

The End is Coming.



THE
APOCALYPSE
BLOG

Book 0: Before the End



Melanie Edmonds

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The Apocalypse Blog

Book 0: Before The End

By Melanie Edmonds

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Shiny new thing

17 December - 7:38 pm

So, here it is. A brand new blog, just for me. I have thrown away my Facebook login, my Twitter feed, and my Myspace details. Who needs 'em? I don't, that's who. I have everything I need, right here.

I never wanted that whole interactive journal thing anyway. Or the community. Or the old schoolfriends finding me after years and miles have passed between us. Or the cute little notes left while I was at work or asleep to let me know that someone, somewhere, was thinking about me.

Okay, I really did. But the dream went sour and the messages turned to venom. Now it's just me: Faith MacIntyre, 22 years old with a fresh online skin and new look. And an utterly clean friendslist.

This is a good thing. It's terrifying and more than a little pathetic, but I have to start somewhere. I've done the part where I curl up into a little ball and cry because the whole world hates me. I've done the part where I compulsively check my wall and my messages and my email to find that yes, it has, in fact, managed to get worse.

I have no idea where they got the pictures. I have a couple of suspicions, but I hope I never find out. And it was the lies that were the worst, anyway. The lies, and the truths that I didn't know until it was far, far too late

I didn't want to start with this! I wanted a clean slate. I wanted to leave all this behind. But I guess you can't. I guess the things that happen to you just crawl in and makes themselves at home. Put their feet up on your mental couch and ask for another drink.

Well, that's fine. Here, have another drink. I'll drink with you, toast this new start and promise that it's going to be better than what came before. This is a new me, a new Faith, one who's done crying and feeling sorry for herself, one who's done listening to the lies and the poison. As soon as I post this, I am going to wash my face and tidy my hair, put on something sexy and go out.

Watch out world, you won't know what's hit you.

* * * *

Woah

18 December - 10:19 am

So, maybe I tried to take things a little too fast yesterday. I should stop making grand plans and learn to take my dad's advice: "One step at a time, Faithy." He said that to me when I fell down the stairs once. If my wrist hadn't been broken at the time, I would have smacked him.

I was all set to go out: hair done, face painted on, boobs squeezed into a pushup bra (a girl's gotta make the most of her assets). I even made it to the door with my keys in my hand, and then I realised that I had no idea where I should go. I didn't want to see any of my old friends - not after everything that's happened - so the familiar, pumping places where they like to party were out. The places I used to party.

I called a couple of other friends (I do have others, contrary to the opinion of the popular), but it was nearly 10pm by then and they were all busy. I think I woke Simone up, too. Whoops.

So I decided to head down to the bar down by the river. On my own. I was feeling brave (the push-up bra seemed to help with that) and striding out on the way down.

It's usually such a busy place. I didn't know that Wednesday nights were always a bit slow, and more so since their sports screen got smashed in a bar fight. So there I was, lookin' good and feelin' fine. And there they were: two old crotchety regulars wearing out their usual spot at the corner of the bar; a fella dressed like a pimp trying to weasel up to the bartender, all shark-smile and fingers toying on the countertop; and three older ladies who clearly disapproved of the music and planned to leave as soon as they had finished their drinks.

It's fair to say that I felt a little bit conspicuous, especially when every single one of them rotated their heads around to look at me. Perfect. So I smiled and went up to the bar anyway, halfway between the pimp and the regulars. The former smiled at me; the latter glanced at their bowl of nuts as if I might encroach on it. I wouldn't touch their nuts; I know men don't wash their hands half as often as they should. Ew.

I would have felt foolish just walking out, so I ordered a Long Island Iced Tea - my drink of choice when the idea is to get as shitfaced as possible in a short amount of time. God knows I wasn't there for the company, and alcohol or no, I certainly wasn't going home with anyone. The waitress looked at me like I had grown another head and I gave her a big smile, and she went away.

What I got was probably a distant cousin to a Long Island Iced Tea, by marriage. It burned all the way down and clumped in my stomach. Hate it when that happens. The pimp with the shark smile was eyeing me in a way that made my flesh want to crawl off my bones and hide under the bar, so I downed the rest of the awful stuff.

