

A portrait of a young woman with long, straight blonde hair, looking directly at the camera. She is holding a sword vertically in front of her face, with the blade extending from the top of the frame down to her waist. The sword's hilt is visible, featuring a textured grip and a decorative guard. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved garment. The background is a solid, dark grey.

MELISA KNOLL

BORN  
TO  
BATTLE



*Aurelei is a warrior in every sense of the word. She battles endometriosis, she battles in court and she is a prayer warrior. When she and her best friend, Lacey, run into their high school crushes again, they realize that their lives are about to change. As they journey into love, marriage and raising a family, Aurelei relies on God's strength to get her through the battles thrown her way. She understands that she has victory in Christ and fights from that victory. Yet, there is a battle she faces in the spiritual realm that seems to have no point of breakthrough. Will she allow that battle to destroy her?*

# Born To Battle

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# **BORN TO BATTLE**

**Melisa Knoll**

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First Edition

## Chapter One

The day was finally winding down. Lacey, my bestie, snuck over from the Real Estate Division while her boss was on the phone.

“What are you doing tonight?” she asked.

“Making sure my brother doesn’t snack after midnight.”

“I forgot. Leif’s having his acl fixed?”

“Yeah. Oh, and I almost killed him! Guess what he did?”

“Aurelei!” my boss yelled from her office. “Where is the Scott pre-trial memo?”

“Lacey, I’ll tell you later. And it’s in her pleading folder in her brief case.”

Lacey laughed. “How about I just come over?”

I nodded, getting up to help Rachel find her file folder. Pain shot through my abdomen. At the same moment, Denise yelled for me. Goodness, I schedule a day off and they act like it’s the end of the world! And on top of it all, my endometriosis was killing me. I wanted to curl up in a ball, but wasn’t able to.

I got Rachel situated for court. I showed her where her files for Friday and Monday were. Then, I did the same for Denise.

As I got ready to leave, Carla yelled for me.

“Aurelei, I need this to go out now.”

“What is it?” I asked, irritated and in severe pain.

“Clark’s financial affidavit.”

“That was due a week ago,” I sighed. “I’ll mail it out.”

I was thankful I had copied all of the supporting documents last week. Lacey came by.

“Need help?”

“Can you get me a big envelope?”

She nodded and grabbed one. She put the labels on as the copier finished. I shoved the documents into the envelope, added postage and tossed it in the outgoing mail.

“So what did Leif do now?” she asked me as I packed up for the night.

“He let Derrick move in!”

“What? After he treated you like garbage because you told him no!”

“Yep. My brother told me bros before Hos. Isn’t that great?”

Derrick was my brother’s best friend.

“What are you going to do?”

I sighed as we got to the parking lot. It was so cold out and was supposed to snow.

"I found an apartment that I'm moving into. The kicker is, it's not available until next weekend."

"Aurelei, if Derrick is too much for you, you can crash at my place," she offered.

"If I need to. It's only for a week. I can suck it up."

"Aurelei, you deserve to live better than this!"

"That's why I'm moving!"

"I'll follow you."

"Ok. We'll order pizza."

I got into my Honda and headed towards home. Lacey followed.

I turned up my radio pretty loud, listening to Disturbed and groaned with pain. I pulled in the driveway about fifteen minutes later. Lacey pulled up behind me. We went inside and heard Leif and Derrick laughing.

"Aurelei, is that you?" my brother yelled.

"Yeah!"

"What's for dinner?"

Instead of yelling, we went into the living room.

"Oh, you had to bring her home too?" Derrick snapped.

I ignored him. "Lacey and I were going to order pizza."

"Cool. Order us one?" Leif replied.

"Sure," I mumbled.

Lacey and I went to my room and I ordered the pizzas. Then, we just chatted as we waited, flipping through our yearbook.

"I wonder whatever happened to Garrett?"

"Seriously Aurelei! You should have talked to him long ago."

"Don't you ever wonder what happened to Mason?" I pressed.

"Yeah," she admitted. "What were we thinking back then? We were so stupid."

