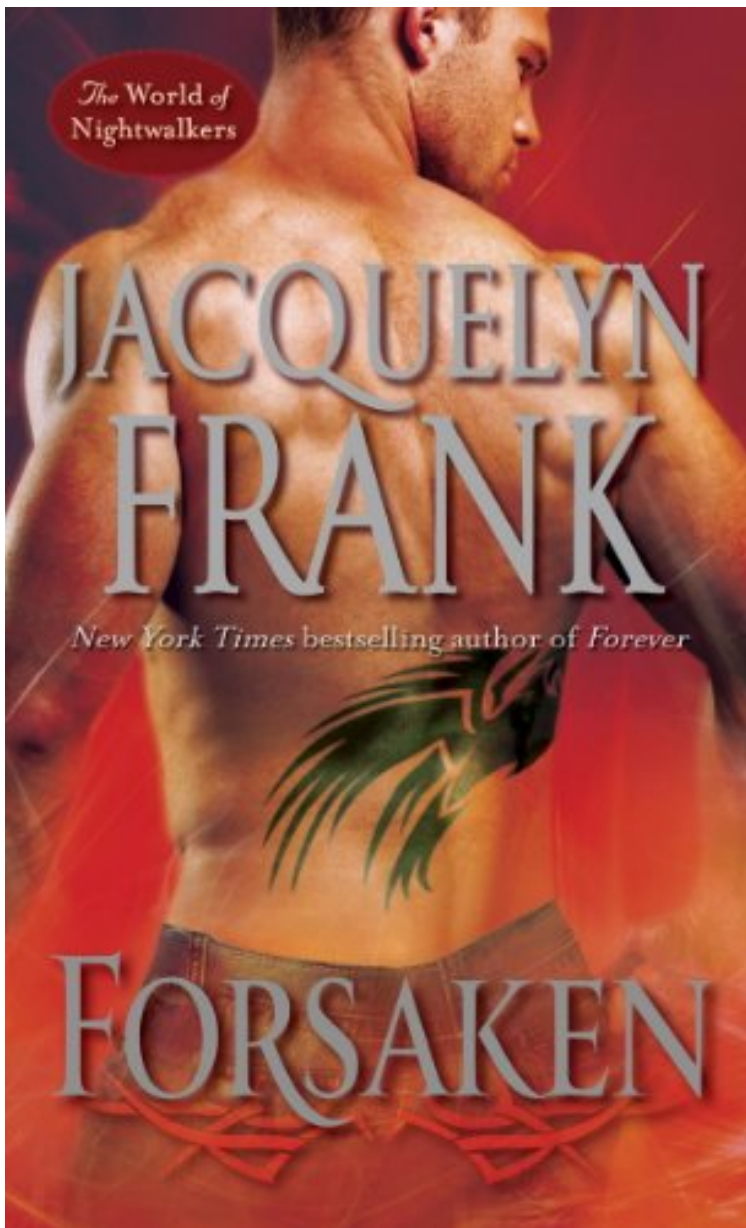


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Forsaken: The World of Nightwalkers



Par Jacquelyn Frank
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNew York Times bestselling author Jacquelyn Frank continues her scorching and sensual new series set in the world of the Nightwalkers, where alluring entities known as Bodywalkers are the vanguards against the raging forces of darkness. As a mercenary, Leo Alvarez has signed on for a lotbut he never signed on for his best friend becoming host to the soul of an ancient Egyptian pharaoh. Jackson is now inhabited by a Bodywalker, and Leo is forced to grapple with a realm of supernatural beings far more dangerous than anything hes ever encountered. But when Jackson is wounded by an attack from a demon

god, Leo must team up with another supernatural creature a Night Angel to save his friend from utter destruction. With skin as black as midnight, hair as white as snow, and a body of pure perfection, the Night Angel arouses a burning desire in Leo, even as he refuses to be intimidated by her power or the power of those who would destroy his friend. An unusual alliance is forged, electrified by sexual temptation, and together the two must unite their strengths to bring down a supreme evil. Praise for Forsaken If you loved the original Nightwalker books, you'll enjoy this. USA Today There's sizzle, steam and enough action to satisfy even the most ravenous appetite. RT Book s As always, Frank excels in highlighting the lovers' delight in exploring the strangeness of each other's bodies, and the heartbreaking tentativeness between Faith and Leo is a delightful break from the grand passions of the Egyptians. Publishers Weekly There's something to be said when you finish a book and immediately want the next book in the series. [The World of Nightwalkers] is just that kind of series. Badass Book s Only Jacquelyn Frank could take legendary Egyptians, intermix them with evil Templars, add gargoyles and weave it all into an incredible new world that exists right in the middle of unknowing humans. Fresh Fiction From the Paperback edition. Excerpt 9780345534910 | excerpt Frank / FORSAKEN Chapter One. . . Why hast thou forsaken me? . . . Leo Alvarez was not a religious man. He had been anything but for as long as he could remember. He had come such a long way from Sunday mass and the catechism lessons his mother had demanded of him. Such a long way. He was not what one would call a good man. He wasn't evil, surprisingly far from it considering the harsh realities of his life. But he most certainly was not an angel. He was not free of sin, and many of those sins were very grave indeed. But if he were to ever be judged for them, Leo would not be apologetic for the things he had done. He had a code, which he followed efficiently, and felt it would speak for him. But however serious his sins, he didn't deserve the punishment that was presently being dealt out to him. No one deserved the cruel and excruciating torment he was swimming in. Leo rolled in and out of consciousness, but he knew the bliss of unconsciousness would be robbed from him violently when the blade sinking into his flesh found the all-too-responsive nerves and receptors. The message was received in a burning explosion of pain, forcing him to clench his jaw until his teeth creaked under the stress of it. But he would not scream again. He was hoarse from everything that had come previous to this new onslaught. He didn't worry about whether or not it made him seem weak. No. None of that mattered at the moment. Nothing mattered to Leo outside of one single word. One single objective. Live. Live, Alvarez, he demanded of himself for the thousandth time. Although, by now it was obvious that the twisted demon who orchestrated his agony had no intention of killing him. No. That would be far too merciful, and this evil thing—the creature that had lashed him down to the coarse cemented floor, his wrists torn to shreds inside the cuffs of heavy metal manacles—was everything opposite of mercy. But these wounds would be healed shortly. As would the newest carving that the beast was drawing into his body. Healing would come only after the thing called Chatha was through lifting Leo's organs out of his body to present them to