Two drinks later, I felt like I needed a shower, there was so much sleet oozing over me. The pimp had slid over to talk to me and, for some reason, I let him. (He wasn't an actual pimp; he was just doing a very good impression in a shiny jacket and too much gold jewellery.) I remembered way too late that I had skipped dinner; by then, I was pleasantly fuzzy all the way through.

I think it was when he put his hand on my wrist that I decided I'd had enough and announced that I was going home. I suspect it took longer than it usually did - I'm fairly sure I walked down one street I had never even seen before - but I arrived home alone. Thank god.

Never going there again. I remember my laughter sounding entirely too loud between songs. And forced. I have no idea

why I do that; it just seemed easier to pretend to be happy than mope about some more.

Today has been less eventful. Today I have the wisdom of the recently wobbly and a bit of the hair of the dog. I have no idea why this is supposed to help. But at least it's better than sitting here feeling sorry for myself, right? Right?

Oops, I'm supposed to be at work in an hour. Where'd all the time go? And where the hell is my uniform?

* * * *

One of those days

19 December 7:28pm

I almost called him today. It was reflex - I'd had a crappy day and I wanted someone to talk to. A friendly ear and a warm voice on the other end of the line.

It was one of those days today. The supervisors at the bookstore were stressed out because today's delivery was late. All of their carefully-prepared schedules were out, and of course they took it out on us. Never mind that this happens at least once a week. Never mind that we had the delivery sorted and out on the shop floor in record time.

Of course, the store was packed, which made it impossible to get any books actually onto the shelves. It seemed like all the nasty customers were on the prowl today, too. Like this one lady who pushed her way down to the self-help books and nearly knocked an old man over. I went to see if he was okay, and he gave me this look as if I'd just suggested something disgusting, or I'd forgotten to put my shirt on this morning.

He had only just got done looking like he wanted to scrape me off his shoe when the pushing lady came steaming up again. She missed him this time - she was after me, apparently. She stood there in the middle of the store and tore strips off me because the books weren't in order and she couldn't find what she was looking for.

And you know why? Because of people like her. Because customers pick up books and shove them back on any handy shelf. At this time of year, it's all we can do to keep the books off the floor and chairs and other books. Does she have any idea how long it takes to re-order a shelf after the store has been open for a couple of hours? We're not miracle-workers, y'know.

Yeah, I didn't say any of that to her. I apologised for the state of things - it tasted bad to let that pass over my tongue, but I was hardly going to have a go at a customer. No matter how tempted I was. Instead, I offered to help her find what she was looking for. And of course, the book was exactly where it should have been, if she had bothered to use her alphabet. I didn't say that to her, either. She went away happy, or at least quiet.

Then one of the managers walked up and asked me why I hadn't shelved a cartload of books yet. I almost bit my tongue bloody to stop myself saying something we would all regret.

So I just took it. Sucked it in and took it. They really don't pay us enough to take that kind of crap, but I can't just leave. I need the money. I need this stupid job if I'm ever gonna get out of where I am and start my own life. I don't like it, but there it is.

On the train home, I had to talk to someone. I had to say all of those things I had bottled up all day - all of these things I'm splurging here. Otherwise, I would've burst or break down. I've done way too much breaking down lately.

I found myself staring at his name on my phone. I had scrolled to it automatically, a habit so deeply ingrained that I didn't realise I was doing it until his name slapped me in the face. Cocky little electronic sucker.

His name. I have to stop doing that. He has a name. He's not one of those people who Must Not Be Named. He's no scary, undead, noseless bastard who just won't quit. And I'm not one of those limp girls who goes to pieces at the sound of his name. It's Cody. His name is Cody.

I used to call him on the train home all the time, almost every day for two years. Just to hear his voice. Just to have someone care about my day. But that hasn't happened for about a month

now. He used to be my boy with the beautiful hands and I can't get used to thinking of him as the ex.

I called Matt instead. Matt and I have been friends forever, since we were kids. I hadn't realised how long it had been since we talked - six months, almost. Wow. I guess I neglected him while I was with Cody.

