

# DARK HEALING

ORDER OF SECRET PRIESTESSES BOOK 1

MARISOL X. DIVINA

**FREE PREVIEW: AUTHOR'S NOTE + STORY #1:**

**#SECRETPRIESTESSPROBLEMS**

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## **Dark Healing**

Order of Secret Priestesses Book 1  
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*For Las Abuelas*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Thank you for picking up *Dark Healing: Order of Secret Priestesses Book 1*. In my full-time profession, I do healing work, and while I would never in the real world use any kind of manipulative or coercive methods for working with anyone, it was really fun to imagine and explore what it would be like to have zero inhibitions about it in the *Order of Secret Priestesses* world.

There are a lot of themes in this novella of connected stories. With healing being the thread that weaves them all together, I wanted to at least attempt to set the container for it in some way before you dive in. I know that isn't something a lot of fiction authors do, but I've never really made a habit of following other people's ways of doing things. When I was younger, it was labeled as stubbornness, then rebellion. As I got older, I realized it was neither of those things. I've just always been inclined to follow the urgings of the mystical heart that beats inside this sacred body that sees, speaks, and feels on behalf of my Wild Soul. Speaking of which, here are a few of my Wild Soul's truths that you will see woven throughout the book:

- 1) There is much more to this life than meets the eye.
- 2) Everybody has sacredness in them somewhere.

Some people's sacredness is buried under A LOT of shit (which we explore through the three men that the Priestesses get their hands on—Daniel, Alex, and Michael).

The *Order of Secret Priestesses* series is a wild dream in a world that needs so much healing. Where so many people aren't free from so many things. Where tenderness is overly regarded as weakness. Where people fight and misunderstand too much. Where blame is everywhere that curiosity should be. Where compassion runs so low we can hardly see, feel, or hear as often as we need to. That is, of course, when we're not being pummeled by it in tidal waves as our hearts break each time the world shows us its awfulness and our minds make us forget its wonderfulness.

People say they want so many things that they don't know how to get, and they're too hurt to really listen to each other or discover what would need to change, what would need to happen to get to the places their hearts know they want to go. The places their minds fear so much because it means breaking with so many ideas and ideals they've been sold by tradition and convention. This is one reason I chose the method of "converting men" that I did in the

book. I won't spoil it here. You'll see! I also had to choose a creative way for the Priestesses to get consent from their marks since, obviously, fiction or not, promoting or condoning any form of non-consensual sex would be gross.

The *Order of Secret Priestesses* series also seeks to weave a better world into being. A world where wisdom can run wilder than ignorance, but emotions like anger and grief aren't bypassed, and people face their shadows rather than avoiding them. The means of getting there in this book are a mix of both deceitful and benevolent because I love paradox and because in my real life, my integrity prevents me from being "bad," but it doesn't mean I don't want to be sometimes! The characters in this book let me embrace my darker impulses and desires in a made-up world. I hope they'll do the same for you.

Magical Realism is my forever favorite genre of books because it doesn't require the same conventions as many other fiction genres. There's room to play and explore, which I did. There's a lot of depth in these stories, but they're not intended to be taken too seriously. I made them reverent and irreverent, sexy, humorous and indulgent, erotic at times, and gut-wrenching at others because isn't that how life is? A little bit of everything?

This book is meant to be fun and thoughtful.

A turn-on, a turn-in, a turnout, and a turnaround.

An effort to venerate intergenerational connections and valuing women as they age instead of relegating us to anti-aging and menopausal hell.

Whether you picked it up for an escape, a distraction, or perhaps you were just drawn to it and don't really know why you picked it up, I hope it lights something up for you. Something courageous, expansive, and liberating.

We all need that.

I chose to bring the *Order of Secret Priestesses* into being as a novella in short stories because I am in love with the format of the short story. I love leaving open loops and giving just enough detail for readers to follow a story but just enough space to fill in some blanks on their own. To me, short stories are both complete and incomplete. And isn't that like life, too? How rare is it for things to be tidy and wrapped up with bows on them at the end? And how often is an ending not even an ending at all but a beginning?