him, just before he would begin to dissect them before his prisoners' very eyes. This time he reached deep and Leo could feel him fumbling around inside his gut, moving lower, slick fingers having difficulty gaining purchase at first. But eventually Chatha found his kidney and ripped it out of him, giggling as he held it up, prodding at it with a finger, not caring that Leo was quickly dying of blood loss. Maybe . . . maybe this time I will die before he can heal me, Leo thought. But he struggled to tamp the hope down, knowing that it was a part of the creature's tormenting ritual, realizing that it was contrary to his earlier directive to live. But the creature did this, liked to make him think he was going to find the release of death. Make him think that, after days of this torture it would finally be over. And he was fading. He was reaching for something . . . something beyond life. Something waiting for him. Something of infinite, blissful peace. Then Chatha dropped the kidney, and scrambled up over his body on hands and knees. He pressed his face close to Leo's, filling his darkening vision with that innocent and maniacal visage. No, no, he tsked, wagging a blood-wet finger before Leo's nose. No fair! And that was when tears would burn into Leo's eyes, that secret of all secret hopes dashed all to hell as the beast laid hands on him like an Evangelical preacher touched by God, and healed him. Leo awoke with a savage shout, his body lurching out of bed, forcing him to stumble and fall as his sleeping muscles refused to awaken and do their duty. He fell to the floor, his hands barely reaching out in time to keep him from landing face-first into the luxurious carpeting. The jarring of his body shook sweat from the tips of his hair, a shower of salt and water spraying everywhere. He was soaked in it, his bare chest slick with wet and his boxers plastered to him in their drenched state. He tried to slow his breathing, tried to make himself understand that he was awake and, for the moment, safe. This house was the home of his best friend. The friend who had seen him healed and who was patiently waiting for him to open up and talk about the horror that he had been through. But he

would be waiting a very long time because Leo would never, ever speak a word about it to anyone. He would not resurrect those moments in the bright light of day. He would never burden another soul with the horror he had survived . . . somehow.No. He would go to his grave with it. He would drag it into the afterlife with him, and this time it would be the one kicking and screaming.She tilted her head, listening to the wind, feeling the eddy of how it flowed freely or, better yet, washed around things. The rush and sound of it acted like sonar, telling her where everything was just by the way it shifted. When there was no wind she was as good as blind to what was happening in the world, and those were the moments that she found as terrifying as humans would feel if only they knew what was out there. What was out there living and breathing beside them without their knowledge.Knowledge. Knowledge was key and it was her job to deliver information. Her people could feel and sense things all around . . . just like she could with the actual wind right at that moment. But unlike the surety of knowing there was a cow twenty paces to her left and a church with a steeple twenty miles due south, the future had murky eddies. The wind of the future was blowing in bad directions now and if the wind blew one way tragedy and horror would reign. If it blew another, there would be tragedy and survival. And yet another would bring victory and joy. It was the first that must be avoided at all cost. The others . . . the others would fall as they would and that was as it should be.Whistle and blow, whistle and blow, she murmured, the phrase like second nature, her peoples way of saying What will be will be.She pushed off the branch of a tree, letting the wind wash over her, letting it lift her up. The feel of it flowing over her skin was the most comforting sensation she knew. There was nothing like it in all the world, nothing more freeing. She had no idea how anyone could take it for granted or how mortals bore being bound to the earth. Then again, they tried to fight it, didnt they, in their great lumbering metal