

Ave Maria: Part 6

by David Kozatch

“I swear that man is a force of nature.”

This was her mother's way of describing her father whenever her mother came too close to the precipice. While growing up, she could never allow herself to fully acknowledge the meaning behind her mother's words, although she could guess why her mother said it. Her father seemed all too human to her; frail at times, belligerent at others, maybe a little crazy. Okay, maybe *a lot* crazy, especially at home. Too crazy to have so many kids around the house wondering, waiting, ever fearful of what he might say or do next. Did her mother mean that God—nature—whatever—made him this way and they all needed to live with it like you would a tornado or hurricane that whipped through your house, most of the time without prior warning? Where was the weatherman when you really needed him? A *force* of nature: wasn't her father also responsible for his own actions like so many of the male figures in the Bible stories she was *force*-fed growing up? Or was this outburst just her mother's way of giving in to the unchangeability of her circumstances, of accepting them as she accepted the fact that the sun would come up each day and then fade into darkness, a darkness that she didn't dare fully embrace?

She couldn't help thinking of this when considering her own relationships. Of course she was drawn to these same kinds of men, these “forces” who seemed to rule the small part of the world they inhabited only to find out later that they were just as weak and fragile as she was, only lacking in self-awareness. The heart knows what the heart wants but why set it on repeat? Was it because the heart, that steady, throbbing organ in her chest pushing the blood to her head, her arms, her delicate hands, her aching legs and feet, the heart that she would gladly give over to someone who could truly *understand*, was too preoccupied with all of that other business? Maybe the heart didn't know shit. The rest of her had doubts (wasn't

that always the way?) but her heart always seemed willing to take that chance.