I also didn't want to follow the conventional beats novels tend to follow that insist on moving things along via conflict and tension. This goes back to doing healing work. I've helped too many clients and students unwind from addictions to suffering, drama, chaos, and everything needing to be so freaking hard all the time (hello self-sabotage!!) to let myself write stories that solely revolve around impending and avoidable conflict.

The last thing I want to say is this—within each of us is a healer, a medicine person, a mystic, and a dancer (physical, metaphorical, or both!). How you heal, the medicine you carry, the connection you have to Life, and the way you move through it all are up to you. Whether

you love this book, hate it, or something in between, it was no accident that you picked it up, and again, I thank you so much for checking it out.

Much love and respect,  
Marisol X. Divina

P.S. My real name is Elizabeth DiAlto. I chose the pen name Marisol X. Divina to avoid “brand confusion” with my body of work at The School of Sacred Embodiment, not for anonymity. I’ve also been wanting an alias since Beyoncé’s Sasha Fierce days, and now I can cross that off my list.

P.P.S. For the nosy folks—none of the characters are based on me, though I have sprinkled a little bit of myself into each of them. Also, yes, some of the men are absolutely based on real people, and some of the interactions are based on experiences I really had, but I’ve changed all identity-revealing details to protect everybody’s privacy.

*Men come to sex hoping that it will provide them with all of the emotional satisfaction that would have come from love. Most men think that sex will provide them with a sense of being alive, connected, that sex will offer closeness, intimacy, pleasure. And more often than not sex simply does not deliver the goods.*

bell hooks

## #SECRETPRIESTESSPROBLEMS

“Elena, I need you to be here right at 10 am today. We have much to discuss.”

“Yes yes, I’ll be on time today. Te prometo,” she said, putting M. on speaker as she stepped into her giant walk-in closet to don some layers for her morning walk.

“Anything else?”

“No, that’s it. Nos vemos pronto.”

In the last month, Elena had developed a habit of running late for her weekly in-person meeting with M. The reason could be described best by a graphic tee she spotted at a boutique once that read, “I’m sorry I’m late. I didn’t want to come.” Of course, nothing gets past M. and this short little phone call was her way of reminding Elena of that fact.

Staring out the bedroom windows that overlooked the Hudson River, Elena marveled at the mutable nature of nature itself. Mutability. Changeability. Adaptability. Contrast. Paradox. How so many things could be happening and true at once. Today, what got her mystical mind wandering was how the sun could be so bright when the temperature was so low. She walked over to the windows and cracked one open. The sound of traffic whizzing by on the West Side Highway greeted her as she took an inhale of frigid February air mixed with toxic car emissions. *New York City living, baby.*

22 degrees was her guess for today. Maybe 25. She’d been playing this game since childhood—guessing the temperature before looking it up. Back then, looking it up required the effort of finding the newspaper or waiting for the weather report on TV. Now, it was always just a tap, click, or voice command away. In her twenties, she discovered that games like this and others had always been her innate Priestess instincts calling her to stay connected to the Earth no matter how rapidly technology was advancing, with its illusions of connectivity. *We have the ability to be more connected than ever, not just within our own communities but across the globe. And yet, most people feel more isolated than ever.* She thought about this all the time. As the High Priestess of a sacred but secret Order that only five other (living) people knew about,



she was no stranger to isolation. As a healer gifted with clairsentience, she also knew isolation because she could feel its heaviness in most people's bodies.

She finished getting dressed and followed the aroma of fresh coffee downstairs to its source—a muscley 28-year-old Dominican standing at her breakfast bar. At 40, Elena still could not believe that her lover of almost a year was so young. She envied men's lack of self-consciousness about such things. It had been such a mind-fuck for her at first, but there he was, scrolling on his phone, looking godlike in a pair of black silk pajama pants that did nothing to camouflage the perfect cock that made her cum like no other.

"Dark and sweet. Just how you like it, mami," he smiled, handing her a steaming mug as he pulled her in with one of his strong construction worker's arms and slid his delicious tongue between her lips. "It's 26 degrees outside."

