



## **The Emperor of Destruction**

By Gary L.M. Martin

### **Chapter 1: The Epiphany of the Bouncing Head**

Princess Margaret McMasters thought her cousin Cunha was going to be her *savior*.

But as Princess Margaret watched cousin Cunha murder her dear brother Prince Darwin, and gasped as Darwin's head bounced down the steps of the throne room, Margaret suddenly realized that perhaps she didn't know Cunha *quite as well as she thought she did*.

Even though they were cousins, Cunha has grown up largely separate from the rest of the McMasters clan. In fact, Margaret only had three solid memories of Cunha growing up, all around the tender age of sixteen.

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They were *all* McMasters at the family ball in Rockrod, all descended from the founding Impressionators. Four hundred years ago, the McMasters clan had discovered that they had the unusual ability to connect to the Power, the Power at the Roots of the Earth. "Gravity", the Wise Men called it; but whatever it was called, the McMasters family was among the few who could tap into it. Very quickly their feats became the stuff of legends, and before long the McMasters Empire of Aridor was born. Over 400 years, from father to son to father to son, the power had been handed down to the current generation, ruled by Emperor William, a kindly old man who was grooming his elder son Delos to take his place. Margaret was his daughter, and she had a younger brother named Darwin.

Margaret first saw Cunha at a family gathering.

Margaret knew who he was, even though they had never formally met. He grinned at her from across the room like they were old friends, sending a chill down her spine. He had dark hair combed roughly over his forehead, dark eyes, and an even darker smile. The tingling of what she would later learn was *ahmen* only intensified when he sat down next to her at a grand dinner festival.

"Hello, Cousin," he said, smiling at her.

Margaret didn't quite know what to say. She knew they were both about the same age, but Cunha seemed older, and more... experienced.

Not trusting her voice, she gave him a watery smile. He put his hand over hers.

Margaret felt a familiar tingling in her body. It has only been a few harvests since she had Made the Change. Her Phongfruit Forest was still growing, as were her Wisdoms, though not quickly enough to suit her, as she fondled them in her bedroom mirror and urged them to hurry up and *grow*. The tingling she felt was growing more and more familiar. It was her *ahmen*. Men had *jizz*, women had *ahmen*, regardless or not whether they had the ability to harness the powers of the Roots of the Earth. Like most McMasters, Margaret had the Power, though not as impressively as her brothers Delos or Darwin.

Cunha smiled at her. "You are a pretty thing. No wonder they've kept you hidden from me all these years." Those dark eyes seemed to probe her.

Hidden from *him*. A secret thrill ran through Margaret's Sacred Gorge, though she tried not to show it.

"I haven't been hiding," Margaret protested, in a higher pitched voice than she intended. It was the other way around! Cunha was the one who had been cloistered away for some mysterious reason-

Her thoughts were cut off by the feeling of Cunha's fingers playing over her hand. It was so casual that no one in view even took notice of it.

But for Margaret it was the most intimate experience imaginable. The way Cunha was looking at her said it all. She was *his*.

And then Rogar, Cunha's father, came over and said to him, "What are you doing?", and Margaret blushed as if she had been caught Juicing him. Rogar pulled Cunha away, and that was the end of her first encounter with her cousin Cunha.

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Margaret's second encounter with Cunha came at another family dinner, a few months later. Cunha was sitting at a separate table, sandwiched by his mother and father, as if he couldn't be trusted to be alone, even in such a public setting. Margaret caught him staring at her. Margaret traded glances with him shyly, getting embarrassed whenever she met his gaze. Cunha would give her a sly grin which would cause Margaret to feel her *ahmen* rising again.

Margaret noticed that Cunha was talking to Marta, one of the serving girls, flirting with her every time she came by with a tray of food. One time he reached over and whispered something in her ear. She tittered and looked incredulously at him. Cunha nodded. Marta, biting her lip and looking tense, casually finished making a circuit with her tray, and then put it down and climbed the stairs to the balcony above the dining hall. And then, a moment or two later, Cunha followed her.

Cunha turned to flash Margaret a grin as he made his way up the stairs. The balcony was currently unoccupied. What could he and Marta....?

A few moments later, Margaret found out. It was the shadows, on the ceiling of the large banquet hall which gave them away. Margaret saw shadows of a man, clearly on top, plunging in and out.