It was good, talking to Matt. We caught up as though no time had passed at all, sailed right over the gap without even noticing. He caught me up on his latest exploits - he's a regular at a gay bar downtown, and it's pretty much drama central there. All of a sudden, my life didn't seem so bad. He's good at that.

Maybe I'll go see him soon. Catch up properly.

* * * *

My nemesis

20 December - 5:04pm

I thought yesterday was bad. Well, today was worse. Who knew, huh?

Yeah, it's the week before Christmas and everything is crazy. Everyone's frazzled and strung out, and desperate to get that one perfect present so that they can go home and put their feet up. And for some reason today, all the displays and decorations kept falling down. I swear, we have an anti-Christmas gremlin in that store.

I was in the middle of trying to re-hang one of the big banners - it takes about three hands, but I was managing - when a familiar blonde flounce caught my attention. My stomach fell through the floor, but I got the damned banner to stay upright before I turned around to face her.

And there she was, grinning at me and looking as perfect as ever. Bree, my former friend, the bitch who thought it was funny to screw my boyfriend.

Ex-boyfriend.

She was the one who had started the rumours among our friends. She was the one who had spread the lies all over Facebook, until even strangers were insulting me and leaving awful messages on my wall.

I still have no idea why she did all of that; I didn't do anything to her. But I've seen her go after other people and I know how much she enjoys it. Now I wonder if she ever told us the truth about what they'd done. Perspective is a funny thing, isn't it?

So, there she was, standing right in front of me. Behind her left shoulder, Tarisha was looking on - Bree's faithful little shadow, wannabe extraordinaire. The girl who might have been nice if she wasn't constantly emulating a bitch. She, at least, had the grace to look uncomfortable when she glanced my way.

I hadn't seen either of them since it all blew up, since I found out about Bree and Cody. I wanted to slap her in the face, I wanted to scream and muss up that prettily-brushed hair of hers. But no. I was working and I was damned if she'd take my job from me, too.

So I looked her in the eye and asked if I could help her, cool as a cucumber. I was, in that moment, very proud of myself.

Then she spoke and I couldn't see properly. I saw myself wrapping my hands around her throat. "Hi, I'm looking for something special," she said. "For my boyfriend. I was thinking something like the Kama Sutra." She was thoroughly enjoying using me as a minion for this; her voice dripped with it.

I'm fairly sure that I had at least one hand curled into a fist. Right then, the banner I'd spent fifteen minutes subduing slithered out of its holder and onto the floor. "I'll just go and find someone to help you," I told her. Then I turned on my heel and walked away. I have no idea how I managed not to smack her.

I was so upset that I just headed straight out the back. Amber saw me and asked what was wrong - she's one of my closest friends at the store. So I told her. She went all taut and frowny - and let me tell you, seeing a goth girl getting angry is an intimidating experience.

She told me not to worry about it and went out onto the floor. I took a few moments to calm down and then peeked out, just in time to see Bree heading out of the store with empty hands and

a face like thunder. Amber was standing by the tills with her arms folded, smiling unrepentantly. I have no idea what she said to Bree; she refused to tell me. I'm not sure I care.

Right now, Amber is my hero.

* * * *

Oh boy oh boy.

21 December - 12:33pm

You'll never believe where I woke up this morning. Hell, I don't believe it. I kept stopping and looking at the bed, and then hurrying on with getting dressed.

I guess that stuff with Bree yesterday upset me more than I thought. Seeing her again, seeing her smile in my face and frame vicious words with her pretty mouth. We'd been best friends for three years, and in all that time, I'd never seen her go all-out for someone to this extent. I can't help but wonder why, but there's no point asking her. She'd never give me a straight answer; she'd just twist me up into a tiny, crying heap and leave me bleeding inside. Again.

I called Matt on my way home again and he cheered me up. He convinced me to go to a party, and I thought, why the hell not? I'm not going to let her stop me from living my life, just because she's a heartless bitch. Screw her; screw both of them. They're not going to make me sit at home on a Saturday night.

