

VOICES FROM THE PAST

A DESTINY TRILOGY
CHRISTMAS SHORT STORY



DERINDA BABCOCK



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Voices from the Past: A Destiny Trilogy Christmas Short Story

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DEDICATION

April Holthaus,

I appreciate your enthusiasm, encouragement, and
feedback.

NOTE TO READERS

In *Dodging Destiny*, Book 1, readers meet Lexie Logan, the Bells, Johnsons, and Wests.

In Search of Destiny, Book 2, follows the lives of the people Lexie leaves behind in the nineteenth century. Josephine “Josie” and her twin, Annie, meet the Bells and Sean West while traveling the Oregon Trail. Olivia Aubry meets Jonathan in Oregon after the Civil War.

The female Bell, Johnson, and West descendants solve the mystery of who Lexie Logan is and why their folks are so secretive about her in *Hunting for Destiny*. Leah Johnson is determined to communicate with Lexie though a century and a half separates them.

Returned to the twenty-first century in *Following Destiny*, Lexie must face the problems she ran from in Book 1. She still wonders about the people she left behind and discovers the tie that binds them together.

Voices from the Past connects the world of the past with the world of the present as Leah has found a way to communicate with Lexie.

ORDER OF THE DESTINY BOOKS

Dodging Destiny

In Search of Destiny

Hunting for Destiny

Following Destiny

Voices from the Past



LEXIE'S HERITAGE

Nathan "Nate" Johnson



Jonathan Johnson m. Olivia Aubry (daughter of Phineas)

Rachel & Sarah (twins)

Nathaniel

Rachel Johnson m. Charles West (son of Benjamin and
Laura)

Olivia Anne

Olivia Anne West m. Franklin David West (her cousin)
(son of Sean and Annie)

Alexandria

Alexandria West m. Albert Bell (deceased) grandson of
Matthew & Betsy / 2nd m. Louis Garth

Rebecca & Ruth Bell (twins)

Samuel Garth

Rebecca Bell m. Louis Marks

Audrey

Audrey Marks m. Joseph Glenn

Olivia

Olivia Glenn m. David Logan

LEXIE

Steven

LEXIE m. Lance Garrett

Tyler & Trevor (twins)

ONE: LEXIE

Kansas, December 2020



LEXIE LOGAN GARRETT paced to the bedroom window for the tenth time and looked down on the dark, snowy street. The lazy snowflakes from an hour ago had changed into the get-down-to-business kind. Another inch now blanketed the ground.

Christmas lights from the neighbors' yards and windows blinked at her through the swirling snow. Though the scene looked like a holiday painting, the unease tightening her muscles didn't allow her to appreciate the hushed beauty of the night.

Where was Lance? Why hadn't he called? He and his brother, Greg, were supposed to be home two hours ago.

She swallowed the lump in her throat and fought down panic. Since the nightmare in Guatemala when she'd miscarried little Matthew David and had then believed Lance had been killed in a massive mudslide, she no longer felt comfortable when he piloted his family's Cessna. She didn't question his skill and experience. He'd flown for years and in all kinds of weather. But each time he left for a conference or to meet

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with clients, her mind returned to those dark days, and she didn't rest until he came home.

Lexie turned from the window and walked to her phone. Had Lance texted and she hadn't heard the beep? She stared at the screen. No message.

Maybe her mother-in-law had news. She hit the speed dial.
"Hello?"

"Amy, have you heard anything?"

"Not recently. Greg texted before they left Portland. He said the conference was worthwhile, and he'd tell us about everything tomorrow. Lisa just called a moment ago with the same question. Her nerves stretch when Greg leaves her and the baby for any length of time."

I knew how my sister-in-law felt.

"I don't know what's going on, Lexie, but don't get worked up. They'll let us know when they can."

Sometimes, Amy's mechanical engineer brain frustrated Lexie, but tonight, her mother-in-law's words soothed her distress.

"All right, but call me as soon as you hear anything."

"I will. How are the twins?"

Lexie looked toward their bedroom. "Fine. They're sleeping."
Amy chuckled. "In which bed?"

