
HER HARD OBEDIENCE

Supernatural Doms - Book One

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Published by Eclipse Press
An Imprint of
ABCD Graphics and Design, Inc.
A Virginia Corporation
977 Seminole Trail #233
Charlottesville, VA 22901

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EBook ISBN: 978-1-948140-62-1
Print ISBN: 978-1-948140-70-6

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Cover Art by ABCD Graphics & Design

This book contains fantasy themes appropriate for mature readers only.
Nothing in this book should be interpreted as Blushing Books' or the author's
advocating any non-consensual sexual activity.

Chapter 1

In all her life, Giselle L’Claire never thought she’d be the one standing under an umbrella at a cemetery, watching people gather for a funeral and probably raising questions amongst those who were standing around the crypt.

Of course she had a few questions herself, ones that had made her mother yell at her when Giselle had called and said, “Why didn’t you tell me Aunt Sybil died?”

“Why don’t you ever listen to me?” Her mother’s voice had been shrill. “I told you my sister was already dead!”

Giselle had taken a few deep breaths and repeated the mantra that she said so many times. *I won’t turn into my mother. I won’t turn into my mother. I won’t turn into my mother.* “She might have been dead to you, Mom, but she still drew breath, until she was mugged three days ago in the French Quarter. You had to have known. I repeat, why didn’t you tell me?”

“Don’t you dare use that tone with me,” her mother had responded. “There will be no family funeral. She doesn’t deserve it. Don’t you dare go to the cemetery. To make sure you do as I say I expect to see you at lunch at the restaurant. We could use your help.”

“I don’t work the morning shift, Mom.” Giselle had clicked end before her mother could respond. She’d stared at the phone, then showered, dressed and headed to the cemetery. She did it as quickly as possible, because she knew her mother would be heading her way, to force her to stay away.

She was out the door of her apartment, in the former slave quarters behind her parents’ garden district home, in fifteen minutes, wet hair and all. Once she was away from the house, she pulled into a parking lot and searched the web for directions to the cemetery, one she’d never heard of before. It was simply called No. 6. When she’d arrived a caretaker had pointed her in the direction of the Bernard family crypt, where her mother’s side of the family was buried. She’d never been here before. In fact this small cemetery, with its simple name, was not even listed amongst the Cities of the Dead tours that she’d searched that very morning. This was in the Seventh Ward, far away from where her family lived and made their living.

How sad that she’d had to use the internet to find the place where her ancestors were laid to rest. At one point she’d asked her mother what had caused the rift between the sisters, why Giselle didn’t know anything about her family. Her mother had screamed at her to mind her own business. There had been an f-bomb in there, too, the first time Giselle had ever heard the word. She’d been all of fourteen years old at the time. When she was fifteen, she’d met Sybil who had waited outside Giselle’s school. Giselle, who had not seen her since she was seven, had barely recognized her.

Giselle had skipped the bus home and the two of them had gone to the zoo where they’d walked, talked, and enjoyed ice cream. When she’d asked Sybil about the rift, Sybil had laughed and said, “Your mother’s just a bitch.”

That had angered Giselle who had screamed, “Don’t call her that!” and taken off at top speed. She’d taken the streetcar home and been in trouble for being late. But she’d kept her real reason

for being late to herself. She hadn't seen Sybil again until her sixteenth birthday, when Sybil had snuck into her parents' Garden District house.

"I know they're at the restaurant," Sybil had said when she'd stepped into Giselle's bedroom. "I'm so sorry they're working on your birthday, and I'm sorry for what I said before."

At first, Giselle had wanted to throw her out, but then Sybil had crossed the room and taken Giselle into her arms and hugged her tight. Giselle had cried against her shoulder, angry at her parents' betrayal since she'd asked them to stay home, so she could have a party for this very important birthday. They had refused, and when they'd left, Giselle had thrown herself on her bed and cried, until Sybil had arrived.

It hadn't taken much coaxing to get Giselle to change her clothes and leave the house with her aunt, despite her parents' order that she stay home. They'd gone to a sandwich shop on Magazine Street and enjoyed a muffaletta. Then they'd gone to an undercover club on Bourbon Street where the bouncer had looked the other way while Giselle had slipped past him. She'd had two drinks and been out for the count, drinking a soft drink after that while watching a jazz band that made her laugh and dance.