"I was close. My guess was 22 to 25." She enjoyed the body contact for a few moments. At 5'6", she loved how safe and small she felt nuzzled into his 6'2" frame. *How does his body feel so good? Even just to hug? Ay.*

Coffee was kind of their thing since the day they met when Javi spilled an entire 16 oz latte on himself after Elena accidentally grazed his arm with her G-cups as she tried to squeeze by him in La Alchimista, the small Spanish café down the street. She didn't know he'd already been admiring the way her thick ass filled out her yoga pants—a gift from her Puerto Rican ancestors, no doubt— and fantasizing about burying his face in it as she ordered. Coffee, black with sugar. He would later tell her how his cock was twitching in his jeans, not yet fully aroused, but immediately stiffened when her "insane natural tetas" touched his arm at the same time he caught a waft of her scent. "It was like a Caribbean coconut dream in the middle of cold, gray Manhattan winter. I almost died, mami." In a rushed effort to adjust his noticeable bulge, he wound up wearing the coffee.

Ordinarily confident men devolving into awkward, clumsy idiots around Elena wasn't new. Her beauty had always been striking in its naturalness, and she was "blessed with all the right curves in all the right places," as her Tía Camila once put it, loudly, in front of their whole family. *Mortifying*. More compelling than any of that, though, was her energy. Take away the gorgeous plus-size model's figure, cherry lips, and doe eyes, and Elena would still radiate sensuality and erotic mystery. Things like Javi's spill were not uncommon. The lust that immediately pooled in her lower abdomen when she noticed his muscles and a pair of luscious lips that she immediately wanted to taste—that was uncommon. She decided the least she could do was offer to help him clean himself up in the bathroom. They'd been fucking ever since.

Wishing she had time for a morning romp, she placed her palm on his naked chest and spoke into his ear, "Thank you for the cafe, amor. You are the sexiest and if I could risk running late this morning, I'd drag you back into the bed."

“No te preocupes, mi vida. I have to get to a new site this morning for inspections. Also, you never have to drag me. I go willingly, always.” He reached a hand under the layers of her auburn curls, massaged the spot on the back of her neck that he knew made her melt, and kissed her again before heading upstairs to get dressed. She hated it when he got dressed.

. . .

Sufficiently caffeinated and bundled up, Elena walked north on Washington towards the 14th Street entrance to the High Line wondering what M. meant by, “We have much to discuss.” She knew M. had selected a new mark for her, but talking about marks was pretty standard between them, not “much to discuss.” Elena had grown used to her practically all-knowing status as High Priestess of the Order, especially as a clairsentient and a claircognizant with the ability to sense and know much more about people and situations than even those with the sharpest intuition. Even so, M.’s ultimate authority was never in question. It wasn’t her style to hold her position over Elena in any way. She wasn’t hierarchical, but that never prevented Elena from feeling indebted. M. had traveled across the world to find her, relieved her from the two jobs she was juggling—real estate assistant and barista—and single-handedly gave her a life she wouldn’t have even known to dream about. A mystical life of purpose dedicated to healing. And yes, it did require a lot of deceit, but all in the name of liberation. *Worth it.* Twenty years later, much about M. remained a mystery—namely, where the endless resources she invested into the Order came from and how she had a connection for everything they ever needed. They had also become family and M. was more devoted to the mission of the Order than anyone and always willing to do whatever it took to achieve it. Her passion never usually failed to invigorate Elena. Lately, though, feeling invigorated was perpetually out of her reach.

She picked up her pace to both fight the cold and raise her heart rate as she thought about why that might be. *I still love this work, don’t I? What’s more satisfying than healing the toxicity within men and restoring the sacredness they were meant to embody before the world corrupted them with all its bullshit? I know it’s a lot of work, and I don’t have much of a life outside of the Order, but I knew that’s how it would be when I accepted M.’s invitation to help her revive it.* The saying, “Do something you love, and you’ll never work a day in your life,” popped into Elena’s mind. *Yeah, I don’t know who made that shit up. I love what I do, but it’s A LOT of work. Maybe that’s it. I had no way of knowing how much work this was actually gonna be—*

“Ma’am! Excuse me!”