"Agreed," I laughed. "Too bad we can't get another chance to do it again."

The pizzas came and we were going to chill in my room, but Leif started talking about his surgery.

"Who's doing it?" Derrick asked.

"Dr. Fritz," Leif answered. "He practices sports medicine." The name was familiar to me, but I wasn't sure why. I figured I could google his doctor later.

"Maybe he can suck the fat out of your sister!"

I sighed, praying against the pain filling my heart.

"Actually Derrick, Aurelei looks great," Lacey came to my defense. "She's not fat at all."



“Lacey, you’re a moron,” Derrick replied. “Aurelei is unattractive in every way. She’s a lousy woman and horrible girlfriend material! Who’d date her?”

“Leif, aren’t you going to defend your sister?” Lacey snapped.

“Bros before hos,” he laughed. “Besides, no one has ever wanted to be with her!”

I gasped in pain and curled up with my knees to my chest. I felt like I was being stabbed repeatedly. Lacey looked at me.

“We need to find something that helps.”

I nodded.

“You aren’t in pain. It’s all in your head,” Derrick said.

“Fuck you,” I snapped.

“I would, but you’d never let me!” He had always wanted to get with me, but I said hell no. There was only one guy I had ever wanted to be with and since I figured it would never happen, I had given up hope.

The next morning, Derrick insisted on going to the hospital with us. I quickly shoved my earbuds into my purse on the way out the door so I could drown him out.

“Nice Ducati Leif!”

“That’s mine,” I snapped as we got in my car.

“Whatever.”

When we got to the hospital, they took Leif back to prep him. I listened to music to ignore Derrick and texted Lacey about him insisting he was coming with.

“Aurelei? You can come back now if you want,” a nurse called.

I gathered my things up and Derrick bumped me, rushing to get ahead of me. I just sighed.

Leif was in good spirits and the surgical nurse talked to us about the procedure.

“Dr. Fritz will be here soon,” she said and then left.

“Leif, do you think Sanders will help me move next weekend?” I asked my brother, hearing footsteps outside the room.

“Um no,” Derrick answered, punching me in the arm.

“Forget it Leif. I’m sure Lacey and I can manage,” I retorted and then got up to leave as the doctor came in, just in time for him to see Derrick hit me again.

My jaw dropped and I flushed. It was him! Dr. Fritz was him and he was so hot! He was like 6’5” and was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. His hair was dark and he had chocolate brown eyes, just like in high

school. He glanced at me with a smirk and I nearly died trying to suppress the excitement I felt.

“Garrett,” I whispered to myself.

“God Aurelei, take a fucking picture you slut!” Derrick laughed, shoving me.

He shoved me so hard, I fell onto the floor. My face burned with embarrassment and I held back tears, getting ready to push myself up.

“Dude, not cool,” Dr. Fritz said, putting down Leif’s chart to help me up. “Are you ok?”

I looked into his eyes and flushed. “I think so. Thank you.” Did he remember me?

“Aurelei, right? I’ll come talk to you after the surgery. Hey Claire?”

The nurse came in, “Yes Doctor?”

“Can you help Aurelei to the waiting area? She may have sprained her wrist. I’m going to get ready for surgery.”

“Sure Doctor.”

“And Aurelei, let me know if your wrist hurts when I come talk to you. If it does, I’ll look at it.”

“Ok. Thank you,” I stammered, realizing his hand still held mine. He smiled at me and I nearly died.

“Ok Leif, I’ll meet you in the O.R.”

Claire walked me to the waiting area and asked one of the receptionists to explain the patient board.

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He watched her walk away with Claire. He noticed her honey blonde hair glistened as the light hit it. He was blown away by her beauty. And to think, he had run into her after all these years!

Who was the guy who shoved her? A boyfriend no doubt. There was no way a girl like her would be unattached. The memory of it made him angry.

He went to clean up and put on his scrubs, but had a hard time getting her out of his head. Claire was waiting outside the O.R. for him.

“Ready Doctor?” she asked.