"You heard?"

"Yes, Lance said the boys wouldn't sleep apart. I can't imagine the two of them huddled together in a junior bed. So what did you do?"

"We got rid of the junior beds and bought them a queen."

She laughed. "Problem solved?"

"For now." Lexie once again stood in front of the window.
"The snow is getting deeper. Do you think the plows will be out soon?"

"Get some rest, kiddo. You can't make Lance and Greg get home any sooner by counting the minutes."

"You're right. Goodnight, Amy."

"Night."

After she hung up, Lexie looked out the window one more time. The snow fell faster and thicker, and her heart rate increased. What if the plane experienced mechanical

problems? Though Greg was a commercial airline mechanic, he might not be able to do anything if trouble started while they were in the air.

“Be quiet!” she scolded herself and moved away from the window. “They inspect the plane in minute detail before and after they fly.”

Lexie reached for her violin and bow, and the pressure in her chest eased. She sat on the bed and placed her chin in the rest and drew the bow across the strings. Without thinking, she closed her eyes and played the first verse of “It is Well with My Soul.”

“Mommy?”

Lexie opened her eyes to see both twins standing in the door of her bedroom, the hall light shining on their tousled brown heads. Tyler held his small violin and bow and Trevor waved his soprano recorder.

“What are you boys doing up?”

Tyler frowned. “We heard you. You always play that song when you’re sad, so Trev and I came to cheer you up.”

“Come in then. Come play with me.”

The four-year-olds crawled up on the bed beside her.

“Ty and I been practicing, Mommy. We know this song real good.”

She smiled. “I know you’ve been practicing, Trev, and that you and your brother know this song really well. I’m proud of you both for working so hard.”

At her signal, Tyler put the violin to his shoulder and raised his bow. She did the same. Trevor put the recorder to his lips. At her head nod, they played together.

Lexie’s heart swelled at how much they’d accomplished since they started playing at three. She didn’t know if they’d inherited the engineering brains and quick understanding from Lance and his side of the family, or their love of music from hers, but however they came by their skill, she was grateful they wanted to play with her. Who needed the Topeka Symphony Orchestra when she could have the Garrett Family Musicians?

They played through all the verses. When they finished the last notes, Tyler played a new, livelier song. Lexie and Trevor

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joined. They played together for another thirty minutes.

“All right boys. Time for bed. Let’s get you tucked in.”

Tyler yawned and stretched. “Do you feel better, Mommy?”

She hugged him. “Yes, much.”

Trevor leaned against her. “Okay. I can sleep now.”

Lexie picked him up and followed Tyler into the smaller bedroom.

She tucked them in and kissed them. “Night, boys. I love you.”

“Love you, Mommy,” they answered as one voice.

Lexie didn’t want to return to her bedroom where she’d be tempted to look out the window every five minutes, so she went downstairs and turned on the television. No late night shows for her. She longed to hear and see the people she’d left in the past. She inserted the DVD she’d made before she and Lance had left for Spanish language school in Costa Rica.

Seeing and hearing Jim, Edna, Fergus, Dwight, Mary, Mattie, Jesse, Jonathan, Nate, and Sean filled her eyes with tears and her heart with love. She longed to talk with them face-to-face, to find out how they’d lived their lives after she left but knew they’d died at least a century earlier. That thought put lead in her heart.

At the sound of the doorbell, Lexie paused the player, brushed at her tears, and looked at her watch. Dark but not late.

She opened the door to a masked UPS driver who scanned the bar code before handing her a medium-sized package.

She smiled at him. “Thank you. Merry Christmas.”

He pointed to his mask. “Sure will be glad when this coronavirus scare is over. My glasses fog in the cold.”

Lexie agreed and shut the door on the snow and cold. She turned the package over and looked at the sender’s address. “A.P. Harper, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Hmm.”

She sat down on the couch and opened the box. She picked up his note.

Dear Lexie,

I’m moving to a smaller place, so I’m downsizing.

In the process of cleaning out the attic, I found

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this photo album stuck in a crack between boxes. I think this goes with the information you found in the trunks.