A man was yelling at her. Having gotten lost in her thoughts, it took her a moment to register his presence and realize that she was walking so slowly she might as well be standing still in the middle of the Highline like a tourist. She imagined herself yelling back, “Walk around me, puta! There’s plenty of room!” but what came out of her mouth was, “My bad,” as she

stepped aside. She dealt with enough fragile and entitled men on the regular. She was not about to give this pendejo an ounce of extra energy. With her attention back on her body, she realized her lips were beginning to numb from the cold and she was in no mood to finish her walk. If she went straight to El Palacio, she'd arrive early for her meeting with M. and have time to do one of her favorite things: read in the grand library, the most magnificent part of the townhouse. *Maybe I can find something inspiring to get me out of this funk...*

. . .

Elena let herself into M.'s \$14 million West Village mansion. She and Josephine, her cousin and fellow Priestess had nicknamed it El Palacio in their 20s because it felt like being inside a castle. The dominant color of the two middle floors where the Priestesses mostly spent their time was midnight blue like the Order's *Prophecy, Ritual, and Ceremony* book. Elena loved the significance of this color from the moment M. explained it. When most people think of fire, they think of red, orange, and yellow, but flames of those colors have cooler temperatures. Blue flames are the hottest. The ancestors who founded the Order, Isabel Flores and Salvadora Vera, chose blue to always remember the fate of their fellow Priestesses during La Inquisición and midnight blue, more specifically, as a reminder of the necessity of The Dark Healing Arts.

Walking into the library, Elena felt the awe of possibility she always felt here. *Gracias, Madre Divina*. The centuries-old Taracea-style tables, desks, and chairs. The intricate hand-carved elements and inlays. The exotic wood and leather. Everything in the room was inspired by Andalucía, birthplace of the Order. Elena loved these sensual details, but she loved the books even more. Floor-to-ceiling bookcases that required rolling shelf ladders and housed volumes upon volumes of ancient texts and herbalism books, classic and modern literature, mystical poetry and art history lined two of the library's walls. Learning was living for Elena. Or, more accurately, as she'd always experienced it, remembering. Remembering was living. She loved the feeling of rediscovery that reading and studying gave her. It was as if the information already existed in the archives of her soul, and the work in front of her was simply there to dust off and illuminate something she'd forgotten.

After the books, there was one more thing. The most magical thing. Literally. It was so ridiculous and fantastical that when M. first showed it to her, she thought she was being punked even though M., who reminded her in many ways of Jessica Pearson from *Suits* (one of her and Josephine's favorite shows), did not have the demeanor of a person who pranks. Still, Elena didn't believe it until she saw it in action.

El Pozo de Aguitas Sagradas. The well of sacred waters. Elena had no idea how M. got it transported from Spain, perfectly intact over 20 years ago, or installed it in the middle of the library, weighing what it must. No matter how many times she asked, M. would never say. She

and Josephine joked that maybe M. had some of that ancient technology the Egyptians and the Mayans supposedly used to build their pyramids.

*Are we really joking, though?*

With M., they had come to believe anything was possible. Los Aguitas were preserved from an ancient river that ran through Andalucía in the centuries before La Inquisición when Priestesses could practice their rituals, ceremonies, and healing arts in the open without persecution. Las comunidades de los pueblos revered and depended on them for sacred rituals and healing potions and their waters served two purposes. El agua curativa was the healing water. El agua de visión was the seeing water. How they remained fresh, clean, and ever-replenishing was another of the Order's great mysteries.

"I knew I'd find you in here."

Elena turned around to see M. coming down the stairs waving a file folder in her hand. Always a sophisticated, regal beauty, especially as she crossed into her 60s, M. proclaimed recently that she was surrendering to her viejita years. Her chosen method for embracing her age was a short haircut and professional coloring in a platinum-silver shade that somehow made her olive skin glow even more than it always had. "Like Storm from the X-Men," she had told them at the Order gathering where she revealed her new look to everyone. It suited her perfectly.

They exchanged besitos y abrazos.

"I have your new mark's file. We received several complaints about him from the dark website."

Elena was still curious about what "much to discuss" meant, but she knew M. would bring it up when she was ready. There was no need to press her.

"Ay, several. So a real gem, huh?" she responded.

Knowing there are few things women are more apt to discuss than shitty dates or shitty men, M. had the idea for the dark website a few years back. She commissioned a web developer to create a site on the dark web for women to submit reports about the worst men they dated. Word of mouth spread quickly once the site was up, and it took off. Of course, the women didn't know their submissions went to a secret Order of Priestesses on a mission to convert men into better people using sex, magic, and potions made from sacred plants. They just thought they were looking out for each other, another thing women love to do.