“In a moment. Can you do me a favor first?”

“Sure.”

“Can you fax a copy of the emergency contact info for this patient to my office? I need it...”

“I understand,” she laughed with a smirk. “You’re enchanted.”

He flushed. Was it that obvious? Then, he went into a room, shutting the door to call his office.

“Put Nadia on please,” he demanded.

“Hey Dr. Fritz,” Nadia answered a second later.

“I’m having an emergency contact form faxed over for my first surgery this morning. I need you to help me on it, on the QT, okay?”

“Of course. I see it coming over now. What do you need?”

“I need you to find any contact info you can for Aurelei Chastain for me. Just leave it under my keyboard on my desk.”

“No problem. Any other info?”

“I’ll let you know. I’d better go. They’re paging me.”

\*\*\*

I sat in the waiting area, freezing and in pain. I wore my earbuds to drown out whatever Derrick was saying to me, sitting in a chair with my knees to my chest. I texted Lacey about what had happened so far this morning.

‘That’s insane. Derrick is such a dick! Can’t believe the Dr. stuck up for you.’

I noticed Derrick was trying to look over my shoulder at my phone. Getting up, I went into the bathroom so I could reply in peace.

‘It was interesting to say the least. He’s hot too!’

‘LOL,’ was Lacey’s reply. ‘I’ll google him.’

A moment later, my phone pinged with her reply.

‘WOW! Is that Garrett?’

‘Yeah.’

I left the bathroom and sat back down, bringing my knees to my chest as it felt like my ovaries were exploding. I pulled up my kindle on my phone and read with music blaring in my ears.

About two hours later, I saw Dr. Fritz come out. He walked with such confidence! He had a huge smile on his face, as if he had heard the best joke ever. He scanned the waiting area and his smile brightened when he saw me. I pulled the earbuds out.

"There you are! Let's go talk," he said. I got up to follow him. Derrick started getting up as well.

"Not you," Dr. Fritz snapped. "I don't talk to non-family members."

Derrick plopped back down. I followed the doctor to one of the conference rooms. He shut the door behind us.

"Who is that little prick?" he asked as I took a chair, cringing with pain. Immediately and instinctively, I pulled my feet up onto the chair.

"That's Derrick, Leif's bestie who's an ass. But Leif always tells me bros before hos," I muttered, tears filling my eyes from the physical pain I was in. It was like a TNT plant had exploded inside of me.

Dr. Fritz mumbled something under his breath. "Leif's surgery went well. I'll schedule a follow up with him next week. I'm assuming you'll bring him?"

“I assume so.”

“Would March 15 at noon work?”

“I’ll make it work.”

“Are you all right?”

“It’s just my endo. It’ll be fine,” I answered. “I’m a warrior after all.”

“Aurelei, I’ll have a referral for you at the follow up. Do you have somewhere safe to stay?”

“I’ll be fine,” I replied. “I’m moving in a week.”

Dr. Fritz sighed deeply. It seemed like he was concerned for me, but I tried to put it out of my mind.

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As Garrett watched her go back to the waiting area, he was concerned for her. He sighed, going back to the surgical unit, stopping at the nurse’s station to find the pictures he took inside Leif’s knee.

Mason, his best friend, more like a brother, stood there. He glanced at Garrett.

“Dinner and drinks tonight?” Mason suggested.

“Yeah. Sure.”

“You seem distracted,” Mason noted. “Rough surgery?”

“No. It was routine,” was his answer.

“He’s enchanted,” Claire teased.

“Really?” Mason asked slyly. “By who?”

Garrett rolled his eyes. “Claire, where are those pictures?”

“By her,” Claire told Mason, pointing at Aurelei with a smile. “They should be on the printer Doctor.”

“Wow Garrett,” Mason teased, hitting his shoulder.

“Shut up,” he replied, going to find the pictures.

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Leif was a bear when I got back there.

“Go away! I don’t want you back here!” he yelled at me.

“Leif, I’m your sister,” I protested.