machines? Poor things. She supposed it was their comfortable and safe way of doing things. But the wind was not safe and as much as it buoyed up it was the sudden plummeting sweeps down toward soil that made life course through the veins. Those humans who flew on silk wings . . . yes, they were the braver sort. To know that a single tear in that silk could end their fragile mortal lives . . . it was invigorating. Those were humans she longed to know better.But that was impossible. Contact with humans was strictly prohibited. Well . . . in true form anyway. You could hardly swing a cat without bumping into a mortal these days. It was why they lived so distant from the nearest human dwelling. But other things had the same inclination and the world was growing small.But that would cease to be a worry for very much longer if the wind kept blowing so ill. She moved low and fast, marveling at the cacti and other strange vegetation. She had never been in this part of the United States before. Which was strange really. She loved to travel and see the world, to see how very different one place was from another. And when she had glutted on the topography of a region she would move deeper into the area, mixing with humans, learning all about the differing cultures involved and the almost rhythmic beauty of their languages. And food. God, how she loved food.She shook the thought off. She was letting herself get distracted. There was business to be done. Sightseeing would have to wait for a different day and a very different set of circumstances.Marissa Anderson looked up from the garden to glance over her shoulder toward the house. A little ways away from where she was kneeling in dirt, leaning against some large desert rocks with one booted foot on the ground and the other braced back against the boulder behind him was Leo.Farther beyond him was the house. She lifted her hand to block the bright glare of the moonlight from her sight so she could get a better look at her love as he sat there staring intently at his best friend. Marissa knew just how worried Jackson was about Leo. Even if it hadnt been written all over his face at that moment. And there was clearly much to be worried about. Leo was a human man thrust harshly into a superhuman world. He had learned the hard way about all the dangers that came with it, and he had learned that the two most important people in his life were also a part of that dangerous night world. On top of being tortured, it was a lot to take in.Staring at them is no going to improve the situation, a deep voice rumbled in the rolling timbre of a Scots accent from beside her. She turned to look at Ahnvil, who, like her, was on his knees in the garden she was working on. Despite her newfound Bodywalker strength he had insisted on helping her with some of the markedly heavy lifting, as he often did. But she had realized some time ago that his eagerness to help her in her landscaping tasks stemmed less from helpfulness than it did a genuine love of being in the dirt and molding nature to something thriving and living. He was a big man, and at the moment he appeared as human as she didthough his skin tone was a bit paler than hers was. But Marissa knew that Gargoyles could also appear in the shape of a flesh-and-blood human, but with a skin of stone, like some sort of built-in armor. Or they could, as a true grotesque Gargoyle, with frightening features and ferociously huge wings capable of lifting their enormous bodies into the air.I know that, she said with a deep sigh, turning back to the comfort of the hard, colorful New Mexico

desert soil. She was planting pansies, which were not indigenous to the area, but she thought they were hearty enough to make it. She missed pansies. Out east there had been such beautiful flowers, like bulbs and hydrangea and more. It was one of the little things she missed being out here. She looked back toward the reason she had moved to New Mexico. The reason why she had decided to die and be reborn into a powerful Bodywalker queen. We are a queen, Hatshepsut was quick to point out from deep in her soul. You are every part the queen we are now, and do not forget that. Her Blending process was still so new and, she had been told, not entirely finished yet. When it was she would be extraordinarily powerful. She