

## *Introduction*

### *Battles: More Stories from The Mee Street Chronicles*

These new stories are the in-between narratives that I never expected to be published. They came out once I finished the first book, telling me that they wanted a voice, too. Although they narrated dramatic battles and challenges in my life, I didn't write them because I was afraid the first book would be too long, and, therefore, unpublishable. These other stories fill in gaps that you may have wondered about after finishing the first book. These stories begin after I move away from Knoxville, Tennessee to go to college in Bloomington, Indiana. In the stories of Part One, "Mojo Woman," you go on the journey with me—an in-the-closet Lesbian, desperate to hide that secret from prying eyes. The first story, "Stalker," dramatizes how speculative rumors about me and my secret served to put me in danger. The second story, "Fever," that won so many fans in the first *Mee Street* is retold here. This time, you get more with the aftermath in two, new stories: Stories about young girls being in love. And being in trouble because of that.

The stories of Part Two, in "Sleeper," are all new except for the two included from the first *Mee Street*, "Scotch on the Rocks" and "Predators." With these new stories, you get a clearer, fuller perspective of my life in Evansville, Indiana. By the time I got there, Mama had died and Daddy had remarried. I mention all this to say that by the time I stumbled out of graduate school, I was broken-hearted, grieving, rudderless, and entirely without focus or direction. My mother was no longer around to do the navigation I'd always depended on. Even worse, the love of my life—the woman whom I had desperately wished to skip down the road of life with—was nowhere around. I had gotten the requisite degrees and, now, something was supposed to happen. Something like living my life happily ever after. But how? Then,

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I visited Evansville, a college friend's hometown, and we passed by Evansville College, a postage-stamp sized campus on Lincoln Avenue. Somebody suggested that I apply at the college for a teaching position. I had never wanted to teach, but I was standing in the middle of a crossroads, clueless about what I was supposed to do next. The college had absolutely no faculty or staff of color, and the pressure was on to hire a Black face. When I applied, they hired mine, offering a year-to-year contract. I was in—the first Black, full-time instructor; this was one of many jobs where I would be “the first Black whatever.” And so began my deep, long sleep, full of shadows and specters pale as death, hidden away in a cave called Evansville, Indiana... a sleep that went on for too many years.

It was in Evansville that I was introduced to Ron Glass, young, brash, and fiercely handsome, who would leave his hometown for the acting life and who would, years later, throw me a life raft that helped me change the course of my life. In the first book, I never wrote about the how and why of moving from Indiana to California. There were more battles involved in leaving Evansville, arriving, settling into, and exploring Los Angeles. I wrote about those things in Part Three, “Exotic.” You'll find both the old and the new in Part Three. There are five stories from the first *Mee Street* and there are four new stories here.

I began this journey of writing the first *Mee Street Chronicles* because I needed to remember things; I needed to surf the images and smells and tastes and sounds, slipping and sliding across each other, shifting like a kaleidoscope... delicate, colored pieces of time gone by. Stories about my life that began, with the first book, in Knoxville, Tennessee. On the first street where I lived: Mee Street. As I wrote, those stories spilled over into the rest of my life, putting me on a path I'd never walked. And I had to trust that. Because the way was not lighted even though I was writing about my own life. Writing will tell you many things about yourself. Who you think you are. Why you believe what you believe. What you value and desire. When and by what you have been changed. The stories in this book did that for me.

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Sometimes, all too well. “And that is why I write,” says Judith O. Cofer, “I write to know myself...” T.S. Eliot, an American poet, says it just as beautifully:

“We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.” *Four Quartets*

I could not agree more.  
*Frankie Lennon, April 13, 2015*