“Bros before hos bitch!” he snapped. “I don’t need a ho taking care of me. My bro will.”

“Fine. Whatev.”

I went back to the waiting area, leaving Derrick and Leif to entertain themselves. I let the reception nurse know that I was there and to tell me when I need to bring the car up. I then settled in with my kindle and earbuds in. Until the Lord prompted me to battle for our church. I left the music playing and prayed for the protection of our church. I prayed for protection for the Sunday service, for the worship team, for the



service to go smoothly and for our pastor to preach the words God wanted him to preach. Then, I prayed about running into Garrett again after all this time.

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“Ok Leif, here’s what I did,” he explained, wondering where his sister was. “I had to make an incision in your knee to put in the new acl. The rest of the procedure was arthroscopic. You will be immobilized for a few weeks. We’ll take the stitches out in two weeks and you can start therapy after about six.”

He just nodded.

“Bring these with you to your follow up. I scheduled it with your sister.”

“I don’t want that ho bringing me!” Leif snapped.

Garrett didn’t answer. He just walked away angry.

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I met Lacey that evening at the Leaky Spout for a drink and to get out of the house. Well, I wasn’t drinking as I had taken the Ducati despite the cold and alcohol made my endo worse.

I nearly died when I saw Dr. Fritz there with his friend. Was that Mason? Lacey instantly noticed them.

“Damn! His friend is way hotter than he is!”

I didn’t agree, but kept my mouth shut.

“Oh look! Let’s do some karaoke,” she suggested.  
“We get to pick six songs.”

“Lacey no,” I begged. I didn’t want to deal with that kind of attention.

“Oh come on. We lead worship at church. We can do this,” she bossed, dragging me over there by the sleeve of my riding jacket. “You pick three and I’ll pick three.”

“Lacey, please!”

“Loosen up sis. It’ll be fine!”

I didn’t think so, but it was too late. My three songs were: 10 Years’ “Wasteland”, Three Days Grace’s “Riot”, and Disturbed’s “Warrior.” Lacey had picked three of the songs we were leading worship in on Sunday: Tobymac’s “Feel It”, Natalie Grant’s “Your Great Name”, and Jeremy Camp’s “Reckless.”

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Mason hit Garrett’s shoulder. “There’s two girls up there. Let’s check this out!”

Garrett flushed, seeing one of them was Aurelei. Was that her best friend from high school with her? He wasn't sure.

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"Ready Aurelei?" Lacey said as Tobymac flashed up on the monitor. What we didn't know was everyone could hear us from the mics we were wearing.

"Sure Lacey. Whatev."

"It's no different than at church."

"We're in a fucking bar Lacey."

"So."

I scanned the bar and wanted to sink into a hole. Garrett and his friend, whom I was sure was Mason, were watching. I glared at Lacey, who didn't notice.

The music began and Lacey looked at me with a smile. I smiled weakly, praying for strength and courage. But, Tobymac was catchy and we danced a bit as we sang, "Feel it in my heart, feel it in my soul. That's how I know... You take our brokenness and make us beautiful."

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“Which one of them picked this song?” Mason wondered aloud. “A little odd for a bar.”

Garrett shrugged. He didn’t think it was Aurelei’s choice, as she was wearing a riding jacket. But, he wasn’t sure.

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As Tobymac ended, I pulled off my jacket. It was pretty hot up there. 10 Years was next and I looked at Lacey.

“Really Aurelei? Really? I have to sing this with you! Really!” she teased.

“Hey, my choice right?” Then began the song. “Change my attempt, good intentions...”

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They had heard the girls’ conversation.

“Interesting choice of music,” Mason said.

“Well, it wasn’t Aurelei who chose the first song. She’s wearing a Disturbed t-shirt,” Garrett replied without thinking. “And we heard her say this was her choice.”

“Dude, what’s with you? I’ve never seen you pay attention to a girl before. Except for... oh man, it’s her from high school, isn’t it?”

Garrett flushed in response. Mason teased him, “You’d better talk to her this time.”

