

A Safe Place To Sleep

A Kristin Ashe Mystery

By Jennifer L. Jordan

© 1992, 2006

www.JenniferLJordan.com

PROLOGUE

I've waited a long time to tell this story. If it were just her story, I could have told it years ago.

Her name was Destiny Greaves. She was a strong, beautiful woman who hired me to look into her past.

I wasn't prepared for what I found in her past... or in mine. But then, how could anyone have prepared for what we discovered? Such loss. Such gain. In such a short span of time. I've often wondered if there are limits to the amount of pain and joy human beings can feel. I think I found my own limit on this case.

I wonder if Destiny found hers.

Sometimes, I like to think back to that very first day, to the day when I first heard about her. It was a day full of such hope.

I remember it as if it were yesterday....

CHAPTER 1

It was an unusually warm Sunday afternoon in late February. I'd just returned from an exhausting thirty-mile bike ride through the streets of Denver. The phone was ringing as I opened my apartment door. I propped my mountain bike against the living room wall and ran to catch the call before my answering machine did. I just made it.

"Kris, you're never going to believe this — I met the most incredible woman at the Book Garden yesterday!" my friend Michelle gushed.

"Hold on a sec, Michelle, I just got in."

I set the phone down, took the keys out of the door and wheeled my mountain bike out onto the nineteenth floor balcony. I tossed my bike helmet on the couch, walked into the kitchen, and poured myself a stiff drink — Dr. Pepper on shaved ice — as a reward for having exercised intensely. All of this, I did at a leisurely pace. Over the years, I'd heard enough of Michelle's descriptions of women she'd met. Invariably, they were long and excruciatingly detailed. No sense hurrying for one.

I plopped down on the couch and massaged my rubbery legs which were still cool from the crisp spring air.

"Okay."

"Geez, Kris, did you clean your whole apartment?"

I ignored her question. She'd seen my apartment. She knew I couldn't clean it in a full day of hard labor much less in three scant minutes.

"Tell me about this woman."

That simple request magically restored her good humor.

"I'm in love, Kris. I swear it. This time, I'm in love."

“I’m sure you are.” Michelle fell in love more often than most people grocery shop.

“I know what you’re thinking,” she said, as if reading my mind across the phone lines. “It’s another one of Michelle’s silly crushes, but this time, it’s different. At least it feels different.”

“What’s her name?” I asked as I restyled my “helmet” hair, using a nearby spoon as a mirror.

“Destiny Greaves.”

“Yeah, right. Real funny!”

“I’m serious.”

“Oh, sure,” I answered, completely unable to believe that my friend Michelle had met the most famous lesbian in Denver.

“Kris, c’mon, I’m not kidding you.”

“Are you talking about the Destiny Greaves, the one who’s an activist, the one we see on TV all the time?”

“Exactly.”

“The one who runs the Lesbian Community Center?”

“Yes, yes, that’s who I met.”

“The one who’s tall, blonde, and incredibly beautiful?”

“Even more so in person than on TV.”

“Wow!” Now that she had me convinced, I was impressed. “By the way, what were you doing at the Book Garden? You don’t even like to read.” I loudly slurped my drink.

“Women’s bookstores are not just about reading,” Michelle said as if she were explaining the most simple idea to a child. “I went to an author’s lecture yesterday to meet women.”

“What author?”

“Who knows? She was quite boring. I can’t even remember her name. Anyway, after the reading, several women stayed around to browse and chat. That’s when I met Destiny. I went right up and told her I thought she was an interesting person, and I’d like to get to know her better.”

“What did she say?”

“Well, first she laughed. But then, she asked me what my name was. I’d been thinking so hard about what I was going to say that I forgot to tell her my name. Anyway, we couldn’t talk in the Book Garden because everyone was standing around and a lot of women were staring at her. All the attention seemed to make her uncomfortable, so the next thing I knew, she asked me out to lunch. I’d already eaten but I gladly accepted. We had a great lunch — she’s a fantastic woman. She’s done so much with her life.”

“Hmm.” I tried to think of more to say, but I was too shocked. Michelle Spivack and Destiny Greaves. How odd!

“And you’ll never believe this, Kris. The best part of all is that she’s not in a relationship!”

“That is good,” I said. For Michelle, it was not only good, it was a veritable miracle. She had a bad habit of falling in love with women who were already in relationships or otherwise unavailable.

“I can’t wait for you to meet her.”

