

TO BE PHOENIX

Chapter 1

by

Wendy L. Koenig

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TO BE PHOENIX

CHAPTER 1

The flame of life licked throughout Destante's body. She shuddered, drawing in a breath, and opened her eyes to the inky well of a starless night. As always in those times, it had taken her awhile to get her bearings. To understand that she'd died. Again.

Her body remembered, though. Every cell of it ached, even as the burning hot blood of new vitality coursed through it, mending broken bones, cuts, and ruptured organs. She'd always thought it an odd sensation, this burning from the inside out, the undefined pressure, or a pinch deep inside her. Of course, she wouldn't be completely healed for a few more days yet. She'd have to be careful until then. She let her eyes close, concentrating on the changes within her. Trying to remember what had brought her to this point.

Judging by the aged smell of charred smoke in the air, she'd been burnt. That meant she'd been in the healing process a long time. Probably much longer than her usual few days.

As she became more aware of her surroundings, it slowly dawned on her she smelled very little of the harsh smoke from the volcano near her home. She'd been taken far to meet her attempted final death.

She also wasn't alone. There was an ink black shadow in the clearing with her, and it was moving.

She didn't want to disrupt any healing that might be going on in her spine; it would take her that much longer to become whole again. But, she also needed to know who was there, so she carefully turned her head toward the intruder and opened her eyes. Though it was dark, she could see quite well. After all, she had bird sight; she could see equally well, both night and day.

About fifteen feet away, she saw the image of a man in his early-thirties squatted on an oblong boulder that jutted a couple feet out of the ground. Really, though, how could she tell his age just by looking? She, herself, only looked to be in her late twenties, but was at that time nearly three hundred years old.

Judging by the height of his knees popped up in front of him, he was tall. He also had no paunch to push his legs away from his body. His shoulders were broad and his biceps looked well-muscled. She couldn't see the color of his hair, but she knew it was light brown, unlike her red. He wasn't solid like a real body should be; she could see right through him. A ghost, then.

Her father wasn't really there. Her injured mind also needed time to mend, to make the transition between death and life. Until it was whole again, it would play tricks with her, dredging up memories of past rebirths, making them seem like a current event. Confusing her or blanking out.

"Father," She said, her voice soft, barely stronger than a passing thought.

He cleared his throat and said, "Welcome back to the living, little phoenix." It was something he'd always said, every time she'd died and been reborn. Then he slowly faded away.

He'd died shortly before she and her sister had moved many of the phoenix families here, to Mexico, near the turn of the tenth century, barely over 200 years ago. When all the dragons disappeared from the face of the Earth.

All but one. That one hid in the midst of the phoenixes.

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