\*\*\*

Our next song was Natalie Grant. I liked the song, but was concerned about singing it in a bar. Lacey ignored my glance at her. However, we both fell to our knees on the stage, hands raised in worship of our God.

I was excited that the next song was Three Days Grace’s “Riot.” I looked at my bestie and asked her, “Ready to start a riot Lacey?”

“Sure! That’ll be fun!”

We laughed and began the song.

Our six songs ended with Jeremy Camp’s “Reckless.” But, the DJ, to my dismay, asked the crowd if he should give us three more songs and they roared their approval.

“Damn it Lacey,” I muttered as we picked three more.

“Linkin Park’s “Breaking the Habit”, anything by the Backstreet Boys,” Lacey said. “Aurelei, last song?”

“Five Finger Death Punch’s “Never Enough.”

“Aurelei!”

“What?”

“I hate that band!”

“So, we’ll do it last,” I said.

“I’ll ditch you.”

“Whatev.”

We got ready to begin. The DJ played them in order this time, so we started with Linkin Park.

\*\*\*

“This is quite entertaining,” Mason laughed. “They can actually sing. And their conversation is insightful.”

“Yeah,” was Garrett’s response. He was still blown away that he had run into her again. Did she remember him? He sighed.

“Dude, you’re funny too.”

“Why?”

“Just cause you’re never like this. What is it about her that has your attention, besides her looks?”

“She’s just different than other girls,” he answered with a sigh as they moved from Linkin Park to the Backstreet Boys.

“How so?”

Garrett didn’t answer.

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As we finished the Backstreet Boys, I looked at Lacey.

“All right Lacey. I guess this one is all me. Even though I just sang the gag me boys with you.”

“Yep. This band sucks.”

“Nope. It rocks. Come on. You can sing it about Annette. Don’t leave me up here by myself.”

“Whatev,” she teased. “You’re the only one I know that likes this band and horribly depressing song.”

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“What are they talking about?” Mason asked. Garrett just shrugged.

“It better not be some stupid song,” Mason said.

Garrett didn’t say anything. What could be more stupid than the Backstreet Boys?

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I stood up there alone as the song began, feeling very insecure. I couldn’t believe Lacey had ditched me! But, she came back up with me, standing beside me, but she didn’t sing the song with me. Her presence brought me comfort.

“I’m so fed up with everyone around me, no one seems to care,” I sang, tears streaming down my face. It was pretty true in my life. I had always been told I was “never enough.”

“It’s always do this, do that, everything they want to...”

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“Damn dude. She likes the same music you do,” Mason commented. “Her friend’s right. This song is depressing.”

“It’s actually pretty good,” Garrett defended. “And she’s singing it with a lot of emotion.”

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As I ended the song, I said, “Thank you daddy that you always say I’m enough, no matter what anyone else tells me. You tell me I am yours and you are proud of me.” I was so happy when that was over. I got off the stage, pulling my jacket back on.

“So your hot doctor watched you intently that whole song,” Lacey whispered to me as we got down. “I think he likes you. And what was with the ending of your song?”



“It ain’t never gonna happen,” I replied. It hadn’t happened in high school, so I had no expectations that it would now.

“You never know,” she teased. “Don’t be a chicken this time. Go talk to him.”

I just shook my head, not sure if I could muster the courage to do so. But, what did Lacey do? She drug us over to Mason and Garrett.

“Hi, I’m Lacey,” she introduced us. “And this is Aurelei.”

“I’m Mason,” Garrett’s friend introduced himself. “This is Garrett. Nice singing up there.”

I felt my face flush and whispered to Lacey, “What the hell!”

“Oh cool it sister. You’d never talk to him if I didn’t drag you over here,” she whispered back.

“Yeah, I like singing,” Lacey answered Mason’s compliment.

“You’re good at it,” Mason replied with a smile.

I glanced up at Garrett, who was watching me. And he was quite red himself.

“Lacey, I’ve gotta run. It’s starting to snow and I’m on the bike,” I told her, noticing the snow slowly falling outside.