*He was bangsticking her!*

Margaret was shocked. But the shadows gave it away clearly. She saw what must be Cunha's Cheeks of Plenty pumping up and down. She looked around her. Everyone was so consumed in their food and discussion that they didn't noticed. She reached out with her fledgling Power. She could almost sense it; the heightened *ahmen* of Marta, the *jizz* of Cunha... his *jizz* felt really strong!

"Margaret dear, are you all right?" First Stewart Magister asked. He was such a kind man. Ever since Mother had died he had shown special concern for her.

"I'm fine," said Margaret weakly, hoping she wasn't blushing.

And then Cunha came down the stairs, a moment later, looking like a triumphant war hero. Marta followed a discrete minute later, her head down.

Cunha swaggered over to her. "My dear Cousin! How are you?" He kissed her cheek.

"What... you...." Margaret was speechless. She lowered her voice. "I... I didn't know you were sweet on Marta."

Cunha made a face. "I'm not."

"But... you... you...."

"Yes," Cunha grinned. "Me, me. It was all me, Cuz. And if you like, someday it can be all you."

He allowed himself a moment to enjoy her expression, and then sauntered back to his table, with a distinct bounce in his step.

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The third and last time Margaret had encountered Cunha before he was sent away was at another family gathering, an outdoor picnic to celebrate the coming of Spring, on the banks of Lake Pinafore. It was an unusually hot day, and she wanted to go swimming, but she hadn't brought a bathing gown. So Margaret walked away from the gentle lawn and feasting tables and headed down to the wooded part of the shoreline. When she had gone far enough, she took off her clothes. She looked at herself critically. Her Phongfruit Forest was beginning to grow in nice and thickly, but her Wisdoms were still quite small. How would anyone take her seriously if her Wisdoms were small, even if she was a Princess? Margaret cupped her Wise Ones for a moment, frowned, shook her head, and entered the water.

The water was cold at first, but delicious, the perfect balm for a hot day. Margaret started to paddle around, just enjoying the serenity, when suddenly she felt something start to pull her down. No, something wasn't pulling her down, it was *pushing* her down. She cried out as her head dropped below the water for a few seconds. She fought to keep her head above water. She paddled furiously. What was pushing her down?

She caught a glimpse of someone, standing there, on the shoreline. "Help!" she cried. "Help!" she cried again, even as she got water in her mouth. She struggled furiously against the force pushing her down, down, down....

And then the force pushing her down was replaced by another force, one which was lifting her up. Margaret found her body being pulled out of the water. Her body floated on a

gentle current of air, until she reached the shore and was gently set on her feet. Right in front of Cunha.

"It's dangerous to go swimming alone, Cousin," said Cunha mockingly. "Who knows what could happen?"

"You saved me! Thank you-" said Margaret. Suddenly she realized that she was naked, and Cunha wasn't even pretending not to stare at her body. Margaret felt insecure as she felt Cunha ogling her. She reached up and covered her Wisdoms with one hand, and her Phongfruit Forest with the other.

"No," said Cunha mildly, and Margaret wordlessly dropped her hands, as if he had uttered a word of Command. Cunha smiled and nodded, as if this confirmed something he already knew, and he scrutinized her. He stared into her eyes, looking for something. Then he nodded again, and reached out and caressed one of her Wisdoms.

"Cunha!" Margaret squealed, inadvertently pushing her Wisdom further into his palm.

"So soft... so soft and luscious," said Cunha with a little smile.

"No," Margaret cried.

"They are small, but you will undoubtedly get wiser in time," said Cunha. He released his hold on her Wise One, and pressed his lips against hers. Margaret groaned as she felt her *ahmen* rising within her. Using her ability with the Power, she sensed that Cunha's *jizz* was rising as well.

When Cunha pulled back, Margaret said, "We... we shouldn't."

"We should," Cunha assured her. Margaret practically melted as he took her in his arms. She could feel him starting to lean her backwards, to lower her to the ground-

"What in the name of the Global Cloaca is happening here?" a voice roared.

Margaret turned to see Uncle Rogar. She quickly pulled away. "Uncle! This isn't what it seems! Cunha, he...."

"I saved her, Father," said Cunha, giving a crooked grin. But his grin vanished when his father clouted him on the head. "Ow! Why did you do that for?"

"You come with me," said Rogar, sounding very angry as he took an iron grip on Cunha's arm.

"You'll regret this!" Cunha yelled, as he was dragged away.