I pulled the bag over my shoulder, and carrying the laptop against my chest in my left arm. I opened the door slowly. She wasn't here; I made a mad dash for the stairs.

"Mom," I called, "I'm going to my room. I need to study."

"Alright dear, dinner will be ready in a few hours. Should I get you when it's ready?" she called from the kitchen.

"Yeah, Thanks." I was half way up the stairs. I rushed to my room just in case she decided to ask me about the books. In this town, everyone knows about anything that happens

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before it's finished. She was going to let me confess on my own.

I leaned against my closed door and sighed. This confession would be the worst. I'm a grown woman what can she do to me; I tried to remind myself I was required to live her way.

I sat at the small desk, opened the laptop, and began pulling out the books. Here in the privacy of my room, my fingers tingled when I touched them. My heart raced as I laid each one on the desk. I felt my body get warmer as I looked at the covers.

Which one would I read first; my heart skipped a beat. I lovingly ran my finger across each one. They seemed to sing for me. I felt my cheeks redden. This was more than I prepared for, did they do this for others? The questions in my mind overwhelmed me, did others feel this same way.

I picked up the smallest and started reading. The knot in my stomach eased. The tingle I felt in my fingers started to spread up my arms and lingered in my shoulders. I felt a cold gaze on my right side. I turned in that direction. The cross hanging above my bed seemed to glare at me.

*Put no other god before me.* My shoulders tensed. What was I doing, my doubts hit me hard. The book in my hand refused to be set aside, it warmed my hands, traveling up my arms and forced the tension from my shoulders. My shoulders fell slack and my neck relaxed. I looked down at the words; they danced across the page in happiness.

The cold rushed at my right side again. *I am the one and the only. I am the beginning and the end.* The books on my desk hummed. My hand reached towards them. The hum grew louder until my skin touched them. Silence came from them as I touched them. My heartbeat raced, how could I control this? Why would they hum for my attention, I wondered. Why did I want to touch them, to read and learn from every one? Why did I feel an attraction to them, and why did I feel electrical jolts. Why did these books seem like the touch of a lover?

*Thou shall not bow thyself down to them.* I felt my core start to tremble. What am I doing, what would mom think if she knew? I pushed back from the desk; my knees shook as I tried to stand up. The hum from the books grew louder. I felt them tug on me.

I paced the small open space of my room. The humming from my desk grew louder. I felt the cold stare watch me as I moved. My head started to pound. As I turned again and walked towards the desk, the books seemed to sigh. *You know your path,* they sung.

My eyes started to burn. My fingers tingled as I reached out to touch them. *These things are an abomination unto me.* I dropped my hand and turned towards the head of my bed. Slowly I took the cross off the wall. The wooden cross was cold in my hand. I sat on the side of the bed and looked down at it.

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The tears burned in my eyes. They waited for the right moment. I couldn't see through them well. The books stopped humming. They inhaled deeply waiting for my response. My heart pounded in my throat. I felt it echo through my body from the top of my head to the tip of my toes.

My hands throbbed, my right with the cross in it, my left to touch on of the books. I weakly stood up. The world spun as I slowly walked to the desk and picked up the plain black book. I felt it vibrate first in my hand then up my arm. *You know your path, daughter*, the book sang. *I too call thee daughter*.

The tears burst from my eyes. I sat back down and looked at both. The cross was still cold. Even after squeezing it. It didn't warm up. I felt a sob build in my body. The cross became hot instantly.

I opened my hand and it fell to the floor. My sobs shook my body as I squeezed the book close to my chest. I hugged it close. Softly it hummed. The tingle moved through my chest, then up and down through my body. It warmed me, soothing the built up stress. *You have chosen well, daughter*, the musical voice filled the air.

I wiped my eyes with the back of my hands. Still holding the book to my chest, I stood up and went to my dresser. I pulled opened the top drawer and took out the white handkerchief with the yellow and blue embroidered flowers. It had belonged to my grandmother.

I walked to the cross still lying on the floor and picked it up with the handkerchief. I wrapped the cross in it and took it back to the open drawer. Come daughter, there is much for you to learn. I pushed the drawer closed. I sat at my desk again and began reading.

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Bio:

Mari Wells blogs about the paranormal at

[www.Mariwells.wordpress.com](http://www.Mariwells.wordpress.com)