She'd gotten home at two-thirty, about ten minutes before her parents arrived. She'd still been buzzed from the drinks, and it had not taken any acting to act like she was asleep when her mother had looked into the room.

After that, she and Sybil had met once a week for food and trips to the zoo or to see movies. They'd always avoided the French Quarter, where her parents owned a restaurant and a bar. She'd loved those days with her aunt, who laughed and showed Giselle love no matter what, which was so different from her mother, who scowled and yelled every day about something her only child had done wrong. Many times Giselle had wished Sybil

had been her mother. But when she'd told Sybil that, her aunt had shaken her head.

"Your mother has her problems." Sybil had kissed Giselle on her cheek. "Cut her some slack." It was so different than when Sybil had called Constance a bitch that Giselle had stared at her and pressed for more information. But her aunt had refused, and said, "Let's go to the aquarium today."

Now, she stared at the people who had started to gather around the crypt. At least there were people there. If she had more guts, she would go down there with them to pay her respects properly, as a good niece should do. Instead she held back, her mother's voice ringing in her ear, "Don't you dare go to that cemetery!"

And then, as if a lightning bolt had come out of the clear sky and struck Giselle, she scrunched up her face and said, "Screw you, Mother."

Giselle walked toward the crypt where about fifteen people now stood. She stood toward the back; her gaze locked on the open door of the stone building that would become her aunt's final resting place.

"Who are you?" a deep male voice asked.

Giselle jumped a little, then straightened her shoulders as she prepared to tell him exactly who she was. But she didn't have time. The man's sharp question was followed closely by a woman's rebuke.

"Bite your tongue, Berto. It's obvious this is Giselle."

The crowd awed as if that made sense, and Giselle wondered what her aunt had told them about her. This was obviously Sybil's circle of friends, so they probably knew everything about her family, and the ongoing feud between the sisters.

"We're glad you're here," the woman said as she held out her hand. "I'm Lucinda. I'll let everyone else introduce themselves. The service will be short, as Sybil instructed in her will. But we

are having a wake tonight at Peskey's. Do you know where that is?"

Giselle nodded. "I went there with Sybil once. It's at the end of Bourbon Street, off the beaten path for the tourists." Giselle didn't tell the woman this was the place Sybil had taken her for her sixteenth birthday.

"It starts at ten," Lucinda said. "I hope you'll join us."

"Yes, we do." The man who had made her feel unwelcome earlier stuck out his hand. "Berto. Sybil talked about you a lot."

People started throwing out names, Chester, Hector, Marissa, Juanita. So many names that Giselle had trouble putting them with faces. There was no way she would remember who was who. They all said they'd heard about her. The right answer would be to tell these people that Sybil talked about them, too. But she couldn't because Sybil never had. "Thanks for the invitation." Giselle clutched her umbrella tighter. "But I have to work tonight."

The people around her exchanged looks, ones that made Giselle very uncomfortable.

"This is a once in a lifetime thing," Lucinda said. "Surely you can, I don't know, call in sick?"

Giselle stifled a giggle. "That's exactly what Sybil would have said." Tears formed in her eyes, and as much as she tried, she couldn't hold them back. She started to turn away, eager to find a place where she could watch the proceedings by herself. Before she could move there were arms around her, strong ones that she thought might belong to Berto. He released her very quickly, and smiled at her like a grandfather would smile at his granddaughter. As she looked at his face, she realized he was much older than she thought he was. From the lines on his face she thought him to be at least seventy. But his body was not nearly that old.

She thought her eyes were playing tricks on her, but the feeling quickly passed when Lucinda wrapped her arm around

Giselle's shoulders, and placed a sweet, calming kiss on her cheek.

"I'm sorry," Giselle said as she sniffled. The difference of Berto up close and Berto far away faded from her mind.

"I'd be sorry if you didn't cry," Lucinda said. "Sybil loved you very much, and I have a feeling you felt the same about her."

Giselle nodded. She kept her gaze trained on the ground, ashamed at crying in front of a group of people she'd never met before.

"If we're ready," a deep voice said.