“Isn’t this jumping the gun a little, Michelle? I mean you only met her yesterday. Did you even set up another date?”

“Of course we did. We’re going to dinner tomorrow night.”

“Did she ask you out or did you ask her?”

“I asked her,” she said, sounding a bit disappointed. “But she seemed glad I asked and she said ‘yes’ right away.”

“That’s a good sign.”

“She’s so much like you. It freaked me out talking to her — you’re even the same age. You are twenty-nine now, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” I said tersely. Michelle could never remember my age, or my birthday for that matter, though she never forgot my astrological sign.

“Also, she’s a Libra.”

“Great!” I said with more than a trace of sarcasm.

“I know you don’t believe in that stuff, but there’s a lot of truth in it. I can see the similarities in you and Destiny!”

“Like what?”

“She sees things in a completely different way, just like you do. She spots opportunities where none exist and then somehow, she pulls them off. We went to my house after lunch, and I read her Tarot cards, and they came up like yours always come up.”

“With lots of money cards showing?”

“Exactly.”

“Are you sure you were reading them correctly?” I didn’t mean to offend, but Michelle had only recently learned to read Tarot cards, and she was often unsure of what the cards meant. I let her practice on me and tried not to take her too seriously.

“I think so. But that’s not the most exciting part. Guess what happened after I read her cards. Just try to guess!”

“I give up,” I said without trying.

“C’mon, Kris, guess!”

“All right, all right... you made mad, passionate love.”

“How did you know?” she sounded disappointed.

“Because you always do.”

“This time, it was different. I didn’t even put the moves on her. We were sitting on my couch, and she leaned toward me and told me she wanted to make love with me, but she didn’t want to marry me.”

“What the hell’s that supposed to mean? Of course she didn’t want to marry you. She just met you.”

“What she meant was that some women view love-making as a commitment. She doesn’t. She wanted to enjoy making love with me without feeling bad when she couldn’t make an emotional commitment. That’s exactly what she said.”

“Huh. What did you say to that?”

“I didn’t know what to say. No one has ever been that honest with me. I did ask her if she’d just ended a long-term relationship, but she said she’d never been in one.”

“Why not?”

“I didn’t ask. Should I have?”

“Of course, you should have!” I practically shouted. “Don’t you want to be in a long-term relationship? Aren’t you trying to break your cycle of becoming involved with women who are never available, like Amber and Joyce and Karen...?” I could have gone on with the list, but I didn’t have the heart.

“Do you think it’s a bad sign?”

“Yes, Michelle,” I replied with exaggerated patience.

“Maybe she’s been busy with her work.”

“I’m sure she has.”

“Maybe I can change that in her.”

“I’m sure you can’t.”

“Really?” she asked, even though she knew the answer.

“Really!” I said emphatically. And I’d had such high hopes for Michelle with this one.

“Well anyway, Kris, I still can’t believe it. Me and Destiny Greaves. My psychic told me I’d be meeting someone important, but I never dreamed I’d be dating her.”

Frankly, I couldn’t believe it either. When the week before Michelle had told me about her appointment with the psychic, what she said went right in one ear and out the other. Because I didn’t believe in this woman’s ability to predict the future (she was right so seldom, I think I could have done a better job of it myself), I rarely listened to what she said. Michelle, on the other hand, always thought her word was gospel.

For once, the psychic, who was also her hairdresser (another reason I distrusted her), seemed to be right. And in a big way.

From a distance, I’d followed Destiny Greaves’ accomplishments. If she wasn’t in the daily papers for her scathing assessment of the governor’s insensitivity to the AIDS

crisis, she was on the nightly news fighting for equal access for disabled people, or in the gay press chastising NOW for its discrimination against lesbians. She seemed to be fighting every important battle that was going on in Denver and winning most of them.

Years ago, I'd heard there were death threats against her, but if that was true, they didn't slow her down a bit. She was as vocal and vociferous as ever.

I could see what Michelle saw in Destiny, but I wondered privately what Destiny saw in Michelle. I hoped, for my friend's sake, that her feelings would be requited.

Several weeks passed before I actually met Destiny and when I did, it was under strange circumstances. Michelle kept setting up dinners for the three of us and cancelling them. Finally, she told me why. Destiny wanted to meet me alone. And ours would not be a social meeting.

Destiny Greaves wanted to hire me.

© 1992, 2006, Jennifer L. Jordan, www.JenniferLJordan.com