Elena's clairsentience was firing. Her stomach dropped, her chest clenched, and a heavy energy came over her as she accepted the file from M. and opened it. Staring back at her was a face she'd seen before. A man she'd danced with. *David, maybe? Or Darren?* As a Brooklyn Boricua, salsa dancing wasn't just in her blood. It was her favorite hobby and an infinite source of joy. She'd danced in every borough over the years. There wasn't a night of the week she could go dancing in New York City and not recognize somebody she knew. This man wasn't a regular-regular, but she'd seen him a few times. Great dancer. Very attractive. Dark-skinned,

Caribbean black dude, mid-40s if she had to guess, with gray eyes that practically pulsed with all the pain he was containing in his body. She remembered feeling dark energy all over him. She did her best to cloak both her clairsentience and her claircognizance when she was out, but some people's energy was so intense it just bled into everything. This guy was one of those, and he was her new mark. *Great.*

"What did the complaints say about him?" she asked, knowing M. would have memorized the file after looking at it once. Her brain was a marvel.

"He lists himself on Connectd and goes to sex parties as a 'dom who loves impact play.' The women who reported him all said he had no regard for their experience or their well-being. He pushed them after they used their safe words, and when they got upset, he found a way to blame it on them. It was pretty much the same story in every complaint."

Elena suddenly felt a sharp pain in her solar plexus, but she kept her attention on M. "Sounds like an unlikely mark. I'm surprised his soul consented." Aside from narrowing down which marks to target via submissions on the dark website, as Keeper of the Order, it was also M.'s job to perform the ritual of consent. Sacred Tenet #13 of the Order is that no mark was to be engaged without the consent of his soul—ever.

Elena rubbed her middle, where the pain had begun to burn, hoping to ease it. M., who never missed anything, noticed and asked if she was okay.

"Yes, I'm fine," she said, but M. gave her the side eye, not appearing to buy it. "Really, I'm good. Let's keep going." Elena gestured toward El Pozo. As was the custom, they stood close, and joined hands. M. recited the activating incantation to herself and el agua de visión began to bubble. Next, in Spanish she said, "Dama Oscura del Orden, somos tus hijas y tus sacerdotisas. Muéstranos todo lo que necesitamos saber sobre el hombre llamado Daniel Williams, para la sanación, para la luz, para la liberación, y para el amor incondicional, por favor. Gracias, Madre Divina. Gracias, gracias, gracias, gracias, gracias."

Elena followed in English, "Dark Lady of the Order, we are your daughters and your Priestesses. Please show us everything we need to know about the man named Daniel Williams. For healing, for the light, for liberation, and for unconditional love. Thank you, Divine Mother. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you."

Scene after scene appeared in El Pozo.

*A mother is holding a baby as they both sob. She's standing in front of a casket. It's her husband, who appears to have been a footballer.*

*The same mother is yelling at her young son who's maybe six or seven years old. He's just fallen off his bike, skinning his knees and elbows. He's crying. "Stop that, Daniel. Boys don't cry," said the mom, "Babies cry. You're a big boy now."*

*The boy, now 15 or 16 is doing his homework at a kitchen table, wearing headphones. He'd started dinner. Enough for himself and for his mom to warm up when she got home from the late shift. Dinner burns. The meal and the pan are both ruined. Later, his mom beats him with the pan. They both go to bed hungry.*

*A beautiful woman screams, "I can't believe I thought I could marry you, Daniel!" He's begging her to stay, to just talk to him, but she is dragging a suitcase toward the door, not even looking at him. She throws an engagement ring at him on her way out.*

*In his mid-30s now, Daniel stands over a casket. His mother is dead. Nothing he ever did was good enough for her. He is both devastated and relieved.*

*He's flogging a woman who is face down on a fancy bed while her ankles and wrists are secured to a spreader bar. He's laughing and saying, "Take that, you ungrateful bitch. You stupid, dirty whore." The position he's put her in, combined with his shouting, makes it hard to hear her saying, "Red!" the safeword. She is crying and wriggling, trying to get his attention so he'll stop.*

Elena walked away from El Pozo. "That's enough. I understand what we're dealing with."