Giselle wiped away her tears and looked up at the priest who stood near the opening of the crypt. There were murmurs, and then the priest said a prayer. He said a passage from the Bible, one that Giselle didn't recognize, and then the group started to chant, something else she didn't recognize. When it was over the priest stepped toward the crypt. He made some hand motions, and then poured water over the threshold. Four men walked to the carriage and took hold of Sybil's coffin. They carried it to the crypt and carefully placed it inside. The priest followed them. Giselle heard more chanting, and then the men came back out. When the priest had exited behind them, they closed the door and the priest sprinkled more water on the steps that led inside.

So that was it, Giselle thought. She'd never been to a service so short. Surely, they should do something else, like sing and dance as most people did at New Orleans funerals.

Lucinda, who was obviously the leader of the group, walked to the priest and gave him an envelope. He took it, nodded and left without saying another word.

"See everyone tonight," a male voice said.

Giselle looked at the speaker, a big bull of a man surrounded by two other men who were also his size. They all had long dark hair, and looked to be in their late thirties. People were starting to leave without saying anything.

"I hope you'll come tonight," Lucinda said. "I can send Berto

to fetch you, if you like. Peskey's is not exactly in a safe area for a woman to travel alone."

"I'll be fine," Giselle said. "But it will be late before I get there."

"We will party through the night to celebrate Sybil's new life," Lucinda said.

Giselle thought that was a strange way to look at things, but she knew some people looked upon death as a gateway to the next world, which was probably what Sybil's friends thought. In all the time Giselle had spent with her aunt, they'd never talked religion, or death, or beliefs,

They'd discussed books, and movies, and music. Why hadn't they talked about the things that really mattered? She knew her mother would throw a fit if she didn't show up for work tonight, but somehow Giselle didn't care. She had friends on staff that she could call and see if they would cover for her.

"Can I offer you a lift home?" Lucinda asked.

"No, thank you, my car is parked near here." Giselle offered her hand. "I will see you tonight, though."

"We'll look forward to it." Lucinda turned. She took Berto's arm and they walked off, with several men falling into place behind them.

When she was alone at the crypt, Giselle stared at the names engraved into the stone. She'd never been here, since her mother wouldn't allow it. She'd been to the L'Claire crypt many times to lay flowers and say prayers for her father's family. But this was a first. She stared at the names, none of which rang a bell with her. Anna Bernard, 1865-1901; Jacob Bernard, 1865-1902; Bishop Bernard, 1890-1906; Franklin Bernard, 1895-1950; and then, under it were two names that made her take a step back. Sybil Marie Bernard, 1924, with no date of death. After that was Constance Marie Bernard L'Claire, 1926, with no date of death. There was one more that took her breath away. Giselle Prudence L'Claire. Beside the name was 1995-1997. She'd been born in

1995. What the hell was that all about? Did she have a twin that shared the same name? No, that wasn't possible. It was her name. It made her feel as if she might vomit right there on the spot.

She pushed that thought aside and made a mental note to ask her mother about it later. Giselle stared at the other names she knew, those of her mother and sister. But the dates of birth were wrong. If Sybil had been born in 1924, that would make her close to ninety now, and the woman she knew as her aunt was barely fifty. And her mother, Constance, was nowhere near that age, either. She'd barely been nineteen when she'd given birth to Giselle, who was now twenty-four. That made Constance forty-three, and it would make Sybil forty-five. According to these dates here they were much, much older.

She needed to talk to her mother about this, about the dates, and why her name was already on the Bernard family crypt. And who was Bishop Bernard who was only sixteen when he died? She did a quick bit of math on the other people interred in this crypt. None of the other things seemed out of place, except for the fact there were not many people here.

Even though she had questions, she knew there was no way her mother would answer them. She'd scream at Giselle for going to the cemetery when she'd been told to stay away. No, what Giselle needed was some time alone with her phone and the internet. Maybe she would find some answers about her family there.

Of course there was the possibility she could talk to Lucinda, see if she knew anything about the Bernard part of the family. Giselle bowed her head and said a silent prayer for her aunt. She crossed herself, and then took a step back.