found that so hard to comprehend because she was already frighteningly powerful. Powerful enough to be grateful she was a well-balanced person. Someone who wasn't could go into a tailspin and use this power in very dark ways. The human will heal. We all heal with time, Ahnvil said. His tone was deeper and darker than usual and she turned her full attention to him. She knew so little about him. But the one thing she knew, the one thing that was true of every single Gargoyle, was that he had been born into slavery. She didn't understand the process or how it all came about, but they had all been slaves to the wicked Templar Bodywalkers who had used their dark magic to create their Gargoyle servants and had used touchstones to keep them imprisoned and chained to their sides. After all, whoever held the touchstone held the Gargoyles life in his hand. But these were only general lines of information. She knew very little about the specifics of this particular Gargoyle. But her ability, her ability to feel emotions no matter how big or small, told her there was a well of trauma around him. He swam in the aftermath of it, carried it around with him every single moment of every single day. It must be exhausting, she thought with a frown. She turned her attention back to the garden and began to pull at the weeds with a vengeance, trying to hide her expression. She knew he would not react well to pity. She glanced over at Leo and knew it was exactly the same for him. Only Leos trauma cut deeper, ran fresher. And as much as her lover wanted his friend to open up to him, to heal with him, she knew there was no way Leo would be capable of doing so anytime soon. Marissa didn't know what could possibly change that, but she was hopeful nonetheless. For Jacksons sake as much as for Leos own sake. But that was to be expected. Jacksons emotions would always call strongest to her. They were mated and had been for lifetimes. Every lifetime they were reborn, each into a new host, and they would find each other. They called it a love for all time, and they were not wrong. She had only known these feelings for a short time, and yet because of the Bodywalker she hosted, it was as if she had known them forever. The idea of meeting the future without him left a cold, bitter taste in her mouth and she resisted the urge to spit into the rich dark soil beneath her. The very thought made her stomach clench with fear. And she was right to feel that fear. Last time she had been incarnated she had barely lived two weeks before she had become a casualty of this damned war with the Templars. She had been ripped away from her love for another hundred years and, though he had quickly followed her into the Ether, it had been too short a time. Was she selfish for wanting more time on the physical plane? For wanting to touch him and hold him to her every night as though it might be the last time? For urging him to make love to her again and again so she could glory in this precious physical existence? Leo. Leo turned to look at Jackson Waverly. It was so strange, seeing him and his cute little redheaded woman sitting on the porch and working the garden, respectively, as if it were a lazy, sunny day in New Mexico, rather than the dark of night, and all they were missing was some cool glasses of lemonade in order to create the perfect idyllic picture. He wasn't used to living in the dark and didn't know if he could ever be. Though, he had always been better in the dark. Hidden. Shadowed. Dangerous. But he was none of those things at the moment. His body hurt from head to toe, full of scars and gouging incisions still in need of serious healing. He had never been a good invalid, however, so he kept moving, refusing a sickbed, knowing that eventually the physical agony would fade away . . . that this healing pain was nothing compared to what he had endured. The mending carvings in his body were childs play in comparison to their acquisition. In a minute, he called to his friend. He turned the word friend over and over in his mind. Maybe Jackson was still the friend he knew and loved. Or maybe he was just another evil thing wearing the skin of someone he trusted. That was all he could think of ever since Jackson had explained to him what a Bodywalker was. A soul from ancient Egypt, reborn in a host body, supposedly