“You shouldn’t have ridden tonight,” she chastised me. “You knew there was a chance for snow.”

“Lacey, I have a need for speed after the nightmare I went through today,” I spat, trying not to look at Garrett, feeling my face flush at the memory of his hand in mine. Mason watched us intently.

“And what was that?” she asked with a giggle, knowing full well what it was. I figured she was trying to gauge Garrett’s reaction.

“Dealing with Leif and Derrick! Lacey, I told you all about it earlier.”

“How is Leif?” Garrett asked me, catching me off guard.

“I haven’t killed him yet,” was my response and I went to run, but Lacey caught me.

“Aurelei!” she exclaimed. “You can’t leave yet.”

“Lacey, please,” I begged her in a whisper. This was really awkward for me.

“I can understand why you’d want to kill him,” Garrett said. “He’s kind of nasty.”

“That’s an understatement,” I muttered to myself.

“And his friend is a complete prick. How are you?”

I just shrugged. “Okay I guess. I really gotta run. I don’t fancy riding in the snow.”

“You rode here tonight?” Mason asked me.

“After my morning, yes, I did. Lacey, I’ll catch you later. Nice talking to you guys.”

\*\*\*

Garrett watched her run out the door quickly. Snow was falling and he understood why she wanted to leave before it stuck to the road.

“Sorry, she’s a little awkward,” Lacey apologized. “I told her not to ride tonight, but she didn’t listen.”

“I get it,” Garrett mumbled. “She had a rough morning.”

“What are you talking about Garrett?” Mason asked him. Lacey’s eyes twinkled, so Garrett had an inkling that Lacey knew every detail about that morning’s events.

“My first surgery of the morning was her brother,” Garrett told him, glancing outside. “It was a little rough when I walked in to pre op. I’ll talk to you later Mason. I’d better go. I’m exhausted and we have a meeting tomorrow morning.”

“Dude, what’s with you?” Mason asked.

“I’m just tired. Catch you later.”

Lacey and Mason stood there as Garrett left. He didn't feel much like socializing. His mind was elsewhere.

\*\*\*

On Sunday, I met Lacey at church as we were leading worship. As we ran through the final practice, Judah and Michah, my little friends, ran up to me to say hi. I crouched down to hug them both, hearing Lacey gasp audibly. She then kicked me.

"What?" I asked, rubbing the spot she kicked me.

"They're here! Aurelei, they're here!" she exclaimed quietly.

"Who?" I asked, confused, getting up. I wished I hadn't. It was Garrett and his friend, Mason.

"Aurie, up," Michah requested.

I absentmindedly picked up Michah, wondering why they were here. Apparently they came often enough that Pastor Jared knew them as they were chatting. How we never noticed was beyond me.

I put Michah down as he was squirming to run with Judah.

"What the hell?" Lacey whispered, flushing red.

“Oh, it’s no different than Friday night,” I teased, glancing at the clock. She kicked me again. “Lacey, stop kicking me!”

Michah came back. He wanted to help me lead worship, but his mom, Ashley, took him.

Lacey was praying quietly as we had a minute to go. I prayed for strength, courage and for focus. I prayed that any enemy strongholds or plots would be broken in the name of Jesus as we led worship.

Michah had escaped his mother and was trying to climb up me. Ashley came running over. I noted Dr. Fritz glanced over our way. He smiled at me and I could tell he was indeed shy. Just like me. This was never gonna happen. We were too shy to talk to each other. The conversation we had the other night had been cordial, but brief.

“Ashley, it’s okay. Michah can be up here,” I assured her. “He wants to help.”

“Thanks Aurelei. I have no energy today.”

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“Does she have kids?” Mason asked Garrett as they watched a little boy try to climb up Aurelei.

A woman ran up to her, trying to get the little boy to go with her. That answered Mason's question. They sat in the back together.

\*\*\*

Lacey was apparently tongue-tied and unable to speak. I laughed internally as she was the leader of the worship team. I guessed I had to be the leader today.