"Aunt Sybil, I'm sorry we didn't have more time together." She sniffled a little before she cleared her throat. "But I wanted to thank you for the time that we did spend together. It was so much fun. You made me laugh, and although I wish you'd told me more about the feud, I'm happy you didn't hold it against me.

Not that I had anything to do with it, but you know what I mean.”

Giselle took a deep breath and said, “I won’t be able to go to the aquarium or the zoo without thinking of you. Of course seeing this crypt I want to ask you about the dates. If you’ve found the fountain of youth, you need to let me know.”

Out of the corner of her eye, Giselle saw movement. She turned in time to see the leg of what she figured was a man disappearing behind a crypt about three down from where she stood. She felt spied upon, and she called out, “What do you want?”

A moan answered, and Giselle jerked her head toward Aunt Sybil’s resting place, from which the moan seemed to have come. Her stomach tightened and she called out once more for whoever was there to “Quit messing around.”

This time there was no audible answer. Of course there probably wasn’t one the first time, either. She was just hearing things. There was a reason why this cemetery was not on the tourist tours... it was creepy.

Giselle inhaled deeply and said, “I’m going to miss you, and I love you, no matter what happened between you and Mom. And if you want to come visit and give me a clue on the birth date thing that would be nice.”

Was it her imagination, or did the crypt seem to shimmer, sort of like water in a desert? Okay, creepy was out the window. This was downright bizarre.

“Sybil?” she said softly. Then, she gasped as the nickname Sybil had given her, *GiGi*, appeared on the door to the crypt.

“What the hell?” She took a step back. Her name disappeared and the words, *Love you, too* took their place.

“No way,” Giselle said. Obviously the August sun had fried her brain. She blinked her eyes—the message was still there. She blinked one more time. It was gone. She sighed in relief, but

decided the strange happenings told her it was time to run for the gate.

The crypt seemed to shimmer again, and Giselle took a step back. This time the message wasn't written on the crypt door.

"Be careful, my darling." Sybil's voice wafted through the hot, humid August air. Her heart started to beat faster, until she thought she would pass out.

"Sybil?" she finally managed to say.

"I'm so sorry. I tried."

"Tried what?" Giselle said. Her body was hot now, as if there were an oven inside her and someone had turned it to five hundred degrees. She put her hands on her knees and lowered her head, trying to catch her breath.

"What the hell is happening?" she whispered. Had she lost her sense of reality? Even in a city known for witchcraft and voodoo, she'd never had a dead person talk to her in a cemetery.

"Sybil." There was no answer.

"I imagined it," Giselle said. Her body shook, though, and she knew she hadn't imagined anything. Sybil had talked to her. Sybil had been there.

She turned toward the area where she'd seen the leg disappear. A man stood there, wearing a Victorian mourning outfit, complete with top hat. He took off his hat and bowed in her direction.

"My condolences," he said, his French accent very pronounced. Then he let loose a string of French words that far surpassed Giselle's high school French classes.

"I'm sorry?" she said when he'd stopped speaking.

He bowed once more and disappeared behind the crypt. This time Giselle didn't stand near the self-inscribing building that now held her aunt's remains. She ran for the area where the man had stood.

He was gone. In his place was a single red rose. Giselle wondered if he and Sybil were lovers. Maybe he had waited until

after the service so that he could have a moment alone with the woman that he loved. If that were the case then she'd messed things up for him, royally.

Her body still shook. She thought about taking the rose, but decided that it wasn't for her, and there was every possibility the man hadn't intended it for Sybil's grave. Best to leave it where it had landed.

"I'm leaving now," she called out. She wasn't sure who she was talking to, Aunt Sybil or the strangely dressed man who had been there one moment, and gone the next. As she headed for the gate, her legs, which had felt like jelly earlier, gained their strength. It was the heat, and the fact she wanted to hear Sybil's voice one more time that had caused her hallucinations.

Or so she hoped. Giselle wondered if she should mention it to Lucinda.

But as she approached her car, she thought she'd keep her hallucinations to herself. There was no need for her aunt's friends to know that Giselle was obviously going gaga.

When she was behind the wheel she thought, for a split second, of telling her mother about today's events, but decided that was not a good idea. Constance would just yell louder at her daughter.

And Giselle knew she was in for a dressing down anyway, without adding a strange message on a crypt door.