The party was great. Full of very drunk gay men, but that's okay; they're good fun. Matt dragged me into a quiet spot when I got there and fixed my hair up for me - the advantages of being mates with a hairdresser. I think he was making sure that I was all right, too. He's a sweetheart like that.

With the cocktails on hand, it wasn't long before I was just as drunk and giggly as the rest of them. I wasn't the only girl there; a few were wandering around, enjoying the chance to party without having a hand fall on their ass at every turn. Even so, I'm fairly sure that I saw one of them kissing one of the guys later on, and a dark-haired fella tried to come onto me on the dancefloor. Matt is always telling me about how easy it

is to pick up girls at gay bars; he'd go home with either, given the chance. Nothing wrong with getting lucky, right?

Lucky. Right.

I told the dancing guy that I wasn't interested - he reminded me a little too much of Cody. Then I went to get another drink and things started to get a bit fuzzy. I remember getting dizzy and too hot; I wobbled outside to get some air. Took in great gulps of it and closed my eyes so the world would stop wavering.

Then Matt was there and we chatted for a while. Before I knew it, I was crying all over him; alcohol makes me emotional, and it hadn't exactly been a stressless day. Apparently, drinking also makes me stupid.

I don't know how it happened, but then we were kissing. Me and the friend I've had forever. There's never been anything like that between us. Never. I listen to his exploits; I've never been one of them. But it felt good, and it felt right, and I guess I needed someone right then.

I don't remember getting to his place, though I do remember being with him there. I hadn't felt like that in such a long time. Oh, god.

It was still bewildering to wake up there this morning. The hangover didn't help. He was still asleep, his carefully-gelled hair all scruffed up, and I didn't wake him. I couldn't. I had no idea what I would say to him; I still don't.

I've known him since I was six. He knows everything I've ever done. I kept looking at him and getting terrified about what he'll think of me when he wakes up.

I don't ever do this kind of thing. I don't pick up guys and let them take me home. I don't have one-night stands. I don't

sleep with friends. What the hell have I done?

I don't know how I'm going to face him now. I ran out of his place pretty quick, before he woke up. I'm such a coward. I feel like I've lost him. Is there any other way I can screw up my life and be more pathetic? Can we pretend that it never happened?

I don't know what to do. Maybe I'll just crawl into my bed and wait for him to never call me again.

* * * *

Ink

22 December - 6:43pm

I almost forgot about today's appointment. How silly would that have been? I made it two weeks ago, mostly out of spite, but when I got up this morning I was determined to get it done.

I spent all of yesterday hung over and moping. Dad kept checking on me - I think he's worried about me. He'd never say, though. He just kept an eye on me and then made me lasagne for dinner - my favourite. Since everything with Cody blew up, I've had a lot of lasagne dinners.

Today, I was determined not to let myself stay in that self-hugging pit. Instead, I spent the whole day at the tattoo parlour. I'm regretting it now - I can barely move, it hurts so much. And Dad has that look in his eye that says it's all my own fault and I won't be getting lasagne tonight. His sympathy is conditional on how self-inflicted my pain is, apparently.

I can't really blame him. He didn't approve of my first tattoo; I suppose I can't really expect him to approve of this one.

I got my first one a week after my mother left. I'd wanted one forever, but she was pretty firm about how she wanted her girls to look. Tattoos were not part of that vision.

Now that I think about it, that's why I hooked up with Bree and Tarisha in the first place; they were exactly the kinds of girls that my mother approved of. They were pretty and always nicely-turned-out. They liked hair and shoes and boys. They were going places, their careers lined up like bowling pins. And I was like that, back then, before Chastity died and our mother left, before I had to pick up the pieces they left behind.

Cody hadn't wanted me to get a tattoo, either. He liked the one I had well enough - a spiky little writhe of flames across my lower back - but whenever I talked about getting another one, he'd change the subject. He never said that he didn't like it; he just disapproved at me silently and that was enough. I did what he wanted because I wanted him.

But I don't have him any more and I'm so sick of living for everyone else. I don't care who disapproves; it's for me, and no-one else.