living a symbiotic life with that host. So his best friend was, at best, compromised. At worst . . . Leo hoped like hell he wouldn't need to kill his brother in order to get at the thing existing inside of him. He'd be damned before he would sit on the sidelines and let a thing like Chatha take over his best friend. That Bodywalker psychopath had seized the innocent mind and body of a Down syndrome man, the ultimate wolf in easily recognizable sheeps clothing. But according to Jackson, there were the good Bodywalkers, the Politic, like the ones residing in Jackson and his significant other, Marissa, and there were the bad Bodywalkers, the

Templars, who subjugated the existing soul inside of their new host and completely hijacked them. As far as Leo was concerned, there was very little difference. And on top of it he had learned a very valuable lesson.

Never turn your back on anyone, no matter how soft and innocuous they may seem. And right now that included Jackson and Marissa. Bodywalker pharaohs. Compromised. Leo straightened, dusting the corpses of the grass blades he had mutilated off his jeans. He remembered a little too late to do so with a measure of gentility, but a blinding sensation of pain quickly reminded him. He stood for a moment, his rear teeth clutching tightly to one another as he rode out the wave of it. He took a slow deep breath in through his nose, and then exhaled in a forceful stream. Better. It was better. He walked over to the porch steps, but remained at the foot of the stairs, keeping his distance. Whats up? Funny, I was going to ask you the same thing. Nothing much. Just sitting around and healing. I think Im a little too idle. I dont do well with too much downtime. Jacksons eyes reflected his understanding. Nothing sucked more ass than being forced to sit still and do nothing. Besides, Im not sure I can keep from stabbing your housemate through the eye with a pencil for much longer. Leo pantomimed the stab, including a vicious little flurry of movement that translated into scrambled brains via an eye socket. How could Jackson blame him? Their housemate was Kamenwati, the former right hand of the Templar leader Odjit and the sole means of introduction between Leo and the demented Chatha. Kamen had set Chatha on Leo like a rabid dog, supposed vengeance for the nearly dead state of his mistress. Leo had cut the bitches throat, completely unaware of who and what she was, unaware of her import to the Templars. All he had known at the time was that she had killed Jackson. Or so the story went. Apparently his memory had been completely wiped out of the entire encounter, a method of guarding him against exposure to the existence of the Nightwalker race these creatures of the night with immense powers. But by robbing him of his memory, they had robbed him of the opportunity to be on guard against the revenge that had been exacted via Kamenwati and Chatha. Leo was more than a little angry about that. He took in a slow, soundless breath, corralling his rage, leaving his face placid. Hes not a housemate, Leo, Jackson said with a frown. People under heavy guard and who are being grilled nightly for information are hardly invited guests. I dont care if you pull his fucking nails out every night! He rounded on Jackson with a vicious vent of ichor. He deserves to die and Im itching to do the deed! If you want to keep that from happening then I need to get the fuck out of here. And frankly, you should be in a rush to send me on my way because Im not too sure youre going to make it through the next twenty-four hours either. Leo! Jackson barked his name, getting to his feet. I am not your enemy! No, but you harbor him! Or maybe you are my enemy. I have no idea what that thing squirming around inside of you is. All I know is that no one in this house can be trusted. There are too many variables at play and Im not about to sleep soundly here while trying to figure it all out. Ive had it up to my craw with blind faith and trust. Im leaving at daylight, and from what I understand you cant follow me and neither can any of those Gargoyles. The beauty is I can move in daylight. I can get thousands of miles away from this fucked-up world of yours before sunset and believe me when I say you wont be able to find me. You think so? Jackson lashed back at