

Theos forbids contact with the hostile and unevolved planet of Earth. A young, scientific phenom disobeys and escapes to prove his government wrong, with his ex-girlfriend secretly in tow. On Earth, they battle deadly illness and evil forces but nothing poses a greater threat than a battle against the heart!

Joshua: Life After Theos

by Patricia Miller

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JOSHUA



Life After Theos

Patricia Miller

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SCREAMING

It's hard to say where the next couple of hours went. Everything, *everything* seemed a blur. I felt encapsulated in some thick, impenetrable fog. Parts of my body – my hands, my feet – felt rubbery, as if they weren't real in some way. Next thing I knew, I was running, not remembering the choice to start doing so. Moreover, I looked down to see sweats, a t-shirt, and a jacket. When had I changed my clothes?

And not just running, but running in the rain. *I must be losing my mind. No Emma. No sanity.* I saw my body, too, soaking wet. *I just don't care.* My breath shot out of my mouth in white bursts while my skin remained only vaguely aware of the coldness.

Eventually, sweat and raindrops mixed together on my skin. But as the rain slowed to a drizzly stop, sweat took its place. *I'm burning up.* I unzipped my jacket and threw it to the ground, but kept on running. I felt pain, but not in my muscles, not physical pain in my body. *I can understand that. I can handle that. But this unbearable emotion? Nope, can't take it.*

As my emotions swelled, my feet powered faster, pounding the ground. Sweat poured down my face, dripped from my hands. I ripped off my t-shirt, throwing it behind me. My feet, continually pounding the pavement. I stopped, looking back at the glow of

the city lights. Stood there, surrounded again by miles of fields. The remoteness freed me. I slowed my pace until I was walking...and then barely putting one foot in front of the other. I turned my head from side to side, scanning the entire area. *What are you looking for? Your sanity?*

Suddenly, all the heavy emotions rushed through my body, like a mad fire. Wind, swirling and twisting, beat against my body. I looked to the sky as a beastly scream left my throat, speeding in an upward direction. My body weakened. Heart, slashed. Exhausted, I collapsed to my knees in a heap, my back hunched over, taste of dirt in my mouth. Then air filled my lungs and a throaty shrill escaped my mouth. *Is that coming from me?* It went on, and on, 'til finally...just a limp and bubbly gurgle.

RELINQUISHING

My body heaved for air, palms scraping the cold, hard ground beneath me. I remained hunched over. The swirling wind quieted. I struggled to catch my breath, aware of that *feeling* again. *Not again*. I raised my head, glanced side to side.

At that moment, I heard a sound, like someone shifting their weight, then dragging their shoes across dirt-covered ground. Instinctively defensive, I jumped to my feet and spun around to confront my aggressor, knees bent, body crouched.

My rival looked ready, in fighting stance. We stared, two animals prepared to pounce. Mani lifted her chin and began to speak, her voice raspy and loud:

“Look closely at me, Josh.”

“I see you clearly, Mani.”

“Yes, but do you *really* see?”

You have my attention.

“As I have said before, here we are, alone on this planet, together. Forget why. Why doesn’t matter. You’re in pain. I’m in pain. Only I can really understand the pain you feel, Josh. I understand you.”

“You caused me this pain.”

“Did I? Did I, really?”

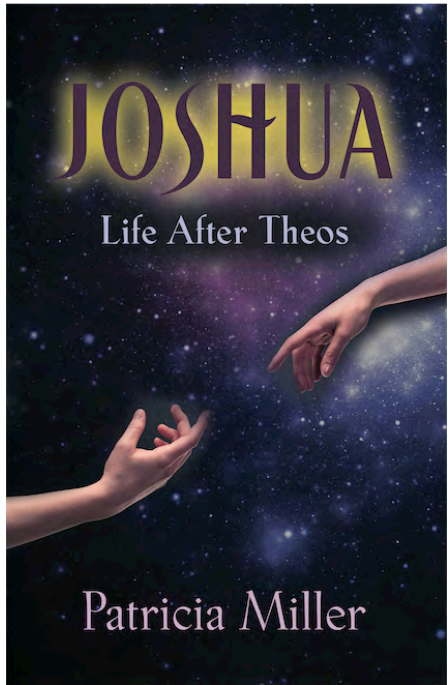
I understood. *It's my fault. I can blame myself. I knew* better than to let myself fall for an Earthling. Not to mention one of age.

I relaxed my stance. She did the same.

She walked a few steps forward, melting against me, breathing on my face.

Once again, I didn't move away. *I remember what drew me to you. You're beautiful. And you do understand. No one understands me like you do. I need someone to understand me.*

As we drew closer to each other, Emma's face flickered in my mind. *I love her. But I can't be with her.* I wrapped my arms around her. *You're so warm.* Pulled her close to me. Remained lost in the pleasure of the glow only Theosians could produce. *This...is...awesome. Mani's the one I need.*



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