And just as soon as I can bear anything to touch my back again, I'm sure I'll be really glad I did it. It was supposed to be just a little thing. I wanted a bird, something winged and free. But I walked in there and saw this beautiful design of a bird rising, wings half-spread, and I knew it would look perfect across my shoulderblades. Then I got talking to Steve, my tattooist, and he suggested that I link it up to the tattoo on the small of my back, and... it sort of grew from there.

It seemed like such a good idea when we were working it out. It took hours to actually ink, though. Steve didn't mind - Mondays are quiet for him, he told me - and he worked right on through on it. But I had forgotten how much it hurt. It stings at first, and then there's the weird euphoria stage, and then it just burns, as if he was needling real fire under my skin. I thought I was going to pass out a couple of times. I almost asked him to stop and finish it another day, almost gave in to it. I must be some kind of wuss.

Getting home was the hardest part. I almost called Matt to come pick me up, but, well. Yes. I walked home, very very stiffly.

I'm wondering if it was a mistake, but it's a bit late now. I have to work tomorrow. I wonder if I'll be able to move at all. I can't wait to see it, see if it was worth all this.

* * * *

Looking forward

23 December - 7:16pm

Today was both better and worse than I expected. Christmas and new tattoos don't mix well, but with a few painkillers and a painted-on smile, you can face just about anything.

I realised halfway through the day that I still hadn't picked up Dad's present. I picked it out weeks ago, but I had to wait for a paycheque to come in, and then... well, my world exploded and it slipped my mind. And now it's Christmas in two days and I still don't have it. The hardware store was closed by the time I got there after work; I'll have to try tomorrow at lunchtime.

When I got home today, Dad was waiting for me with his concerned face on. It creeps out every now and then, usually when he's had a slow day at work and too much time to think. Not too many people buying cars right now, it seems; they're tending to go for cheaper presents this year.

It came over dinner: The Talk about My Future. What I'm going to do, I can't stay at a bookstore my whole life, come on Faithy, you have to do something better with yourself. You could be more than this.

I've heard it all before; he does this once every few months. So I've been at the bookstore for almost a year now. So this job is yet another in a string of crappy retail positions. So I'm smart enough to do something better.

I surprised him by having an answer for him. I surprised him by telling him that I'm angling for the supervisor position that's about to open up there. That I want to get management experience before I look at opening my own store.

My own little bookstore - one of those poky, kooky places that smells of old paper and newly-minted books - not one of the chain monstrosities. All mine - my own hours, my own work, my own weekendless weeks, my own crappy pay, my own name over the door. I love books , I love working with books, and I love people who love books. That's what I want to do with myself.

That shut him up for a while. Finally, he asked if I was sure that I wanted a bookstore. He might be a bit upset that I don't want to go into the car business and take over from him one day. That's what I took these retail jobs to get away from, so I could find my own thing. Now I've found it and I'm not going to let him guilt me into helping him at the yard again. Been there, done that. It's time for me now.

A girl can dream, right?

* * * *

Boom

24 December - 2:29pm

We've been attacked. I don't know what's happening. I don't know if it's just the city, or the state, or the country. I don't know if it's war, or terrorists, or something equally awful. It's all such a mess right now.

There was a bomb, a few hours ago. The central business district is falling down. I can't even think about how many people were hurt. Nothing is working - my phone is dead, there's no power anywhere. I only turned on the laptop to see if I could, and I can. There's no internet, though. Is the world still out there? Do they know?

Can't talk long. Just had to take a break, sit down for a while. This building keeps groaning - I don't like it. Wait, I hear someone. They need help. I'll be back.

####

Thank you for reading the prequel book of the Apocalypse Blog! I hope you enjoyed it. There's a long, wild journey ahead for Faith and those caught up in the chaos with her. If you want to travel with her, head on over to Amazon and pick yourself up the rest of the story.

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About the author:

Melanie Edmonds is a technical writer by trade and fiction writer by love. She has a degree in English Literature and Creative Writing, and has been writing since she was old enough to hold a pen. She writes primarily science and speculative fiction, and her published work includes web serials such as the Apocalypse Blog and [Starwalker](#).

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