

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

SCARLETT ST. CLAIR



TERROR
AT
THE GATES

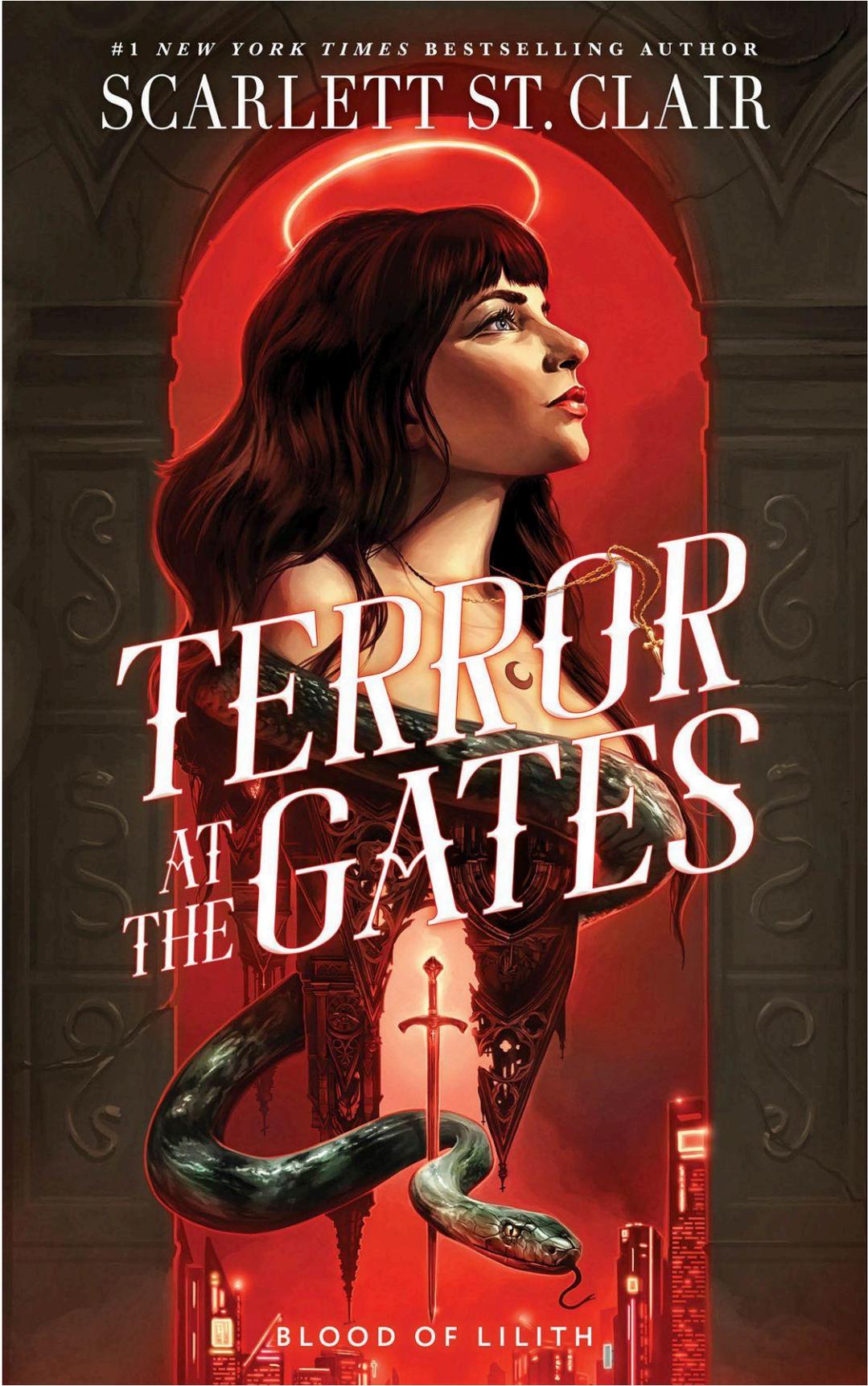
BLOOD OF LILITH

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Also by Scarlett St. Clair

When Stars Come Out

Hades X Persephone

A Touch of Darkness

A Game of Fate

A Touch of Ruin

A Game of Retribution

A Touch of Malice

A Game of Gods

A Touch of Chaos

Adrian X Isolde

King of Battle and Blood

Queen of Myth and Monsters

Fairy Tale Retellings

Mountains Made of Glass

Apples Dipped in Gold

TERROR AT THE GATES

SCARLETT ST. CLAIR

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To the women who were told they must submit to the dominance of man.

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Excerpt from *King of Battle and Blood*

One

Author's Note

References

About the Author

Trigger Warnings

Religious trauma, sexual assault specifically by an authority figure in the church, child abuse and emotional abuse by a parent and authority figure in the church.

