



The Thorns Beneath the Rose: Book One

Gary Walters

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The year is 2016 and the place is Earth. And, as it turns out, the Greek and Norse mythologists were absolutely right. There is a council of gods watching our every move. Not so much for our benefit but rather for their own capricious amusement. Placing temptations (be they material or venal in other fashion, ways of the flesh, etc.) on the paths we all trod. And then these gods wage on the outcomes, whether we mere mortals take the bait and make choices for our own benefit or ignore the temptations placed in our way by the gods and make choices for the benefit of the greater good of society as a whole. But lately there has been a schism in the council of gods.

Some gods find they grow in strength when mortals act in their own selfish interests, while other gods, while not great supporters of we mortals, find that they become more powerful when mortals make choices for the benefit of all mortal kind. And so the two groups of gods come into conflict. The group that benefits from mortal self-interest plan to launch an all out war on the gods of the other side. But first they must take direct control of the behavior of earthly mortals and develop a device called the "Decision Liberator" in an attempt to "free" mortals from the "burden" of making their own choices, thus guiding mortal behavior in more selfish ways that will make them even stronger relative to their fellow gods, who are now firmly ensconced in opposition.

However, the other side knows perfectly well that this is precisely the time when all mortal kind must start making choices that benefit the whole and not just it's parts. Rapid climate change leading to potential environmental disaster, technological change spinning wildly out of control, outpacing mortal attempts to keep up with responsible social change to match the technological change, (massive invasion of personal privacy, equally massive dislocations in employment with fewer mortals needed to run planet Earth) as well as the ages old battle of materialism versus something of a higher order.

As such, two decades ago, these gods planted in the mind of a very young child, visions in the order of nightmares, visions of the manipulations by the gods of mortal behavior. In 2016 this young man has grown up and with the help of a few close friends as well as a few agents of the gods who have given him his hellish nightmares, attempts to destroy the Decision Liberator, and the kidnapped mortals trapped within its confines, as well as rescue one of their friends, the young man's first serious love, who is trapped in the clutches of the gods who are causing so much trouble. This young man, a budding novelist/advertising executive, and his first love, a special needs educator turned swimsuit model, his college roommate, a lawyer playing both sides under the influence of his former girlfriend, an agent of the gods wanting to control mortal kind, as well as a female friend of the teacher/model, a young physician, in residence for her specialty and her now found love, a woman filmmaker and videographer, the only African American in this all white band of brothers and sisters, all with their internal struggles and group conflicts must resolve their differences and issues if they are to have even the slimmest of chances to save their personal freedom of choice as well as the planet they inhabit.

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Mary Ransom:

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