"Good morning! What a glorious day it is!" I exclaimed. "Let's worship our Daddy in heaven this morning. Little Michah is going to help us lead worship today." I picked him up as pain shot through me and I groaned.

"Me too!" Judah yelled, running up as Ashley tried to stop him. He grabbed my leg, so I picked him up too.

"These are my little friends. And Jesus welcomed children, so we do as well. You guys ready?"

"Uh huh!" they both yelled.

Then quietly to Lacey, "Ready?"

She nodded terrified and I laughed. But, I was a little scared too. There were two hot guys in the back that were distracting us.

"Daddy, give us focus," I prayed as we began.

We followed the order we had Friday night, beginning with Tobymac.

\*\*\*

Garret smiled at the sight of her holding two small boys. Mason looked over at him.

“Dude, really?” he whispered to Garrett.

“What?” he asked confused.

“She had two kids climbing up her. Are we sure they’re not hers?”

“Who cares?” Garrett snapped.

Mason just shook his head.

“She said they are her little friends,” Garrett retorted, defensive.

\*\*\*

Lacey and I lost touch with the world as we lead worship. I felt the Lord’s presence strongly and prayed into it for the service. Halfway through Tobymac, Judah wanted down. He started dancing and smiling. Michah put his head on my shoulder and fell asleep.

We moved into Natalie Grant’s “Your Great Name.” That song normally drove me to the floor, but

holding Michah prevented it. I ignored the pain in my pelvis, pushing my arm into it.

“You ok?” Lacey whispered. “You’re quite pale.”

I just nodded, shifting Michah’s weight a little.

We then played Jeremy Camp’s “Reckless.”

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“What’s with you?” Mason whispered to Garrett.  
“You’re never like this.”

“I can’t get her out of my mind,” was his answer.

“Then go ask her out!” Mason exclaimed in a whisper. “Stop being a chicken.”

“Mason, can we discuss this tomorrow?”

Mason rolled his eyes. “Oh, they practiced Friday night. That explains the interesting choice of music. And dude, you’re not getting any younger.”

It was Garrett’s turn to roll his eyes.

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Lacey shifted her music sheets for our next song, “Even So Come.” As she got ready for that on the keyboard, I prayed.

“Lord, come fill this place with your presence. Come, have your way among us. Break away anything that is not of you in the name of Jesus! Protect this



service today and let us feel you. We say yes and amen to whatever you want to do today.”

After worship, Lacey and I sat in our normal spots, which was two rows ahead of Garrett and his friend. Garrett smiled at me, as his friend did to Lacey. Michah was still asleep, so I hadn’t bothered bringing him to the nursery.

Lacey handed me my sweat jacket and I covered Michah with it.

“Aurelei, what is going on?” she whispered. “Why are they here?”

“It must be a God thing. Let’s pray to see what He tells us about them. Perhaps it’s just temptation.”

“Or something more!”

I shrugged. I didn’t believe it was anything but temptation. “It ain’t gonna happen.”

“You don’t know that!”

“If it’s to be, it will be. Now pay attention!”

After the service, I talked with Ashley and handed her Michah, who was just waking up.

“I do good help Aurie?” he asked sleepily.

“Yes you did.”

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They heard little Michah call her “Aurie.”

“Told you,” Garrett snapped.

“Go talk to her!” Mason urged.

“It would be rude to interrupt her.”

“Garrett, you are such a chicken. No wonder why you’ve never had a girlfriend. Let’s go. We’ll discuss this tomorrow.”

“Japanese?” Garrett asked. Mason just nodded.



*Aurelei is a warrior in every sense of the word. She battles endometriosis, she battles in court and she is a prayer warrior. When she and her best friend, Lacey, run into their high school crushes again, they realize that their lives are about to change. As they journey into love, marriage and raising a family, Aurelei relies on God's strength to get her through the battles thrown her way. She understands that she has victory in Christ and fights from that victory. Yet, there is a battle she faces in the spiritual realm that seems to have no point of breakthrough. Will she allow that battle to destroy her?*

# **Born To Battle**

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