Merry Christmas. Tell Lance and the boys I said hello. My new address is on the back of this note. Come see me when you can.

A.P.

Lexie's pulse raced as she lifted the photo album out of the box and opened the cover.

Her heart almost stopped when she looked into Mary's eyes.

Mary sat next to Jesse and their nearly-grown children. Someone had written their names on the page below the image. *Jesse Johnson, Mary Bell Johnson, William, Zachary, Leah, and Deborah, Christmas, 1882.*

Lexie stared at each of the images and smiled when she saw the diamond heart necklace she'd given Mary for her seventeenth birthday. The same necklace now hung around her neck.

She switched her attention to Jesse. Energetic, fun-loving Jesse. "I'm glad you and Jonathan didn't kill each other in the war."

She turned the page and her eyes widened. She looked at a mirror image of herself dressed in nineteenth century clothing. *Jonathan Johnson, Olivia Aubry Johnson, Rachel, Sarah, Nathaniel, Christmas, 1882.*

How could this be? Her eyes traveled to the twin girls, Rachel and Sarah. Had she and Lance had twin girls instead of twin boys, they might have looked like Rachel and Sarah.

"You look happy, Jonathan, though I can see you've aged and the marks of war line your face. I'm glad you found Olivia." She stared at their images for several minutes before turning the page.

Dwight Bell, Josephine Aubry Bell, Susana, Polly, James Fergus, Grayson, Christmas, 1882. Lexie couldn't believe her eyes. Josephine Aubry could be another twin. She flipped between Olivia and Josephine's images. Uncanny.

When Lexie gazed at the next image, she laughed. "You've got to be kidding." *Sean West, Anne Aubry West, Betsy, Corbin,*

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David, Christmas, 1882. Another twin? Because she'd read Olivia's journals and the letters, Lexie knew Olivia, Anne, and Josephine resembled each other and her, but to see the photographs startled her.

She cried when she turned the page and Jim, Edna, Mary, and Matthew looked at her, unsmiling, and posed in typical nineteenth century fashion. She stroked their images with an index finger. "You're not little anymore, Mattie. You're a giant like your dad and uncle. I miss you, and I really miss Fergus."

Big Tom, Mammy Sue, and Peter were included in the album, and her gratitude overflowed. "Thank you, Lord, for letting me see them again. Peter is as big as Tom."

Lexie noted the Christmas decorations in the background. All the pictures were taken in the same place.

Then the people in the groupings changed as she progressed through the album.

Nathan Johnson, Jonathan, Jesse, Christmas, 1882.

Lexie stared. Though his hair had whitened, Nate looked as ornery as he had in 1857. She could still hear him demanding she marry Jonathan that Sunday so long ago.

Leah Johnson and fiancé, Corbin West, Christmas, 1882.

Interesting. Leah now wore the diamond heart necklace she'd given Mary.

William West, Benjamin and Laura Shoemaker West, Charles, Christmas, 1882.

Ben and Laura. Her thoughts instantly returned to the box supper and Ben's care of Fergus.

Betsy West and fiancé, Matthew Bell, Christmas, 1882.

Lexie studied Matthew's and Betsy's images. "I know your descendants, Mattie. You'd like Kimberly and Weston. Weston has your sense of adventure."

More photographs had been added through the years as the families grew and increased, and the necklace appeared on Rachel's daughter, Olivia Anne, and then on her daughter, Alexandria. Then the images stopped.

Lexie pursed her lips. "If someone intended to return the necklace to me, how could they know I am Jonathan's direct descendant and not Leah's? Coincidence? I don't think so."

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She started to close the photo album but noticed an extra pocket built into the back cover. The pocket bulged, and the corner of a handwritten letter, yellowed and faded, protruded from this pocket.

Lexie eased the letter out. The first words riveted her attention and shocked the breath out of her lungs.

Christmas, 1882, at the Aubry ranch, Oregon

Dear Lexie Logan,

My name is Leah Johnson. I am Jesse and Mary's daughter ...