Are you a survivor? Need assistance or support? Call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or go online to hotline.rainn.org

Pronunciation Guide

Elohim—EL-o-heem

Elohai—EL-o-hi

Lilith—LIL-ith

Zahariev—ZA-har-reev

Lucius—LOO-shuhs

Analisia—ANA-leese

Cassius Zareth—KAS-seeus ZA-reth

Gabriel De Santis—GAY-bree-l De SAN-tis

Esther Pomeroy—EST-er POM-a-roy

Colette “Coco” D’Arsay—CALL-let “COCO” DAR-say

Macarius Caiaphas—ma-KAR-e-us KAI-uh-fuhs

Eryx—EAR-ix

Ashur—AH-shur

Families

Zareth—ZAR-eth

Leviathan—La-VI-a-thin

Viridian—ver-ID-de-un

Sanctus—SANK-tus

Asahel—AH-sha-el

Places

Nineveh—NIN-a-vah

Akkadia—a-CAID-dia

Galant—GAL-ant

Hiram—HI-rim

Gomorrah—ga-MORE-uh

Sumer—SUE-mur

Kurari (Sea, Canal, Islands)—qu-RAR-ee

Nara-Sin Desert—NA-ra-sin Des-ert

Mount Seine—Mount Sin

Archangels

Zerachiel—zer-AK-e-el

Raziel—RAZ-e-el

Uriel—UR-e-el

Menadel—MEN-a-del

Arakiel—ARA-key-el

Sariel—SAR-e-el

Metatron—MED-a-tron

Part I

Genesis

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world...

Ephesians 6:12

Chapter One

Ritual was teeming. Glossy tables and velvet couches were already overcrowded, leaving people standing shoulder to shoulder beneath pulsing blue and purple light as they waited for the entertainment to begin.

They would come from above, the aerialists, their red silks unfurling in the dark like ribbons of flame, hypnotizing the audience with their strength and grace as they soared, suspended in the smoky air. It was a popular attraction in Nineveh. Those who came down from the other four districts would have the church believe it was this tame performance they'd come to see, but we all knew otherwise.

Their descent began like clockwork. On Friday at three, Procession Street, the only road in Eden that connected all five districts, would fill with bumper-to-bumper traffic. The onslaught started with the financiers from Hiram, then the industrialists from Temple City, the merchants from Galant, and the artists from Akkadia. Though once they crossed the border into Nineveh, where they were from didn't matter. They were all just hypocrites.

Crits, the locals called them.

Most spent the weekend roaming from club to club on Sinners' Row, returning to their respective districts to worship at temple early Sunday morning. By Monday, they would be cleansed and forgiven, ready to live piously until the weekend.

Forgiveness is an invitation to sin. It will be our ruin.

I ground my teeth as my mother's words came unbidden, roaring to life in my mind. Her doctrine was etched into my memory, conditioned to surface anytime I came into contact with anything that contradicted her teachings, though this was one of few I actually agreed with.

Forgiveness *was* an invitation to sin. I witnessed it every week, which was why I'd decided a long time ago that I did not care to be forgiven.

I'd rather be a sinner than a hypocrite.

I wove my way through the flock dressed in red, as vibrant as the aerialists' silks, but unlike them, I went unnoticed. It was a choice. I could draw attention if I wished, but among those present, I had yet to spy anything of worth.

And tonight, I needed something expensive.

Rent was due, and my landlord had just hiked the price again.

My roommate, Coco, short for Colette, had gone into work down the street where she danced at Praise. She'd asked me to stay home, but only because she didn't like the way I managed to make ends meet.

I was a procurer of goods, usually of the religious variety, but I wasn't picky. I'd sell anything if I could get a good price. The issue was, my job was technically illegal since the church prohibited the sale of holy items.

Coco called my methods stealing, but I called it using my resources, which just so happened to be *magic*.

Honestly, I wouldn't need to if Zahariev, the head of the Zareth family and the district of Nineveh, would let me dance at one of his many clubs, but he refused.

You would start a war, Lilith, he had said.

I rolled my eyes. *You are dramatic, Zahariev. No one has to know who I am.*

You are the daughter of House Leviathan, he said, as if that explained everything. *Besides, I like my balls, and your father would cut them off and feed them to me if he found out I let you dance.*

Let me.

Zahariev.

Zahariev.

Zahariev.

He was a beautiful, frustrating man. I had known him my entire life. He was eight years older than me and had ascended to the head of his family after his father died five years ago. He had always been quiet and controlled, mostly unemotional, as were all Elohai. That was the name of the bloodline that gave each family magic and, with it, the right to rule.

Except that was all really bullshit, because the blood of the Elohai—the blood of God—only gave magic to *women*. It made *us* powerful, a power we could not even utilize because we were subservient to men.

It is what we deserve for tempting the First Man, my mother would say.