"We need to discuss your approach. This man could be dangerous."

"Dangerous?" Elena turned around to face M., "He's weak, he's wounded, and he preys on vulnerable women to feel powerful. He needs to know what it feels like to—" She winced and grabbed her stomach, "¡Put a Madre!"

M.'s face scrunched into her *I-am-concerned-about-you* look, an expression Elena knew well.

"What? It's just a stomach ache. I only had coffee this morning, I haven't eaten anything."

M. put her hands on her hips, not buying Elena's explanation. "I may not be clair-sentient or clair-cognizant like you, but you're like the daughter I never had, Elena. Do you think I can't tell when something is off with you? You've been late to our weekly morning meetings, easily agitated and distracted, and now mysterious stomach pain...Are you pregnant?"

"Pregnant?! Ay bendito. Hell no! I just had my period last week," said Elena, amused by M.'s wild misread of the situation. "I really think I just need to eat something. You're right about something being off, though. I was thinking about this on my walk this morning. I just haven't felt like doing this work lately. It's been really hard to get it up to give a shit about marks, whether or not they heal, what their issues are." She sat down in a big leather chair and rubbed her temples, "I don't want to quit or anything. This is my whole life, but fuck, maybe I need a sabbatical?"

“You know, I am Spanish. I don’t know how it has not occurred to me that we could all probably use more time off. It’s hard to measure when one is fully devoted to a sacred calling how much energy is actually expended day in and day out on ‘working’ since this is not work in a traditional sense.”

With that, the pain in Elena’s solar plexus disappeared and her first major claircognizant download in months arrived. The pain had only been a messenger. She closed her eyes, her body shifted upright, and she got very still. M., who’d witnessed Elena in enough claircog moments to recognize what was happening stopped talking. When the download was complete, Elena spoke, “So, I need you and Milagros to do me a favor. Later, after I leave, I need you to look in El Pozo and ask about me.”

“Ask what?”

“For anything that will help me get past this funk. I need to know what my gifts can’t access on their own right now. While you two do that, I need to chat with Isabel and Salvadora. Whatever’s going on, it’s not something I can navigate on my own.”

M. trusted Elena’s gifts and truth wholeheartedly and didn’t object. “In that case, why don’t I hold onto Daniel’s file? We can revisit another time, or maybe it’d be better if I give him to Josephine.”

“Gracias. I’ll call you later.”

. . .

The walk back to Elena’s penthouse was only a few blocks from M.’s. and the cold air felt refreshing now. Sacred Tenet #6 of the Order is: The Body Never Lies. We can know things in our bones, but it doesn’t mean we always abide by them.

With the extra clarity that always came after a major download, Elena felt one step closer to herself and couldn’t wait to hear what Isabel and Salvadora had to say. She saw now that she’d been overriding her body’s signals for months. That, along with some very human hubris were catching up to her.

The elevator opened directly into her penthouse. Discarding her warm layers in a pile on a bench in the foyer, she went straight upstairs and sat down on the yoga mat by her altar. Elena despised yoga, but she loved Wild Soul Movement, a healing movement practice Josephine discovered at a workshop eight or nine years ago that helped them learn how to navigate emotional reactivity better, listen to their bodies, and perhaps the most helpful thing—work with their gifts. It was also a great way to ground before connecting with Las Abuelas. Her favorite format, the Wisdom class, combined a simple mantra with gentle sensual movement that helped crowd out distractions and unhelpful thoughts, regulate emotions, and embody a practical, universally soothing idea instead.

Elena knew her conversation with M. in the library had only scratched the surface of whatever was going on with her, so she went with one of her favorite mantras, “I release with compassion and forgiveness.” The trauma, pain, and suffering she witnessed on a regular basis was a lot to hold, even for a High Priestess. Thankfully, stretching, circling her neck, shoulders, and hips, and lovingly massaging a few key places on her body as she repeated the release mantra helped. She could feel a lot of the tension she’d been carrying beginning to unwind. *Maybe I just need to do this practice more often?*

After about 15 minutes, she paused to light two candles. One was an offering for La Diosa. The other was for Las Abuelas (her nickname for Isabel and Salvadora). Growing up Catholic, Elena had always prayed to Jesus’ parents - God and Mother Mary when she needed guidance. While she had no beef with either of them, getting spiritual guidance as High Priestess of the Order was just...different.