him. Ill find you, Leo. Youre thinking in human terms, my friend. This is a Nightwalker world. I live with Gargoyles that have wings and a smoking-hot sense of smell. Or maybe Ill get Docia and Rams little Djynn friend to snap her fingers and bring you right back to where you are standing now. That just proves my point. The Jackson I know wouldnt try and strong-arm me into anything. He would have let me live my life on my own terms. But now you have all this power he scoffed in disgust, sweeping an acidic look over Jackson and no one to stop you from using it however you like. The Jackson you know would fight for you, Jackson said, his anger spinning away as his voice grew softer. He would make sure you took care of yourself. He would want to see you healed before letting you run off half-cocked so you can show the world, and more importantly yourself, what a badass you are. The Jackson I know would never talk about himself in the third person, Leo snapped. Really? Is that how you want to justify all of this? Discarding me because you dont understand this world youve been thrust into? The Leo I know wouldnt run away like a scared little girl. Hed face his fears, face the world around him. I need you, Leo. I need people I know and trust here. He stepped forward and Leo couldnt help himself, he stepped back in instant retreat. The action made Jackson frown. Im facing an enemy with the powers of a god, Leo. A god I know very little about. The Templars are out there, just waiting for a new leader to step into the vacancy left behind by Odjit. And they dont even know that the players have changed. That the god Apep was reborn into Odjits body. As far as they know they are following their Templar leader, and not this . . . this thing Kamenwati has resurrected! All the more reason to kill him, Leo spat. Tell you what, give me a pencil and five minutes alone with him and then Ill stay. You know I cant do that, Jackson bit back grimly. Even if he wasnt going to play out as a powerful ally now that hes defected to our side, Im still Jackson

Waverly inasmuch as I am Menes, Bodywalker Pharaoh. I will never have it in me to sentence any man, good or evil, arbitrarily to death. Arbitrary? The fucker set a psychopath loose on me! I can still feel that monsters hands inside me fumbling around, trying to decide which part of me he was going to show me next! He deserves to die. Horribly, painfully. And soon. Because if you think Im going to let this just slide . . .

Leo, youre human. Youre frail and mortal, a brittle thing, as you already have learned, in the face of the power he and his kind can wield. You wouldnt even come close to him. Jackson sighed and rubbed at the tension coiled in the back of his neck. Do you really think a part of me doesnt want to let you at him? Doesnt want to do it myself? But the knowledge Menes has of the last time this demon god sought to rule in this realm is terrifying. Ive gotten no more sleep than you have since you came back, sunlight or no sunlight. Leo quieted. Jackson had been awake? But I thought . . . ?Thought I was paralyzed in daylight? I am . . . if that daylight touches me. The windows in the house are polarized. If there was some kind of attack on this house, do you think we would want to be caught helpless? Does that make any sense? Jackson saw the anxious thought that flitted across Leos features. And yeah, Ive heard you every single time youve woken up screaming like some inhuman thing. Did you really think no one would notice? Revue de presse

If you loved the original Nightwalker books, youll enjoy this. USA Today Theres sizzle, steam and enough action to satisfy even the most ravenous appetite. RT Book s As always, Frank excels in highlighting the lovers delight in exploring the strangeness of each others bodies, and the heartbreaking tentativeness between Faith and Leo is a delightful break from the grand passions of the Egyptians. Publishers Weekly Theres something to be said when you finish a book and immediately want the next book in the series. [The World of Nightwalkers] is just that kind of series. Badass Book s Only Jacquelyn Frank could take legendary Egyptians, intermix them with evil Templars, add gargoyles and weave it all into an incredible new world that exists right in the middle of unknowing humans. Fresh Fiction