After the founders of the Order, Isabel and Salvadora escaped being burned at the stake with the rest of the Priestesses in their original Order, they made it their mission to destroy the consciousness and behavior that would even allow for such a thing to happen so it would never be repeated. It then became the destiny of their descendants to carry on their legacy. Elena and Josephine were descendants of Isabel, the Flores line. M. and Milagros were descendants of Salvadora, the Vera line. Elena always felt seen, held, and known by Las Abuelas, especially since somehow, despite being from 16th-century Spain, they spoke like the Golden Girls—minus the savage sarcasm and fatphobia.

Invoking Las Abuelas, she asked what was going on and what she needed to know.

Isabel chimed in first. “Whew! We were wondering when you’d reach your limit and realize you needed some help.”

Salvadora was next, “It appears, hija, that you are the first to encounter an issue we didn’t see coming as 16th century Spaniards whose imaginations would never have fathomed all these devices you people have now, and your internet, and your Face Pages, and your Gram-tocks or whatever they’re called.”

“Don’t forget the pornography,” Isabel added.

“Thank you, I was trying to,” Salvadora responded, which made Elena laugh.

“Josephine isn’t far behind you, by the way. Hopefully, your experience will serve as a warning for her so she doesn’t have to burn out like you have.”

“Burnout...” Elena said out loud, feeling the truth of it.

“Yes,” they said in unison before Isabel took over. “It’s all just too much. All the work you do for the Order. Meeting the worst of the worst. Having to be intimate with them in order to convert them. PLUS everything going on in your world. It’s so volatile, so divided, and so oppressive, and you’re inundated with it everywhere. Not that there isn’t just as much good going on too, but it’s just that’s not what gets the clicks or makes the headlines, so none of you are inundated enough with proof of healing and miracles and the possibility of liberation!”



Salvadora had another point, “And you, on top of all of that, also live a double life to protect the Order. You really are a superwoman, Elena, but your drain is clogged.”

“My drain is clogged?”

It was Isabel who took this one, “Yes, and while all the other things you do, eat well, walk, exercise, your Wild Soul Movement practice, meditation, all that hot sex you have with that beautiful Javi of yours—”

“Wait...what?! You watch me having sex???!” Elena shouted.

“No, no, no,” said Isabel, “We’re deceased Sexual Priestesses of the Dark Healing Arts, not perverts, Elena. We just assume. We can still feel energy, you know.”

Elena sighed with relief. “Thank Christ.”

“Oh, we can tell you some stories about him...”

“Isabel!” Salvadora interrupted her. Elena was loving this but also dying for them to get on with it. “Elena, Milagros needs to create a new poción that you and other Priestesses can journey with to give your physical, mental, emotional, and energetic bodies a good reset once or twice a year, like a limpia. It’s just not sustainable to live in the world you live in as it is and do the work you do without more support from la medicina de las plantas sagradas.”

“Wow, okay. Will it be like the journeys we take our marks on?”

“No,” Salvadora replied, “It’s really just a clearing and a recalibration to unclog the drain. It should be quite gentle and lovely. You’ll probably also get some useful insights.”

“That sounds amazing.”

“Si. It will be. Eso es todo, hija. Nosotras te amamos mucho.”

“Las amo mucho, tambien. Gracias, Gracias, Gracias!”

. . .

Elena ran herself a bath in the oversized tub M. had installed for her 40th birthday and added some healing herbs and oils. As she waited for it to fill, she thought about what Las Abuelas had said and laughed this time when she got to Isabel’s comment about Javi.

*Mmm, hot sex with Javi.* She reached for her phone and texted him, “What time are your inspections done today, corazón?”

...

He was typing...

...

“Almost done”

“Puedes venir aquí, despues? Te necesito dentro de mi cuerpo.” She asked him to come over after, saying she needed him inside of her. He responded with three emojis of the man running, four eggplants, and five squirts of water. Her pussy responded by tingling in anticipation.